



Legislation Text

File #: RES 21-77, **Version:** 1

Committing to racial healing through the exploration of reparations for American descendants of Chattel Slavery Living in Saint Paul.

WHEREAS, the institution of slavery in the United States, beginning in 1619 and continuing through 1863, enriched American industries, commercial and financial corporations and transformed the newly established United States into an international economic power through the oppressive, dehumanizing and torturous system of enslaved Black labor; and

WHEREAS, after slavery ended in the US, the slaveowners were compensated for the loss of their slaves, but those who had been held in bondage were never compensated for their labor, despite the promise of “40 acres and a mule”; and

WHEREAS, although slavery was illegal in Minnesota, Dred Scott and Harriet Scott were in bondage at Fort Snelling as well as other African Americans who were used for enslaved labor by US Army officers, which was in violation of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and the Missouri Compromise of 1820; and

WHEREAS, in the aftermath of slavery, African American citizens of this country continued to face brutal discrimination, as evidenced by Jim Crow, forced segregation, mass atrocities in Tulsa and Rosewood, the lynching period and to this day, mass incarceration; and

WHEREAS, in Saint Paul, systemic discrimination was perpetrated through redlining and racial covenants, access to housing, environmental injustice and the removal of Saint Paul’s Rondo neighborhood - the center of Saint Paul’s African American business, residential, spiritual and cultural life - for the construction of Interstate 94; and

WHEREAS, the pervasiveness of structural institutionalized racism in Saint Paul and all of American society has led to overwhelming black-white disparities in every area of endeavor, from housing to education and employment, business investment, economic prosperity, health and wellness, including life expectancy and infant mortality; and

WHEREAS, according to the November 2020 edition of the New England Journal of Medicine, reparations are now widely considered to be the most effective means of breaking down the societal structure related to power, money and access to resources, and indeed may be the only solution that can be applied intergenerationally that “would be an investment in the future and in reducing disparities that have been intractable for generations”; and

WHEREAS, local and state governments throughout the US have demonstrated a commitment to address these disparities by creating programs to generate public and private sources of funding, including dedicating tax revenues from enterprises that have historically profited from targeting African American consumers and other forms of discrimination that have fueled black-white disparities; and

WHEREAS, the tragic killing of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers has led to local, national and international reckoning of the immorality of the racial hierarchy that exists under our so-called democratic institutions, and the founding values of this nation, “that all people are equal, that they are

endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of Saint Paul does affirm that there can be no further delay in engaging all of Saint Paul in a process of racial healing and righting these wrongs; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the City Council of Saint Paul, does herein apologize and commit to making amends for its participation in and sanctioning of institutional racism against the American descendants of chattel slavery; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the City Council of Saint Paul does herein apologize and commit to making amends for Dred Scott being held in bondage at Fort Snelling and its enforcement of institutional racism and its accompanying discriminatory practices; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the City Council of Saint Paul apologizes and commits to making amends for allowing the construction of Interstate 94 to destroy a vibrant Black community and successful Black businesses; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the City Council of Saint Paul calls on all organizations and institutions in Saint Paul that have advanced and benefited from racial inequity to join the city in these apologies and invites them to address racism within their own structures and programs and to work with the city to more comprehensively address systemic racism; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the City Council of Saint Paul calls on the State of Minnesota and our federal delegation to initiate policymaking and provide funding for reparations at the state and national level; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul City Council commits to use its authority to establish, within the next six months, a legislative advisory committee to work with the Administration to create the roles and responsibilities for a new city commission to be known as the Saint Paul Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission; and be it further

RESOLVED, the Saint Paul Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission shall be empowered to make short, medium and long term recommendations to specifically address the creation of generational wealth for the American Descendants of Chattel Slavery and to boost economic mobility and opportunity in the Black community; and be it further

RESOLVED, the Saint Paul Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission, as envisioned, will make significant progress toward repairing the damage caused by public and private systemic racism in the City of Saint Paul, and will issue a report for consideration by the city, which will focus on but not be limited to strategies to grow equity and generational wealth, closing the gaps in home ownership, health care, education, employment and pay, and fairness within criminal justice among the American descendants of chattel slavery.