



City of Chicago



SR2019-694

Office of the City Clerk

Document Tracking Sheet

Meeting Date: 9/18/2019

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Type: Resolution

Title: Call for establishment of Chicago Descendants of Enslaved Africans Reparations Commission

Committee(s) Assignment: Committee on Health and Human Relations

SUBSTITUTE
RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Four centuries ago, the transatlantic slave trade from the west coast of Africa to America began, resulting in approximately 4,000,000 Africans and their descendants being enslaved in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The institution of slavery was constitutionally and statutorily sanctioned by the United States government and its predecessor Colonies from 1619 through 1865. Although the *de jure* institution of slavery ended with the Emancipation Proclamation, it continued *de facto* through such onerous policies as Jim Crow and the Black Codes. Such nefarious discrimination provided significant advantages to white individuals and corporations while disadvantaging African Americans and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, 2019 also marked the 100th anniversary of the "Chicago Race Riot," precipitated by the death of Eugene Williams, an African American youth who had accidentally drifted into a white swimming area at a segregated beach near 29th Street. The unrest lasted from July 27, 1919, to August 3, 1919, causing 38 deaths and 537 injuries. African American neighborhoods near white areas were attacked by white gangs. Thousands (mostly African Americans) lost their homes. Some African Americans organized to defend and protect themselves while the city's police department often turned a blind eye or even joined in the mayhem. The mayor at that time exacerbated the situation by refusing to ask the governor to send in the Illinois National Guard, even though the guardsmen had been called up, organized in the city's armories, and made ready to intervene; and

WHEREAS, Additionally, last December marked the 50th anniversary of the death of Black Panther Party Chairman Fred Hampton and Defense Captain Mark Clark. On Dec 4, 1969, the Cook County State's Attorney, along with members of the Chicago Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, staged a pre-dawn raid on the Black Panther Party Headquarters. The subsequent investigation found that the Chicago police fired between 90 and 99 shots while the Panthers had only accidentally discharged one shot when the gun Mark Clark held fell from his hands as he was shot to death; and

WHEREAS, African Americans continue to suffer significant disparities in economic, educational, health, housing, unemployment, and poverty outcomes. African Americans have been disproportionately incarcerated and been victims of torture and police abuse. Although African Americans account for 31 percent of Chicago's population, they account for 80 percent of the victims of gunshot wounds and deaths for the past 10 years. During this last decade, the City of Chicago has paid out nearly \$1 billion in wrongful death lawsuits against the Chicago Police Department where primarily citizens of African descent were the victims; and

WHEREAS, More than 30 percent of African American families live below the poverty line in Chicago compared to less than 10 percent for white families. The unemployment rate for African

Americans in Chicago is approximately 20 percent and for whites, it is less than 5 percent. The median family income for African Americans is \$36,720, compared to \$81,702 for white families and \$47,308 for Latino families; and

WHEREAS, The African American infant mortality rate is approximately three times higher than whites and the community areas with the highest rates of infant mortality cluster on the south and west sides of the city; and

WHEREAS, High school graduation rates for African American males in Chicago Public Schools is 64.7 percent, the graduation rate for white males is 82.1 percent. African American students are expelled at four times the rate of Latinos and 23 times the rate of whites; and

WHEREAS, In 2000, the City of Chicago City Council passed a resolution in support of U.S. House Resolution 40 (HR 40), The Commission to Study Reparations Proposals for African Americans Act. The Illinois State Senate Joint Resolution 0031, passed in the 94th General Assembly, established the Illinois Transatlantic Slave Trade Commission. This Commission examined the institution of slavery and its lingering impact on African Americans in Illinois. The Commission filed reports in 2007 and 2008 with recommendations to deal with structural racism and inequity; and

WHEREAS, In 2002, under Title 2 of the Municipal Code of Chicago, the City of Chicago City Council codified the Business, Corporate and Slavery Era Disclosure Ordinance (Section 2-92-585), making it mandatory for all businesses seeking city contracts, not just insurance companies, to research and report any slave trade history, with documentation to be filed with the Department of Procurement Services; and

WHEREAS, In the 99th and 100th Illinois General Assemblies, the House passed unanimous resolutions calling on a Presidential Commission to Study Reparations that specifically details the economic impact of the slave trade, the use of slave labor, and how Emancipation, while freeing slaves of their literal bonds and ending an immoral practice, did not guarantee equity in education, employment, housing, and access to quality affordable health care, as well as a proposal for reparations and how those reparations can help overcome obstacles that still exist today in education, employment, housing, health care, and justice; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the members of the City of Chicago City Council, gathered together this the 13th day of March 2020, do hereby call on the City to designate individuals who are hereby charged with examining the state of equity in the City of Chicago. In their examination of equity, the designated individuals may be tasked with analyzing the historical harms of slavery and segregation, as well as the ongoing harms of institutional discrimination and mass incarceration. The designated individuals may further be tasked with assessing the implementation of reparations measures consistent with international norms, standards, and laws for reparations as developed by the United Nations Human Rights Commission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That said individuals may be tasked to:

- 1) Ensure that progress is being made to secure equity, equality, and parity for citizens of African descent in Chicago,
- 2) Consider what forms of redress may be taken including, but not limited to, rehabilitative reparations (i.e. closing racial gaps in homeownership), educational funding, healthcare access, contract equity, etc.,
- 3) Engage members of the impacted community and the public to discuss implementation of the above-mentioned measures.

Roderick T. Sawyer
Alderman- 6th Ward