

Statement to the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent  
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PRESENTING NCOBRA'S GROUNDBREAKING REPORT - THE HARM IS TO OUR GENES:  
TRANSGENERATIONAL EPIGENETIC INHERITANCE AND SYSTEMIC RACISM IN THE  
UNITED STATES

Madam Chair,  
Forum Members,  
Great Delegates,

I am Siphiwe Baleka, Founder of the Balanta History and Genealogy Society and member of the NCOBRA Health Commission. In 2021 NCOBRA released its groundbreaking report - The Harm Is To Our Genes: Transgenerational Epigenetic Inheritance and Systemic Racism in the United States.

As I noted in my presentation to the 26th Session of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent Regional Meeting with Civil Society, in addition to the social, economic, spiritual, emotional and political damage caused by slavery, we are now beginning to understand the genetic damage that was done.

Simply put, the epigene is an extension of the gene that responds to biochemical signals emanating from the environment. These signals cause changes to the gene and under certain circumstances reprograms the genetics of the cells of the limbic system which is the center of all thought, emotion, behavior, learning and psychosocial pathology. The brutal trauma and dehumanization of the slavery experience has thus damaged the natural genetic makeup of people of African descent that survived slavery. This damage is passed from one generation to the next.

NCOBRA's Harm Report, which is available at [www.officialncobraonline.org](http://www.officialncobraonline.org) explains the science, the harms, and introduces a path towards remedies. NCOBRA recommends that this Forum includes a specific reference to the genetic harm in the Forum's Declaration regarding reparations and that people of African Descent have a right to their natural genetic status free of mandated artificial genetic alterations from food, medical treatments and emerging nanotechnology.

Abeneh. Thank you.