

Offered by City Councilors Julia Mejia and Kenzie Bok



**CITY OF BOSTON
IN CITY COUNCIL**

**ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING REPARATIONS AND
THEIR IMPACT ON THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF BLACK
BOSTONIANS**

WHEREAS, Since even before June 19th, 1865, the day upon which the ending of slavery in the United States is commemorated, the idea of paying reparations to formerly enslaved African Americans and their descendants has been a topic of fierce discussion and debate, *and*;

WHEREAS, Reparations are a form of “transitional justice,” which the International Center for Transitional Justice defines as “ways countries emerging from periods of conflict and repression address large-scale or systematic human rights violations so numerous and so serious that the normal justice system will not be able to provide an adequate response” *and*;

WHEREAS, Reparations can take many forms, including: Restitution, which seeks to restore a victim to their position before the violations occurred; Compensation, which is a financial award for harms; Rehabilitation, which seeks to provide care and services for victims beyond monetary payment; Satisfaction, which includes symbolic reparations such as public apologies and verifying facts; and Guarantee of non-repetition, which assures that this kind of harm shall never be repeated, *and*;

WHEREAS, The topic of reparations for slavery have come up time and time again, with historical proposals, such as the infamous *40 Acres and a Mule* promise, symbolically continuing through H.R. 40, a current Congressional bill originally submitted by Rep. John Conyers which seeks to form a commission to study and develop reparations proposals for African Americans, *and*;

WHEREAS, Currently, only two cities in the United States has officially begun the process of administering reparations to its citizens: Evanston, Illinois voted in March of 2021 to grant qualifying households up to \$25,000 for

down payments or home repairs; and San Francisco, California formed a Reparations Committee in May of 2021 to explore the same idea, *and*;

WHEREAS, There is a need in Boston to reconcile its history with slavery, both in confirming and presenting a common understanding of the city’s history with slavery, and in exploring the issuance of reparations to the descendants of those impacted by that history, and;

WHEREAS, The City Council has an obligation to lift up the civil rights of all residents, particularly those who have been systematically marginalized economically, politically, and socially, ***NOW THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED,

That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing on reparations and their impact on the civil rights of Black Bostonians, in order to both form a common, shared history regarding Boston’s involvement in the enslavement of Black people as well as to explore the possibility of Boston issuing reparations. Representatives from the City of Boston, including the Mayor’s Office of Resilience and Racial Equity, as well as advocates such as the NAACP, are encouraged to attend.

Filed in Council: June 9, 2021