

## Slavery & Reparations:

Legislated apologies for 250 years of North American slavery are feel-good, but ultimately meaningless legislation. Even as an ethic (not legislation) apologizing to those whose ancestors were hurt by your ancestors, is useless. Do you think a government's promulgation that "we're sorry" is going to assuage a single hardened slave descendant who thinks this nation is full of white oppressors? Those who are so blinded by fury would just say "you apologizers are Uncle Toms who are collaborating with Whitey to make us feel good and keep us down another 50 years."

You can only be just IN YOUR OWN TIME. Let's say you were a direct descendant of a cruel plantation overseer, the sins of your great-great-great-grandfather don't fall on you. You're decent. And to whom would you apologize? You can't find a single ancestor of a slave on that plantation. And if you did, he'd likely say "I've moved on; don't YOU have anything better to do?" Feel-good legislation keeps you from doing REAL good. Here's the REAL good I'd like to see:

not a government initiative, but just a series of private gatherings of former racists and their former targets. There are still 80+ year old whites who helped Bull Connor hose down blacks in Alabama. For them to come together with the 70 and 80 year old blacks who were on the Edmund Pettis Bridge and in the streets, and personally apologize to those individuals would be meaningful. A former policeman who might have used excessive force against a jailed Negro in the 1950s would be doing a beautiful thing, whether publicly or privately, to seek him out and apologize directly.

Finally, while I don't believe in a legislated apology for slavery, I DO believe in helpful reparations. The men and women, still living, who suffered from clear instances of Jim Crow abuse by state governments, deserve compensation. To the extent our tort law has not taken care of these people, I'd like to see states re-open those cases and waive statutes of limitation. If they won't, I'd consider supporting a federal fund to do this immediately, and I would make the argument before the Supreme Court that The 14th Amendment supersedes the Jim Crow injustice some of them suffered.

My religion teaches me that atonement can only be done between man and man, not man and God, and not man and dead ancestor. Personal atonement is cathartic; group atonement is meaningless.

Every year for the last 18 years, some time between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, I say a "thank you" to the Czar. Not the "drug Czar", but the real Russian Czar from 100 years ago. His military conscription, his hostility to peasants and his hostility to Jews, made the lives of my ancestors so bad, they had to leave for America.

Thank you Nicholas II Romanoff. Thank you for being hostile enough that my grandfather and grandmother, and their fathers needed to leave Mother Russia. They, and their children, and now I, have been able to flourish in America in ways we could not never have under Czarist and Soviet rule. Those in my extended family who stayed in Russia are mostly dead. If Hitler's Einsatzgruppen didn't get them, Stalin's army mostly did. And lest a few of my extended relatives are still alive in the

new Russia, never would I exchange places with them. You propelled my ancestors to the best country in the history of the world. Though I hate your intentions, I'm grateful.

Most, but not enough, African Americans are grateful for being in America. How your enslaved ancestors got here is deplorable, but remember the alternative to America: Nigeria, Sudan, Congo, and Ghana remain open to your returning. The disease, crime, racism, and poverty there probably dictate that you stay here. Let's try to make here a little better. 21st century white America by and large wants blacks to succeed. For those racist enclaves that still exist, 21st century America allows ease of movement to communities that welcome you.

Let me conclude with offenses that our government currently does to blacks:

1) We have ongoing government crime against blacks. Poor state-run schools have kept inner city youth from thriving. The worst racist couldn't be happier than he is when he looks at blacks who are imprisoned in decrepit DC schools. State legislators, and school board members, YOU owe an apology to the parents and students you are hurting. But better than an apology would be ACTION. Please lift the restrictions that keep blacks from choosing the public schools they attend.

2) We have nearly 1 million African Americans who've been incarcerated or are under probation for drug offenses. We slam young black men into 5 – 10 year prison terms for selling marijuana, but divert law enforcement from stopping crimes where there are real victims: rape, armed robbery, domestic abuse, and murder. In urban areas, the VICTIMS of these crimes are predominantly black.

3) We have African Americans still shackled by Social Security. Blacks on average pay in longer, and on average receive less than whites. If Black families could receive that 15.6% NOW, instead of never, you could fund a private school education 12 years after starting your family. Many of you could buy homes in suburbs that are better than the crime-ridden, drug-infested communities you inhabit now. And many of you could use it to start a business instead of keeping yourself tethered to a lousy job.