

Offered by Councilor Andrea Campbell



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING A LOCAL TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

WHEREAS: Given the long history and present-day realities of racism and racial inequities that in the wake of George Floyd’s murder have led to a resurgence of the movement for racial justice, communities long harmed by these realities are seeking a space of truth-telling, acknowledgement, and healing; *and*

WHEREAS: People of color and immigrants in Boston continue to experience the impacts of racist policies such as redlining in the housing industry, discriminatory and exclusionary banking practices, displacement, racial segregation in our public schools and the legacy of busing, generational health disparities, and environmental injustice; *and*

WHEREAS: A long history of racism, discrimination, and exclusion has deteriorated trust and understanding between people of different backgrounds and between residents and the government institutions that are meant to represent and serve their best interests; *and*

WHEREAS: In 2020 District Attorneys in San Francisco, Philadelphia, Boston launched pilot Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commissions (TJRC) with the intention to review racial inequities, police violence and misconduct in the legal system; *and*

WHEREAS: District Attorney Rachael Rollins has said that Boston’s TJRC will be designed with community input and will address past misconduct and how to change the legal system, looking at specific incidents of racial injustice or discriminatory practices that must be acknowledged, such as the fight over busing in Boston and the case of Charles Stuart; *and*

WHEREAS: These pilot TJRCs and other efforts for truth and reconciliation have been inspired by the post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation efforts in South Africa seeking to address the past injustices that continue today so people harmed are afforded the time, attention, and dignity that they deserve; *and*

WHEREAS: The most impactful international examples of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC) were in Argentina, Chile, and South Africa where each was officially sanctioned by the government, generally established by executive order

or legislation, which gave them public legitimacy from the beginning as they engaged with residents; *and*

WHEREAS: TRC impact can be measured by actions, reparations, and also their impact on shifting a community's or a nation's narrative of history; *and*

WHEREAS: There are two local models in the United States, one in Greensboro, NC and another in Maine, each with its own unique history that can offer insight to the design process of the TJRC in Boston when it comes to community engagement, leadership structure, and action items; *and*

WHEREAS: The principles of restorative and transformational justice, addressing harm and repairing relationships in community, have a long history in the practices of indigenous people from around the world; *and*

WHEREAS: Fania Davis in the 'Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice: Toward a Racial Reckoning' defined reconciliation as "an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships and when damaged restoring them by apology with individual and collective reparations, and with concrete actions leading to relational and systems change"; *and*

WHEREAS: Expected outcomes from truth and reconciliation processes can include: public apologies; reparations and restitution to those harmed; correction of official historical records; memorials to the fallen, including statues, memorial plaques, headstones, museum and street renaming; public art, poetry, film and theater that unearth truths about racial violence; legislative and budgetary action to demilitarize police and reinvest in community-based solutions; *and*

WHEREAS: The work of a TRC will only be successful if it is informed by residents most harmed by discrimination, exclusion, and racist policies and has tangible outcomes. *NOW THEREFORE BE IT*

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss the opportunities for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Boston, the multiple models of truth and reconciliation processes, and what residents envision in a transformational model here in Boston. Representatives from District Attorney Rachael Rollin's office, public entities, racial justice organizations, and the public will be invited to testify.

Filed on: April 14, 2021