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**On The Importance of Reparations and Self-Determination
Keeping it Real**

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BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board

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The corporate / military / prison apparatus rulers of the U.S. Empire are quick to tell those they rule to take responsibility for being exploited. This is of course the ridiculous and hypocritical irony of ironies. And it is typically "American."

It is not particularly unusual these days to hear *some* liberal and/or so-called progressive vociferously demanding that the U.S. Government pay reparations to the horribly pillaged nation of *Iraq*, while utterly ignoring the reparations that *are due* Black and Red peoples on this North American continent. Politically conscious Black, Brown, Red, Yellow and White peoples must address this matter directly and uncompromisingly.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines the word *reparations*, in relevant part as:

- 1) The act or process of repairing or the condition of being repaired
- 2) The act or process of making amends; expiation
- 3) Something done or paid to compensate or make amends.

The components, consisting of *repair*, *amends*, and *compensation*, are integral to what reparations means and fundamentally is all about.

Self determination, i.e. the ability to determine one's own economic, political, and social destiny in a very real and practical sense, is yet another aspect of human

existence that has been, and *continues* to be, *denied* Black people *collectively* in the U.S., since the very inception of this nation. The American Heritage Dictionary defines self-determination in relevant part thusly, the "Determination of one's own fate or course of action *without* compulsion; free will." Without genuine self-determination, real people's democracy is an utter fraud, which of course in this nation, it most certainly is: an utter fraud.

The United States of America, was brought into existence through the massive, brutal enslavement of Black people and genocide of the Indigenous Red peoples. No amount of waffling or attempts to revise history can change this despicable reality. Moreover, even the *continued* existence of this nation is, in fact, based upon the deliberate maintenance of a massive system of racial, economic, judicial, and social exploitation - coupled with huge doses of hypocrisy and subterfuge.

As Black political activist and former Oakland, California, City Council Member Wilson Riles so poignantly wrote in his brilliant piece titled, [*Unpaid Debt=Anger*](#), "Any talk about gains through merit rings *hollow* when folks luxuriate in gains earned through genocide, theft, slavery, and discrimination." Nothing could be more accurate in this regard.

The *right* to reparations and self-determination are *not*, and *cannot* be ameliorated or made to go away by the occasional *meaningless and self-serving* apologies for slavery, etc., especially in view of the *ongoing* collective disenfranchisement and subjugation of Black people in the U.S. Nor do the pious and hypocritical pronouncements about America's supposed "greatness" do anything but *further* this corporate / military / prison apparatus' *sham* of democracy in the United States. It's time to stop being accomplices in perpetuating this sham.

The rights to reparations and self determination are, in fact, *human* rights that continue to be, and have too long been, *systemically* denied Black America collectively. This is yet another urgent and important reason as to why we must organize, build, and work *outside* the corporate / military / prison apparatus of the Democratic and Republican Parties [i.e. the Republicrats].

Politically conscious Black, Brown, Red, Yellow, and White peoples in this nation and throughout the world, *know* that there can be no *real* forward movement without forthrightly addressing and supporting the human rights to and of reparations and self determination - beginning right *here* in the United States of America.

Without *systemic* change outside the Democratic and Republican Parties, the physical murders and judicial lynchings (as in the case of the murdered Sean Bell in New York City and so very many others) will continue unabated, unaffected by hypocritical and meaningless feel-good rhetoric. It is the people - *we ourselves* - who are the *only* ones we can or should count on to bring about serious and real economic, political, and social justice and change in this nation. It will not happen unless we *make* it happen.

For the sake of the peoples of this nation and the entire planet, we must remain steadfast in our *active* commitment not only to the attainment of reparations and self determination but concomitantly to building and organizing for real justice and

equality for *all* peoples, *all* our sisters and brothers throughout the world; for we are comrades and until we *all* have our human rights - none of us do.

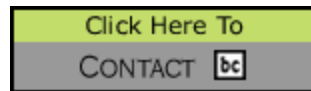
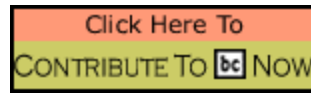
We are comrades in this most important struggle. We are struggling for fundamental *systemic* change, *not* meaningless cosmetic reform. Our ancestors are smiling upon us in this quest. The time is *now*. Onward then...the future beckons and the struggle continues...

BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board member, Larry Pinkney, is a veteran of the Black Panther Party, the former Minister of Interior of the Republic of New Africa, a former political prisoner and the only American to have successfully self-authored his civil/political rights case to the United Nations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In connection with his political organizing activities in opposition to voter suppression, etc., Pinkney was interviewed in 1988 on the nationally televised PBS NewsHour, formerly known as The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour. For more about Larry Pinkney see the book, [Saying No to Power: Autobiography of a 20th Century Activist and Thinker](#), by William Mandel [Introduction by Howard Zinn]. ([Click here](#) to read excerpts from the book) [Click here](#) to contact Mr. Pinkney.

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