

Rebecca Howard,

Where do I start, I moved here in 2013, and one of the first things I noticed when I got here was how white it was, but slightly more friendly than Seattle. A friend suggested I check out the bread Peddler, that's when I saw her, this big beautiful patriate of a Black Woman, from the 1800's on the side of the wall of the building.

I've had some ups and downs in this town, the knowledge of Rebecca Howard and her portrait served as an inspiration to keep moving, do what I know how, and follow the signs. I feel supported by my Ancestors and Rebecca Howard, that is why I do the work that I do. To be able to help make positive change in the community I live in. That is what this park means to me. The possibility of being a part of an effort to bring such amazing history to light.

We live in an amazingly beautiful part of the country, and due to my travels, both state side and abroad I have seen enough to know how lucky we are here in Olympia. For the most part we can drink the water and breath the air here. Rebecca Howard, Cora Pinson, George Bush, and the many other Black pioneers recognized this. They worked hard and overcame many obstacles to make a living and raise their families here. They contributed to the community and helped make it a thriving, safe, place for all.

Naming the park that is across from our cultural center after such an amazing pioneer, and acknowledging an African American woman such as Rebecca Howard, would mean so much to women of color, especially Black women in this community and beyond. It could set the tone for growth, acknowledgement, and respect for the Black community as a whole. It shows that there are community members in Olympia that understand the importance of representation, especially positive true representation of Our Black community members. Representation of our contributions, accomplishments, and resiliency. They also see the importance of not just bringing Black issues and people to the forefront only during times of trauma, pain and loss.

Having a park that is dedicated to our Black community members, both past and present could also challenge some of our community members who can only see Black people as victims, needing to be saved. Community members who only feel comfortable interacting with Black people whom they view as less then and other. This Park, as well as naming the park after this amazing Black woman, could help educate those community members and the rest of us on the incredible achievements of African Americans in this region.

Thank you all for considering this very important request,

Shawna Hawk

Community member, founder of The Women of Color In leadership Movement

Director of Media Island International