

# DO WHITE CHRISTIANS DESERVE REPARATIONS?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue questions the legitimacy of reparations:

The idea that the descendants of slaves are owed reparations is based on the notion that white people owe black people money today because dead white people mistreated dead black people long ago. On this score alone, this is a racist proposal, the victims of whom are white.

Why should those who did not suffer the indignity of slavery be awarded financial compensation? And why should those who had nothing to do with it be forced to pony up? But if this crazed idea is to be taken seriously, then white Christians are also deserving of reparations. Who should pay? Muslims.

Economist Thomas Sowell recalls that it was Adam Smith, author of "The Wealth of Nations," who observed in 1776 that Western Europe was the only place in the world where slavery did not exist. Sowell further notes that nowhere in the world was slavery a controversial issue prior to the 18th century. It wasn't controversial in Africa or Asia or the Middle East—they were accustomed to slavery. No, it was in Western Europe and the newly created United States where objections were first registered.

It seems odd, then, that the nations which ended slavery are the ones being tapped for reparations. Yet that is exactly what the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, wants. She recently said that those nations that "engaged in or profited from enslavement, the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans, and colonialism—as well as those who continue to profit from this legacy," should pay reparations.

Bachelet, like so many other elites around the world, never addresses the need for reparations to white Christians. They need to do so.

Charles Sumner was an 18th century American politician, and one of America's most famous abolitionists. He not only condemned black slavery, he condemned white slavery. Indeed, he wrote a book about it, "White Slavery in the Barbary States," published in 1853.

Sumner detailed how Muslim pirates from North Africa, called corsairs, "became the scourge of Christendom, while their much-dreaded system of slavery assumed a front of new terrors. Their ravages were not confined to the Mediterranean." In fact, they extended to "the chalky cliffs of England, and even from the distant western coasts of Ireland," forcing the inhabitants into "cruel captivity."

The most authoritative work on this subject can be found in Robert Davis' book, "Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800." The Ohio State University professor of history estimates that "between 1530 and 1780 there was almost certainly 1 million and quite possibly as many as 1.25 million white, European Christians enslaved by the Muslims of the Barbary Coast."

How did the Muslim slavemasters manage to capture these white Christians? The Barbary pirates trolled the Mediterranean looking for ships to raid, taking their cargo and enslaving those on board. They also showed up at coastal towns of Italy, Spain, France, England, Ireland, and the Netherlands.

"While the Barbary corsairs looted the cargo of ships they captured," writes Davis, "their primary goal was to capture non-Muslim people for sale as slaves or for ransom." Meaning that the pirates were out to enslave white Christians. It should be noted that they treated their slaves just as harshly

as white slavemasters in America treated their slaves. "As far as daily living conditions," he says, "the Mediterranean slaves certainly didn't have it any better."

According to political scientist Abraham H. Miller, "For over two hundred years, during the mid-1600s to the 1830s, Barbary Muslims trafficked in white European Christians. The Ottoman Muslims trafficked in White Christian slavery started even earlier, in the 15th century. All in all, Muslims enslaved more than two million white European Christians."

Similarly, Sowell contends that the number of whites who were enslaved in North Africa by the Barbary pirates "exceeded the number of Africans enslaved in the United States and in the American colonies put together." In fact, he adds, "white slaves were being brought and sold in the Ottoman Empire decades after blacks were freed in the United States."

This raises an interesting question: Are white Christians today owed reparations?

Sowell knows the answer. "Nobody is going to North Africa for reparations, because nobody is going to be fool enough to give it to them." "So," Miller asks, "should white European Christians condemn all Muslims for their role in the enslavement of white European Christians? Should the Europeans of the Southern Mediterranean demand reparations from Muslims for the enslavement of their ancestors?"

I would go further: Should present-day Muslims living in America be forced to pay reparations to white Christians living here today? According to the logic of those who work in the reparations industry—you don't have to be personally guilty or personally victimized to qualify—the answer is clearly yes (though we would not support it).

Perhaps the U.N.'s chief Human Rights official can offer some advice. But to do so she would first have to admit that her selective interest in this subject makes her unsuitable to

continue. She should resign.

Contact her at: [mbachelet@ohchr.org](mailto:mbachelet@ohchr.org)