

**NEW YORK STATE COMMUNITY COMMISSION ON REPARATIONS REMEDIES**  
**Business and Public Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, March 4, 2025**

**Location: Memorial Art Gallery, 500 University Avenue, Rochester, New York 14607**

**Members Present: Commissioner Dr. Seanelle Hawkins and Commissioner Timothy Hogues**

**Via Zoom: Commissioner Dr. Deborah Jenkins, Commissioner Dr. Ron Daniels, Commissioner Lurie Daniel Favors, Esq., Commissioner Linda Tarrant-Reid, Commissioner Linda Brown-Robinson, and Commissioner Jennifer Jones Austin, Esq.**

**Member Excused: Commissioner Dr. Darrick Hamilton**

## **I. Call to Order and Welcome**

Chair Hawkins called the business meeting of the New York State Community Commission on Reparations Remedies (NYSCCRR) to order at 4:13 p.m. Commissioner Timothy Hogues introduced himself and made brief comments. Commissioners Jennifer Jones Austin and Linda Tarrant-Reid introduced themselves virtually. Commissioner Linda Brown-Robinson was attending virtually, but unable to introduce herself due to technical difficulties. Commissioner Dr. Ron Daniels also joined the meeting virtually and made brief comments.

Chair Hawkins stated that she is proud that New York State is the second state, after California, to establish a statewide Commission to study reparations and the enduring harms and impacts of slavery.

Chair Hawkins thanked two staff members from Governor Hochul's office, Jacob Mahoney & Shakera Tems, for attending the meetings, stating their presence acknowledged the support of the Governor, along with the bill sponsors, NYS Senator James Sanders, Jr. and NYS Assemblymember Michaelle Solages.

## **II. Approval of Minutes**

Chair Hawkins requested a motion to approve the December 16, 2024 minutes.

**Motion:** Commissioner Hogues moved to accept the December 16, 2024 meeting minutes.

**Second:** Commissioner Tarrant-Reid seconded the motion.

**Vote:** The motion was moved and carried by unanimous vote.

## **III. Update on the work of the Commission**

Chair Hawkins presented a PowerPoint deck introducing the Reparations Commission, a brief history of slavery in New York, an overview of the Reparations Bill and similar actions across the U.S., and the work of the Commission and community outreach. The presentation is available online at [www.ny.gov/reparations](http://www.ny.gov/reparations)

Chair Hawkins spoke about the Commission's mandate to produce a report of recommendations to address the longstanding harms and inequities that descendants of the enslaved and African American New York residents experienced and continue to experience. The Chair stated that the Commission is not

ready to submit a report in July 2025 as the Commission is still staffing up, and have requested an extension to ensure the submission of a quality report.

Chair Hawkins expressed her gratitude for the leadership and support of the Commission's partners including the Office of General Services, OGS. She noted that there are RFQs and RFPs seeking individuals or firms to fill positions including: Operations Manager, Research Historian, Research and Policy Analysis Firm, and an Audio-Visual Firm. Several of the positions are in process of interviewing candidates or still accepting submissions. For those interested in working with the Commission, Chair Hawkins encouraged interested parties to visit the website, [www.ny.gov/reparations](http://www.ny.gov/reparations) to apply for the positions.

Commissioner Hogues further explained that these positions will help the Commission to execute the work needed. He stated that those positions are contracted and not employees of the Commission or the State.

#### **IV. Commissioner Engagement**

Chair Hawkins urged the Commissioners to be active participants in the business meetings and the public hearings that take place all over New York State to engage with the community members and hear their stories about the harms and impact of slavery on their lives.

The Commissioners also discussed establishing a separation of the business meetings from the public hearings as a way to allow for the opportunity to engage more actively. It was then decided by Chair Hawkins that the Commission would take the recommendations back to the Executive Committee.

Chair Hawkins made known that each of the Executive Committee Members are charged with and have agreed to take a group, noting that there needs to be a commitment from all the Commissioners to attend so we can there can be those small meetings to talk about points of view and the work they have.

#### **V. Community Engagement**

Chair Hawkins and the Commissioners discussed how to best to deepen its understanding of community perspectives and solutions to strengthen its report as they are looking to ensure that they are receiving solutions that are going to inform the work by expanding all possible opportunities for public involvement.

#### **VI. Subject Matter Expert Engagement**

Commissioner Daniels opined that the mandate was to come up with subject matter experts and couple them with specific themes and specific issue areas.

Chair Hawkins added that there were discussions to have zoom public hearings with specific invited subject matter experts attending to talk about specific topics.

Chair Hawkins recognized that there was still work needed to be done regarding the latter agenda items and suggested that the issues be taken back to the small groups to deepen those conversations. She indicated that, for the sake of time, the Commission would just move forward with the public hearing.

## **VII. Public Hearing Plans**

Chair Hawkins reported that Public Hearings would be held throughout New York State and the schedule of meetings is being prepared and will be uploaded to the Commission website as soon as dates and locations are confirmed. Commissioner Linda Brown-Robinson expressed interest in assisting in organizing public hearings.

## **VIII. Adjournment and Closing Remarks**

Chair Hawkins thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 5:15 p.m. with a five-minute recess to prepare for the public hearing.

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Chair Hawkins opened the public hearing at 5:27 p.m. She thanked everyone for their attendance and especially thanked everyone who helped plan the public hearing, for their incredible effort and support. After which, each of the Commissioners gave an introduction.

Chair Hawkins then acknowledged the elected officials in the room, voicing her pleasure to have them present. She first recognized Assembly Member Demond Meeks and Councilman Michael Patterson. She invited both to the podium to bring greetings to which they both did. Chair Hawkins then recognized Senator Samra Brouk who brought greeting through remarks given by Dr. Candace Lucas. Chair Hawkins expressed her gratitude for all their support.

Chair Hawkins thanked the Memorial Art Gallery for hosting in their beautiful facility. She then thanked The Entrepreneurs for providing some good food, the interpreters for their support, and the media who came out to learn more about the Commission.

Commissioner Brown-Robinson commented that she would be remiss if the passing of New York State President Hazel N. Dukes was not acknowledged. She asked for a moment of silent testimony for all the work Hazel N. Dukes has done for the New York State NAACP and the general community at large and the country. Chair Hawkins agreed and then asked for a moment of silence to honor the great work that Hazel Dukes has done across the nation.

Chair Hawkins then introduced the two upcoming presentations, one given virtually by David Hochfelder, Associate Professor and Undergraduate Director of the Department of History at the University of Albany, who, along with his research colleagues Stacy Kinlock Sewell and Ann Pfau, have been researching the history of urban renewal and housing discrimination in New York State for more than a decade. Thereafter followed by Shane Wiegand and Tay Porter-Jourdain, Rochester's own, of Our Local History, who gave a presentation highlighting the impacts of slavery in Buffalo and across New York State.

Commissioner Jenkins wanted to acknowledge that Dr. Hochfelder and his colleagues are part of the expert witnesses that the subcommittee has had to consider. She thanked him agreeing to be here for this meeting and noted that this is the caliber of people and teams that have been examined for the Commission's work.

Commissioner Daniels commented that it was an incredible presentation, very important in terms of documentation. He likened it to what happened in Evanston where Evanston was the first municipality to provide reparations to a program that's very much alive and certified by the National African American Reparations Commission. He expressed his familiarity with it and stated that what was so stunning about the research in this city was the kind of no guessing, clear documentation about what the intent was and what the damages were, the specificity of particular, not only individuals, but communities referring to how that becomes important as it sets the stage for discussion of how to also do remedy.

Chair Hawkins recognized Constance Jefferson and Tiffany Owens, the daughter of Rev. Florence, stating it is an honor working with her at the Urban League.

Chair Hawkins then expressed gratitude for Our Local History's presentation and opened the floor for questions.

Commissioner Jones-Austin posed a question and Elder Adams also gave commentary, responded to by Shane Wiegand and Chair Hawkins, respectively.

Chair Hawkins again acknowledged the staff present from Governor Hochul's office thanking them for their support.

Chair Hawkins, as she prepared for the public hearing portion and the invited speaker, first share the process for the communication.

Chair Hawkins then welcomed Angela Perez-Delgado, President and CEO of the Ibero-American Action League, who she admires for her great work, proud to have her provide remarks.

Chair Hawkins then announced the commencement of the public comments.

## **VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF NYSCRR PUBLIC HEARING – MARCH 4, 2025 – ROCHESTER, NEW YORK**

DR. LASHUNDA LESLIE SMITH: Good evening. My name is Dr. LaShunda Leslie Smith, and I come from a family where generational wealth was never a possibility because each generation was forced to start from a deficit. A deficit not created by personal failure, but by systemic exclusive, by redlining, as we heard this evening, by policies that strip black families of opportunities to own homes, to build businesses to pass down wealth.

The neighborhoods that many Black Americans live in today, the ones that remain segregated, underfunded and disproportionately poor are not by accident. Again, we heard that today. This was not a coincidence. They were the result of intentional government sanction actions that determined who had access to prosperity and who was left behind struggling to survive.

For the first time in my family's history, I have been able to break that cycle. I am the first generation to send a child to college and fully support them into adulthood, rather than needing them to become a financial contributor at the age of eighteen just to help make ends meet because we had more month than money. I feel honored. I feel privileged, and at times I feel middle class guilt. Not because I didn't work hard, but because I know others who came from the exact same place as me, from the exact circumstances, never got the same chance.

At ConnectedCommunities where I work, we are using a different model, one that treats neighborhoods as economic ecosystems capable of breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Proving that when you invest in people and you invest in place, and you invest in economic opportunity, you do not just create equity, you create transformation.

Reparations are not a handout. Reparations are a necessary correction. A moral obligation, a long overdue acknowledgement that this country, and this state owe a debt to Black Americans that cannot be ignored any longer. We cannot rebuild what was stolen in places like the Greenwood

District, Tulsa, Oklahoma also known as Black Wall Street, but we can repair the harm that was done by white economic envy.

We can invest in black communities with the same intentionality with which they were dismantled.

The question before us today is not whether or not reparations are deserved. The evidence is undeniable. The question is, Do we have the courage to act? Thank you.

SOLOMON TITUS TAYLOR: I would like to say welcome Rochester to this tremendous event on this evening.

My name is Solomon Titus Taylor. And reparations to me is everything that we're talking about here tonight. Because I am a descendant of the Titus Africans from 1746 here in American. I am also a descendant of Alai Mohammad, one of the first Muslims that was brought to these lands in 1803. So I am reparations here in America. And these things need to take place.

We know what happened with the transatlantic slave trade. We know what happened with our people that came across these shores and help build this nation. We know what happened.

So today I stand before you, a sixty-four year old man here in Rochester, New York, born and raised here in Rochester, New York. And the photo that's in my phone is my grandmother that was on one of those photos on the screen on Philander Street during the time of the 1964 riots.

I am now an elder here in the City of Rochester with over three hundred family members living here in the City of Rochester. But my voice is also that of my family members across this nation that has been displaced because of slavery, that have gone through things because of slavery, and that are standing today and have learned that because of reparations that did not come, we had to stand. And we produced lawyers, we produced councilmen, we produced teachers, educators, police officers, to include a Rochester -- a Police Chief in Washington D.C. So we stand on who we are as a people.

But still yet understand, and I'm sorry for going back and forth, but this is Rochester. And we're the second to go through this fight for reparations, after the State of California. Then we need to become the first to make sure that things happen for all of our people here in the -- in this country because of what took place in our lives.

I am now, like I said, an elder for my family. And if we were to go back to Africa, and I had to stand before my people, I will be next in line to be king. So I stand as king of my family, and I stand as a representative here of the City of Rochester.

Demond Meeks, I almost raised him, so look where he is now. So we will stand together as a family here in the City of Rochester and across this nation to do what we have to do.

Thank you very much. The fight is not over. The fight has just begun, and it will continue to fight on our watch. This is on our watch. And I thank you very much.

My grandmother name was Ella Titus.

SHAE HERBERT: So good evening Members of the New York State Reparations Commission, colleagues and fellow New Yorkers.

My name is Shae Herbert, representing the New York Civil Liberties Union Racial Justice Center, and in partnership with New Yorkers for Reparations, which is a coalition with over seventy organizations committed to securing reparations for Black New Yorkers.

As a proud Rochesterian with deep roots in this community, I stand before you not only as a resident, but as an advocate in this community.

I work with an organization that ensures that the basic human needs of black people are met. My journey here has intertwined with the lives of countless individuals, particularly our black youth. I am a mentor at a local theater with a mission to teach our youth how to write and produce plays.

I am someone who consistently show up and have been recognized by the City of Rochester as someone who is dedicated to the solution.

I am here today because to intentionally address longstanding challenges in our communities, we must start at the root of the problem.

I want to bring sharp focus to a couple barriers and systemic inequalities, policing and environmental racism. The unequal systems that Black Americans have been forced to navigate are not unintended ramifications, these are the residual impacts of slavery that still greatly impact black people in Rochester.

I will begin by acknowledging the racist history and continued harmful practices of the Rochester Police Department. As most of us may know, the Rochester Police Department was originally formed as an unstructured system of volunteers acting as watchmen with the task of controlling former enslaved people and dehumanizing them, mainly with verbal and physical violence that left many recently freed black people with added trauma.

Today Rochester is among some of the heaviest policed cities across the country, and the Rochester Police Department is one of the most violent police forces in the State of New York.

I was raised within one of the poorest zip codes in Rochester and have firsthand witnessed my black uncles, friends, and community members be targeted and fall victim to excessive use of force by police, with the officer's intention being to inflict fear and uphold a sense of superiority over black people in the city.

Another prominent issue here in Rochester is the clear environmental racism that a high percentage of black families have been affected by. Take the Corn Hill neighborhood, for example. A prominently black neighborhood that became a target for urban renewal and highway planners.

And by 1972, Route 490 cut through Corn Hill, ultimately demolishing nearly every home and business. Exposing them to environmental toxins, people lost investments in their homes, businesses and cultural institutions from jazz clubs to civic clubs and community centers. They were displaced and had to close entirely. Nearly nine hundred families were displaced and uprooted.

Black neighborhoods in Rochester are the most impacted by gross air, lead, contaminated water, and there are hardly any available green spaces in black neighborhoods. This -- sorry. This has an adverse affect of pollution, and the property values of these homes and these neighborhoods compared to white neighborhoods.

Reparations will be the start of New York taking a true accountable look and acknowledge the harm that follows the legacy of slavery and will be a tangible step towards prosperity for all New Yorkers. Thank you.

DR. CANDICE LUCAS: Good evening Commissioners, fell Rochesterians. The call for reparations is not simply about acknowledging the wrongs of the past or providing financial payouts to individuals, it's not just about figuring out who can trace their ancestry back the furthest or who can demonstrate they've been harmed the most. Those are just tactics that continue to divide our community. It's about righting the historical wrongs, healing generational trauma, and addressing the injustices that continue to leave countless black New Yorkers behind, uneducated, disproportionately incarcerated, living unhealthy lifestyles, dying prematurely and so many more ills.

First New York must confront its legacy of slavery. Even though it was a free state by the time of the Civil War, New York continued to benefit from the enslavement of Africans. New York's economy was built on the backs of enslaved black people who labored on the farms, in homes, and throughout the city, helping to establish the wealth of this state. This is a history that has been erased, overlooked, and dismissed for far too long.

The fact that so many people didn't even know that New York was a slave state is part of the problem. Our students must be educated on the full and true history of our state and our country.

For decades black families in New York were denied mortgages, access to quality housing, fair employment opportunities based on discriminatory policies that sought to segregate communities. For example, while white families got to live in beautiful subdivisions built just for them, some known as Levittown in the suburbs of Long Island, in Brooklyn, where I happen to be from, we got Marcy Projects and other housing developments.

New York must significantly invest in urban communities, through greenlining to counteract the effects of redlining. Dollars must go to homeowners to fix up and restore their homes, not just watch them get -- sorry, I can't read my handwriting. Not just watch them get torn down.

The systemic disadvantages faced by black communities in housing, education, healthcare and employment continue to perpetuate because of the inequities of the past.

Reparations for Black New Yorkers is about atonement, reconciliation and investment in black communities and black lives. It is about being bold and steadfast in dismantling the structures of oppression that have existed for centuries, and ensuring that the next generation of Black New Yorkers have the tools, resources and opportunities to thrive. Thank you.

CHRISTOPHER WILSON: Hello. Good evening. My name is Christopher Wilson. I am here with Real Boss Kids, a charity we put together a couple years ago to help children of Rochester. Also the CEO of Verdant Global, probably one of the only black renewable energy and critical infrastructure companies operating today in American.

We are talking about the problems here, and all the things here, and I want to give you a little bit of my perspective so you know who I am, and why I'm speaking the way I am.

My mother is white, Irish Dutch and English. And my father is from Tanzania, Africa. And you'll say, Well, what does that matter? That means I'm pretty much on the line. I don't know what color you are, I care what you're doing. I care who you are. I care that you show up.

My mother worked for City Hall. She was there during the whole thing, and my mother was white. So she heard conversations that a lot of people didn't hear about the Inner Loop and what happened and what went on. And we saw what happened.

And after that, I was inspired. I said, You know what, when I grow up, I've got to do something. And if I can come back to my city and go learn something somewhere and bring it back, I would. And I did, and I went to City Hall years ago, eight years ago and I gave them this plan right here, this exact plan. And it was for circular economic sustainable development, 1.8 million square feet of which I have the blueprints for right here. And they looked at me like I was stupid, like I was crazy. So you know what I did, I went back and I got a degree, just this last July, from Cambridge University in Circular Economic Sustainable.

And I live over on Clifford and Clinton Avenue and wake up every night to people losing their damn minds because of this project. And then when I go to City Hall and all the other people, and I say, Look, I did this. They say, Chris, you got to do that, and then I go do that. And then they say, Chris, you got to do this, and then I go do this. And then you know what happens, they say, Chris, you got to do that. So Chris is tired of doing that.

And since I have new friends from over in Cambridge, and new opportunities to bring money to communities, then I got to ask, Well, Chris, where is your community? Where are the people that are in charge? I know the communities are. I know if I told them right now and they really believe me that I could bring \$450,000,000 to help redevelop this community and show them that we already have the money here, I bet you would totally different because I'm not the usual suspect.

Okay, I'm not the usual black person that gets the opportunity here, and I'm definitely not the white person.

But I've heard it from both sides, and I believe it's time to remove that separation, to move all that stuff out the way and we start working together as people of color. And that's the problem.

And I literally have the plan right here and been turned away multiply or been ignored. And I e-mailed and called some of the people in this room, and they look at me like I'm crazy or try to say that I'm trying to cut the line. I don't cut anybody's line.

The thing we need to start learning to use is FOI, that is Freedom of Information. So when that money comes down the line or when it's not coming down the line, we put a FOI on it.

And you know what, you and me might only need -- know how to answer certain questions or ask certain questions. It's not always the answer, it's the -- it's the way you ask it, it's who's asking it. And if I get my professors from Cambridge with degrees in economics and circular sustainability, I bet you we'll get the answers we need. And I bet you we have the money because money is imaginary and made up. And why can't we imagine that everybody has enough money to do something that makes sense when we go the plans, the talent right here in Rochester. We don't need talent from elsewhere. We need to work on the talent here. And God bless you all. Thank you.

TATIYANA WELCH: Hello everybody. Hope everyone is well. Thank you all for coming and participating. So let me get started.

My name is Tatiyana Welch, and I stand before you today as a parent, an advocate, and a believer in the power of education. But I'm also here as a descendant of enslaved Africans carrying the weight of a legacy that continues to share our lives today.

I've seen firsthand the transformative potential of learning when it's tailored to individual needs and driven by passion, not that standardized tests. That's why I'm here to talk to you about educational justice, reparations and revolutionary idea learning savings account. Yes, we know what learning savings account are, but our current education system is failing too many of our children. It's a system doesn't -- designed for mass production, not individual flourishing.

In New York State school districts receive between 20,000 and 40,000 per student each year, but what if those funds followed the child empowering families to create the best learning environment possible. Imagine this, a learning savings account funded by the state that parents can use to pay for educational expenses; meaning things like homeschooling cost, curriculum materials, tutors and even field trips. Things like private school tuition, expanding options for families who want alternatives to tradition public schools.

Also, learning pods, like the ones I created where small groups of students learn together in a personalized and supportive environment, whether lone school suspension or at homeschool in general.

This isn't about abandoning public education because we love our public education system. We want it to be better. It's about empowering families with choice and control. It's about recognizing that one size does not fit all when it comes to learning.

A learning savings account would be able to promote educational equity. It would be giving families, especially those in underserved communities, the resources to access the education that best meets their children's needs. It will help foster innovation by encouraging the development of diverse in creating learning models. It will also increase parental involvement making parents an active participant in their children's education and not having to almost worry about food being on the table.

But let's be clear, learning savings accounts are just one piece of the puzzle. We need a comprehensive approach to reparations that addresses the deep injustices caused by the legacy of slavery and the systemic racism for centuries.

We demand justice for the trauma that continues to haunt our communities, the Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome that manifest in disparities and mental health education and all economic well-being. We demand recognition of the economic exploitation that built this nation on the backs of the enslaved Africans. We demand a share of the wealth that was generated by our ancestors, forced labor. We demand bond, stock and trust funds that will be provided opportunities for future generations. We demand free college tuition for descendants of the African diaspora, a chance to break the cycle of poverty and inequity that has been perpetrated by the systemic racism for centuries.

This not about charity, this is about justice. It's about acknowledging the debt that is owned, and taking concrete steps to repair the harm that has done -- been done.

It's time to re-image education, to invest in our children to create a system where every child has the opportunity to thrive. It's time for reparations, for healing, for justice. Let's make it now.

LORI THOMAS: Good evening. The federal government promised us 40 acres and a mule, which was essentially a proposal to give each formally enslaved family a plot of 40 acres of land and a mule to help them establish economic independence and generational welfare.

So I did some math. There are 340,000,000 people in America. 14 percent is what we all agree upon is African American or some people call black, okay. That's 476 -- 47,600,000. If we give those individuals 40 acres and a mule, based on an average of New York State, North Carolina and California properties, we would only take -- it would only take \$1,809,000,000.

Give me my 40 acres and a mule. We were not -- we were not guaranteed an education, we were not guaranteed a home, we were not guaranteed food, clothing or shelter. We were promised 40 acres and a mule. And that's all I want, 40 acres and a mule.

So I've done some -- few observations here. In 1935 the leadership was white, and we [raised|raced] our voice and effected change. Today's our leaders are black, and we suffer under the same conditions, but we have no voice.

You got to ask why. Why are our black leaders allowing our children to fail? 14 and 16 percent ELA and math scores, and they want to be re-elected and are re-elected by the people, by the way.

One percent of 14 percent of the Rochester population is 290 people. There are not 290 people here.

We will never get what we deserve because we will never stand and fight for it. We will not come together. We will not join our voices. We will elect leaders who work for them and not for us. We will believe their narrative instead of the reality of our narrative. And as long as we do that, we're never going to have our 40 acres and a mule. Thank you.

SHARICE BEUFORD SCOTT: Hi. My name is Sharice Beuford Scott. Today I come to you as just a community member, Someone whose family has been impacted from the beginning, from the moment they stepped on this land.

I read an article while I was sitting here as you guys were going through your minutes, and in the article it was a man from Greer, Oklahoma who was talking about how he had no idea that his family enslaved slaves under their name. A story that I am very familiar with, as my family placed through transatlantic slave trade by entry of the Louisiana Port and were taken by an Irish family, by the last time Greer that my family still carries, and taken onto Oklahoma where our language, our culture and everything was stripped from my family.

My great, great grandfather Greer was able to do amazing things, and my grand -- and my great grandparents started ministries and they spoke all over this nation about advocacy and empowering people. They fought through the Jim Crow era and the Civil Rights Movement. And this is, as far as I know, my history goes.

On the other side of my family, my grandmother, Esther Eddings who married my grandfather, Grant Greer in Oklahoma. They met on the sharecropping land where my family was enslaved. My grandmother was pushed from Alabama. She was in the Trail of Tears. My family's land, history, everything was snatched and taken from them.

People act as though Native Americans were not dark-skinned, were not brown. I keep her picture up as a legacy in my office. She was a dark brown chocolate woman that when the government came to verify who she was, and if that's where she had moved to, out of fear, because black Native Americans were treated worse than African Americans during that time, my grandmother denied her lineage. And so we have no right to the land that we rightfully belong on. This is rightfully our land.

And reparations could look like so many things to me, but I remember vividly when in 2017 the State of California took my father's whole estate for Medicaid to where that was the end of our generational wealth. That should have been something to elevate finally, finally all the work that my ancestors made. That should have been something to finally elevate and give my father's grandchildren, children and grandchildren and descendants a fighting chance at generational wealth.

And however the reparations come out, not only do we need to make it known that descendants of slavery still exist, descendants of Black Native Americans still exist. And those harms have not been written right.

SHAWN DUNWOODY: I want to say thank you to everyone. Thank you. Good evening, everyone. How are you doing tonight?

All right. I'm going to keep it short and I'm going to keep it brief. This gone be under three minutes because I can submit things online.

We all need to stand that reparations are important. It needs to happen. So that's not here my argument. That's not my cause. What I want to do is just talk about one particular area. As Elder Asa, you still here, was mentioning.

My partner, Susan and I have been working on the reconnecting communities and the Inner Loop. And we do see the fear of what Elder Asa mentioned. So we've been working with individuals like Demond Meeks, Senator to make things happen. To make sure that the communities just north of the Inner Loop are not harmed, that they can remain in their homes.

Maybe this reparations funds could go towards a anti-displacement fund, so that those individuals who are in their home who can't afford their taxes, now have a fund that helps their taxes. Let us figure out ways that we can build housing with auxiliary dwelling units within the home so that now mom and dad are there and grandma could live downstairs. Grandma can now age in place. The children can now come into the home. This creates a stream of generational wealth in the neighborhood.

So if we have the momentum and movement to do it now, I please ask you do what's right with this reparations. As they shine the light on the Inner Loop being the beacon of the great thing that's happening at Rochester, don't forget about the families that have been there and live there right next to it. I'm done. Thank you.

SUZANNE MAYER: Hi, I'm Susan Meyer, but my partner just spoke for me, so thank you very much.

ETHALENE LAWRENCE: Yes, my name is Ethalene Lawrence, and I'm just a citizen in Rochester, lived here all my life.

And I'm just -- you know, I mean, I look at the -- the black community and I get very sad because I know that what happened to us was by design. And I know that the only way we gonna fix it, is we as black people got to come together and make it happen. We got to do it. Because I done lived here a long time, and I'm a senior, and I haven't seen no change for us. Not through the government, local, state or national, haven't seen it.

Reparations is due, and we will get it because that's by universal law, not man's law. And I would like to see things get better for us, but I don't see it coming through laws and policies of man. I do not see it.

Affirmative action, DEI -- DEI and all that stuff, that wasn't about nothing. It wasn't even for us. It was just language, word games. It didn't do nothing for us.

And I want to tell my people, y'all we got to get together, we got to come together and help ourselves. That's what we got to do. You talking about -- oh God, because I didn't write nothing down. I don't write nothing down. I speak from my heart.

When they talk about gentrification, urban renewal, it's still going on, still going on. Right now elderly people have homes they want to leave to their children, but the houses is falling down because they haven't had the monies to fix them up. And then, Oh, go get a grant, go get a lead grant, go get this. The only thing the city come in there and do is outside of the house. For what, curb appeal. That's all it is. It's about curb appeal. They ain't gone help you with your plumbing, your electricity, your foundation, they not gonna do none of that, okay. Make it look good on the outside even though the floor is falling in on the inside, okay.

And then -- you know, I just got to speak the truth how I see it, and I've been seeing it for years. I'm a senior citizen and I see it. I seen it for years.

ELIZABETH McGRIFF: Hi. My name is Elizabeth McGriff. And I was wondering, you know, what to say and then I began to think of the things that people have already said. And the question is, What would reparations do for me?

Will it change my history not knowing my elders? Because they died very young. Will it change or restore -- restore the education lost by a system that hasn't been well for us? Will it change the folks that are in jail incarcerated, exploited by low wages, \$60 and then they sell it in the market for much more?

My hope is when restoration happens, it will be put back in the communities that have been harmed by this. It will give people the education that they need to go to school and have -- have a better life.

There is the saying by your zip code, wherever you're born in that that defies who you'll be. Give them -- give people an opportunity to raise themselves up and to have an education. And create community -- community wealth for -- to be put back in those communities so people can -- can thrive.

I just wanted to tell a little bit of my family history. When the white flight was leaving Rochester, my dad had an opportunity. He was a builder, he built foundations. And housing is the biggest foundation for people in our community. We have a -- an increase amount of homelessness.

Gentrification will not happen if -- well, gentrification will happen if our government continues the act in the way it's acting now. Right now the -- like Asa said earlier, we see the reverse that happened in the past, we see it now, and we need to change that.

KING TREMAINE: Good evening. King Tremaine with the Black American Tribe Task Force.

I would like to begin by reasserting re-demanding transparency by this Commission. First in Buffalo in November, then again in Queens in December we asked for transparency as to what the Commission was doing in realtime. We still have yet to receive that.

There is no expense report, for example, or budget as far as what the Commission is working on. Specifically, though, what I'm talking about is the Subcommittee put together an Expert Witness List or so-called Expert Witness List that we have not been about to examine.

If we cannot examine this Witness List, then we cannot ask questions, the appropriate questions that we want to ask. We are done being spoken for without being -- representing ourselves and holding the people who are representing us accountable.

Moving on. To lineage-based remedies and reparations. To quote Brother M, because I didn't get his permission to use his name, so we'll call him Brother M here from Rochester with a work group. Ideologies are the mental software that programs how we move. But here's the chest move, is that software outdated? Can it be updated to meet the current algorithm?

For context for everyone here, the software is Pan-Africanism, aka flat blackness, race-based approach to reparations.

The current algorithm is the current legal standards that race-based remedies are, indeed, in fact, unconstitutional.

Devine Prince, when he was the was the President of the U.S. Freedom Project -- Freedman Project, when he was in Albany with you on 2/15/25 asked you to examine No. 8 of your duties which asked this Commission to recommend appropriate remedies. Appropriate remedies would be appropriate legislation. Appropriate legislation would be laws that, in fact, that should be passed.

A law that is unconstitutional, even if it is passed will over -- be overturned and not withstand legal scrutiny.

So again, to furthermore, Brother Howard Ewar wrote this Commission. Neither him nor Mr. Prince were ever acknowledged for their oral or written submissions by this Commission.

He asked this Commission, if you would stand with the people, the Community of the Community Commissions on Reparations and Remedies, if you would stand with the people and demand that the legislators that -- the legislation that convened this Commission be amended to include lineage-based remedies, which is the only thing that will withstand the legal scrutiny that is the context of the law that exist right now.

To my knowledge, we have not received any information regarding that, no feedback from the -- the Commission regarding that, which is imperative to how we move. Because there is no sense in going further. Definitely no sense in us asking our legislators to give you an extension because it will all be for none. We are not going to propose legislation that's not going to get us anywhere.

Finally, a lot of members of this Commission seem to think that holding onto this idea of Pan-Africanism is what's most important, like there's some type of battle between that and lineage-based remedies. That's not what exists. What actually exist is evolution versus stagnation.

Why is this Commission still stagnated and not evolving with the rest of the country? California has proposed two bills, AB 1315, SD 518. Both of them are lineage-based resolutions and bills for remedies for reparations.

I ask that this Commission stop being stagnated and evolve with the demands of the people.

TERRY CHAKA: Okay. I grew up during the '50s and '60s on Frost Avenue between Jefferson and Genesee. We were the first black people in that area, if you can believe that. So, you know, people who think of that area, you know, couldn't imagine it without black folks there.

So although I've lived in other cities, I'm back there now because I inherited that family property. And I feel like it still feels like home. And so one of the reasons that, you know, I kind of elected to stay there is because I feel that that neighborhood needs me.

I'm just one person, but I'm also not a person that likes to just talk about things, I'm about action. And those people who know me, know that I had one of the largest black book stores here in Rochester during the '80s and '90s.

And they also know that I spent time at the Baobab Cultural Center for little or no money teaching our students about themselves. So a lot of this -- you know, reparations is not just about the dollar, but it is about identity, recognition. It's about dealing with generational trauma. So we need for people to -- or we need for Reparations Committee to be able to support those entities, and financial literacy.

So there's a lot there that has to go on, so it's not just about the dollar amount. Because we know that in the past that we have had, that black people have had our own -- we've had our own places, our own cities and they were destroyed. So how, even after all of this -- you know, if we get up on

our feet and are able to accomplish a whole lot of things, how is it going to also be protected? That question has not come up. There's a lot more that I could say, but for now, that's it.

ELDER ADAMS: My guy done got quiet. I'm not here to hold a walk. I'm finna to turn my three minutes over to a friend of mines because I believe I said enough. And I believe everyone has the message.

CLAY HARRIS: My name is Clay Harris for those who do not know me.

I'm going to be Just straight up. I used to believe in reparations because one, I thought it -- I'm a peacemaker, right. I don't like conflict per se, and I like to bridge gaps and et cetera. And I didn't want a conflict between us and America, right, black people against white people, you know. Or those who don't believe in it, whether they black or white, in reparations.

But -- but over the last couple years, I came to realize -- oh, and the second reason. Excuse me. The second reason was I didn't think we could afford it because we were like \$34,000,000,000,000 in debt. This was a national, not state. And I was like, This gone be too much money. We got to get rid of the debt. We gone be in bankruptcy as a country, right.

However, when I saw the boarders just flung open and anybody and everybody came in we got about 20,000,000 just came in and the government is taking care of them, I was like, Hum, I think they can afford us, to give us reparations. They can afford people who don't even belong here, right. So, so I came around and I -- I have decided to support it.

Another thing, and this is for you guys, governor, all these Commissioners, how We gone pay for it, right, New York State. Because New York State, right. I got two great ideas. One is they've legalized marijuana now, okay. And they making a lot of money. I don't know where this money going, but I think a percentage of that should go towards reparation. Secondly, which I thought they should have just decriminalized and not legalized. I won't go into it. Secondly the lotto, I think a portion of that lottery, because from what I heard now they gone put it up to \$5 per. Used to be a dollar, now it's \$2, it gone be \$5. That's a lot of revenue they gone be bringing in. I think a percentage of that should be allocated towards reparation.

Another thing, which I have a problem with. We, here in Rochester, are committing gentrification on steroids, right here, right now. This ain't 1950 or 1960, it's right now. Because of the real estate and the investors and the taxes and everything, and this Inner Loop that they about to put a billion dollars in further downtown, and it should be invested into the neighborhoods.

DEMOND MEEKS: So I just want to say anything, you know, you heard a number of people speak today about some of the development that's coming down the Inner Loop. This \$223,000,000 project as far as filling in the Inner Loop and preparing it for what's to come development. We

secured a hundred million from the State of New York, another hundred million from the federal government, and we're working on the additional 23,000,000.

If we look at our community right now as it relates to gentrification or development, there's a number of development projects that are going on. And I think that we, as a community, have to be intentional in this space as it relates to generating wealth from these development projects.

One of the first conversations that I had when we met regarding the -- well, when I was at the table regarding the Inner Loop was, we need funding and resources to make sure that individuals from our community have an opportunity to generate wealth. With that we were able to secure hundreds of thousands of dollars from the federal government to help begin to train individuals from our community.

We also have some development going up in our neighborhoods, some of it by way of our churches. But if we look at major development in our community, it's very seldom that you see black and brown bodies working on them. That's not on the government. Part of it is, it calls for 30 percent. But if it's our community, we also have to have a voice as a member of our community.

I've talked to other communities across New York State, they say, Brother, we don't deal with that. I said, Well, how did y'all push back against it? They said, Well, eventually we were able to get some agreements, as it relates to the labor, before it take -- took place. But they would actually go and March onto these projects as a community and say, We need to speak to -- to the -- we need to speak to the developers. We need to speak to whoever's spearheading this project. And they would simply tell they're not available. They said, Well, we don't know how you're going to move forward with this project unless we speak to those people and they agree that we get X amount of jobs as it relates to this development.

So I'm saying to us as a community, the power of the people is far stronger than the people in power. And for far too long we sort of lost track of that as a community.

I grew up in a Baptist church. There were rules and guidelines as it relate to who walks and who speaks from the pulpit. But what I notice is a lot of our churches, if you a politician you get the pulpit. Some -- somebody know what I'm talking about, but historically that just wasn't the case. And I just think that we sort of lost sight because we've been sort of bamboozled as to who the power brokers are, and the power brokers are the members of the community.

So I hold a political seat, but I subscribe to servant leadership. And I have not lost sight of who I am, who I'm from, and whose I am. So I think that we got to do better in that space. Thank you all.

**MIGUEL MELÉNDEZ:** Good evening. Thank you for having me. My name is Miguel Meléndez, City Council Member.

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge that I have my daughter with me, my twelve year old daughter Aaliyah, because I wanted her to experience and hear from the community as well.

What I wanted to say tonight, and the reason I think this is critically important is the State of New York can act. We know that right now the federal government will not, and it is has been decade and decades, lifetimes and lifetimes where the federal government has not acted. And this Commission has an opportunity to invest in black communities across our state and to do so in a way that is meaningful.

And it is my hope that the remedies that come from the community, the solutions that you're hearing tonight, that they are lifted at a state level, at a statewide level. And that we here in Rochester can be -- help elevate those voices and create opportunities because the federal government isn't coming to save us. It's very clear under this current administration it's not happening. And frankly, even when democrats have had the office we have not been able to move.

So let's be very clear that the State of New York has an opportunity. I'm very thankful for Assembly Member Meeks, for this leadership in this space. And we have a lot more work to do, but I'm here for it. Thank you.

BROOKE: To the Commission, you were setup to fail. Other commissions had executive directors, staff, research and legal teams, and this one, you weren't even allowed to speak to each other before being sworn in. Does that include relatives or is that a conflict?

Anyway, if you know the law, you know that this bill and this Commission is a time-wasting, heel-spinning joke. More democratic symbolism over substance. Why pass a blatantly illegal, unconstitutional bill then use taxpayer funds for a commission? Commissioners may not be getting paid, but other staff and researchers are.

Race-based compensation will never become law. And this isn't just a valid point, it's constitutional law. And as we have seen with the overturning of DEI and affirmative action, labeling it African descendant doesn't change it's race-based nature.

Legislators can pass bills, but that doesn't mean they'll survive legal scrutiny. Legal scrutiny like Ed Blum who is laser focused on knocking this bill down. The Freedman Project went to legislators and told them that they got it wrong. They told them they wanted it amended. They told them to repeal the existing bill currently signed into law.

The Freedman came in hand with a constitutional bill, with the recipients based on our legal status as Freedman. They went around to different legislators and the assembly and state senate. They talked to them. They sat with them. They sent letters and phone calls. But due to what I can only assume is the inability of legislators to see themselves benefitting from this legal bill, we faced what we always face in this country, except this time it's from skin folk proving in action that they aren't the kin folk of the FBA Freedman.

How telling is it that we're getting the same treatment as we have with other legislators who don't share our skin? How does will free us? I guess the legislators would be unqualified to tell us or they

are purposely sabotaging our reparations because they do not have a bill that's worth a hill of beans.

So, there may be only forty-four million of us, but we are forty-four million who are used to fighting. And I don't mean to sound pejorative, but we are forty-four million who don't run from a fight. Foundational Black American impacts and influence, our presence over power is so effective in fighting that people immigrate here from all over the world to benefit from the fruits of and gains of the civil rights that we fought and died for.

Since this bill is already deadlier than a doornail, I come to speak before my neighbors. I come to serve you notice that when this bill dies, we, the FBA Freedman will remain standing and fighting as we have for centuries on this land drenched in our blood.

In closing, including your report that this bill is unconstitutional and illegal and isn't worth the paper it's written on and you know it. Have a good day.

KEISHA FORRESTER: Good evening to the Commission. First, I would like to conclude what Brooke said that this bill is flawed.

As Black American -- as a Black American descendant of slavery, we demand reparations in the form of substantial cash payments and full income tax exemption.

Our ancestors who were stolen from their homes, trafficked and exploited under the system of brutal forced labor built the wealth of this state, yet we and our families have continued to suffer under generations of racial injustice, economic suppression and government neglect.

New York State's role in slavery was not incidental, it was foundational, hence foundational Black Americans deserve reparations.

Before the Civil War and even after the abolition of slavery of the transatlantic slave trade, excuse me, in 1808, Black American were still kidnapped and sold in slavery through the reverse underground railroad. New York itself was the home to a thriving network of kidnappers who preyed on free black people forcing them into bondage in the south. This was not the work of a few criminals, but a system upheld by corrupt officials, law enforcement and even the courts, all of them who turned a blind eye to the suffering of black families torn apart.

The New York kidnapping clubs composed of police officers, judges ensured black people would never feel safe in a so-called free north. Wall Street itself, now a symbol of American wealth, was built on the trade of black bodies. Enslaved blacks were the first commodities bought and sold on the very heart of the New York Financial District. This was not just southern brutality. New York profited immensely from slavery, insuring slave ships, financing plantations, and ensuring continued oppression of black people long after slavery was legally abolished. The state government, its banks and its business thrived on our suffering, and they owe a long overdue debt.

Even after slavery officially ended, New York never made good on its promises to Black Americans. The New York democrat party has consistently failed us, offering empty pledges, symbolic justice while doing little to repair the damage. Instead of justice we face redlining, segregation, police brutality and economic exclusion.

The crack epidemic of the '80s fueled by systemic neglect and targeted policies devastated black communities, while the government wage war on us instead of addressing the root causes.

This is not an accident, it is a continuation of the same racist structure that has always sought to keep us oppressed. We are tired of waiting. We are tired of broken promises. New York history is one of active participation in black suffering.

You owe a debt, and we come to collect that debt. And if you think what happened to Kamala Harris's campaign was something, wait till we do with the rest of you.

ELDRRESS DELORES JACKSON RADLEY: Good evening everyone. Hi Sean, everybody.

Reparations, I -- I wish -- okay, reparations. Reparations would be so essential to the uplift of our entire country itself. When you do what is right, what is owed, what is supposed to be done, everyone will benefit.

Yes we do deserve reparations. At the end of American slavery, who got reparations? The slave owners got reparations. We are due no less for all the hundreds and hundreds of years.

Universal education for all of us, college, post college, any kind of education for all black people. Okay. Free or -- or decent housing available to everyone. Health care, we -- we -- racism takes ten years off of our lives so we need -- we need health care, universal health care. All of these are things that we should have unlimitedly, housing, health care, education.

And then yes, cash, real money. Because that 40 acres and a mule, I was talking to some ladies back here said the mule, we don't need the mule, we need the value of the mule. We need the value of 40 acres. We deserve it. We've fought for it. And we always fight for every single thing we've ever gotten in America. We stand up and we fight over and over and over again. And it's exhausting and yet because of our great spiritual power, we are still here.

We deserve it all. We will have -- if we don't get it all, we're all going to perish.

ROSS JOMO: Yes, to the Commission and to everybody, and even to our creator and all of our ancestors I think that everybody, hopefully, is coming with the right spirit even if we got different ideas, and I guess that's why we're having a listening sessions.

But one of the things I could do, and don't take my time yet. I think that the Commissioners should try to encourage all of their constituents, all of their voting armies to ask our assembly and our senate to extend the time so that we can do things more thoroughly. We know that the time is not going to be enough, so please invite everybody while you have the listeners in Rochester, you have

the assemblymen here, the senator, senator representative, but all over New York State let us -- let us add that to -- to the value of our -- of our voice.

A couple things I just want to add in recommendation, and we will submit them, but just in listening to what happened here, I'm in Buffalo, New York and all over as is being spoken, the greatest -- one of the greatest things that is taking place is the dividing of the people and their culture. Because when you're not with your people you can't fully practice your culture because that's a interrelational thing. So all of these patterns that remove us from our communities and our cultures have had an affect that we might not be qualifying or quantifying in our -- in that form with the end of the communication.

But segregating us also segregated our time, and our talent, and our resources and it allowed for others to take advantage of those things not being interconnected. Our time, our talent, and our resources were left defenseless when we were separated. All right.

The continued fight or really a cultural war, it has taken place on our physical wealth, our mental health, and our spiritual self, which has not also been brought up. Like what spiritually has happened to us since the onslaught of what Europeans done to our people. Whether you were here already as natives or whether you was brought over as Africans or whether you came here alone and you still got ran over. Regardless to how or when you got here, they did it to all of us. So I don't want to argue about who was here first, second or third. Okay.

The other aspect is Bob Marley has a song, Buffalo Soldier. And if you haven't listened to the first part it says, We were taken from Africa, brought to America, fighting on arrival, fighting for survival. So just as the foundational family has spoken, just as everyone spoke, our communities have never stopped fighting.

And I don't want to really put all blame on laws and legislation because if you're watching the 21st century, every time a law or legislation or even a good move is made, there is always a group of people trying to take it back, which is why the sister talked about protection.

So we have to continually fight. It's not as though voting didn't help or the legislation didn't help, we have people that are always trying fight a cultural, spiritual war against us. So being full mindful of that, our mission is to prepare to repair. And repair also means restoration of our best selves to a BC status. And that's before captivity because we based everything on what happened in American. What was made in America is not who they stole. All right. So we've been using the reference point that's off.

So we'll talk a little bit more about it later. But I think that we should support our black media, our black newspaper and our black press because without them we can't continue communication. Thank you.

BROTHER ROB OMOABATHALAH: Good evening everyone. And thank you to the New York State Community Commission on Reparation Remedies and all of our Commissioners and everyone who really put this together.

My name is Brother Rob Omoabathalah from -- born and raised in the City of Yonkers and now reside in the City of Buffalo, and I'm glad to be here.

This issue is a long time issue, and I just want to give honor and respect to our ancestors, those who fought a good fight. Those who had struggled for freedom, for black freedom, for freedom before we got here and while -- while we're here. We are the recipients, I am the recipient of that movement and that energy.

So reparations, I do recognize that the damages have occurred in my own family and in my own community. And I recognize that it's only a portion of repair that could be -- that could be administered from the state. I just recognize that slavery was much more larger than just the state's involvement or the government's involvement.

And so I just want to caution us to remind us that we have a responsibility. We have responsibility to fight for our own repair and freedom. Yes, yes, the enslavers --

Well, let me say this. Also that there is a thing of labor -- language of liberation. And we're hoping that as we re-educate ourselves about our position and our -- our position in this society that we recognize that we're not slaves. That we want to start to remove and peel that terminology background. We were people who were enslaved. Slavery is a system. And so we are -- we've heard other people come and say, Those Africans who were enslaved. This is a part of the restorative language.

Also we want to caution you to also look at that word master. For an enslaved African he is no master, he is a murderer. He is a killer. Do you understand that the language, as we change the language we begin to see things for what they are.

And so we're hoping that as we place education as a high priority of re-education and de-education to re-educate ourselves that we begin to look at some of these terminologies.

Then last, but not least, the land question. And the land question is -- always needs to be center because the land is the basis of independence so says Brother Malcolm. And as we reconsider we have to reconsider our relationship to the land. We have to restore the land and restore our relationship to the land. Not to be exploitive, but to be cultivating of that land.

If you notice that they -- they say we're tricked into thinking you -- you are to exploit the resources instead of you are to use the resources wisely and equitably. Thank you.

BABA ING: Good evening. I'd first like to give thanks to God, the God who brought us all this far during our enslavement.

Slavery is not ended, so I'm grateful to God. I'm grateful to our ancestors. I'm grateful to the Commissioners for the work that you're doing. It's very necessary. We deserve reparations.

My focus tonight, and I will submit documents and documentation to you at another time online, but my focus tonight is on how reparations will impact the destruction that mass incarceration has had on black communities throughout America.

I believe, this is my -- from my own research, that when the hoax of the emancipation proclamation was written they immediately followed that with mass incarceration. The prison leasing, you know, program was immediately instituted, chain gangs were instituted. And over a hundred and a half million black and brown, men women and children are imprisoned in America today. So mass incarceration is the extension of our enslavement in my mind and reparations needs to address that.

I mean, we have all the professionals, all the experts necessary to make the decisions on how reparations money will be allocated.

Yes, there should be paychecks in the hands of those descendants who show lineage to a person that was enslaved on a plantation here in America. But yes, also policies and programs and re-education, all of this has to be focused on by the -- you, by the Commissioners because black children, as Carter G. Woodson told us in the Mis-Education of the Negro, have been programmed to hate themselves in the public education. Public education was created in America to maintain a servant class. That's not what we need. We need self-education.

And there has been a -- a focus by people in New York City, the Board of Education actually in New York City, to develop a black curriculum. That they are hoping that black parents and black community organizations will take on. Go online and get this black curriculum for black and brown children so that you can teach it to your children because the Board of Education is not going to do it. They haven't done it this far, they're not going to do it, so we have to do it ourselves.

And again, thank you very much for your work. I hope to be able to submit further comments online.

Yes, the website was developed by a panel out of New York City. The Chancellor of New York City board of education doctor, I think Alvarez maybe or Vasquez. I'll find that and I'll put it online, yes I will. Thank you very much.

KEITH HARRIS: Welcome welcome. Well again, my name is Keith Harris. I'm a artist, advocate and educator in the community of Rochester.

In regards to reparations, the question is, it definitely needs to happen, but why? All of the -- you know, and I will say that my -- my mother and my father came from the south from area Memphis and Mississippi. I was born and [raised|raced] in the great State of New York. And I love New York, but there has to be changes.

One of the key things is that the wealth of nations globally was built on slavery. The transatlantic slave trade impacted everything. That means that everybody got rich, except those who dug the ditch, who built the Capitol, who built the White House, these are black people, who dig up cities, literally and figuratively, by hand. Manhattan was done when it was under the Dutch, it was New Amsterdam. They dug up, dug up Manhattan. The cobblestone streets and all that is still there. All of the legacy is still there.

The banks in America, if we go all the big banks, Chase, all -- they can trace their roots back to slavery. The Bill of Sale, every -- they were trading stock, the stock market was where they traded slaves. This is all -- so all this began with slavery and it built up the wealth of the world.

So doing right, America can't go forward until they address the concerns of black people. They can't go forward until we get the debt that's owed. The reason being, look what happened during the Civil War. They tried to ignore us, said, No, we're going to keep them slaves. No we're not going to -- and it almost destroyed America. It brought America to its knees. They almost wiped us out.

Look at -- I mean, brother against brother over black people. America hasn't learned. You know, they said if you don't learn from history you're doomed to repeat it.

Then you go to the '60s with Dr. King and Malcolm and the panthers and people marching. America was almost brought to its knees. And again they were shown mercy because they said, Hey, if you don't do right by black people, there will be consequence and actions. There will be consequences and repercussions.

So now we're coming into the new age and there has to be a change. Right now black people are calling out all around the world. It's time to understand that black people have had enough. It is time --

America can't move forward until they pay the debt. They did it with the Jews. The Jews, they gave them reparations, they gave them a country and everything. And then they said, Well, we don't know where you're going to put your -- they first went to Africa. They was going to put Israel in Africa. People don't know this. But they said, Okay we'll --

So this is what -- they can do it. They can do it for one group, they can do it for us. And now is the time for it.

JOYCE LUCAS: I'm Joyce Lucas. I'm here on behalf of myself, a taxpayer, a citizen of this great City of Rochester for over sixty years. My grandfather came from Georgia for a better opportunity in the City of New York State where there was inadequate education, corrupt penal system, economical redlining that demands reparations. Also as far as urban renewal, I was here back then.

As a resident, previous residence '05, these areas where they want to filled in Inner Loops when people don't have homes, is ridiculous. I would like to see those funds put back into the

community, build up the Pepsi Colas and the Coke Colas and all these other businesses where we could become more self sustainable.

Our education systems, our correctional systems, all of those need to be revamped. We have money -- I mean the Inner Loop could be refilled, however, that money be could be better used in building up hope in the city. Give us some businesses where we could feel good about ourselves, where we could become self sufficient ourselves. We don't have to depend on reparations. I mean they're good to have, but let's build up our own selves, our own communities.

LAMAR THE THERAPIST: You could start my time.

Activism cause the court system the auction block. Bear reform got us torn but don't turn back the clock. Are the inmates black like the kettle quarter pot? I been on Riker's a whole lot. Correctional facilities I was all up in them. Now I'm aging off double agent in the system. Mister make a difference. Therapist me, prison abolitionist doing God work and God image I'm really different. Really present, really gifted. I could part the Red Sea just to point out the division. And yet I chose raptivism cause ain't no broken system. It don't lack it was made to take and to subtract. Let my brothers out the box, bring our girls back. How these vagrants stay complacent during terror attacks? Politicians and the police performing the act.

It is no reparations without a change to mass incarceration. It was convict leasing that came after slavery, and then they re-branded it into the new Jim Crow that is now in today mass incarceration. They provided with us a bill reform bill that we could argue about what's the right way to reduce violent crime in our communities, and yet the research shows that when you provide people with housing and jobs and education, not only does poverty go down, crime also goes down.

We know the solution. We are aware of the solution, but we have to remember that this country was built on slavery. It was built on racism, and it was built on capitalism.

This country has a hypocrite- critics foundation. Lost and found beats in our nation, media circus circulation. Cash cows called complacency inflation. False prophets, market manipulation. False idols and philanthro-faking. In a second we gone stop asking for reparations. In a second we gone stop asking for reparations.

Tupac said it better than I could. He said, It's gonna be a point where the rich is gonna be so fat, they gonna be so wealthy, they gonna have so much money, they gonna be so comfortable. And the poor are gonna be so down-trodden, and so ragged, and so hungry and so thirsty that they not gonna have anything to eat but the rich.

Tax the rich. Tax the rich. This state has so much wealth and we know exactly where it lies at, 1 percent, 1 percent.

Would you rather be fed or would you rather be on the plate? I know where I'm trying to be at.  
Would you rather be fed or would you rather be on the plate? I know where I'm trying to be at. Tax  
the rich, it's as simple as that.

Dr. Hawkins thanked the audience from Rochester for lending their voices to the process. The  
Commissioners then provided their comments.

(The NYSCCRR Public Hearing concluded at 8:24 PM)

