



**Coalition of Concerned Freedmen**

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## News Release

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **The Coalition of Concerned Freedmen™ Issues Four Calls-to-Action in Open Letter to College Presidents Demanding Lineage-Based Affirmative Action for Descendants of U.S. Slaves/Free Negroes**

**[St. Louis Missouri]** The descendant community of U.S. chattel slaves, descendants of free Negroes, and unaffiliated Negro descendants of slaves to Native American tribes (collectively “Freedmen”) are buoyed by the June 2023 United States Supreme Court (SCOTUS) majority opinion that admissions decisions at colleges/universities cannot be “race based.” This SCOTUS decision brings the U.S. and its institutions closer to the original intent of the post-civil war 14<sup>th</sup> amendment, Freedmen civil rights acts of the 1860’s, and Negro-driven affirmative actions of the 1960’s civil rights movement. Though affirmative action cases aimed to curb and/or mal-distribute the Freedmen legacy, this SCOTUS decision to limit race-based considerations now calls the country into a focus on Freedmen *lineage* and benefitting the people whose experience is marked by the unrepaired harms of continual discrimination from our nation’s founding to present: the U.S. Negro Freedmen. It is Black descendants of U.S. slaves and free Negroes who, from 1776 through today, bear an unbroken chain of discrimination including what the Supreme Court calls “the badges and incidents of slavery.”

Considering the haze of misinformation and disinformation, institutional leaders are asking how they can help affirmative action return to the original intent of repairing U.S. Negro Freedmen. The Coalition of Concerned Freedmen™ supports the first-of-kind litmus to identify descendants of U.S. chattel slaves and descendants of free Negroes (U.S. Negro Freedmen) established by the California AB 3121 reparations taskforce. To be considered a U.S. Negro Freedmen a Black American must provide certifiable vital records and, if needed, census data proving connection to a maternal and/or paternal Black American (Negro) direct bloodline ancestor born in the United States prior to 1924.

Pamela Denise Long, National Coordinator for The Coalition of Concerned Freedmen™ stated, “*Historians largely frame 1960’s Affirmative Action as a response to Negroes’ sustained resistance to the unconstitutional Jim Crow era that began after the sabotage of Reconstruction (via the Compromise of 1877) and lasted through May 17, 1954, when the Supreme Court of the United States finally overturned the 1896 Plessy v Ferguson SCOTUS opinion that sunk the nation into ‘separate but equal’ racial segregation between White Americans and America’s newly freed people.*” The Plessy decision restarted a pattern of U.S. policies and practices that again disenfranchised the nation’s Freedmen who had completed only *one generation* of emancipation after five-plus generations of chattel slavery under U.S. jurisdiction. Some nearly 100 years later, the Affirmative Action executive order of John F. Kennedy (1960) was supposed to restart the journey of correcting the losses from previous generations of economic and educational discrimination. But as we know, from the moment our families began to benefit from Affirmative Action (via our presence in shared spaces of employment, finance, education, and recreation), resisters to the *practice* of equality (rather than just theory of it) began to bring lawsuits aimed at gutting what the post-civil war framers of the Constitution and the honorable Martin Luther King Jr (himself a U.S. Negro Freedmen) said—in *their own words*—that they so diligently aimed to do: repair the unbroken chain of injuries caused by the legacy of chattel slavery and Jim Crow discrimination. Until now, resisters had largely been successful at turning the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment into a “history blind” weapon against Freedmen—the very people for whom the 14<sup>th</sup> was argued and written. Long goes on to note that, in her analysis, “*All is not lost; this 2023 SCOTUS decision explicitly declares that government and educational institutions may indeed enact admission preferences based on previous discrimination.*”

Within the following four calls-to-action, the Freedmen community asks that institutions affirm a commitment to educational and economic redress to the very people whose family legacies spurred the post-civil war 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments and 1960’s Affirmation Action itself.

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In the open letter, The Coalition of Concerned Freedmen™ expressed an expectation that recruitment and admissions decision makers fully comply with the SCOTUS ruling which states, as Chief Justice Roberts wrote: "*Nothing in this opinion should be construed as prohibiting universities from considering an applicant's discussion of how race affected his or her life, be it through discrimination, inspiration or otherwise.*" Justice Thomas's concurring opinion provides examples of U.S. case law showing that programs to redress the impacts of previous discrimination have passed strict scrutiny when multigenerational Black Americans benefitted most.

The U.S. Negro Freedmen community asks that institutional compliance includes, at a minimum:

- Immediately implementing a certification process to vet applicants and current students claiming to be of the U.S. Negro Freedmen lineage and, thus, survivors of U.S. Negro Freedmen discrimination, as allowed by law, and guided by existing precedents (see California state law, AB 3121, lineage-specific reparations).
- Refining recruitment, admissions, and retention processes to ensure that vetted descendants of U.S. Negro Freedmen are prime beneficiaries of special considerations for admissions, scholarships, culturally responsive student services, tutoring, internships, mentorship, hiring, etc.
- Piloting a multigenerational student development program that focuses on guiding descendants of U.S. slaves/survivors of U.S. Negro Freedmen discrimination from admission through alumni career development and even retirement. This call-to-action anchors to the court's critique of unclear outcomes after special considerations are given.
- Prioritizing admissions into STEAM and finance fields to address the health, wealth, and wellbeing disparities of U.S. Negro Freedmen patients and consumers.

Toward a More Perfect Union.

**The Coalition of Concerned Freedmen™ is a voluntary association of the descendants of emancipated U.S. chattel slaves and descendants of free American Negroes with ethnogenesis in the U.S. from the 1776-1865 antebellum era through present. The Coalition is committed to delivery on the promise of a comprehensive package of reparatory policy, practices, and financial appropriations to redress the impacts of chattel slavery, Jim Crow, and ongoing discrimination against multigenerational Black Americans. Our work with institutions and national, state, and local governments ensures reparative implementation and full enforcement of the citizenship rights and protected class status of the descendant community.**

Learn more about the Coalition of Concerned Freedmen™ and confirm the support of your institution by visiting us online at [www.concernedfreedmen.com](http://www.concernedfreedmen.com)

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