

Anthony Pickens  
SID 12379118  
2605 State Street  
Salem, Oregon 97310

February 23, 2021

Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee  
900 Court Street NE, Room 331  
Salem, Oregon 97301

*RE: SJR 10 and SJM 2 Written Testimony*

My name is Anthony Pickens. I am 38 years old and have been incarcerated since the age of 15. I am also the President of Uhuru SaSa, a cultural club located inside of Oregon State Penitentiary. I spent more time in prison than I have a free person in society; so, my perspective is first-hand while speaking on this issue. I spent a lot of time studying our country's history, especially our country's history surrounding racial justice and human dignity.

I admit we have made a lot of progress on many levels but what is confusing and often despairing is that in the same breath which I speak progress our state holds on to a language in its Constitution that is out of date and downright degrading. "There should be no slavery or involuntary servitude except for..."

With the history associated with slavery in this country how do we even keep that language as an option for a human being? With the social and racial justice conversations going on in our country today we as a state have to lead the charge and show the world that no human being ever deserves for be the exception clause to be a slave.

What was gut-wrenching to me is when I had to explain this outdated language to my eleven-year-old daughter, Jordynn Conner, whom you heard testify today. In the America she is growing up in and knows, she could not bear hearing that the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the Oregon Constitution consider her stepfather a slave. Her words to me were, "Daddy, you're a human being, not a slave." It was then that she was determined to fight for the language to be removed from Oregon's Constitution because she knew that no human should ever be considered a slave. That is when she joined O.A.S.I.S.

As the State of Oregon, we as the people, have the opportunity to show our children and grandchildren that there is no place for this line of thought in our Country. As long as the language exists it not only is a reminder of our heinous past but also continues to serve as a framework for a lack of human dignity. Oregon is better than that.

Respectfully,

/s/

Anthony O. Pickens