



Barbara Lee

CONGRESSWOMAN FOR THE 13TH DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Press Kit

United States Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT)

Overview: As we know from witnessing the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many others, understanding and finally addressing systemic racism in this country is literally a matter of survival for Black people. Inequality has been woven into our country's DNA from the beginning – from slavery and Jim Crow, to the genocide of Native Americans, to modern day mass incarceration and police brutality. Many other countries around the world have had commissions on truth and healing, but we have never made a serious attempt to address the deeply rooted truth of this country. The Commission will examine the effects of slavery, institutional racism, and discrimination against people of color, and how our history impacts laws and policies today.





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PRESS RELEASE

Rep [] Joins Congresswoman Barbara Lee in Calling for the Formation of a Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Commission

Washington, D.C. – In response to the murder of George Floyd and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color, Congresswoman Barbara Lee introduced legislation calling for the establishment of the first United States Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT).

The Commission will examine the effects of slavery, institutional racism, and discrimination against people of color, and how our history impacts laws and policies today.

“The murder of George Floyd and the current COVID-19 crisis illustrate once again the painful and dangerous legacy that white supremacy has had in our country, and the desperate need to fully acknowledge and understand how our history of inequality continues today,”

Congresswoman Lee said. “This inequality is at the heart of every crisis we’re dealing with right now – the crises of police brutality and mass incarceration, the COVID-19 public health crisis which is disproportionately affecting communities of color, and the crisis of poverty excluding so many minority families from the American Dream. This is a matter of survival for countless Americans. Only by understanding our past, and confronting the errors that still haunt us today, can we truly move forward as a people and a country.”

The full text of the resolution can be [found here](#).

Talking Points

- Congresswoman Barbara Lee has introduced a resolution to urge Congress to establish a commission that will take a deep look at the systems in place that lead to the continual disenfranchisement of Black people.
- HR CON RES 100 will recommend the establishment of a truth, racial healing, and transformation commission in order to bring to light the legacy of institutional racism and how it continues to every aspect of American life for black people.
- The TRHT is not a substitute for the passage of HR 40 OR other legislation that pushes forward a racial justice agenda. This resolution is aligned with the broader efforts to address police brutality and reparatory justice, such as The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and H.R. 40. H.R. CON Res 100 will build upon ongoing work to develop a common understanding of systemic racism and come up with a framework for what a just society looks like;
- Commission work is not a one size fits all. We have seen the positive impact of Truth Commissions across the country and world that have been successful and it is important that all of the examples, both positive and negative, determine methods that will work best for justice;
- The resolution is calling for a commission that properly acknowledge, memorialize, and be a catalyst for progress toward jettisoning the belief in a hierarchy of human value based on race, embracing our common humanity, and permanently eliminating persistent racial inequities;
- The murder of George Floyd and the current COVID-19 crisis illustrates once again the painful and dangerous legacy that white supremacy has had in our country, and the desperate need to fully acknowledge and understand how our history of inequality continues today;
- This inequality is at the heart of every crisis we're dealing with right now – the crises of police brutality and mass incarceration, the COVID-19 public

health crisis which is disproportionately affecting communities of color, and the crisis of poverty excluding so many minority families from the American Dream;

- This is a matter of survival for countless Americans. Only by understanding our past, and confronting the errors that still haunt us today, can we truly move forward as a people and a country;
- This legislation garnered 137 cosponsors in less than a month. Members of Congress and the general public are extremely excited about the resolution and know that the time is now for us to work on this;
- This effort is endorsed by a broad array of organizations, not only many of the traditional civil rights partners that we work with, but also groups like the American Public Health Association, J Street, and the United Nations Association;
- Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle realize that we have a moral and patriotic duty to work toward a more just, inclusive, equitable, and healthy union;
- And as the racial turmoil that has occurred during this pandemic has shown us all too clearly, truth, racial healing, and transformation are life and death matters for countless Americans;
- Only by understanding our past, and confronting the errors that still haunt us today, can we truly move forward into a brighter and more inclusive future as a people and country.

Op-ed

Opinion: U.S. must address reality of racial discrimination and inequality

On May 25, a handcuffed African-American man died in Minneapolis police custody, sparking weeks of global protest. On that same day, a white woman in Central Park, without provocation, invoked an unjust police confrontation against a Black man. Though more than 1,000 miles apart, these events are connected by a thread of white supremacy and systemic racism — one that must, at last, be severed.

The past continues to haunt us — from police stops that turn fatal to the over-incarceration of communities of color. It also reaches the coronavirus pandemic raging across the nation.

More than 120,000 people already have died in our country due to this disease, a number that will, sadly, continue to grow. Every single one of those deaths is a tragedy.

We also must acknowledge that people of color are bearing the worst burdens of this crisis. In California's East Bay, represented by Rep. Lee, the death rate for African Americans is more than twice the rate for whites, according to Alameda County data. In Santa Clara County, Latinos account for 42% of all cases, even though they are only 26% of the population. Across the country, Black, Native American, Pacific Islander and Latino communities have been hit extremely hard.

This disparity is woven into our country's DNA. From the enslavement and Jim Crow oppression of African Americans, to genocide of Native Americans, to internment of Japanese Americans, to modern-day mass incarceration and the subprime mortgage crisis, discrimination and inequality have been constants in our history. We have never made a sincere effort to reconcile this truth with our story of a nation founded on the words "all are created equal."

While we are all suffering from the worst health and economic crisis of our lifetimes, for low-income people and many people of color, this is a pandemic on top of a pandemic. Like HIV, cancer, diabetes or heart disease that disproportionately affect our communities, the disparate impact of COVID-19 is inextricably tied to the crises of poverty, lack of adequate medical care, environmental injustice, and systemic inequality.

As millions of people around the world protest the murder of George Floyd, it is time for our nation to finally account for and accept our history of racial inequality and how that history continues to hold us back.

That is why we are calling on Congress to act on legislation introduced by Rep. Lee to establish the first United States Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation.

If this crisis has taught us anything, it is that truth matters, especially when it is difficult, or even shameful. When our leaders are incapable or unwilling to face the truth of our past and the challenges before us, the consequences are literally life or death.

The purpose of the Commission is to properly document and acknowledge the reality of racial discrimination and inequality, both past and present, and to finally leave behind the belief in a hierarchy of human value based on attributes such as skin color and facial features. The Commission will examine the generational effects of slavery and institutional racism against people of color and how our history impacts laws and policies today. It is an opportunity to provide the awareness and understanding that we desperately need as a nation to embrace our common humanity and permanently eliminate persistent racial inequities.

As this pandemic has shown us all too clearly, truth, racial healing and transformation are a matter of survival for countless Americans. Only by understanding our past, and confronting the errors that still haunt us today, can we truly move forward as a people and a country.

Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Oakland, represents California's 13th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. Wade Henderson is the former president of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

PRESS RELEASE

In the Wake of COVID-19 and Murder of George Floyd, Congresswoman Barbara Lee Calls for Formation of Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Commission

Washington, D.C. – Today, Congresswoman Barbara Lee announced legislation calling for the establishment of the first United States Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT). The Commission will examine the effects of slavery, institutional racism, and discrimination against people of color, and how our history impacts laws and policies today.

The legislation – supported by a broad coalition of members of Congress and community partners – will be officially introduced Thursday, June 4. The full text of the resolution can be [found here](#).

“The murder of George Floyd and the current COVID-19 crisis illustrate once again the painful and dangerous legacy that white supremacy has had in our country, and the desperate need to fully acknowledge and understand how our history of inequality continues

today,” **Congresswoman Lee** said. “This inequality is at the heart of every crisis we’re dealing with right now – the crises of police brutality and mass incarceration, the COVID-19 public health crisis which is disproportionately affecting communities of color, and the crisis of poverty excluding so many minority families from the American Dream. This is a matter of survival for countless Americans. Only by understanding our past, and confronting the errors that still haunt us today, can we truly move forward as a people and a country.”

The purpose of the Commission is to properly acknowledge, memorialize, and be a catalyst for progress toward jettisoning the belief in a hierarchy of human value based on race, embracing our common humanity, and permanently eliminating persistent racial inequities.

“The Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Resolution puts us on the path of reconciling our nation’s brutal history with the grave situation we currently face,” said **Rep. John Lewis (GA-05)**. “During the Civil Rights Movement, we studied and sought to realize the philosophy and doctrine of ‘satya,’ or truth, as the guiding force in our work to create a more equal and just nation for Black Americans. By creating a clear, indisputable, public record of the atrocities that African Americans and people of color experienced on a constant, daily basis, we were able to build a movement that transformed the face of our nation. We knew, however, that the roots of racism, bias, and centuries of socio-economic inequality are deep and require a thoughtful, inclusive, and comprehensive effort. This resolution moves our country in the right direction of establishing a model and process to explore, expose, confront, and reconcile the truths of our past so that we may create a more just and equitable future for all, not just a select few.”

“I commend my colleague Congresswoman Barbara Lee for introducing this resolution to help this nation begin the process of healing,” said **Rep. Karen Bass (CA-37), Chair, Congressional Black Caucus**. “We must address these racial issues with a full understanding of the emotional, psychological, and economic impact racial injustice has caused our communities for generations. At this pivotal moment in our country, we must heed the national outcry for change and respond with comprehensive legislation to get us there.”

“The pain our country feels is rooted in generations of institutional racism. People of color are dying unjust deaths at the hands of power abusers. Whether it be the abuse of power that poisons the air and water surrounding communities of color, taking away protections for undocumented young people, underfunding Tribes putting them at disproportionate risk during a pandemic, or police brutality that kills unarmed black people, we must untangle the racist webs that are woven into our laws and policies. The Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Resolution takes a step to fully examine how slavery and racism have impacted laws and policies on the books, so that we can take action,” said **Rep. Deb Haaland (NM-01), Co-Chair of the Congressional Native American Caucus**.

“Our nation has witnessed a horrific week of events that has left communities mourning. After more than 400 years of oppression in America, Black men continue to be targeted, Latino families continue to be separated, and all persons of color continue to be marginalized. More

than 100,000 individuals have died during a pandemic that continues to wreak havoc on communities of color at far greater portions,” said **Rep. Adriano Espaillat (NY-13)**. “It’s time for action and effort from each of us, together and united to ensure that the change we see happening around the country today is different. There has to be urgent resolve and healing because we cannot afford to go back to business as usual in the face of such challenges.”

“The Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Resolution comes at a most timely moment, as our nation faces, yet again, the structural and brutal racism that affects communities of color, especially African Americans,” said **Rep. Grace Meng (NY-06)**. “During this coronavirus pandemic, Asian Americans have been discriminated against and verbally and physically assaulted. When those attacks occurred, the African American community denounced those incidents and called for justice. Today, the Asian American community must stand in solidarity with them. Only together can we truly reconcile, heal, and transform our nation. I am proud to support this critical resolution, because our nation must come to grips with our ugly past – and present. We must acknowledge that our system is broken, and that we have to fix it. Ultimately, I want my children – *all* children – to grow up in a better world.”

“Justice and reconciliation must begin with serious self-reflection and an acknowledgment of the long and painful history of racism in America that has created the disparities we see today. For many of us, that means taking time to acknowledge how we have benefitted from systems of injustice and oppression and then working to uproot racism and discrimination whenever and wherever we see it in our lives,” said **Representative Jim McGovern (MA-02)**. “I am grateful to Representative Lee for introducing this legislation so we can begin to heal our country by acknowledging our past. I look forward to working with her to advocate for this important bill.”

“Today, our nation faces its greatest challenge in the past century, not only about equity and fairness but also about the nation’s national security,” said **Wade Henderson, former President of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights**. “The disparities and racial discrimination exposed by COVID19 and rampant police brutality are the fruit of a poisonous tree of slavery, racial bias, and structural discrimination. That tree – the tree of racism writ large – must be destroyed root and branch if we are ever to become the nation of our highest ideals. The first step in that process begins with a self-aware acknowledgment of the existence of the problem and a commitment to resolve it. The Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation is the first step of that important process.”

“Today, the National Collaborative for Health Equity (NCHE) enthusiastically joins many other organization in applauding the House Resolution urging that a United States Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) be established,” said **Dr. Gail Christopher, Executive Director of the National Collaborative for Health Equity**. “As cited in the Resolution, a devastating belief in racial hierarchy has fueled conscious and unconscious bias and injustices against populations of color for centuries resulting in structurally-based patterns of discrimination in public policies and in private practices throughout our society. NCHE believes

that a TRHT Commission can help jettison the hierarchy of human value and launch a new era where all human beings are valued and have a capacity to see ourselves in one another.”

“Every day offers new examples of the tragic cost racism imposes on our country. I’ve learned, from transitional justice work overseas and my time in office in Virginia, that hate left unchecked only repeats and escalates,” said **Former Rep. Tom Perriello, Executive Director of Open Society-U.S.** “That cycle is never broken without reckoning with the truth. America is long past due for an official process that acknowledges the pain and injustice of our past and present—the first step in building a more vibrant and inclusive future. The Open Society Foundations appreciates Chairman Lee’s leadership and supports this landmark resolution as a crucial first step toward healing and creating a better country worthy of its ideals.”

TRHT WEEK OF ACTION

Graphics Link Here:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/7kkffpcwmz77zri/AAD3PoUF_i7P4l3XBHLSuCJTa?dl=0

Saturday:

- Tweet about Nelson Mandela's Birthday and support for #TRHT and #TRHTWEEK

Monday:

- Send a letter of support to Members of Congress
- Tweet using #TRHT #TRHTWEEK

Tuesday:

- Send a letter of support, Call your Member of Congress, Send letter of support
- Tweet using #TRHT #TRHTWEEK

Wednesday:

- Tweetstorm from 2-4 PM
 - Tweet using #TRHT #TRHTWEEK

Thursday:

- Call your Member of Congress to support TRHT Resolution
- Tweet using #TRHT #TRHTWEEK

Friday:

- Tweet using #TRHT #TRHTWEEK

Social Media

Tweets:

*Commemorate and observe Nelson Mandela's Birthday with a call to action! Contact your Member of Congress and tell them to dismantle systems that perpetuate racial injustice.
#TRHTWEEK*

*In order to address oppression and racial injustice, we must understand its history. We need the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Commission introduced by @ Rep. Barbara Lee.
#TRHTWEEK*

Inequality is at the heart of police brutality, mass incarceration, COVID-19, and the many crises we are seeing today. We need a Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation commission to create better policies. #TRHTWEEK

*Understanding our past and confronting the racism that still us today, is the only way we can move toward a country. We need a Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Commission
#TRHTWEEK*

Eradicating 400 years of systemic oppression takes work. We need a truth telling commission to begin healing and transforming systemic racism. #TRHTWEEK

Countries around the world have had commissions on truth and healing, but we have never made a serious attempt to address the deeply rooted truth of this country. We need a truth, racial, healing commission. #TRHTWEEK

*Inequality is a part of our country's DNA. We need a truth, racial healing and transformation commission in order to move forward. That's why I support @Rep.Barbara Lee's resolution.
#TRHTWEEK*

It's time for Congress to take action systemic racism and dismantle the policies that hold our country back from making progress. It's time for a truth, racial healing and transformation commission. #TRHTWEEK

*We must understand our past and have a truth telling moment about race in this country in order to move forward. That's why I support a truth, racial healing, and transformation commission.
#TRHTWEEK*

*This is a moment for truth telling about the legacy of slavery and racism in this country. Congress must work to establish a truth, racial healing, and transformation commission.
#TRHTWEEK*

*If our policing crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that truth matters. We need the truth in order to understand and dismantle systemic racism in this country.
#TRHTWEEK*