

2/25/2025

L. F. Branch, Family Historian/ Archivist, Culture-Bearers Archive

To: Chair Tran, Vice Chair Gayber, Vice Chair Lewis and Members

As a family historian and Co-Founder of the ***Culture-Bearers Archive***, I support House Bill 2995. This bill establishes the Task Force on Reparations to study and develop proposals for financial and nonfinancial remedies for past and current injustices that have affected African-American lives and livelihoods.

Reparations, in this way, serve as a way to compensate for the numerous human rights violations imposed on the lives and livelihoods of Black and African-American Oregonians. Many people consider reparations only to be defined as a compensation plan to repair the harms of slavery. They miss the inhuman treatment post-slavery policies like voter suppression, housing displacement, redlining, and uncompensated employment, along with other systemic policies and practices that oppress underserved communities; much of this list continues today.

Beginning in 1526, over 15 million enslaved Africans were subjected to forced labor to establish the American economic system. Oregon's founding as an exclusionary state for Black people is a dark part of its history. In 1844, the provisional government passed laws banning Black residents, enforcing compliance with whippings of "not less than twenty nor more than thirty-nine stripes" every six months for those who stayed. These violent policies aimed to deter Black settlement and left lasting inequities that persist today, underscoring the need for reparations to address these historical injustices.

Compensation isn't just giving money without recognition of the harms of dehumanizing people based on race — the recognition, repair, and restitution of the harm of racial injustice, colonization, and the denial of fundamental human rights define reparations.

I fully support HB 2995, which recognizes one of Oregon's most marginalized racial groups and addresses the needs of all Oregonians.

Sincerely,
LF Branch

Sources:

- <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://archive.org/details/brownspolitical00unkngoog/page/n152/mode/2up?view%3Dtheater%26q%3Dnegro&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1738098115351675&usg=AOvVaw2v7-fL12DbLTpAVoxh-npi>
- <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-we-need-reparations-for-black-americans/>
- [*"Know Your Price: Valuing Black Lives and Property in America's Black Cities"*](#)

Past Harms: a legacy of systemic racism, Slavery, Jim Crow, Black Codes, and domestic terrorism

Current day Harms:

- a. Disparities in healthcare access and culturally competent care
- b. Lower Black homeownership rates due to wealth gap, and discriminatory lending practices like predatory lending.
- c. Limited access to quality education due to both federal and state underfunding, inadequate resources, and support,
- d. Unequal access to employment due to embedded biases, both intentional and unintentional (stereotyping, inhuman treatment, both in governance and policy)
- e. Disproportionate imprisonment: 30% of population: 60% of incarcerated
- f. 76% mistrust institutions - due to disenfranchisement in voting, and racially based disrespect of Black governing officials/employees/staff at both federal and state levels.
- g. Domestic intimidation and terrorism continue.

<https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/emancipation-reparations-ensuring-black-americans-can-enjoy-economic-and-social>

<https://www.rwjf.org/en/about-rwjf/newsroom/2017/10/discrimination-pervades-daily-life--affects-health-across-groups.html>

<https://www.pewresearch.org/race-and-ethnicity/2024/06/15/most-black-americans-believe-u-s-institutions-were-designed-to-hold-black-people-back/>

<https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/policycast/us-pays-reparations-every-day-just-not-black-america>