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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.”

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