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## Mayor Jorge Elorza Announces Truth-Telling, Reconciliation and Municipal Reparations Process

*Research & Engagement to Advise City on Forms of Municipal Reparations*

July 15, 2020

Mayor Jorge O. Elorza today joined City Councilwoman Nirva LaFortune, 1696 Heritage Group Vice President Keith Stokes, Founder and CEO of Impact RI Janice Faulkner, Community Relations Advisor Shawndell Burney-Speaks and community members to announce a community-driven Executive Order committing the City to a process of truth, reconciliation and municipal reparations for Black, Indigenous People, and People of Color in Providence.

“As a country and a community, we owe a debt to our Black, Indigenous People, and People of Color, and on the local level, we are using this opportunity to correct a wrong,” said Mayor Jorge Elorza. “Though this does not undo history it is the first step in accepting the role Providence and Rhode Island has held in generations of pain and violence against these residents, healing some of the deepest wounds our country faces today. May this process of truth bring us education and awareness of these wrong-doings and may our reconciliation change the systems that continue to oppress our communities, while reaffirming our commitment to building a brighter, more inclusive future.”

Through this Executive Order, the City is committed to advancing a social justice process that works in three parts. First, the City will work to identify the Truth by examining the role of the State of Rhode Island and the City of Providence in supporting the institution of slavery, the genocide of Indigenous People, forced assimilation, and seizure of land, among other policies. As part of this first step, local and state laws will be reviewed. This will include a review of all other forms of public and private sector discrimination against people of African or Indigenous heritage and their descendants up to the present day.

“Providence can lead the nation on how we present the inclusive history of all Americans through public memorials, public investments and public education,” said 1696 Heritage Group Vice President Keith Stokes.

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Once the collection of Truth is completed, findings will be used to begin the process of Reconciliation. Residents, organizations and institutions will be engaged in discussing these Truths, with the aim of appreciating the resiliency of the Black, Indigenous People and People of Color in Providence and to better understand the ways these injustices continue to impact residents today.

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,” said Founder and CEO of Impact RI Janice Faulkner, reciting Bible passage John 8:32. “When will we know the truth? When will we be set free? No one knows the answer. However, I am very grateful that the Honorable Jorge Elorza, Mayor of this great City is committed to uncovering the truth and addressing the centuries of institutional and systemic racial bias affecting Black, Indigenous, People of Color.”

Through the last step of this process, Reparations, the City will take measures to reverse the injuries resulting from the Truth findings and advise what appropriate policies, programs, and projects may be executed based on recommendations that accomplish this mission. These will also work to address local laws and policies that continue negatively impact Black, Indigenous People, and People of Color in Providence.

This process was developed with and crafted by the Mayor’s African American Ambassador Group, which meets weekly and serves as a direct line of communication between the community and the Administration. What originally began as a means to ensure equitable access to COVID-19-related care and resources has since expanded, establishing subcommittees focused on recommending strategies to increase equity citywide and most recently developed the [Executive Order](#) removing the term “plantations” from all City documents and oath ceremonies.

The announcement was hosted at Dexter Park and Training Grounds, a nine-acre park donated by Ebenezer Knight Dexter for military purposes that played a key role in the Dorr Rebellion, the Civil War and World War I. The 14th Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, who used these training grounds, was the first Black company from Rhode Island to serve in the Civil War, recruiting at least 1,800 soldiers from Rhode Island and surrounding states such as Connecticut and New York.

Those interested in engaging in the subcommittees of the Mayor’s African American Ambassador Group are encouraged to contact Community Relations Advisor Shawndell Burney-Speaks at [sburneyspeaks@providenceri.gov](mailto:sburneyspeaks@providenceri.gov).

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