

Chair Tran, Vice-Chairs Grayber and Lewis, and Members of the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans,

My name is Donovan Scribes, I'm from Portland and am testifying to voice my strong support for HB 2995. I am an award-winning writer, former VP of the Portland NAACP, and communications consultant. More than that, I am a fourth generation Oregonian. I know this place, deeply. There are many places in this city I can walk around without looking at a single street sign. This is home. And it has been my family's home for four generations.

Last session, when reparations was being considered, I shared the story of my 2nd great grandfather, a man born in a Texas County that was literally named for how much cotton it produced. [You can go back and read the words I shared then](#). But today, I want to focus on what I've found as a researcher and advocate for reparations. During the height of the George Floyd protests I lobbied the Portland mayor's office to make reparations part of its federal lobbying priorities. They emailed me shortly after to confirm that they [had adopted reparations for Black Americans as part of their legislative agenda](#). And while this was an important recognition of need from our state's biggest city, in the words of Kendrick Lamar, it's not enough. We need to bring it back home. We need to address our state's divestment, dismantling and attempted destruction of Black futures in Oregon.

Black people being banned from the state is not a piece of trivia to rattle off.

Redlining is not a fun-fact.

The racial covenants found in homes to this day, excluding us from the economy and security of homes across this Oregon are more than "dark days in our history."

And, this testimony is not "powerful" for the sake of being powerful, without the expectation that action follows.

From the overt to the covert, there's an insidious legacy in this state that has led us to become the leaders that we are. Leaders in Black education disparities. Leaders in the widening Black wealth gap. Leaders in the rates of imprisonment of Black people despite our relatively small numbers here. Leaders in systemic inequity. These words don't feel good. Imagine the reality that lives on the other side of them.

HB 2995 offers us some light. It gives us the chance to lead in a new direction. To link arms with the long line of freedom fighters who have struggled to make a more vibrant future for all. What we'll find if a task force is enacted as this legislation calls for is that there is an unfortunate abundance of stories. Wrongs never righted. Legal trauma. Illegal harm. And, yes, millions lost by the tiny 2% of Black Oregonians who call this place home - through no fault of their own. What we'll find is a need for repair. Unless, we believe all is working well as intended.

Today is the day. It's time to join the city of Portland on the demand for reparations, and point the mirror towards ourselves. It's time to pass HB 2995.