

*Emotional Reparations:
Healing the Damage Caused by the
Lie of White Superiority and Black Inferiority*

**Stakeholder Report
to the
United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent
by
Community Healing Network, Inc.**

The Problem

The problem that Community Healing Network (CHN) wishes to bring to the Permanent Forum's attention is the urgent need to free people of African descent from the centuries-old lie of white superiority and black inferiority. That lie is the most powerful barrier to the realization of the Forum's mandate of "full political, economic, and social inclusion of people of African descent in the societies in which they live as equal citizens without discrimination of any kind... to ensure their equal enjoyment of all human rights."

For more than six centuries, that lie has been a silent, invisible barrier to the realization of full human rights for people of African descent everywhere we find ourselves in this world. The lie of white superiority and black inferiority is the heart of the crime against the humanity of African people. It is *the* root cause of the dehumanization of African people, the underdevelopment of Black communities, and the multigenerational racial trauma experienced by Black people across Global Africa today. The lie was told centuries ago to justify the Transatlantic trafficking and enslavement of African people and the colonization and economic exploitation of the African continent. It is the ideological bulldozer that paved the way for the subjugation and oppression of Black people—establishing a false hierarchy of humanity in which whiteness confers maximum human value, and blackness dramatically diminishes human value.

Enslavement is as old as humanity itself. But the enslavement of African people was unique in human history. Starting in the early 15th century, acting under their "Apostolic authority," popes of the Roman Catholic Church established the template for this "perpetual" enslavement by granting to the kings of Portugal: "full and free permission to invade, search out, capture, and subjugate" African and other territories, "and to reduce their persons into perpetual slavery." The lie, which was often justified by reference to the biblical Curse of Ham, consigned African people to a degraded status—not just for the period of their enslavement, but in perpetuity. The lie was the instrument for making the subjugation of African people perpetual.

How the Problem Is Manifested Today

This understanding of history explains why, all over the world today, Black lives continue to be devalued. Our ancestors were forced into a form of subjugation that has, in essence, been passed on to us through the continuing power of the lie. Unless we extinguish it, it will be passed on to our children and to our children's children. This is why there is nothing more urgent than freeing ourselves from the lie.

The lie is the thread that runs throughout the fabric of global systemic anti-Blackness. The lie is the reason why Black people are the only human beings who are so often associated with apes. According to the Stanford University psychologist Jennifer Eberhardt, the co-author of a 2008 study describing this association, “there is one old race battle that we’re still fighting. That is the battle for blacks to be recognized as fully human.” This dehumanization fuels unconscious biases against Black people in policing, employment, health care, education—in nearly every area of life.

CHN, a U.S.-based nonprofit, is building the global grassroots movement for complete freedom from the lie. In a world in which the lie has essentially cast people of African descent out of the circle of humanity, our movement is mobilizing Black people to reclaim our rightful place in the circle. We believe that freedom from the lie is an indispensable foundation for emotional reparations, emancipation, healing, wellness, and empowerment for Black people. We have been working since 2006 to mobilize Black people to Defy the Lie of Black Inferiority and Embrace the Truth of Black Humanity. We have developed a range of initiatives to carve out physical, psychological, and spiritual Black-owned spaces for healing from the multigenerational damage caused by the lie. Our key movement-building initiative is the Emotional Emancipation Circle, an African-centered self-help support group process originated by CHN, and developed in collaboration with the Association of Black Psychologists, that is resonating with people across Global Africa. Together, CHN and ABPsi have planted seeds for EE Circles in more than 50 cities in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, the United Kingdom, Ghana, and South Africa.

Recommendations

What was designed to be perpetual must be brought to an end. Much of the work of emotional reparations, emancipation, healing, wellness, and empowerment must be done—and is in fact being done—by people of African descent.

But the Permanent Forum, other United Nations bodies, and others can help immeasurably by recognizing explicitly: 1) that the lie of white superiority and black inferiority is *the* root cause of the unique challenges facing people of African descent all around the world; and 2) that complete freedom from the lie is a prerequisite for achieving the Forum’s mandate of full political, economic, and social inclusion of people of African descent and our equal enjoyment of all human rights.

This mandate will never be fulfilled unless we as, people of African descent, are able to free ourselves from the lie. Freedom from the lie is more than a matter of racial justice; it is a matter of Black people reclaiming our rightful place in the circle of humanity.

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