



City Council Meeting
November 12, 2024

Resolution Supporting Reparations for the Descendants of Enslaved African People

The Legacy of Charles Mitchell

- Charles Mitchell was born enslaved in Maryland in 1847 and forcibly relocated to Washington Territory in 1855 by his owner James Tilton
- Charles Mitchell lived in Olympia, residing in the Tilton home, now 1009 Columbia St SW
- In 1857, the US Supreme Court rendered slavery legal in territories like Washington, but was illegal in the British Empire, including Victoria
- African-Canadians from Victoria encouraged 13-year-old, Charles Mitchell to escape from slavery in Olympia to freedom in Victoria
- On September 24, 1860, Charles Mitchell, seeking life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness escaped as a stow away on an international mail steamer headed for Victoria, aided by African-Canadians James Allen and William Davis

Pioneer and Democrat.

OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON TERRITORY,
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1860.

EDWARD FURSTE, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

'Truth crush'd to earth will rise again,
The eternal years of God are here.'

Fugitive Slave Case.

The people of Victoria, especially the black element and their sympathizers, have been greatly exhilarated at the escape of a boy from this side, who it appears was sworn to by some negroes, who knew nothing of the facts, as being a slave of Gen. Tilton, Surveyor-General of this Territory. Not deeming it necessary to enter into a lengthy detail of the causes which led to the escape of the negro boy Charley, we will endeavor in as brief a manner as possible, to present the circumstances and influences by which the boy was surrounded, and the arguments used to wean his affections from those who have been to him a father and mother, rather than master or mistress, as stated in the affidavit of the Victoria blacks,

What are Reparations?

- Reparations is a process of repairing, healing and restoring a people injured because of their group identity and in violation of their fundamental human rights by governments, corporations, institutions and families.
- Those groups that have been injured have the right to obtain from the government, corporation, institution or family responsible for the injuries that which they need to repair and heal themselves.
- Such rights to obtain include, but are not limited to, direct cash payments, land, housing, college education, and healthcare.

Proposal to Address Reparations

1. Prepare a resolution for City Council consideration
2. Research other cities that have taken similar actions to address reparations
3. Research possible City scale actions to explore ways the city government can support efforts to petition our state and federal governments to study this issue and implement findings.
4. Connect current Olympia initiatives to addressing reparations for descendants of enslaved African people
5. Present findings at City Council Study Session and discuss next steps

Resolution Actions

1. That the Washington State Legislature, Washington State Office of the Governor, United States Congress, and the Office of the President of the United States work towards forming a commission to study reparations for the descendants of enslaved peoples to initiate the process of rectifying centuries of systemic oppression and intergenerational trauma, which has led to disparities in nearly all areas of life for Black Americans over generations.
2. Supports the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs' unanimous decision to advise the Governor to create the Charles Mitchell Commission to Study Reparations for the descendants of enslaved African Americans.
3. A copy of this resolution be sent to the Washington State Legislature, including the Legislative Black Caucus, Washington State Office of the Governor, Offices of Congresswoman Marilyn Strickland and U.S. Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell and urge Congress to pass HR 40 - Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act.
4. Encourage other Washington cities and counties to pass a similar resolution and join the City of Olympia in calling for the study of reparations for the descendants of enslaved African people.

Resolution Actions (cont'd)

5. Direct City of Olympia staff to research possible city-scale actions and continue to explore ways the city government can support efforts to petition our state and federal governments to study this issue and implement findings. Meanwhile, connecting our own Olympia Strong initiatives, Comprehensive Plan, Fair Housing Assessment, Capital Facilities, and non-government and governmental partnerships to our city's plans, and research cities that have taken similar actions.
6. The City of Olympia should establish a goal to go beyond minimal federal requirements when it comes to hiring equity practices. Our partnerships with the Olympia School District and within our capital contracting, are but a few examples.
7. Encourages Thurston County to partner with The Black Homeownership Initiative in King-Pierce County to address racial inequities as a regional effort within our collective housing ecosystem along with other relevant organizations and institutions. It is recommended that Thurston County and the City of Olympia establish clear goals for Black and African American homeownership.
8. The City of Olympia will continue efforts in reparative justice to increase Black homeownership with particular focus as part of the City's housing strategy following the City's Affordable Homeownership Research Study.

Next Steps

- Tonight – Adoption of the Resolution
- Ongoing
 - Research by Truclusion
 - Meeting with Mayor Payne
 - Review cities across the country that have considered or provided reparations. It will include type, timeline, qualifications, etc)
 - Conduct FOIA requests from a minimum of 200 cities to inquire about public discussions, resolutions, or ordinances related to reparations
 - Qualitative interviews to investigate motivation, process, and outcomes
 - Written report from Truclusion
- To be Scheduled
 - Facilitated conversations by Truclusion w/staff to determine connections to plans: Olympia Strong; Comprehensive Plan; Fair Housing Assessment; Capital Facilities Plan and non-government and governmental partnerships to our City's plans
 - City Council Study Session
 - To present findings from other municipalities and current City initiatives and programs connected to reparations
 - Assess scope of Study Session based on findings. May need additional meetings or a different format to cover City initiatives
 - Next steps and approach will be discussed after findings are presented



Questions & Discussion