

**Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission)
BRIEFING ON TRUTH, RECONCILIATION, & HEALING**

Toward a Unified Future

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Testimony by Gail C. Christopher

Chairman Hastings, Chairman Wicker, Commission members and our audience, thank you for holding this important briefing. I am honored to testify on methodologies that can unify and heal societies across the globe that have been divided by war, genocide and other traumas reflecting a belief in a hierarchy of human value. My name is Gail C. Christopher. I am the founder of the Ntianu Center for Healing and Nature, the Chairperson of the Trust for America's Health, and the architect and implementor of more than \$1 billion in efforts spanning four decades to facilitate racial healing and jettison racism from American society.

Research reveals that the inequities caused by racism cost our nation almost \$2 trillion annually in lost purchasing power, reduced job opportunities, and diminished productivity. Research also documents the extent that the conscious and unconscious belief in a racial hierarchy fuels the reluctance of political leaders and policy-makers to acknowledge the inequities and devote adequate resources to addressing them. Our democracy, like others around the world, is based upon full human engagement and action on shared interests of the population. In order to move forward, this nation must heal the wounds of our past and learn to work together with civility, and indeed, with love. We must build the individual and collective capacity to "see ourselves in the face of the other."

Our country has a history of enslaving people, committing genocide among Indigenous people, and embracing centuries of institutionalized racism. Yet, unlike other countries that have endured war, sectarian or racial strife, the United States has never undertaken a comprehensive Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) effort to heal divisions and bring equal opportunities to all communities. Thus, America experiences a significant wealth gap between white families and families of color, the persistence of government-incentivized residential segregation, unequal access to quality health care and affordable housing, achievement gaps in education, and discrimination in hiring practices.

Throughout the world, extreme nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism and other forms of ethnic and religious bias are often sustained by an antiquated notion that the human family can be divided and ranked based on physical characteristics and ascribed traits. These ill-conceived beliefs ossify, becoming hardened barriers among populations. This belief is alive today, as is the racism it has perpetuated and ingrained in America and other nations.

The planet has more refugees today than at any time on record, and the impacts of human conflict related to weakening multi-lateral institutions and rapid climate change will only increase the number. Across the globe, societies struggling with growing inequality and demographic changes are being offered scapegoats instead of solutions. It has proven far too easy for citizens to turn against families seeking a safer home, because anti-immigrant

demagoguery taps into a well of beliefs that cast racialized Others and people in poverty as inferior and criminal. These are false beliefs. The truth is that, managed well, immigration makes societies stronger -- and we never know when any of us will need welcome from a stranger.

When we uproot the false belief in a hierarchy of human value, we will be on firmer ground to face the challenges ahead. Together with other healing thought leaders, we have plotted a new course, one that can transform our nation as well as serve as a blueprint for other nations facing legacies of racism and discrimination. The Rx Racial Healing National Mobilization Campaign is a movement that aims to generate a critical mass of people committed to working together and healing the wounds of the past as we seek to end racism and the inequities it has created. Remember architect and systems thinker Buckminster Fuller once said:

"You never change things by fighting the existing model. You must create a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

By redefining racism as the embedded and entrenched belief system it is, Rx Racial Healing provides a needed on-ramp for launching a new model of relatedness that is grounded in the knowledge of our interconnected and equal worth as human beings. With this foundational idea in place, we can create new ways of living, policing, and governing, as well as ways of distributing resources more equitably because we see our collective common interests.

This campaign is empowering organizations reaching millions of people in every sector of nearly every community in our country to transform our society by going beyond just treating the symptoms of racism. Using a Rx Racial Healing methodology to create empathetic and compassionate support, our objective is to facilitate local action coalitions to jettison racial hierarchy and implement long-term policies and practices that address the impact of racial equity on health, education, housing and economic opportunity.

The Rx Racial Healing vision identifies five imperatives for transforming communities:

- ❖ Leaders in the philanthropic, public and private sectors should leverage media and technology to disseminate the new narrative about human origins and connectedness, informed by 21st century genomic science, to repudiate the false 17th century belief in separate and unequal human races. This public historical correction should include authentic narratives and experiences of diverse people who will provide previously untold historical and contemporary perspectives, fuel new understanding, and enhance capacity for self-compassion and empathy.
- ❖ We are already training a critical mass of facilitators in all disciplines, geographic areas, and organizations. They will provide Rx Racial Healing experiences for diverse groups to enhance skills and capacities for empathy, self-compassion, resilience and perspective-taking.

My final three recommendations are for policymakers.

- ❖ Congress and states should aim to overcome institutionalized racial separation patterns by implementing new approaches to land use, zoning, housing and transportation policies, mortgage finance and resource development.
- ❖ Congress should review its public policies and administrative practices to ensure that they are honoring the humanity of all; and particularly redress past and current inequities in civil and criminal justice systems.
- ❖ Economic policymakers at every level of government should implement investment strategies that result in a more equitable economy that closes racial and ethnic income and wealth divides.

Rx Racial Healing is a 21st century approach to collective healing. It is the work of positively influencing the consciousness of a people to help create a world without the effects of racism and religious bias. While we are applying it to the inequities in the United States, it can be applied globally to address the various manifestations of the belief in human hierarchy in any society. *E pluribus unum!* Out of many, one. If America is to survive and to thrive as a democracy, we must begin to truly believe that we are one people, one human family. We must muster the courage to unlearn human hierarchy and act to redress the consequences of adhering to that false belief for centuries. We must learn to love one another, to show compassion and grace. The prescription for what ails us is racial healing.