

IN HONOR OF FATHER WILLIAM
GULAS

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 25, 2001

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and celebrate St. Stanislaus pastor William Gulas on his 40th anniversary of his ordination of priesthood on this 27th day of May.

Father Gulas was born in 1934 in Hazleton, Pennsylvania. His first priestly assignment was with the editorial staff of Franciscan Publishers of Pulaski, Wisconsin, as editor of "Franciscan Message." While with Franciscan Publishers, he assisted on weekends at parishes and edited other religious publications. He attended Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was awarded a Master of Arts Degree in Journalism. He later taught at St. Mary's High School in Burlington, Wisconsin, and served as the Catholic Chaplain at Southern Wisconsin Colony at Union Town. His accomplishments did not go unnoticed; he soon served as President of the English-speaking Provincial Ministers of the Order of Friars Minor. In 1992, he was appointed General delegate of the Lithuanian Franciscans. His accomplishments are countless.

In 1993, Father Gulas assumed the pastorship of St. Stanislaus Catholic Church in Southeast Cleveland. One of his primary objectives was to restore the historic century-old church in Slavic Village. Father Gulas raised over \$1.3 million for the church and successfully completed the restoration on the church's 125th anniversary. St. Stanislaus was blessed and dedicated on November 22, 1998 by Cleveland Bishop Anthony Pilla.

St. Stanislaus now thrives under the leadership and direction of Father William Gulas. We as a community are grateful for his time and dedication to St. Stanislaus and Cleveland. Please join me in honoring Father William Gulas on this very special day.

SLAVERY REPARATIONS

HON. CHAKA FATTAH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 25, 2001

Mr. FATTAH. Mr. Speaker, I submit the following editorials for the RECORD.

[From the Philadelphia Inquirer, May 20, 2001]

FORWARD ON RACE—TOGETHER

Try this sometime: Say the words reparations for slavery in a crowded room.

Then watch the stereotypes and anxieties roll in like thunderheads: Hands move protectively over wallets or extend to receive a check; eyes scan the floor for an escape hatch or roll back in exasperation.

For 136 years, stereotypes and anxieties have stifled the conversation. But change is coming—and it's long overdue.

Recent investigations into race riots in places such as Rosewood, Fla., and Tulsa, Okla., have brought reparations to the fore. Businesses have apologized for slavery-era practices. The writings of people such as

Randall Robinson, author of *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks*, and conservative columnist David Horowitz have broadened and energized the debate. A class-action lawsuit is possible. The issue will arise at a United Nations conference on racism this summer in South Africa.

But the reparations issue is too weighty, too unsettling to be left to individual communities or businesses. Books, conferences or lawsuits by themselves won't be enough.

Slavery and the century of government-sanctioned discrimination that followed were national policies that denied fundamental rights—justice, equality, freedom—to African Americans. It will take a national effort to answer for that.

An excellent starting point is a bill that U.S. Rep. John Conyers (D., Mich.) has introduced annually since 1989. It would "acknowledge the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality and inhumanity of slavery in the United States."

And it would create a commission to study the impact of slavery and post-Civil War discrimination and to recommend remedies.

Mr. Conyers' colleagues and President Bush, who has eloquently spoken of taking on the mantle of Abraham Lincoln, should rise to the moment and turn this bill into law.

A reparations commission, handled fairly, could give America an honest grasp of the past that would help it seize a better future. It would show how by-products of the past—stereotypes, demagoguery, denial—block the path to progress. It would allow an open airing of wrongs, not to define the country by its sins but to help Americans see history through each other's eyes.

Most of all, it would remind America that the idea of reparations is not about who gets a check. It is about justice. But if Washington can't stir itself to pass the Conyers bill on its merits, America may be forced to have this conversation anyway.

In court.

Last year, a powerhouse team of lawyers and advocates formed the Reparations Coordinating Committee. It is considering strategies to address the legacy of slavery and discrimination, including lawsuits. The group includes Randall Robinson; Harvard professor Charles J. Ogletree; attorney Johnnie Cochran; Alexander J. Pires Jr., who won a \$1 billion settlement for black farmers in a discrimination suit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Mississippian Richard F. Scruggs, who helped win the \$368.5 billion tobacco settlement.

Mr. Ogletree says the committee is hoping "for a serious examination of the issues that provides some sense of healing and an ability to move forward."

Who can blame advocates for thinking of lawsuits? In the nation's civil-rights history, courts have often been the place where minorities finally got action after appeals to community conscience or legislatures failed.

But while lawsuits can further justice, they are not designed to promote healing. The best approach to reparations is one that manages to serve both those goals.

What's more, if you put the words lawsuit and reparations together, most Americans will focus on one thing: money. How much? Who gets paid? Who has to pay? Those questions get sticky in a hurry. Critics of the idea have a field day.

That's why the courts, with their adversarial tone and necessary focus on legalistic details, aren't the best venue.

It is in Congress, elected by the people to talk through America's challenges, where

the nation could best begin the moral process it urgently needs.

That process has three steps—acknowledgment, atonement and reconciliation.

The idea of atonement is as delicate a part of this discussion as money. Similar questions swiftly arise. Who should atone? To whom? Are you exempt if your ancestors came to America after 1865? If they lived in a "free state" before the Civil War? If your black ancestors "crossed over" to live as whites?

Ten seconds into such a discussion, you risk confusion, anger and defensiveness. That's why many Americans argue the nation should just duck this question and "move on."

And that is why it should be made clear from the start that a national initiative to study reparations must not be a festival of finger-pointing.

White Americans should not be required to apologize individually for benefits that they or theirs received from the exploitation of African Americans. Regardless of station or ancestry, no one person should be expected to shoulder all the years of moral, political, economic and social exploitation. Besides, words alone won't be enough.

No, atonement must come through actions—actions by the federal government. That government, acting for white people, allowed slavery for the first 76 years of its existence. That government, acting for white people, stood aside for almost 100 years as atrocities were committed against freed slaves and their descendants. That government now must act for the sake of all the people and take the lead in making amends.

As for acknowledgment, Americans need to grasp certain hard truths about their country.

First and foremost is that horrible wrongs were done to African Americans during the years of slavery and the century of government-sanctioned discrimination that followed.

But not just that. Those wrongs weren't done by just one evil region or contingent while the rest of white America innocently went about its business. Those wrongs were a major part of America's business. The unpaid labor of millions—even the slave trade itself—helped set in motion the U.S. economic juggernaut and fueled world trade. In 1790, the value of America's slaves was estimated at \$140 million, twice the national debt, and 20 times the budget of the federal government.

So this truth may come as a surprise: The race that has been so vilified throughout U.S. history, that has often been depicted as a drain on the country's resources, worked side by side with white people in building America, in war and peace, right from the start.

Here is another necessary acknowledgment: Other ethnic groups in the United States have suffered. American Indians endured unspeakable atrocities. Many immigrants were cheated of fair pay for their labors and felt the sting of bias. Race hatred has claimed victims of all colors. All these stories should be heard and a reparations commission should be prepared to hear other requests for compensation.

But the African American experience is unique. As hard as other groups' roads may have been, none of them suffered chattel slavery and zero compensation for their labor and a hundred years of racebased discrimination.

A national dialogue on reparations will also have to acknowledge that America has made down payments on its debt.