



26 February 2025

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 2665

Establishing a Task Force for Reparations for Black Oregonians

Dear Honorable Representatives,

My name is Troy Winslow, and I am the fifth generation of Black Oregonians whose ancestors arrived in Portland in 1914 to work on the railroad. My family, like so many others, came seeking opportunity and stability, yet what they found was a state that had written their very presence into illegality. Oregon's Black exclusion laws, enshrined in its constitution from the very beginning, explicitly barred Black people from settling in the state, under the threat of incarceration and other forms of violence. Though many of these laws were repealed on paper, their legacy of exclusion and marginalization continues to shape the lived realities of Black Oregonians today. This is not a matter of opinion; it is a matter truth and justice.

While I have not personally endured the brutality inflicted upon my ancestors, the trauma of exclusion, the need to justify our existence, and the systemic denial of our rights have echoed through generations in my family. The exclusion laws and racist housing policies that followed ensured that Black Oregonians were deprived of the wealth-building opportunities that white business and homeowners provided to others.

This historical injustice is not just an economic issue—it is a public health crisis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the State of Oregon, and Multnomah County have all declared racism a public health crisis, recognizing that systemic inequities lead to chronic health disparities. The intergenerational trauma caused by exclusion, displacement, and economic marginalization has tangible epigenetic effects that manifest in higher rates of heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and other chronic conditions in Black communities. This is not coincidental—it is the direct result of policies that have deprived us of the resources necessary for health and well-being.

HB 2665 is a vital first step toward addressing these harms and identifying tangible pathways for reparative justice. A task force dedicated to studying the impacts of historic and ongoing racial injustice will provide the foundation for policies that directly address the harm caused. Reparations must include comprehensive strategies that ensure Black Oregonians have access to culturally-versed healthcare, homeownership, business ownership, and financial security—opportunities that were systematically denied for generations. This means targeted housing assistance, land restitution, business grants, and financial programs that empower Black families to build generational wealth.

Furthermore, opposition to these measures often stems from a deep-seated denial of historical and contemporary racism, as well as a white rage fueled by a lack of diversity and cultural identity. Many who resist reparative solutions cling to myths of meritocracy while ignoring the systemic barriers that have shaped racial disparities. This resistance is not rooted in factual history but in an effort to maintain a pathetic status quo, which continues to benefit from the marginalization of Black Oregonians. Reckoning with this reality is an essential part of creating a just and equitable society.

The time for action is long overdue. Black Oregonians have endured centuries of exclusion and denial, yet we remain integral to the fabric of this state. It is incumbent upon this legislature to take bold and decisive action in support of HB 2665 to begin the process of reconciliation and repair. I urge you to support this bill and stand on the right side of history.

Respectfully,

Troy Winslow
Interim Executive Director
York Collective