

Submitter: Trevor Irish

On Behalf  
Of:

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

Measure: SB776

Hello Senators,

I'm offering my support for Bill 776 as a white person living and working in Portland, OR.

My mother taught me that when I make a mess, I should be the one to clean it up. Racism is a mess, a mess white people made and a mess white people need to clean up. Cleaning up, in this instance, means that we need to fix the damage which was caused. Oregon's history of exclusionary laws and history of red-lining and discrimination, as well as the fact that we have been and continue to be a breeding ground for extremists espousing the myth of white supremacy means that we have a moral responsibility to repair the damage which has been and is being caused.

That is the root of reparations: to repair. When something is broken, you do not abandon it and hope someone else fixes the problem or that it goes away on its own - you fix it! You have that power, Senators: the power to fix this, here, in Oregon, right now.

As Ta-Nehisi Coates writes in his article, "The Case for Reparations":

"Won't reparations divide us? Not any more than we are already divided. The wealth gap merely puts a number on something we feel but cannot say—that American prosperity was ill-gotten and selective in its distribution. What is needed is an airing of family secrets, a settling with old ghosts. What is needed is a healing of the American psyche and the banishment of white guilt. What I'm talking about is more than recompense for past injustices—more than a handout, a payoff, hush money, or a reluctant bribe. What I'm talking about is a national reckoning that would lead to spiritual renewal."

I want that spiritual renewal. We as a country, white people and Black, need to face our past so we can properly understand our present and heal, together.

Reparations have been provided for historic wrongs within our country, to the survivors of our own Japanese concentration camps, and to the survivors of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. Internationally, South Africa created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission following apartheid. Germany has spent over sixty years paying reparations to Holocaust survivors and their descendants.

So why, then, do we not have any sort of reparations here in the land of the free and the home of the brave? You can make it happen, Senators. It can start here, in Oregon. We can be the first state to make this a reality and be a leader in starting this conversation on a national level.

Please, advance this bill.

-Trevor Irish.