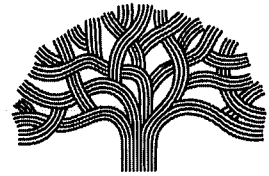


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CITY OF OAKLAND

19 JUN 27 PM 3:52

CITY HALL ■ 1 FRANK H. OGAWA PLAZA, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor ■ OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612

Date: June 26, 2019

To: Members of the City Council

Cc: LaTonda Simmons, City Clerk  
Barbara Parker, City Attorney

From: Councilmember Lynette Gibson McElhaney

Re: Resolution in Support of H.R. 40

Dear Colleagues,

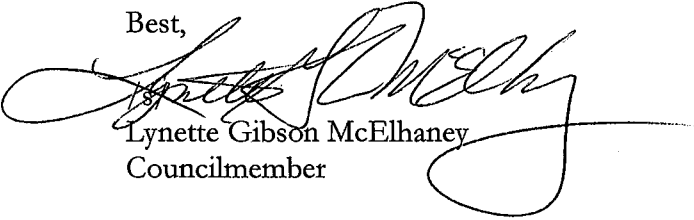
I urge you to support H.R. 40 and join me in affirming our commitment to make reparations a core value of our municipal policy making. The City of Oakland has work to do to examine, acknowledge, and rectify our own historic complicity in the oppression of Black people. As the national debate on reparations progresses, Oakland must be a leader in making the promise of reparations real.

On June 19, Congress held its first proceedings on this resolution to study reparations. Lawmakers debated H.R. 40 which will form a commission to create recommendations concerning “any form of apology and compensation to descendants of enslaved African Americans.”

In a country whose wealth and prestige was literally created on the backs of African American slave labor and oppression, such discussions are a necessary first step to address the devastating effects this legacy continues to bring upon our country to this day. The passage of H.R. 40 presents an unparalleled opportunity to redress the harms inflicted upon the descendants of the victims of America’s original sin.

That the United States has incurred an ongoing debt to the 42 million African Americans who have had to deal with the repercussions of oppression, trauma, and stolen labor cannot be questioned. The real ethical question facing us today is whether we have the willingness to make righting this historic wrong a priority. In the words of Oakland native, actor, and activist Danny Glover, who testified at this proceeding, “A national reparations policy is a moral, democratic, and economic imperative.”

Best,

  
Lynette Gibson McElhaney  
Councilmember



**DRAFT**

19 JUN 27 PM 3:52

City Attorney's Office

## OAKLAND CITY COUNCIL

### RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_ C.M.S.

INTRODUCED BY COUNCILMEMBER LYNETTE GIBSON MCELHANEY

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#### RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 40 - COMMISSION TO STUDY AND DEVELOP REPARATION PROPOSALS FOR AFRICAN- AMERICANS ACT

**WHEREAS**, the dehumanization and atrocities of slavery in the United States were mandated by formal laws that were codified and enshrined within the United States Constitution; and

**WHEREAS**, approximately 4,000,000 Africans and their descendants were enslaved in the United States and colonies that became the United States from 1619 to 1865; and

**WHEREAS**, the institution of slavery was constitutionally and statutorily sanctioned by the government of the United States from 1789 through 1865; 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**, California, despite its admission as a "free" state, permitted the virtual enslavement and trafficking of Native Americans under the 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of Indians; and

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. government has never acknowledged, apologized, or otherwise taken responsibility for its role in slavery or segregation (de jure and de facto), and has never made reparation to African Americans for the generations of labor expropriated from them, deprivation of their freedom and rights, and terrorism against them resulting in widespread injury and death; and

**WHEREAS**, following the abolition of slavery, the United States government, at the federal, state, and local level, continued to perpetuate, condone, and often profit from practices that continued to brutalize and disadvantage 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~~  
continue to 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**, in 1980, Congress established 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; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2001 United Nations World Conference Against Racism held in Durban, South Africa acknowledged that the Transatlantic slave trade and slavery were crimes against humanity; and

**WHEREAS**, a bill pending before the United States House of Representatives, (H.R. 40), 1) acknowledges the fundamental injustice and inhumanity of slavery; 2) establishes a commission to study slavery, its subsequent racial and economic discrimination against freed slaves and the impact of those forces on living African Americans today; and 3) makes recommendations to Congress on appropriate remedies; and

**WHEREAS**, H.R. 40 and the concept of reparations have been supported by state and local resolutions across the country, including legislation passed in the states of Louisiana and California, and the city councils of Detroit, MI, Cleveland, OH; Chicago, IL; Evanston, IL; Atlanta, GA; Washington, D.C., Baltimore, MD; Inglewood, CA; Dallas, TX; Philadelphia, PA; Paterson, N.J., Burlington, VT; and

**WHEREAS**, numerous national, state, and local organizations as well as religious institutions, legal organizations, and labor unions have officially endorsed the concept of reparations and HR 40;

**WHEREAS**, the United States government has acknowledged and taken responsibility for its role in the unjust internment of Japanese-Americans during the Second World War and has undertaken to pay reparations to the internees and their descendants and to apologize for the unjust abrogation of their rights; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States has lent its support to other reparations claims even where such claims did not take place on United States soil; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Oakland City Council hereby recognizes the date of February 25th of each year as Reparations Awareness Day, having been celebrated as such by the growing reparations movement for the past decade; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Oakland City Council hereby expresses its support for HR 40, and calls upon the California Congressional delegation to endorse the bill and advocate for its passage in Congress; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the City Administrator forward a copy of this resolution to Representative Sheila Jackson Lee of Michigan, the author and primary sponsor of H.R. 40.

IN COUNCIL, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA,

PASSED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES - BAS, GALLO, KALB, MCELHANEY, REID, TAYLOR, THAO AND PRESIDENT KAPLAN

NOES -

ABSENT -

ABSTENTION -

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

LATONDA SIMMONS  
City Clerk and Clerk of the Council of the  
City of Oakland, California