



Legislation Text

File #: 20-381, **Version:** 1

TITLE:

A Discussion About Reparations Part II

PURPOSE: The purpose of this work session item is for the Town Council to continue the discussion about reparations.

DEPARTMENT: Town Management

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INFORMATION: The Town Council first discussed the topic of reparations on September 1, 2020. The discussion involved a national perspective and how zoning and governance decisions still impact life in Carrboro. The Council unanimously voted to devote a work session acknowledging the past, how to define reparations and consider a plan of action moving forward.

Some of the materials included in this packet was shared during the earlier discussion. What is new includes - the definition of oppression, Durham, North Carolina in the list of jurisdictions that developed a reparations plan and timeline of racial injustice.

It is important to have a common understanding of terms when discussing racial equity work. Hopefully the following definitions can help in the discussion:

Institutional racism - GARE defines Institutional Racism as policies or practices that work better for White people than for people of color, often unintentionally or inadvertently.

Oppression - prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or control. *

Racial equity - The Center for Social Inclusion defines Racial Equity “As both an outcome and a process. As an outcome, we achieve racial equity when race no longer determines one’s socioeconomic outcomes; when everyone has what they need to thrive, no matter where they live. As a process, we apply racial equity when those most impacted by structural racial inequity are meaningfully involved in the creation and implementation of the institutional policies and practices that impact their lives.

Racism - the belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities, or qualities, especially so as to distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another. Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized. *

Reparations - the making of amends for a wrong one has done, by paying money to or otherwise helping those who have been wronged. Reparations are a means of addressing the wealth and opportunity gaps residents

experience due to historical racism and discrimination.*

Structural racism - Race Forward defines Structural racism as encompassing a history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color. Structural racism is racial bias among interlocking institutions and across society, causing cumulative and compounding effects that systematically advantage white people and disadvantage people of color.

Systemic racism - Racism resulting from the inherent biases and prejudices of the policies and practices of social and political organizations, groups, or institutions.*

White Supremacy - the belief that white people constitute a superior race and should therefore dominate society, typically to the exclusion or detriment of other racial and ethnic groups, in particular Black or Jewish people.*

Note: * Definitions were taken from the dictionary if not cited.

In addition to common language, the following information provides a glimpse of what has been happening across the USA.

The topic of reparations is being considered and even unofficially discussed at all levels of government. Some cities are making a conscious effort to address racial injustice that continues to plague Black America. These cities are conducting research, engaging the community and providing recommendations that help frame local programs. Examples of ways in which jurisdictions plan to address this disparity includes creating funds, boosting opportunity in Black communities and establishing commissions/community groups with the sole purpose to partner with local government to narrow the racial disparity gap.

Reparations was recently discussed during an episode of “United Shades of America”. (A CNN documentary series in which the host W. Kamau Bell travels throughout America to explore race-based subcultures.) An editorial entitled, Six Questions about Slavery Reparations, Answered was also written by CNN staff on August 15, 2020. (See Attachment A)

Based on some preliminary research, six jurisdictions recently confronted the difficult topic of reparations and developed a plan of action. Here is a summary of their stories:

Evanston, Illinois - June 2019 -see Attachment B

- a. The City Council adopts a resolution to end structural racism and achieve racial equality. (June 2019 - see Attachment C)
- b. Creation of Subcommittee to assist with the reparations process. (September 2019)
- c. The Council adopts a resolution to create a Reparation Fund in the 2020 budget. Tax revenue collected from sales of recreational cannabis committed to support the fund and residents can contribute. (November 2019 - see Attachment D)

Chicago, Illinois - June 2020

- a. The City Council participated in reparation discussions in 2019-2020.
- b. The Council adopts a resolution Establishing the Chicago Descendants of Enslaved Africans Reparations Commission to begin reparation process that includes restitution, compensation,

satisfaction, and rehabilitation. (June 2020 - see Attachment E)

Asheville, North Carolina - July 2020 - see Attachment F

- a. The City Council adopts a resolution supporting reparations. (See Attachment G)
- b. Create Community Reparations Committee to develop recommendations to specifically address the creation of generational wealth and to boost economic mobility and opportunity in the Black community. (Within year)

Providence, Rhode Island - July 2020 - see Attachment H

- a. Mayor signed an executive order to create a Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations. (July 2020 - see Attachment I)
- b. Creation of the African American Ambassador Group - grass root group of community leaders who advise city government throughout three-part approach and work to dismantle state and local laws.

Buncombe County, North Carolina - August 2020

- a. The County Commissioners adopts a resolution to support community reparations. (August 2020 - see Attachment J)
- b. Appoint representatives to participate in the Community Reparations Committee in Asheville. (August 2020)
- c. Calls for organizations and institutions to help advance racial equity, Congress to study and develop reparations proposals and the State to follow a parallel process. Staff is tasked to address critical needs such as the educational achievement gap and health disparities. (August 2020)

Durham, North Carolina - October 2020

- a. Create Racial Equity Task Force to address the issues of racial equity through education of inequitable circumstances, research of best practices and issue policy/funding recommendations. (2018)
- b. Year long discussion between city and the racial equity task force.
- c. The City Council adopts a resolution in support of Federal Action to Increase Racial Equity. (October 2020 - See Attachment K)

The final attachment is a timeline of racial injustice ranging from 1715-2020. The document initially began as a GARE assignment while participating in the cohort. Since that time it has gone through various iterations for this work session item and still a “work in progress”. Special thanks to Allie Hansen, PSA II/GARE Core Team for her research and formatting the document. (See Attachment L)

FISCAL & STAFF IMPACT: Fiscal impact varies based on specified follow-up action.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Town Council discuss this item and provide any direction to staff.