

North Carolina County Votes To Support Reparations For Black Residents

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On Tuesday night, a North Carolina county passed a resolution supporting reparations for black residents.

Buncombe County's resolution states, "Slavery represented an irreconcilable contradiction in our nation's founding: a young democracy committed to the ideals of liberty and justice and yet

actively perpetuating the degradation of Black people. This contradiction – what some have called our nation’s original sin – has yet to be fully addressed and systemic racism continues to this day,” WYFF reported. Another resolution was passed to declare racism a public health crisis.

In mid-July, the city of Asheville, which lies in Buncombe County, had its city council unanimously approve reparations for black residents, although it did not stipulate direct payments, but will rather aim funds to areas where racial disparities allegedly exist.

On Tuesday, Buncombe County’s commissioners voted to select representatives to join the Community Reparations Commission that Asheville created.

Commissioner Brownie Newman stated, “The civil rights era is not over, will still have a lot of work to do.” Commissioner Amanda Edwards, who drafted the resolution, added, “It is not a plan to write checks but to invest in programs and services for the communities of color,” as Fox Carolina reported.

When Asheville voted for reparations, Councilman Keith Young, one of the two black members on the Council, stated, “Hundreds of years of black blood spilled that basically fills the cup that we drink from today.” The other black member of the council, Sheneika Smith, echoed, “A lot of the feedback that we’ve gotten so far by email is that you know, ‘Why should we pay for what happened during slavery?’ And my pushback

against that is reparations is more than restitution for what happened during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. It is a dark evil sin of chattel slavery that is the root of all injustice and inequity that is at work in American life today.”

The Buncombe County website reported statistics for Buncombe County (based on Buncombe Community Health Assessment data from 2018):

Life expectancy for Black residents was, on average, 5.9 years shorter (73.4 years) compared to white residents (79.3 years).

The overall death rate for Black residents was 38% higher than white residents.

In 2016, 13.7% of whites experienced poverty compared to 27.2% of Blacks and 36.4% of Hispanics.

The average per capita income for whites was \$28,480 compared to \$15,335 for Blacks and \$13,121 for Hispanics.

The website states: “Based on this research and the resolution, County staff is directed to look for ways to eliminate racial disparities in areas such as education, housing, health, the justice system, and other areas. There is also a focus to look inward at County policies and practices that could unintentionally support racism such as purchasing and hiring practices.”

County Commissioner Joe Belcher said, “I look forward to the work staff will do and bring back to us, we have a commitment as a Board, staff, and community to work toward positive solutions.” Commissioner Jasmine Beach-Ferrara echoed, “This is an important step forward to come together as a community and name racism as the crisis it is.”

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