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CITY OF SAINT PAUL

**Saint Paul Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission Update
Presented by Trahern Crews – Commission Chair &
Veronica Burt – Legislative Aide**

City Council Organizational Committee Meeting, August 7, 2024



Labor Acknowledgement

View: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83eJfEFFZ74> (The Rise of Cotton: Crash Course Black American History)



PICKING COTTON
From Department of Agriculture Bulletin, "The Cotton Plant."

We acknowledge that much of America, including its culture, economic growth, and development has been made possible by the forced free labor of enslaved Africans and their descendants who suffered the horror of the transatlantic slave trade, chattel slavery, Jim Crow segregation and acts of racism – all culminating into modern day disparities. We pay homage to these ancestors and ask that they guide the efforts of the Reparations Commissions to correct these wrongs for those who are living and those who are yet born.

Original source: Melanie Johnson - Associate Director of Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the College of Liberal Arts, University of Minnesota. Modified by Veronica Burt - Reparations Commission/City Council Legislative Aide, The Office of the St. Paul City Council 3.27.2024



Definition

Reparations are forms of compensation provided to those who have suffered wrongdoing or to their descendants and may refer to payments made in the aftermath of war, slavery, or other forms of wide-scale [systemic](#) injustice.

Reparations typically consist of monetary payments, but they can also consist of goods, materials, or [reparatory](#) actions intended to account for such damages or to address ongoing injustice.

In the United States, *reparations* have been made to certain groups and proposed for others. Discussion of the topic often involves proposals to make *reparations* to people who have been the victims of brutal treatment and racist policies throughout U.S. history, including Native Americans and the Black Americans who are the descendants of the African people enslaved in the U.S.

Source: www.dictionary.com/browse/reparations#word-of-the-day

The Atlantic
250 years of slavery.
90 years of Jim Crow.
60 years of separate but equal.
35 years of state-sanctioned redlining.
Until we reckon with the compounding moral debts of our ancestors, America will never be whole.
THE CASE FOR REPARATIONS
BY TA-NEHISI COATES



Enactments

- [Resolution 21-77](#) (January 13, 2021) formed the **Reparations Legislative Advisory Committee** to create the framework for a permanent reparations commission which came to be known as the Saint Paul Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission.
- [Ordinance 22-52](#) (January 4, 2023) established the **Saint Paul Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission** to advise the City Council and Mayor in all policy and budget matters pertaining to reparations within the city.
- [Resolution 23-939](#) (June 28, 2023) **Appointed** Commissioners: Jamila Pickett, Khulia Pringle, and Nick Khaliq to terms of one year; Carla Robinson, Idman Ibrahim, Joseph Bloedoorn, and Nick Muhammed to terms of two years; and Arthur McCoy, Nila Gouldin, Trahern Crews, and Jeremie English to terms of three years.



Commission Purpose

[Chapter 112.01](#) of the Administrative Code states: the Reparations Commission is to **serve as an advisory body to the Mayor and City Council on matters related to repairing the damage caused by public and private systemic racism in the City of Saint Paul which resulted in racial disparities in generational wealth, home ownership, health care, education, employment and pay, and fairness within the criminal justice system among the American descendants of chattel slavery.**



Commission Powers

[Chapter 112.05](#) empowers the Commission to **act in an advisory capacity to the Mayor and City Council in all policy and budget matters pertaining to reparations** within the City through the following activities:

- a. Shall be empowered to **make short, medium and long-term policy, program and budget recommendations** to specifically address the **creation and sustainment of generational wealth for the American Descendants of Chattel Slavery** and to boost economic mobility and opportunity in the American Descendants of Chattel Slavery community;
- b. Shall **establish a work plan annually** which will serve to notify City officials of the Commission's **priorities and activities**;
- c. Shall develop time-based **evaluations of City expenditures using quality of life metrics as indicators of progress on reparations**;
- d. **Review and advise on City programming and budgeting related to reparations**;
- e. Serve as an **expert for reparations policies and actions** within the City; and
- f. Conduct all business in such a manner as to **encourage and utilize maximum citizen participation**.



Key Accomplishments

- **Staff hired:** Legislative Aide, Veronica Burt in March and Executive Assistant, Janie Vang in June
- **5 Commission Meetings** conducted since March
- **Elected Officers:** Chair Trahern Crews and Vice Chair Khulia Pringle
- Adopted a **Meeting Schedule** of 4th Wednesday of each month, Rondo Library @ 6pm
- Wrote Commission **Bylaws**
- Approved a general **budget request of \$500,000** to support the work of the Commission
- Currently developing a **Workplan** and establishing **Committees** around each subject matter



Budget Priorities

Workplan 2025 Objectives:

1. Build knowledge base of Commissioners

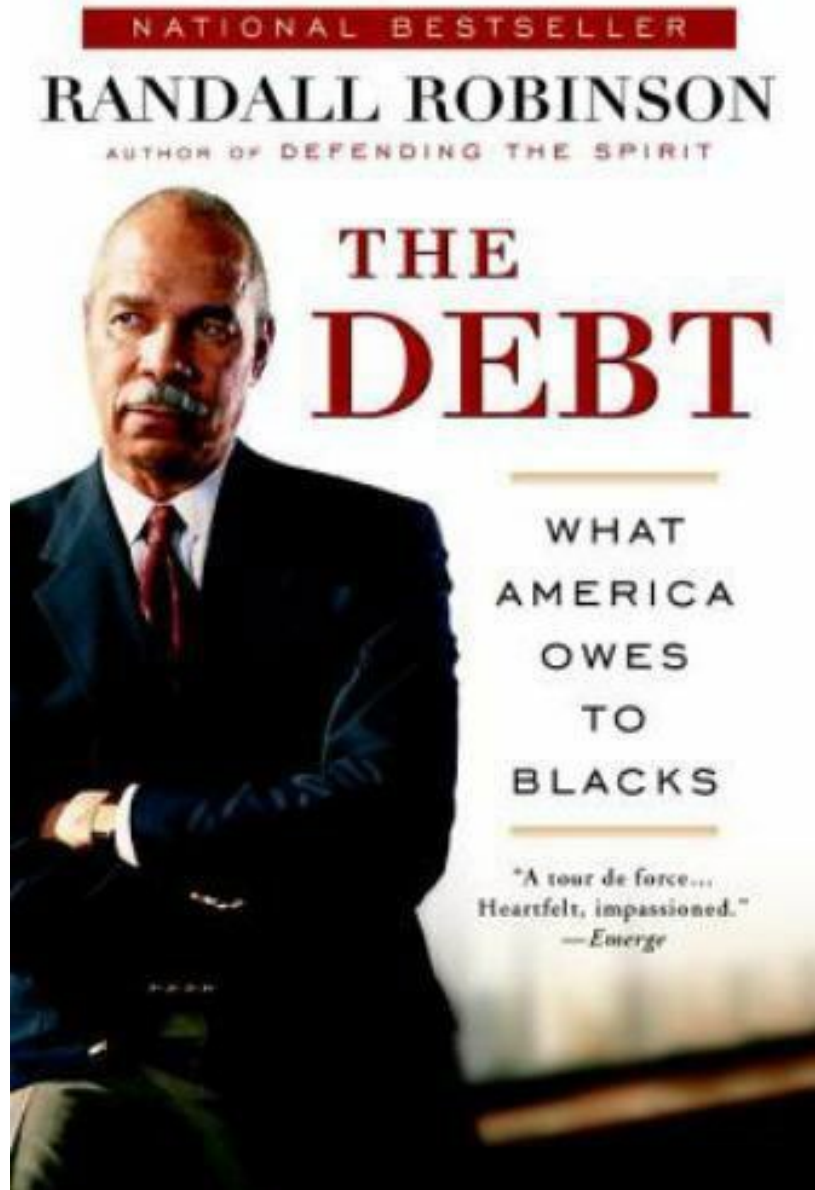
- Conduct Community **Listening Sessions** to engage with and hear directly from community members.
- **Invite Presenters** to learn of national initiatives.
- Develop a **Glossary** to clarify concepts.
- Support **Educational Development** to broaden understanding of the movement.

2. Clarify and quantify what harm looks like in St. Paul and how it connects historically and contemporarily

- Develop a **Harm Report** to help establish a narrative and create a starting point for redress.
- Support existing Rondo **Archival Work** in partnership Hallie Q. Brown to expand documentation of a longstanding local redress concern.
- Develop a **Historical Timeline** to map local and national historical events.

3. Institutionalize Commission work for long term success

- Examine pros and cons of moving **Reparations Commission under the Mayor's Administration.**
- Develop a **Slavery Disclosure and Redress Ordinance** that requires businesses who contract with the city to research its company's history and report any financial transactions and activity that may have been part of the slave industry.
- Create a **Reparatory Justice Fund** for longer term programmatic initiatives.



“America has consistently refused to confront the issue of racism and the enormous debt owed to African-Americans for helping make this the richest, most powerful nation in the world. It could not have happened without the free skilled and unskilled work of Black slaves who built this country. America owes a debt to African-Americans, and it is past time to put this issue on the table...”

— Randall Robinson, [The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks](#)



Questions?