

Submitter: Alex Riedlinger

On Behalf Of: IRCO Africa House

Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

Measure: SB776

February 28th, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

From: Alex Riedlinger, IRCO Africa House, Portland, Multnomah County

Re: Task Force on Reparations SB 776

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 776. For the record, my name is Alex Riedlinger, I use he/him pronouns and am the child of a Black East African immigrant.

I was born in Oregon, and I am writing to you from Portland where I serve Black immigrant, migrant, and refugee communities as the Policy Advocacy Coordinator for the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization.

Today I am addressing you as a representative of IRCO Africa House, its Director Djimet Dogo, and its Advisory Board President Charles McGee Sr. to emphatically support Senate Bill 776, the proposed task force to investigate the past, present, and future impacts of Oregon's anti-Black racist laws, and suggest forms of repair and action for the state government to take.

IRCO Africa House is a Portland-based culturally responsive non-profit that provides a wide array of direct services and capacity-building resources for Oregon's Black immigrant, migrant, and refugee populations.

I do not believe it is my place as someone with no ancestral, historical, or geographic connection to the trans-Atlantic slave trade to name what repair should look like for Oregon's African American communities. I do, however, stand in solidarity and in community with the descendants of those whose lives have, for generations, been impacted by the economic consequences of discrimination and institutional racism in a country whose wealth and influence are built upon the chattel enslavement of African peoples.

I am, however, a Black Oregonian and as such, part of the state's diverse Black communities. As a Portland State University Black Studies Alumni, and as a

community organizer, what I know of the legacy of Oregon's racist laws and formation is that it continues to have impacts on all contemporary Black communities in Oregon. The structural, institutional, and interpersonal effects of anti-Black racism impact Black newcomers upon arriving in the United States.

Our clients at IRCO Africa House, especially those that are African refugees, have experienced displacement from their home countries and again as part of urban gentrification. Their children are the victims of the school-to-prison pipeline and our staff regularly support families whose youth have been killed by guns.

Personally, I advocate for community members experiencing a mental health crisis, houselessness, housing discrimination, and violations of their rights as tenants. In terms of discrimination in health care, my family members have been irreparably harmed by medical malpractice by negligent white healthcare professionals who do not value the bodies of Black people. Additionally, I am the survivor of a hate crime having been assaulted by white supremacists on the streets of Portland.

These types of historical discrimination and institutional racism persist today, and I hope will be uncovered by the Task Force. If this bill is passed, the State of Oregon will be making a good-faith effort to Oregon's African American communities to document the past, acknowledge harm, and develop community-informed processes of repair.

We at IRCO Africa House believe in solidarity between all Black peoples, support this process, and understand that revealing the history of institutional racism in Oregon will be a net gain for all communities, and provide our Black immigrants, migrants, and refugees who are navigating white supremacy with valuable historical context, issues in which to connect with African American communities and tools for advocacy.

Sincerely,

Alex Riedlinger  
IRCO Africa House