



Reparations Committee

Thursday, March 2, 2023 @ 9:00 AM

Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, G300 (Hybrid)

COMMITTEE MEMBER PRESENT:

Councilmember Devon Reid, Councilmember Krissie Harris, Committee Member & Chair Robin Rue Simmons, Committee Member Carlis Sutton, Committee Member Bonnie Lockhart, and Committee Member Claire McFarland Barber.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

Councilmember Bobby Burns

STAFF PRESENT:

Tasheik Kerr, Assistant to City Manager; Damiloa Olabanji, Reparations Intern

1. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m by Chair Simmons.

A. Ancestral Acknowledgement

Committee Member Barber read the Ancestral Acknowledgement.

2 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Alvin B. Tillery, Director of the Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy, provided an update on the Reparations Survey. The survey was launched and will be in the field in about 10 days. There will be 3 phases of the program. 1st phase: Convenience sampling - the city's communication office sends surveys with a digital link. 2nd phase: Surveys sent in the mail targeting addresses in areas of the city. 3rd phase: Field study with 20 young people, 10 Evanston Township High School students and 10 Northwestern students in the city to assist residents with filling out the surveys on a tablet. 3,200 surveys were collected in the first phase. In 2 weeks mail surveys will be sent out and surveys will be completely anonymous. Surveys will most likely close in early June

Questions: (all responses from Professor Tillery unless otherwise noted)

Question: How do you verify only Evanston residents have filled out the survey and filled it out one time?

Response: NORC, National Opinion Research Center (out of University of Chicago) collects the addresses the Northwestern (NU) team doesn't see any of the addresses

on the response. The address data verifies Evanston residency. There is a statistical matching with the sample on how many addresses are in each ward so they can see when something is off, which is an unlikely scenario.

Question: If there is 1 person per address but there are 3 adults in my home, how does that work?

Response: 1 per address in the first phase, if another adult is in the home and wants to fill out a survey, they can do so via the young people with the tablets during the field research phase.

Question: Is there a way to target churches and elderly homes to target elderly people?

Response: Absolutely plan to do that

Question: Is there a limitation on the age of who can complete the survey?

Response: No

Question: What is the purpose of the survey?

Response: The survey is a multi-prong approach to understand how reparations affects the community. Essentially an attitude survey.

Question: Qualm with Northwestern involvement in the Reparation survey

Response: Professor Tillery explains he is an employee at Northwestern but he is not the University at large. Northwestern as an organization is not involved with the survey and survey data.

Question: Professor Tillery asked to explain how he came into this work

Response: Professor Tillery stated he is an anti-racist educator. He does this work across the country and runs a consulting firm titled 2040 consulting. He has volunteered to do racial Equity training for the City Council in advance of the reparation project.

Question: Does the survey impact payments for folks that are waiting for payments?

Response: No, the survey is just informational.

Question: What type of grassroot training will Professor Tillery do with the community because some people just do not understand reparations?

Response given by Chair Simmons: The committee intends to continue having public education sessions such as listening sessions, town halls, and informational sessions and bring in experts.

Question: When the survey is complete, what is the final report/scope of the report? Will the data be analyzed and will recommendations be submitted?

Response: Yes there will be analyses done. It is not their place to make recommendations but just to inform.

Question: Once all the data has been collected what will Northwestern do with the data since they have historically been against reparations in the past?

Response: Professor Tillery stated he understands the mistrust of Northwestern, the President, the Provost, etc. of Northwestern is not receiving the data. The City of Evanston will be receiving the data. After the city has the data, the data will be disposed of. There is no intrinsic value of the data to Northwestern.

Question: If you have a multi-adult household will there be a notice that the surveyors will be in X neighborhood so you don't miss them?

Response: Yes

3. RESTORATIVE HOUSING PROGRAM AMENDMENTS

Chair Simmons shared that two recipients have not received their benefits since they are not homeowners, do not plan to purchase a home and do not have eligible descendants to pass the benefit to. Discussion ensued on how to assist the two recipients in the community.

Chair Simmons makes a motion to extend a cash benefit of \$25,000 to each of the two ancestors that are unable to otherwise use their benefit. Motion seconded by Committee Member Lockhart.

Councilmember Reid stated that instead of extending the program just for the two folks, it should be extended to at least all Ancestors if not everyone in the program.

Councilmember Reid calls for Roll Call Vote.

Ayes: Chair Simmons, Committee Member Sutton, Committee Member Lockhart, and Committee Member Barber.

Nayes: Councilmember Reid

Abstain: Councilmember Harris

(4-1-1 on a recorded vote)

Councilmember Reid moves to amend the housing program overall to allow direct cash benefits to all ancestors. Motion failed for a lack of second.

Councilmember Reid moved to return to this topic as soon as possible. Committee member and Chair Simmons suggests a hybrid meeting in one week and will have Staff Kerr coordinate members' schedules.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

A. Listening Session

Andrea Pettius: *In the spirit of full transparency, residents would like a breakdown of how the initial 10 million dollars was spent.*

Chair Simmons responds that the first \$400,000 has been allocated. Funding has been received incrementally, and disbursements have been made incrementally. There is more work that needs to be done on identifying remedies for disbursement.

Rose Goggins: *Do you accept Illinois Power of Attorney for health care? My mother will be 82 and does not feel she can travel to a notary.*

Committee Member Barber responded assuming the question relates to whether they can use their authority as an agent under a power of attorney for health care to execute or communicate with the city regarding the Reparations benefit. The answer is no. Power of attorney under health care deals with decisions about the body, health, residential placement etc.. In Illinois, power of attorney for property is needed. If the mother is still cognitively sound they can execute that. Additionally, there are mobile notaries that can be looked into. Councilmember Reid adds a reminder the committee has created a form to designate a beneficiary for the reparation program.

Resident Charlene: Charlene inquired about the state lottery. They would like the people attending to support them in allowing Black people to get a percentage of that money and if it's administered, the money should be distributed to the people here. Chair Simmons clarifies that Charlene wants lottery revenue to fund reparations. Chair Simmons recommended some possible next steps. She noted the state of Illinois is looking for members to participate on the state's reparations committee. Chair Simmons is open to any ways the Committee can support the resident in this effort.

Sherill Johnson: *Will this program stay active until all the registrants are funded?*
Committee Member Barber responds yes.

Michael Trapp: *When is the next round of reparations awarded and will the recipients be ancestors or descendants?*

Committee Member Barber responded funds would be distributed on a rolling basis. Benefits will be distributed to the ancestors until the list is exhausted, then benefits will be distributed to descendants.

Lisa Page: *Why didn't we spread the money out to more people by giving the first 16 \$15,000, that way more would have benefitted?*

Committee Member Barber and Councilmember Reid responded that's not how the program was designed. Committee Member Barber adds \$25,000 had been considered small as well, but hopefully, in the future, there will be more financial instruments for recipients.

Robin Sudduth: *Is this a loan?*

Chair Simmons responds no. This is a benefit; it's not like any other program in the city.

Ros Micken: *Would she be prepared to answer questions from other journalists and me?*

Chair Simmons responds that the committee is here and is available to answer questions.

Diana Logan: *When can reparations pay the people?*

Chair Simmons responds we are in the process of dispersing under the first program that was informed by people who showed up to the first meetings back in 2019.

Otis Griffin: *How and when will the program be expanded?*

Chair Simmons explains that is the purpose of the listening sessions. Additionally, an idea she has not yet brought up to her colleagues, she believes we should return to the

conversation on having subcommittees so we can do what is possible as it relates to economic and educational development. There were some recommendations made in 2019 that have been accomplished and should be documented.

Bennett Johnson: There should be somewhere for people to vent (Truth and Reconciliation Committee) and share their stories on the discrimination they have faced since money alone can not completely rectify all the insults and discrimination faced in a lifetime. Also, there should be venture capital and real estate investment trusts established to provide equity and work for housing, and nonprofit entities. These entities should be separate from the city and controlled by Black people, but the city can have representation in the organizations.

Donald Smither: *Why is a home loan repair program being passed off as reparations when it's not? This makes the program look more like a gift.*

Chair Simmons explains this program is reparations because it is a direct benefit that repairs a specific law, specifically zoning laws, and anti-Black housing policies. Building wealth through home equity is a direct remedy for that. Additionally, there are many forms of reparations that do not need to be a cash check to qualify as reparations.

Jain Marie Simmons: *Seems to be some confusion about who's eligible to request and receive funds – only homeowners? Tenants?*

Chair Simmons explains there is only one program that has been developed. What has been underestimated is the amount of time to operationalize this. There has been hard work to get it done. Eligibility for this program are residents who are Black and lived in Evanston between 1919 - 1969 and their descendants. Not only are homeowners eligible, you can be looking to purchase a home or give pass the funds to a descendant.

Sistarella Rella: *How is the committee recognizing people with enslaved lineage?*

Chair Simmons explains this is not a lineage-based reparations program based on slavery. This program is not limited to those who have come from XYZ country, it's based on harm. So if you are Black and harmed and fit the eligibility requirements, you can receive the benefit.

Bennett Johnson: The Freedom Plan

Chair Simmons reiterates her opinion that it is a great goal.

Kellie Pryor: NAARC/NCOBRA believes they are above reproach.

Chair Simmons responds that both organizations are legacy organizations that exclusively fight for reparations. Unsure what Kellie means about they are above reproach, but they can learn more about these organizations on their websites.

Ira Pettius: *How soon will the committee be administering its next payments to residents?*

Tasheik Kerr, Assistant to the City Manager, states that starting next week, we will be moving beyond the first 16 and the reparation team will be meeting with everyone on the ancestor list and report back to the reparation committee.

Ndona Nyomo Muboyayi shared she endorsed the idea of having Real Estate Investment Trusts to raise funds for reparations.

Lafeare Ward: *Looking forward to seeing the dots connected on Reparations for who and why the committee sees fit on the 1965 families.*

Chair Simmons explains eligibility was based on Evanston's specific harm. There were laws in Evanston from 1919-1969 that were anti-Black that we are acknowledging as harm.

GeneveLou Wade: *With the attainment of the last reported financial status, when will funds be moved on to the second distribution*

Chair Simmons explains we have funds to continue dispersing.

Anthony Swope: *As an ancestor, a homeowner, and a business owner is that time 3 benefits? Additionally, my wife is a homeowner and has a son who would be a descendant. We all live in the same household. Who is eligible for reparations?*

Chair Simmons respond there is one eligibility for this program as a Black ancestor. If each person is eligible, two can combine their benefit on one property.

Michael Hicks: *Given the current numbers awarded, how was this program achieved the goals it was meant to address?*

Chair Simmons responded we are on our way, reparation is a process.

Gerald Johnson: *Is there any estimation of when the direct descendant's recipient will be processed?*

Councilmember Reid responded the allocation of funds would go to the ancestors than the direct descendants.

HNetu Sais: *When will Evanston address the PTSD aspect of reparations?*

Chair Simmons states they are hoping there is a partner working on trauma in the Black community. There is no direct answer, but something they are hoping for as well.

Meleika Gardner inquired how the reparations donations are being used. Meleika stated at the last Committee meeting it was stated that donations funds were used. Councilmember Reid clarifies the donation money has not been used for benefits to the ancestors. There are two separate funds, donations to the city and then donations to the reparation funds. Additionally, as of today, 14 have been awarded, and then today, the last two have been awarded.

Tina Padent: *If two people were able to receive cash payments, then everyone should be able to receive cash payments, and the application needs to be reopened again. Additionally, expenses should be reported publicly, where the money is coming from and how it is being used. Do you plan on paying CPAH? Asking no non-for-profits be able to hold any money. Ms.Kerr clarified for the reparation's youth art contest, the money was taken out of the city manager's contingency budget line. In the future, staff will add revenues and expenses to the agenda.*

Lisa Laude: *Many people did not sign up in the beginning because they weren't sure it was real. However, as we see now, it is real; when will applications reopen for people to apply? Chair Simmons responds that that is TBD (to be determined).*

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:06 a.m.