

**DRAFT**

## **Reparations Commission**

### **SUMMARY/ACTION MINUTES**

**Wednesday, April 9, 2025**

**6:00 p.m.**

**Location:** Alameda County Training & Education Center  
Hayward/Union City Room  
125 – 12th Street, 4th Floor  
Oakland, CA 94607

#### **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, Debra Gore Mann at 6:00 p.m.

#### **II. Roll Call**

##### **Members present:**

1. Leo Bazile
2. Artavia Berry
3. Jesse Burleson
4. Phillip S. Gardiner
5. Debra Gore Mann
6. Carolyn Johnson
7. James Knowles
8. Shadrick Small
9. Tiega Varlack

**Excused:** Alan E. Dones, Shenita Hurskin, Larry McClendon, Brandon Sass, Natasha Tripplett

#### **III. Public Comment (items not listed on the agenda)**

Chair Gore-Mann announced that Tiega Varlack has been appointed to replace Lori Cox as a commissioner. Commissioner Varlack is an attorney and small business owner based in Hayward, attended Howard University for both her undergraduate and law degrees. She has a strong interest in reparations work, having actively supported reparations efforts, including testifying and writing advocacy letters.

Commissioner Knowles attended the Hayward Unified School District Black Student Union Conference on March 24<sup>th</sup> involving junior high and high school Black Student Unions (BSUs). He led a session on Russell City and reparations, covering housing access, low-interest loans, tax benefits, senior support, scholarships, job training, and life skills. He encouraged students to think about generational wealth.

Commissioner Berry announced the Brotherhood of Elders Network is hosting a reparations-focused event on May 16<sup>th</sup> in Oakland. The event will include workshops on reparations, power building, and healing. Members from the Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA) will co-facilitate workshops.

#### **IV. Approval of Minutes - Action Item**

Minutes of March 12, 2025

A motion was made by Commissioner Bazile and seconded by Commissioner Gardiner, to approve the minutes of March 12, 2025, as submitted.

**Ayes:** Bazile, Berry, Gardiner, Gore-Mann, Johnson, Knowles, Small

**Noes:** None

**Excused:** Dones, Hurskin, McClendon, Sass, Tripplett

**Abstain:** Burleson, Varlack

**Motion passed 7/0**

## **V. Brown Act Adherence - Informational Item**

Chair Gore Mann reminded the commissioners about compliance with the Brown Act during workgroup activities. Avoid majority (6 or more members) meetings outside of public settings, which would be a violation. This includes informal communication such as emails or phone calls that involve too many members, potentially creating a “daisy chain” or “spoke and wheel” situation. If such a majority meeting is necessary, it must be publicly noticed with an agenda and location.

## **VI. Listening Sessions - Informational Item**

Commissioner Gardiner, Commissioner Berry and Commissioner Small reported on the listening sessions.

A listening session is scheduled for May 17 (12–2 PM) at Allen Temple in District45; the church has granted permission and equipment (podium, microphones) is secured. Funding is still needed for food and other items.

Pilot Sessions have been tentatively scheduled for April 26<sup>th</sup>, in addition to three (3) potential locations have agreed to host, pending confirmation for the date: 1) Kingmakers of Oakland, Oakland, CA; 2) The Hidden Genius Project, Oakland, CA and 3) Palm Ceia Baptist Church, Haward, CA. The goal is to hold listening sessions in each of the county’s supervisorial districts.

### **Structure and Content of Listening Sessions:**

- Duration: Approximately 90 minutes
- Agenda Includes:
  - Welcome and introductions
  - Purpose of the Commission and its directives from the Board of Supervisors
  - Background on the need for reparations for Black Americans in Alameda County
  - Public input on personal experiences and visions for reparations
  - Distribution of a short survey (paper and/or digital)
  - Possible screening of the formal apology (may extend beyond 90 minutes)
- Supporting Materials:
  - A 2-page outline with assigned presenters and times
  - One-pager from the Board of Supervisors outlining goals and timeline (report due June 2026)
  - Promotional flyer for distribution
- Presenter Roles:
  - Brandon: Emcee
  - Shad: Historical context
  - Artavia, Shenita, and Brandon: Q&A facilitators
  - Commissioner Gardiner: Overview of the county’s role and objectives

The Commissioners discussed the need for resources for holding and promoting the listening sessions. Chair Gore summarized three main areas that need to be addressed to effectively plan and execute upcoming events, including listening sessions:

1. Sequencing - Determine the order of tasks and dependencies to successfully hold an event by a target date.

2. Collateral Materials - Identify what promotional and informational materials are needed (e.g., flyers, handouts, website content).
3. Budget and Resources -Develop an itemized cost sheet to present to the Ad Hoc Committee on Reparations for event expenses, including a strategy to obtain both funding and in-kind support.

## **VII. Update County Department Support- Informational Item**

Chair Gore-Mann gave an update on the Commission website. The Commission will have a dedicated website hosted by Alameda County, using a WordPress template.

Chair Gore-Mann presented a PowerPoint presentation on various options for the Reparations Commission web page, including the Commission on the Status of Women's page and the Public Health Commission's website.

The proposed website structure is a landing page to include:

- Mission, purpose, values
- "In the News" section
- Contact info
- Highlight on active listening sessions
- About Us
- Members
- Agendas/Minutes
- Harms Report & Presentations
- Opportunities to Get Involved (e.g., Join the Commission)
- District-specific updates
- Community engagement tools

Alameda County's Information Technology (IT) Department will build the site using WordPress. Setup and hosting costs will be covered by the Alameda County Library until the Commission sunsets. The Library also offered to handle flyers and print materials when needed.

Commissioner Berry and Commissioner Burlison agreed to work with the IT Department on the website content and structure.

## **VIII. Discussion Action Plan Outline - Informational Item**

**Chair Gore-Mann**

The Reparations Commission discussed delivering a comprehensive Action Plan by July 2026.

It was proposed that each Commissioners could each contribute a 5–6 page section from their perspective., and should include:

- Learnings from listening sessions
- Data analysis (if available)
- Broad themes of harm and policy recommendations
- Suggested Report Structure (Broad Outline):
- Land acknowledgment (Native American land and its history)
- Thesis statement on historical harm due to slavery, Jim Crow, etc.
- Historical background on Black oppression in Alameda County (since ~1854)
- With national context included
- Findings from community listening sessions

Specific local examples:

- Russell City as a case study (County's role in displacement)
- Racial housing covenants (e.g., Commissioner's deed example)

Focus Areas:

- Economic harm
- Environmental racism
- Displacement and redevelopment
- Community activism
- Health and racial disparities
- Obstacles to reparations

Identify report themes first, then shape community questions to explore those areas. Alternatively, let community input shape the themes.

Listening session handouts should include categories/themes discussed, to help prompt public input. Draft a preliminary outline of the report for review at the next meeting.

## **IX. Working Groups Report Out - Informational Item**

### **1. Request for Qualifications (RFQ)**

Commissioner McClendon and Chair Gore finalized RFQs months ago but have not distributed them yet. These will be used to request in-kind support from county departments by identifying qualifications needed and asking departments for help.

### **2. Allies/Partnership Agreements**

No report.

### **3. Summary Harm Report**

A graduate student at the Goldman School of Public Policy is drafting a template to guide how departments might contribute to a harms report. A draft is expected soon.

### **4. Website up and Live**

(See agenda item 7)

### **5. Listening Sessions Strategy**

(See agenda item 6) - Materials are available on SharePoint.

### **6. Progressive movement report**

No report.

### **7. Data gathering and data analysis**

Outreach to various departments is ongoing, but active data gathering has not yet begun.

### **8. Budget/Resources**

This group has not been staffed

## **ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m. on April 9, 2025.

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