

Submitter: Chris Caldwell

On Behalf  
Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal  
and World Affairs

Measure: SB776

I urge you to support SB 776, which would establish a task force to study and develop proposals for financial and nonfinancial reparations for Oregonians of African-American descent.

I believe there is nothing more critical than taking this step. As a white woman with Black family members and friends, I have looked back at my own ancestry and fully understand that I am a descendant of people who owned other humans as property, and I benefitted from and am harmed by a large scale system of enslavement. Those unconscionable benefits, and devastating harms, still exist today. They exist for every American, no matter their ancestry.

Oregon has a troubled, and dangerously unspoken, history with race. Acknowledging this past harm with more than symbolic acts is an important step for healing.

As Representative Sheila Jackson Lee states, "Slavery is America's original sin, and this country has yet to atone for the atrocities visited upon generations of enslaved Africans and their descendants. Moreover, the mythology built around the Civil War has obscured our discussions of the impact of chattel slavery and made it difficult to have a national dialogue on how to fully account for its place in American history and public policy."

Reparations are not a symbolic act -- they are a real and necessary demand for justice that's gaining support among members of Congress, presidential candidates, and even power centers like J.P. Morgan, the Episcopal Church, and the city of Charleston, SC, and most recently Evanston, IL. Reparations are about respect, reconciliation, and propelling us toward a more just future.

The time for an honest conversation and serious implementation for reparations is now. It is time for us to stand behind this.

Reparations for slavery are necessary if we are to advance racial justice in this country. This is crucial for all Oregonians to take this step of healing and accountability.