

REPARATIONS FOR LeBRON IS A SLAM DUNK

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the latest call for reparations:

Max Fennell says white people owe him money. Why? Because he is black and blacks were enslaved a long time ago by white people. Has that hurt him? Apparently not. He is an affluent 35-year old businessman, entrepreneur and former professional triathlete. But he wants the money. He also wants land.

Fennell testified last week before a California reparations task force. He said every black person in the state should get \$350,000. He wants additional funding for businessmen like himself: black-owned businesses should receive grants of \$250,000 and 15-20 acres of land.

Here is what he told the panel. "It's a debt that's owed, we worked for free...we're not asking—we're telling you."

We worked for free? Fennell never worked for free a day in his life. Yet that doesn't stop him from hustling whitey. And let's face it—whitey is ridden with guilt, making him a ripe target for shakedown artists.

There are few things the task force should consider before it goes any further.

It is a matter of historical record that not all blacks were enslaved during slavery. In fact, some of the slavemasters were black. Journalist Philip Burnham wrote an enlightening article in the February/March 1993 edition of *American Heritage* on this subject.

He concluded that black slaveowners were not uncommon (and let's not forget that African slavemasters *sold* their black

slaves to the Europeans). "According to 1830 U.S. census records, 3,775 free blacks—living mostly in the South—owned a total of 12,760 slaves. Though the vast majority of these owned no more than a few slaves, some in Louisiana and South Carolina held as many as seventy or eighty."

Burnham found that some black slaveowners had benign motives—they wanted to protect family members from being mistreated—while others shared the motivation of white slaveowners and were consumed with the pursuit of commercial profit.

John Hope Franklin, the distinguished African American historian, came to the same conclusion. "The majority of Negro owners of slaves had some personal interest in their property. There were instances, however, in which free Negroes had a real economic interest in the institution of slavery and held slaves in order to improve their economic status."

Another prominent African American historian, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., found evidence of free blacks in New Orleans who defended the Confederacy. On the eve of the Civil War, free blacks issued a statement making clear what their interests were.

"The free colored population [native] of Louisiana...own[ed] slaves, and they are dearly attached to their native land...and they are ready to shed their blood for her defense. *They have no sympathy for abolitionism; no love for the North, but they have plenty for Louisiana....They will fight for her in 1861 as they fought [to defend New Orleans from the British] in 1814-1815*" (my italics).

So how will they determine who needs to pony up? Surely some of the blacks who live in California today are descendants of black slavemasters. Do they get a check? Or should they have to fork up as well?

Here's another problem. The reparations task force is

apparently not considering a means test, which means LeBron James qualifies.

James earns \$100 million a year shooting basketballs into a hoop. His net worth is \$600 million. He also earns \$60-90 million a year in endorsements and has a \$1 billion lifetime contract with Nike. To top things off, the money James gets from Nike is taken, in part, from slaves who work for the company in communist China.

No matter, it looks like LeBron makes the cut. Indeed, it's a slam dunk. But the Mexicans who clean his locker room have to pay.

This a sticky wicket best left alone. But white guys ridden with guilt—like Gov. Gavin Newsom—won't drop it, and neither will professional hustlers like Max Fennell.

"California dreaming" never sounded so surreal.