

Enrolled

Senate Joint Memorial 4

Sponsored by Senators FREDERICK, MANNING JR; Senator WAGNER, Representatives DEXTER, KOTEK, PHAM, POWER, REARDON, REYNOLDS, SALINAS (at the request of former Representative Tiffany Mitchell) (Pre-session filed.)

To the President of the United States and the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled:

We, your memorialists, the Eighty-first Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon, in legislative session assembled, respectfully represent as follows:

Whereas more than 400 years have passed since the first arrival of enslaved Africans to present-day America; and

Whereas the Congress of the United States has established the 400 Years of African-American History Commission to commemorate the historic heritage and contributions that Americans of African descent have made to help shape the cultural, academic, social, economic and moral attributes of this nation; and

Whereas approximately four million Africans and their descendants were enslaved in the United States and colonies that became the United States between 1619 and 1865; and

Whereas the institution of chattel slavery was constitutionally and statutorily sanctioned by the government of the United States from 1789 through 1865; and

Whereas chattel slavery flourished in the United States and constituted an immoral and inhumane deprivation of life, liberty, citizenship rights and cultural heritage, and denied enslaved persons the fruits of their own labor; and

Whereas as a result of historical and continued discrimination, African American descendants of slaves continue to suffer debilitating economic, educational and health hardships, including an unemployment rate more than twice the current white unemployment rate and an average of six percent of the wealth of white families, a disparity which has worsened, not improved, over time; and

Whereas African Americans have been unjustly targeted by law enforcement and criminal justice procedures, incarcerated at disproportionate rates and subsequently excluded from full participation in the benefits of citizenship that include voting, employment, housing and health care; and

Whereas a preponderance of scholarly and legal evidentiary documentation constitutes the basis for inquiry into the ongoing effects of the institution of chattel slavery and its legacy of persistent systemic structures of discrimination on living African descendants of slaves in the United States; and

Whereas modern conceptualizations of reparations for descendants of African slaves have resulted in research without implementation of proposed recommendations; and

Whereas it is imperative that the Congress of the United States explore the role of federal and state governments in supporting the institution of slavery, the forms of discrimination against freed slaves and their descendants and the lingering negative effects of slavery on living African Americans and society; and

Whereas systemic racism was created over centuries and will take time to dismantle; and

Whereas the federal government has a responsibility to adopt programs, policies and funding to address reparations; and

Whereas House Resolution 40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act, would initiate the long overdue and vital process of implementing reparations; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon:

That we, the members of the Eighty-first Legislative Assembly, recognize the need to pursue avenues to implement reparations for the descendants of African slaves in the United States; and be it further

Resolved, That we respectfully urge the Congress of the United States to pass, and the President to sign, House Resolution 40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this memorial shall be sent to the President of the United States, to the Senate Majority Leader, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and to each member of the Oregon Congressional Delegation.

Adopted by Senate April 15, 2021

Lori L. Brocker, Secretary of Senate

Peter Courtney, President of Senate

Adopted by House June 2, 2021

Tina Kotek, Speaker of House