



March 20, 2024

To whom it may concern,

I am a concerned citizen in Hennepin County. I have worked in family services in the governmental and non-profit sectors. At one point I was a division manager in the child protection system. As an administrator I was astounded at the numerous pathways that were enlarged to involve families of African American dissent. Very often these individuals were brought into the system for issues relating to poverty and institutional racism. The framework was titled child neglect. Contrary to popular belief they were not physically or sexually abusing their children.

I have seen instances where children were removed from their parents because the system didn't have an understanding or care about the family system or culture. Ultimately African American children were traumatized by removal and placement into a non-relative foster home. Very often there was very little thought given to the strengths, familial attachments or future life trajectory for these children once they are removed.

The historical treatment of African American children and families in the Minnesota child welfare system is reminiscent of slavery. Where the familial bond and the importance of the nurturing of African American children by their biological parents was considered irrelevant. This generational perpetuation of the disparate and traumatizing removal of African American children from their families under the rubric of child protection has to stop. I and my organization the Family Refuge Village supports the passage of the African American Family Preservation Act.

Sincerely,

Lynn K. Lewis,  
CEO, Family Refuge Village