Conyers:

'Reparations now!'

By Larry Still, NNPA

Hearings may be scheduled in the U.S. Congress to consider legislation proposed by Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) "study the impact of the slavery on African Americans and the nation and to recommend....a range of remedies, including whether reparations or some renumerative action is warranted."

The measure, which will consider funds for descendants of slaves, has been referred to the Administrative Law and Government Relations subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee for appropriate action, says Janis Hazel, senior legislative aide to Conyers.

Vincent Godwin, chairman of the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations, based in Washington, agrees that it will be difficult for the Conyers bill to become law without mass support. The NCBR has established coalitions in San Francisco, Detroit, Miami, New Orleans and New York.

Some may think the African-Americans' reparations bill does not stand "a snowball's chance in hell," he said, but Godwin believes the proposal is an old idea whose time is fast approaching. "I think 100 years is far too long for anybody to owe a debt," he said.

Cong. Conyers said in introducing the bill, H.R.3745 in the first session of the 101st Congress last year that "This legislation establishes a commission to examine the continuing discrimination against African Americans and makes recommendations to Congress on whether some remedy should be made to descendants of slaves."

Emphasizing that his proposal follows the model of the recently enacted Reparations Act voted for Asian-Americans interned in camps during World War II, Cong. Conyers proposed the appointment of a seven-member commission with three presidential appointees, three named by the House of Representatives and one by the Senate.

The law establishing the commission for the study of Asian-American reparations was passed in 1980 and Congress eventually voted $20,000 payments to eligible Japanese Americans. The legislation is expected to result in the dispensing of over a billion dollars to some 60,000 victims of wartime internment. Lawyers for Native American ethnic groups (Indians) have filed similar successfully claims for resettlement of land and/or payments.

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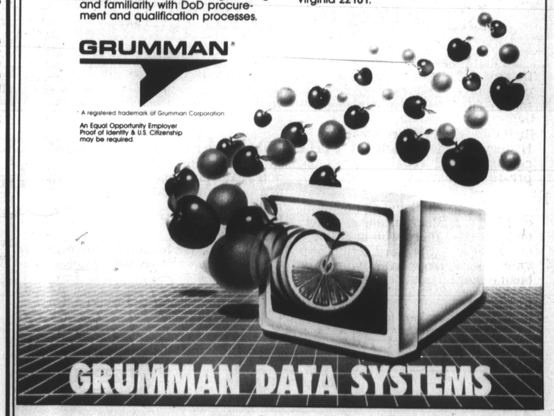

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