

March 14, 2022

To the Committee on Judiciary Finance and Civil Law:

I am writing in support of [H.F. No. 3850](#), authored by Representative John Thompson, to establish the Minnesota Migration Act and fund a study to develop reparation proposals for American Descendants of Chattel Slavery (ADOS) who reside in Minnesota. As a state that prides itself on progressive, equitable ideals and ended last year with a more than \$9 billion surplus, this is a modest proposal that would benefit all Minnesotans.

I am writing on behalf of only myself, but I would be remiss to not bring my professional perspective as an advocate for young people with neurologic conditions to this work. Scientists have proven time and time again that trauma makes [lasting, structural changes to the brain](#) and is [passed down](#) neurologically through generations. For the many ADOS individuals both throughout the United States and here in Minnesota, that means that the trauma, stress, and physical pain of the enslavement of their ancestors still has a profound effect on the way their bodies and minds operate in a system that is still violently and dangerously racist. Our current healthcare system remains [exclusionary and racist](#), coupling the bio-physical effects of the trauma of enslavement with racism remaining a [crucial social determinant of health](#), linking it to [poorer health outcomes](#) for ADOS individuals.

This widely cited and trusted scientific findings that have been available for more than a decade now are basis enough for reparations for ADOS individuals in the United States, and that is before acknowledgement of the myriad other ways that ADOS individuals continue to navigate systems that were established to, and remain successful at, ensuring white patriarchy. Housing, education, employment, voting rights, policing, and the health care system all have roots—both nationally and in this state—as systems that we know disproportionately work in favor of white citizens, and disproportionately harm ADOS individuals. Even in what is now our northern state of Minnesota, we have the legacy [of Dred and Harriet Scott held in bondage](#) by the US Army at Fort Snelling, the University of Minnesota [built using the profits](#) of the labor of enslaved people, and Territorial Governors Arthur St. Clair and Charles Willing Byrd as slavery [advocates who did not enforce the Northwest Ordinance of 1787](#), allowing enslaved labor to occur.

The legacy of Minnesota's history of the exploitation of enslaved people is felt today in our disgraceful outcome gaps in [housing, education, and healthcare](#). This is even before the acknowledgement of Minnesota's serious issues with policing and criminal justice. The deaths of George Floyd, Philando Castile, Daunte Wright, Amir Locke, Winston Smith, Hardel Sherrell, and Jamar Clark at the hands of those we trust to protect us are well documented, as is the barrage of half-truths issued by those same officials in an attempt to protect themselves. Systemic racism was hardwired into the beginnings of our state, and it continues to this day. And from the moment we learn of this history and choose not to move toward reparations, we are guilty ourselves.

Which is why I wholeheartedly support H.F. No. 3850, which will allow the state and our municipalities to better plan for reparations that have positive outcomes for our ADOS neighbors. I stand with my colleagues at the [New England Journal of Medicine](#), who in 2020 found that reparations are considered the most effective means of breaking down the violence of systemic racism. They also found that reparations is likely the only intergenerational solution in reducing the disparities between ADOS individuals and those whose ancestors profited off this enslaved labor. Please join me and many of my neighbors who want to see the promise of a just and equitable Minnesota fulfilled, and support H.F. No 3850 as the first step of many to creating the Minnesota we want to see.

Sincerely,

Jessica Nickrand, PhD
126 Victoria St. S., 2N
Saint Paul, MN 55105

Jessica.nickrand@gmail.com

734-546-1582