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Secretary Weber Addresses Inaugural Meeting of Reparations Task Force

SACRAMENTO, CA – California Secretary of State Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D. addressed the members of the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans (Task Force) as they convened their first meeting Tuesday. The Task Force was created as a result of legislation, AB 3121, authored by then-Assemblymember Weber and signed into law in 2020.

“This Task Force brings together experts who understand how we as Californians are still affected by slavery and its successors in our own state, including redlining, theft of labor, wealth and capital, over-incarceration, over-policing and systemic discrimination,” **Secretary Shirley Weber said**. “The aim of the Task Force is to heal the injustices of the past and present with tangible action, and to set a course for a better future for African Americans in the state.”

The California State Archives housed in the Secretary of State's Office include documents that give testament to aspects of California's own history of enabling slavery within the state as well as policies that perpetuated systemic racism and discrimination.

AB 3121 charges the California Department of Justice with providing administrative, technical, and legal assistance to the Task Force. Attorney General Rob Bonta — who was a co-author of the bill as an assemblymember — joined Secretary Weber in addressing the Task Force members.

"Although the horrors of slavery may have begun in the past, its harms are felt every single day by Black Americans in the present," **said California Attorney General Rob Bonta**. "This Task Force will play a critical role in helping unearth the legacy of slavery — sometimes purposefully forgotten — and begin a sorely-needed process of healing, and of truth and reconciliation. That healing isn't about one community, it's about all of us. At the California Department of Justice, we'll be here every step of the way — providing administrative, technical, and legal assistance — to help the Task Force in this monumental and historic effort."

The Task Force was enacted after research confirmed that California institutions enabled slavery and slave owners within the state, including returning escaped slaves to those who claimed them as property. Following the abolition of slavery, government entities at the federal, state, and local levels continued to perpetuate, condone, and often profit from practices that brutalized African

Americans and excluded them from meaningful participation in society, resulting in debilitating economic, educational, and health hardships.

AB 3121 charges the Reparations Task Force with studying the institution of slavery and its lingering negative effects on living African Americans, including descendants of persons enslaved in the United States and on society. Additionally, the Task Force will recommend appropriate remedies of compensation, rehabilitation, and restitution for African Americans and issue a report to the Legislature by June 1, 2022.

More information on the Task Force is available here: <https://oag.ca.gov/ab3121>. A recording of today's convening will be made available on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/user/caoag/videos>.

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