

Wilmington, Delaware
December 3, 2020

#4892

Sponsors:

Council
President
Shabazz

Council
Member
Johnson

Co-Sponsor:

Council
Member
Turner

WHEREAS, City Council recognizes the fundamental and critical role of promoting human rights and addressing discrimination at the local level; and

WHEREAS, City Council recognizes the valiant efforts by congressional Representative Sheila Jackson Lee and Senator Cory Booker in the introduction of H.R. 40 and S. 1083, respectively, to establish a “Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans” in the United States in order to address the injustice, brutality, and inhumanity of slavery in the United States by studying the discriminating effects of slavery and recommending appropriate remedies to Congress; and

WHEREAS, the institution of slavery was constitutionally and statutorily sanctioned by the government of the United States and adaptively adopted among colonies and states from 1789 through 1865; and

WHEREAS, slavery was facilitated as the result of approximately 4,000,000 Africans and their descendants who were kidnapped from their own lands and enslaved in the United States and colonies that became the United States from 1619 to 1865; and

WHEREAS, even at the founding of Wilmington, Delaware, and by no accident, many Africans were brought to the Swedish colony as enslaved skilled workers, because very few artisans were willing to make the trip from Sweden. Still, no records show that Africans had social status in the Swedish colony, because none were included by name in any documents, except for one, “Black Anthony”; and

WHEREAS, the slavery that flourished in the United States constituted an immoral and inhumane deprivation of life, liberty, citizenship rights, and cultural heritage, and denied enslaved persons the fruits of their own labor; and

WHEREAS, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution were enacted following the end of this country's Civil War, which resulted in the abolishment of the practice of slavery and the extension of civil and legal protections to Black people who were formerly enslaved; however, this country's ugly history of state-sanctioned violence against Black people persists despite the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments and the adoption of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968; and

WHEREAS, Jim Crow laws perpetuated the racist legal and social systems, which existed prior to the Civil War and resulted in Black people being treated as second-class citizens; and

WHEREAS, following the abolition of slavery, the United States government, at the federal, state, and local levels, continued to perpetuate, condone, and often profit from practices that brutalized and disadvantaged African Americans, including sharecropping, convict leasing, Jim Crow laws, redlining, unequal education, and disproportionate treatment at the hands of the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the historical and continued discrimination, African Americans still to this day suffer debilitating economic, educational, and health hardships, including, but not limited to, an unemployment rate more than twice the current White unemployment rate and an average of less than one-sixteenth of the wealth of White families, a disparity which has worsened, not improved, over time; and

WHEREAS, a preponderance of scholarly and legal evidentiary documentation constitutes the basis for inquiry into the ongoing effects of the institution of slavery and its legacy of persistent systemic structures of discrimination on living African Americans and society in the United States; and

WHEREAS, in 1980, precedent for this legislation exists in the establishment by Congress of a Commission to investigate the legacy of the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II and to recommend appropriate redress; and

WHEREAS, on August 10, 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act to provide reparations to the more than 120,000 Japanese Americans who were incarcerated in America's internment camps during World War II; and

WHEREAS, in January of 1989, former Representative John J. Conyers Jr. of Michigan introduced the "Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act," and reintroduced this measure each subsequent congressional term, which is currently sponsored by Representative Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas; and

WHEREAS, modern conceptualizations of reparations for descendants of African slaves have resulted in research without implementation of proposed recommendations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON, that a *City Council Taskforce to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, with a Special Consideration for African Americans Who are Descendants of Persons Enslaved in the United States* (hereinafter the "Taskforce"), ~~*consisting of nine (9) members~~, shall be established. The City Council President of the 108th Session of City Council (hereinafter "President") shall appoint ~~the nine (9)~~ ^{*}members, and the

***Note Amendment: language stricken**

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appointments shall be approved by a majority of all members of City Council/ ^{*}by City Council's second meeting in February 2021.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Taskforce shall be composed of ^{*} ~~nine (9)~~ issue area experts in fields closely related to African American history, economic development, finance and other related fields who have actively demonstrated an interest and expertise in efforts to promote diversity, equality, equity and understanding of civil and human rights, and to dismantle injustice, discrimination, bigotry, hatred and harassment within the city, as evidenced through the production of a resume, recommendation letter(s) and any other relevant documentation. The proposed members shall hold no other public office or paid public employment. The President shall designate one member as the chairperson and one as the vice chairperson.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Taskforce shall meet, at a minimum, on a quarterly basis with such additional meetings as it deems necessary to properly perform its duties.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Taskforce shall make findings and recommendations to City Council regarding issues of systemic racial disparity, racist practices and procedures and/or institutional discrimination against African Americans, resulting from the delivery or provision of City government services or the implementation or effect of City policies, and resulting from the delivery or provision of other government-provided services or widely implemented business practices or the implementation or effect of government policies or business practices. Specifically, the Taskforce shall recommend, among other things, the form of compensation that should be awarded, the instrumentalities through which it should be awarded, and who should be eligible for this compensation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in the performance of its duties, the Taskforce may coordinate with community organizations such as the National Conference for Community and Justice, the American Civil Liberties Union, The Urban League, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, as well as educational institutions of its choosing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Taskforce shall make findings and recommendations to the City Council within 180 days of its appointment.

Passed by City Council,
December 3, 2020

ATTEST: Maibelle Seijo
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: This Resolution establishes the *City Council Taskforce to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans* in order to research the full range of mitigating factors which have resulted in the unjust treatment of African Americans in the City of Wilmington as it relates to the provision of City services. The Taskforce is also established to conduct research on the totality of the racial environment of the City, related but not limited to fair housing, economic and business development and education.