

CONGRESSWOMAN LEE RELEASES STATEMENT ON VANDALISM OF LAKE MERRITT MENORAH

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Congresswoman Barbara Lee (CA-12) released the following statement on the destruction of the large Menorah on display at Lake Merritt in Oakland: "I'm deeply saddened and disheartened that the Lake Merritt Menorah was destroyed earlier this week. My heart and prayers go out to the Jewish community in Oakland, and I strongly condemn this vile [...] The post Congresswoman Lee Releases Statement on Vandalism of Lake Merritt Menorah first appeared on Post News Group.

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By Magaly Muñoz

Earlier this month, San Francisco Mayor London Breed approved \$75 million in mid-year budget cuts, which included \$4 million that was intended for the first of its kind Office of Reparations.

The funds had originally been approved in a June Board of Supervisors meeting to establish the reparations office in city hall and fund it for two years but is now on the chopping block to conserve spending in the city is still dealing as it grapples with the severe impacts of the pandemic.

In an October letter sent to department heads, Breed stated that the city is projected to face a \$500 million deficit by the 2025-26 fiscal year. These budget cuts will ensure that the city can continue to invest in its top priorities. This means cutting proposed programs that have not yet started, including the Office of Reparations.

Breed has long been criticized for her stance on the issue of reparations coming from the local level, stating her belief that any payments to individuals should be handled at the federal level.

"The Mayor also does not believe that addressing the needs of the African American community requires adding more bureaucracy and a whole new office; this work can be done with existing staffing," said Parisa Safarzadeh, the mayor's press secretary, in an email to the Post.




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Safarzadeh explained that Breed has and will continue to uplift marginalized communities with programs like the Dreamkeeper Initiative (DKI) to address inequities in the African American community and Opportunities for All, which provides all high school students in San Francisco with a paid internship.

Reverend Amos Brown, a member of the SF African American Reparations Advisory Committee (SFAARAC), expressed that while monetary compensation doesn't have to be distributed locally, public policies should be enacted to address the racial gap and inequities of the Black community.

"They need to move forward with deliberate speed, working with the Black community to ensure that the low-hanging fruit is delivered regarding health care services, education, economic empowerment, jobs, and restorative justice programs for those coming out of this criminal justice system. That would give us reparations," Brown said.

The SFAARAC was formed in December 2020 to research and develop recommendations for repairing the harm done to the Black community of San Francisco.

In July, they submitted their final report of recommendations to the mayor and Board of Supervisors. The report proposed a payout of \$5 million to individuals who could prove direct ancestral ties to slavery and included other recommendations aimed at improving education, health, and economic development.

Efforts to implement reparations on a national level have largely been unsuccessful. However, advocates like Kamm Howard continue pushing for a committee's establishment as we approach an election year.

He says that the Biden administration should issue an executive order establishing a reparations committee because it would show his commitment to uplifting Black people in America, as they are the largest voter group after white voters. He needs the Black vote to win another presidential election.

In 2022, Howard founded Reparations United to provide guidance and leadership to coalitions and activists involved in the reparations movement. He also led the revisions to the federal bill H.R. 40, which seeks to establish a commission to study and develop reparation proposals for African Americans.

Howard expressed that even if individuals today claim they aren't racist or their ancestors didn't own slaves, everyone has to contribute to the repairs that address the generational damage inflicted on Black and African Americans.

"Everyone who benefits from the status of America and the wealth of America, all has to contribute to the remedy of unjust actions by this country," Howard said.

He says that local and state governments also owe it to their Black citizens to acknowledge the harm that their policies and laws have done to them. All states have the power to enact change and form committees, like California has attempted to do with their state Reparations Task Force, and should be supported at every level of government.

Brown said it should not take so long to put a plan in action to give some sort of restorative justice back to the community. He points out that the fight is about much more than allocating \$4 million for a department for reparations, which is an insulting number to fight about when the rightful compensation owed to African Americans is many times greater.

"It's time for San Francisco to lead the way and respect the humanity of Black people," Brown said.



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There are no comments yet.