

Reparations testimony

Honorable members of the Portland City Council, esteemed community leaders, and fellow citizens,

As an ally and citizen of Portland, Oregon I find it crucial that I provide my testimony on this matter for the good of Oregon. I stand before you today to speak on behalf of the Black community in Portland and the critical need for reparations. For generations, Black people in this city have endured systemic oppression, economic disenfranchisement, and institutionalized racism that have hindered our access to wealth, opportunity, and justice. It is long past time for us to address this painful legacy and take meaningful action.

The history of Portland is steeped in exclusionary practices that have directly harmed Black people — from discriminatory housing policies like redlining to the exclusion of Black voices in political decisions, to the deliberate erosion of Black wealth through exploitative labor systems. These actions have created a racial wealth gap that persists to this day. The impact is not just historical; it is present and visible in the disparities we continue to face in education, employment, healthcare, and housing. I have lived in Northern Portland (Alberta to Kenton) for the majority of my time living in Oregon, and it wasn't long until I noticed the shamelessly hidden history of what used to be flourishing areas. The paintings of black people around town serve to confuse and virtue signal to white people that the city isn't as whitewashed as it is. Many white people that are blinded by economic privilege will not do their due diligence to know a single thing about the surroundings that they navigate and live their lives in, and the government relies on this. Black people bring the majority of the creativity, artistic talent "the art's district" and community solidarity to the city which is drastically needed to revive Portland from its decrepit slumber. They are committed to caring for their community in ways that white culture and economic security can never replace no matter how many dollars are wasted on overpriced trinket shops.

Reparations are not just about compensation; they are about recognizing the value of Black lives and acknowledging the undeniable truth of the harm that has been done. Financial reparations are a necessary step toward restoring equity, rebuilding wealth, and providing opportunities that were systematically denied for far too long.

This is not simply a moral obligation — it is a call for justice. Reparations can help fund educational opportunities, support Black-owned businesses, improve access to homeownership, and ensure that the next generation of Black Portlanders does not face the same barriers to success. It is an investment in a future where all communities have the chance to thrive, where historical wounds can begin to heal, and where true equality can be realized.

We are asking for a concrete, measurable commitment to repair the damage done. It is time for Portland to make good on its promises of fairness and inclusion by delivering reparations to Black Portlanders who have been disproportionately affected by centuries of injustice.

This is an opportunity for our city to lead by example, to show the nation that true justice requires action, and that reparations are not a handout, but a necessary step toward healing and equality.

Thank you for your time, your attention, and for considering the importance of reparations as a pathway to justice for Black Portlanders.

Sincerely,

Celia Guzi