

I am writing in support of HF3850, the Minnesota Migration Act, which the Judiciary Finance Committee will consider on Tuesday. This is an act to study and develop reparation proposals for descendants of chattel slavery who reside in Minnesota.

Some of my own ancestors were among the first British citizens to settle on the North American continent. They worked hard, and they prospered, becoming merchants, bankers, educators, and civic leaders.

At the same time they arrived, African peoples came in chains on slave ships. They were sold to people a good deal like my own ancestors, to establish cotton, sugar, and rice plantations. They also worked hard -- very hard -- under abusive conditions. They did *not* prosper from their labor, however.

In the system of capitalism, one has to have money in order to make more money. My ancestors could start new businesses, a university, churches, and even a settlement house in Northeast Minneapolis because they had capital. When chattel slavery ended in the US, formerly enslaved people gained legal freedom without recompense for two and a half centuries of forced labor.

The exploitation continued. When Black people managed, through ingenuity, sharing, and hard work, to scrape together capital to start their own farms and businesses, they faced predatory lending practices, discrimination in housing, barriers to voting, lynching, and from time to time race riots by white people who did not want them to prosper. Often the government at every level participated in keeping descendants of enslavement from getting ahead. The appropriation of Black-owned housing and businesses to build I-94 and I-35W are two well-known examples that happened here in Minnesota.

It is time to talk seriously about repairing this damage. White people with good consciences lament "persistent educational achievement gaps," "health care inequities," "the low rates of Black home ownership," and other enduring effects of enslavement. The MN Migration Act would start us on the road to a comprehensive examination of what happened, and a plan for setting things right. Repairing this damage may take another century, and it is high time to get started.

I urge you to pass the MN Migration Act out of your committee so that it can be considered by the full House in this session.

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Pronouns: she/her/hers