

**RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE STRUCTURE OF THE DETROIT CITY
COUNCIL REPARATIONS TASK FORCE**

BY COUNCIL PRESIDENT MARY SHEFFIELD

WHEREAS Four hundred years ago, enslaved Africans were brought to the Americas as captives. From 1619 to 1865, approximately four million Africans and their descendants, under a practice that was constitutionally and statutorily sanctioned by the U.S government, were enslaved in the United States and the colonies that became the United States; and

WHEREAS The system of slavery that flourished in the United States constituted an immoral, shameful, and inhumane deprivation of the life, liberty, humanity, citizenship, and cultural heritage of Africans and denied them, among other things, the fruits of their own labor upon which this country was built; and

WHEREAS Following the abolition of slavery, state actors at the federal, state, and local level continued to perpetuate, condone, and profit from practices that continued to brutalize and systemically disadvantage Black people, including sharecropping, convict leasing, Jim Crow laws, redlining, unequal education, deplorable housing, and disproportionate treatment at the hands of the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS In 1946, Detroit Mayor Edward Jeffries first proposed a plan to acquire and clear all the land and buildings in the areas of Detroit formerly known as Black Bottom and Paradise Valley. And elected in 1950, his successor Mayor, Albert Cobo and the Common Council moved forward a plan to condemn and acquire land and clear Black families from the areas, leveling an entire community, destroying Black businesses, households, and the ability to build generational wealth; and

WHEREAS The full effects of the institution and legacy of slavery on Black people in Detroit have not been fully examined, nor have there been remedies for past injustice and present harm, as a result of historic and continued systemic racial discrimination, Black people in Detroit confront some of the worst racial disparities in America; and

WHEREAS Reparations for centuries of Black Americans' enslavement, and subsequent second-class citizenship rooted in structural racism and discrimination, are a long-overdue recognition that Black people face unfair and unequal conditions, created within public and private sectors, and reproduced over time and place. Reparations are intended as a way to overcome the reluctance to take action to cure these systemic ills, and to help create true equality; and

WHEREAS The Detroit City Council strongly supports reparations for centuries of human enslavement and post-emancipation systemic discrimination and racism; reparations have been prominent among protestors' demands during historic

demonstrations in the wake of the George Floyd killing in 2021, which at least temporarily shifted racial attitudes and relations among many Americans; and

WHEREAS According to the results of the reparations taskforce survey, the qualifications of the individuals to serve on the should be considered:

Eligibility

- Detroit Residents
- Required term of residency 6-10 years
- Membership is open to Non-African Americans

Composition

The top 12 professions and disciplines selected for representation on the Task Force:

- Historian
- Legal
- Impacted resident
- Community/Grass roots
- Housing expert
- Social justice advocate
- Economist
- Senior Citizen
- Urban Planner
- Youth Representative
- Restorative Justice Advocate
- Clergy/Religion

WHEREAS The Reparations Task Force is established as a result of the overwhelming support received by the ballot initiative which garnered over 80% of the vote to help further exploration of the feasibility and ability of the City of Detroit to create processes, develop, and implement community reparations for mass historic unjust treatment of Detroit's majority Black population by making recommendations for housing and economic development programs that address historical discrimination against the Black community in Detroit; **Now, therefore be it**

RESOLVED That the Members of the Reparations Task Force shall be determined as follows:

The Task Force shall consist of thirteen (13) members, appointed as follows:

- a. The City Council President shall appoint a Four-Member Executive Committee consisting of a chair and three (3) *ad hoc* working coordinators
- b. Nine (9) Members at large shall be appointed by the City Council as follows: City Council Members may nominate two (2) additional members each. City Council shall conduct interviews in Council's Internal Operations Committee of the eighteen (18) or fewer nominees, exclusive of

the executive committee members. The top nine (9) nominees shall be selected by vote of the City Council Committee of the Whole. **And be it further**

RESOLVED The Reparations Task Force shall submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to the City Council no later than the date that is eighteen (18) months from the date of the first meeting of the Reparations Task Force.