THE COCHRAN REPARATIVE JUSTICE FOUNDATION
admin@crjcfoundation.org

Demand for Retraction and Respect for the Right to Petition

September 27, 2026

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House

cc:

Will Scharf, Assistant to the President and White House Counsel

Susie Wiles, White House Chief of Staff

Mr. President:

The Cochran Reparative Justice Foundation addresses you in your official capacity as President of the United States. We demand that you retract your September 9 characterization of people seeking reparations as "people that hate our country" and cease portraying the exercise of a constitutional right as evidence of disloyalty. Your office carries a duty to uphold the Constitution, including the rights of Americans whose demands you oppose.[1]

Your own words expose the contradiction. At the Young Black Leadership Summit on October 4, 2019, you declared, "African Americans built this nation," and told your audience, "you built this nation." You acknowledged that their contribution was greater than the credit they had received. Praising Black Americans for building this country and then branding people who seek repair for its injustices as enemies of that country is an indefensible double standard.[2]

If our ancestors' labor helped build the nation, asking what is owed for the theft of that labor deserves a substantive answer. Ceremonial recognition does not settle questions of accountability. You cannot celebrate America's accumulated wealth while treating questions about how that wealth was accumulated as an act of disloyalty.

Your description of reparations as an effort to "steal your money" is especially offensive. It casts people seeking repair as thieves while pushing the original taking—the theft of labor, freedom, family security, and opportunity—out of the discussion. Our position concerns governments and institutions whose existence, assets, and benefits extend across generations. It does not depend on claiming that every living American personally committed slavery.[1]

You are the temporary, term-limited occupant of the presidency. The office belongs to the constitutional order and the people it serves. The Twenty-Second Amendment bars election to the presidency more than twice. Your remaining time in office gives you no authority to make our belonging conditional on agreement with your policies. Our citizenship and our right to demand justice will outlast your administration.[3]

The First Amendment protects our right to speak, organize, and petition the government for redress of grievances. You may oppose reparations and argue against our proposals. You may not use governmental power, retaliatory enforcement, or coercive threats to punish or suppress protected advocacy. In National Rifle Association of America v. Vullo, the Supreme Court reaffirmed that officials cannot use coercion to suppress disfavored views. We insist that your administration respect that boundary in its treatment of reparations advocates.[4]

Congress has constitutional authority over federal spending and appropriations. A new federal compensation program would require lawful authority and funding, potentially supplied through authorizing legislation and appropriations in the same or separate enactments. You have a significant role: you may recommend legislation and sign or veto a bill. Congress may override a veto with the constitutionally required two-thirds vote in each chamber. You do not possess an exclusive or permanent veto over the nation's consideration of reparative justice.[5]

In the same September 9 speech, you promoted a proposed $5,000 payment to adult Americans contingent on Republican congressional victories while dismissing reparations as unaffordable. The proposals differ, but those differences require an honest explanation of priorities, costs, and responsibility. Insulting the people seeking redress supplies none of those answers.[1]

We therefore demand a public retraction of the accusation that seeking reparations demonstrates hatred of America; an acknowledgment that peaceful reparations advocacy is legitimate civic participation; and an assurance that your administration will not use federal power to retaliate against people or organizations for exercising that right. We request a written response through the Foundation's contact address above.

We will continue advancing research, public education, and advocacy for meaningful redress for descendants of people enslaved under U.S. chattel slavery. Debate the evidence. Explain your objections. Defend your priorities. Stop questioning Black Americans' loyalty because they refuse to accept silence as the price of belonging.

Our citizenship is not yours to question. Our history is not yours to erase. And our demand for justice will not be withdrawn to spare you the discomfort of answering it.

The Cochran Reparative Justice Foundation

Respectfully,

Carlos Mason

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President

For and on behalf of

The Cochran Reparative Justice Foundation

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