

2022 – 2023 Legislative Memorandum

Subject: Establishes the New York state community commission on reparations remedies S1163A (Sanders) A7691(Solages)

Position: SUPPORT



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In early June 2023, New York made history by becoming the second state after California to pass legislation out of its Assembly and Senate which recommends the establishment of a reparations commission. The body would be tasked with examining the long-lasting effects of chattel slavery and racial discrimination in New York, as well as developing proposals to address ongoing injustices.

As S1163A/A7691 Relates to acknowledging the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality and inhumanity of slavery in the city of New York and the state of New York; establishes the New York state community commission on reparations remedies to examine the institution of slavery, subsequently de jure and de facto racial and economic discrimination against African-Americans, the impact of these forces on living African-Americans and to make recommendations on appropriate remedies; provides for the repeal of such provisions.

New York State's position as an economic and cultural hub of the world was built and shaped by slavery. The expropriation of labor and human resources of enslaved Africans provided the economic foundation upon which New York's trade and commerce was built. Indeed, some of our state's most prestigious institutions and infrastructure were built using these stolen resources—depriving generations of Black New Yorkers the accumulated fruit of their ancestors' labor. Despite our state's great wealth, New York has the [highest income disparity](#) in the contiguous United States. The resulting [racial wealth gap](#) is in large part the legacy of our former slave system.

Today, historically deprived communities are suffering the ravages of systemic racism in wealth, education, employment, health, housing, and mass incarceration. As we saw in the May 2022 racist mass shooting in Buffalo, such disparities leave Black New Yorkers particularly vulnerable to white nationalists looking to prey upon disaffected communities. Ultimately, the tragedy in Buffalo shows us that repairing the harms of racism is not exclusively a matter of reconciling with our past, but also with our shared present, in order to protect our collective future.

The only way to build a better, safer New York is to face our history and repair the harm of white supremacy's legacy, which has hurt Black New Yorkers since the state's foundation.

Signing S1163A/A7691 is a necessary, critical step toward ensuring an equal, thriving future for Black New Yorkers.

Lanessa Owens-Chaplin,
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