

Slavery reparations gaining traction

(AP) - Advocates who say Black Americans should be compensated for slavery and its Jim Crow aftermath are quietly chalking up victories and gaining momentum.

Fueled by the work of scholars and lawyers, their campaign has morphed in recent years from a fringe-group rallying cry into a sophisticated, mainstream movement. Most recently, a pair of churches apologized for their part in the slave trade, and one is studying ways to repay Black church members.

The overall issue is hardly settled, even among Black Americans: Some say that focusing on slavery shouldn't be a top priority or that it doesn't make sense to compensate people generations after a historical wrong.

Yet, reparations efforts have led a number of cities and states to approve measures that force businesses to publicize their historical ties to slavery. Several reparations court cases are in progress, and international human rights officials are increasingly spotlighting the issue.

"This matter is growing in

significance rather than declining," said Charles Ogletree, a Harvard law professor and a leading reparations activist. "It has more vigor and vitality in the 21st century than it's had in the history of the reparations movement."

The most recent victories for reparations advocates came in June, when the Moravian Church and the Episcopal Church both apologized for owning slaves and promised to battle current racism. The Episcopalians also launched a national, years-long probe into church slavery links and into whether the church should compensate Black members. A White church member, Katrina Browne, also screened a documentary focusing on White culpability at the denomination's national assembly.

The Episcopalians debated slavery and reparations for years before reaching an agreement, said Jayne Oasin, social justice officer for the denomination, who will oversee its work on the issue.

Historically, slavery was an uncomfortable topic for the church. Some Episcopal bishops owned slaves — and

the Bible was used to justify the practice, Oasin said.

"Why not (take these steps) 100 years ago?" she said. "Let's talk about the complicity of the Episcopal Church as one of the institutions of this country who, of course, benefited from slavery."

Also in June, a North Carolina commission urged the state government to repay the descendants of victims of a violent 1898 campaign by White supremacists to strip Blacks of power in Wilmington, N.C. As many as 60 Blacks died, and thousands were driven from the city.

The commission also recommended state-funded programs to support local Black businesses and home ownership.

The report came weeks after the Organization of American States requested information from the U.S. government about a 1921 race riot in Tulsa, Okla., in

which 1,200 homes were burned and as many as 300 Blacks killed. An OAS official said the group might pursue the issue as a violation of international human rights.

The modern reparations movement revived an idea that's been around since emancipation, when Black leaders argued that newly freed slaves deserved compensation.

About six years ago, the issue started gaining momentum again. Randall Robinson's "The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks," was a best seller; reparations became a central issue at the World Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa; and California legislators passed the nation's first law forcing insurance companies that do business with the state to disclose their slavery ties. Illinois passed a similar insurance law in 2003, and the next year Iowa legislators began requesting — but not forcing — the same disclo-

tures.

Several cities — including Chicago, Detroit and Oakland — have laws requiring that all businesses make such disclosures.

Reparations opponents insist that no living American should have to pay for a practice that ended more than 140 years ago. Plus, programs such as affirmative action and welfare already have compensated for past injustices, said John H. McWhorter, a senior fellow at the conservative Manhattan Institute.

"The reparations movement is based on a fallacy that cripples the thinking on race — the fallacy that what ails Black America is a cash problem," said McWhorter, who is Black. "Giving people money will not solve the problems that we have."

Even so, support is reaching beyond African-Americans and the South.

Katrina Browne, the White Episcopalian film-

maker, is finishing a documentary about her ancestors, the DeWolfs of Bristol, R.I., the biggest slave-trading family in U.S. history. She screened it for Episcopal Church officials at the June convention.

"Traces of the Trade: A Story From the Deep North," details how the economies of the Northeast and the nation as a whole depended on slaves. "A lot of White people think they know everything there is to know about slavery — we all agree it was wrong and that's enough," Browne said. "But this was the foundation of our country, not some Southern anomaly. We all inherit responsibility."

She says neither Whites nor Blacks will heal from slavery until formal hearings expose the full history of slavery and its effects — an effort similar to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission after apartheid collapsed.

Franchisee

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tween McDonald's and the city of Los Angeles — the only one in his possession — had been amended two times without his participation or knowledge and those amendments were turning his projected cash flow from the restaurants into rivers of red ink.

Johnson said the undisclosed amendments that caused his businesses to hemorrhage money include an obligation to pay LAX \$1.8 million a year in a profit-sharing arrangement, a \$1.1 million overnight increase in operational costs due to the enactment of a living wage ordinance in the city of Los Angeles, which raised the minimum salary of his more than 100 employees from \$6.25 to \$9.52 an hour, plus an additional annual increase of \$300,000 in labor costs due to an hourly increase in wages of another 30 cents, which the city requires he give his workers on July 1 of every year.

Johnson said the two contract amendments hidden from him also made him liable for the unpaid bills of the previous owners, including unpaid utilities and the required facility refurbishment, which McDonald's and the previous owners failed to make.

And on top of that, Johnson said McDonald's has overcharged him almost \$6 million on the two LAX restaurants since January 2005. "McDonald's is charging me 36 percent of my gross revenue for franchising fees, as opposed to 4 percent as stipulated in the second amendment to the contract," Johnson said. "If you take 36 percent of the money out of a business, it will fail."

Johnson said his research shows that the corporation is taking fees from its franchises at the Denver Airport of 19.5 percent; from San Diego, 19 percent, and from Orange County, 20 percent. "But they're taking 36 percent from me," he said.

"I complained to McDonald's about this, but they ignored me. So I complained to the L.A. City Attorney's Office, and they told me my franchising fee is capped at 20 percent," he said.

Betty Pleasant writes for the WAVE Newspapers.

Your Horoscope Says... July 13-July 19

ARIES

Things are busy right now, and you love it! You feel very much as if you are at the center of life. Children will be a topic of conversation. Make plans to enjoy a special week with your honey.

Soul Affirmation: I appear to others what I know myself to be.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 13, 21

TAURUS

You can fly through the week if you keep your level of cooperation high. By this week's end, you'll have many plans, romantic and otherwise for the time period. Be patient at the workplace and things will go fine.

Soul Affirmation: I take it easy on myself this week.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 6, 43

GEMINI

You may feel as if you'll never get everything done that's asked of you, but stay steady and on course, take things one step at a time, and you'll be amazed at what you accomplish. Celebrate with a special friend.

Soul Affirmation: This week is a gift that I deserve.

Lucky Numbers: 10, 20, 38

CANCER

It's a great week for catching up on chores and leftover tasks from last week. You'll also have the opportunity to spend some time thinking about the direction you want your life to flow toward.

Soul Affirmation: I face each day with a smile, and the day smiles back at me.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 6, 8

LEO

Communication vibes are high-

lighted, and you are in your element. Many ideas will be presented, and everyone will be very receptive and agreeable to what you say. Romantic interests are easily pursued this week. Smile on.

Soul Affirmation: The slowness of my pace gives me time to refresh my energy.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 49, 51

VIRGO

Love and romance vibes are all around you this week! They will soothe your spirit and uncoil your tensions resulting from having too much work to do. Delegate some of the minor tasks so that you can do your best at the big stuff. Have a loving, lovely week.

Soul Affirmation: New intuitions create new plans and a new cast of characters.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 5, 16

LIBRA

Financial matters are highlighted during working hours. Everything to do with your money, or money under your care, goes smoothly. Another party invitation arrives... say yes.

Soul Affirmation: I admit what I really want out of life this week.

Lucky Numbers: 14, 22, 36

SCORPIO

If you are finding it hard to concentrate on a project at work, begin imagining it successfully completed. Work steady and stay calm this week. This week is a good time for personal inventory.

Soul Affirmation: I will take time to enjoy the simple things in life.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 33, 44

SAGITTARIUS

Mental fog lifts and you are sharp as

a tack once again. You'll be making decisions about partnerships and joint finances. A very happy week is in store. Give thanks to the universe for the good thing that happened for you last week.

Soul Affirmation: My smile is a radiant light to those I encounter.

Lucky Numbers: 19, 23, 41

CAPRICORN

Exercise prudence this week in your handling of personal funds. Let your mind wander into the future and you'll receive the happy answer that you are looking for. Time shared with a partner tonight will be very enjoyable.

Soul Affirmation: Helping others is the true measure of my worth.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 15, 20

AQUARIUS

Work with a partner or colleague goes exceptionally well this week. You receive praise for a job well done! Feel free to change your mind regarding a personal issue. News from a distance arrives. Contact with babies will bring a lot of delight this week.

Soul Affirmation: I go inside myself to find peace and joy this week.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 16, 24

PISCES

You are a superstar at work. Efficiency seems to be your middle name. As you go your charming way, don't forget to delegate tasks with a smile. Travel is favored and it is related to someone you love. Smile as you close the distance between yourself and your love goals.

Soul Affirmation: I give my mind a holiday again this week.

Lucky Numbers: 43, 47, 4