



**Reparations Task Force Meeting
Thursday, February 8, 2024, at 6 p.m.**

Location: Fulton County Government Center Assembly Hall, 141 Pryor St SW, Atlanta, GA
30303

Zoom:

https://zoom.us/rec/share/oLRzhpPv8WniMexhInYNTKuoWan_IrrgWm48WCDcbJTFQr_zszfGsceNEA_WE9.kka_ss7O_P51RXcV

POST AGENDA MINUTES – RATIFIED

This document has been ratified or approved by the Fulton County Reparations Task Force and is not binding on the County or any officer.

****A QUORUM WAS PRESENT****

Roll Call: Rodney Littles, Donte’ Thompson, Ann Hill Bond, Greg Fann, Carole Sykes, Amanda Meng, Karcheik Sims-Alvarado, Elon Butts Osb. Marcus Coleman, Michael Simanga (online)

Staff Present: Fran Calhoun, Jordana Arias, Denvall Stuart

Adoption of February 8, 2024, Meeting Agenda

Motion by Carol Sykes. Seconded by Donte’ Thompson. Motion passes.

Approval of January 18, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Motion by Donte’ Thompson. Seconded by Greg Fann. Motion passes.

Public Comments (found at end of document)

Old Business

- Hiring Updates
 - We have hired 3 researchers (Christopher Smothers, Luther King, Abyssinia Mulatu) and 2 co-project managers (Dr. Clarissa Myrick-Harris and Amber Mungen Davis)

- Mr. Littles provides financial update (attached)
 - The agreement with the Atlanta University Consortium Inc is for 3 payments of \$70,000 each. The first payment has been received. The second payment no later than April 2024 and the third pay will be no later in July 2024.
 - The second payment invoice has been submitted
 - The researchers are under the pay core payroll system and to date, as of the end of January, \$14,285.72 has been paid out to the researchers
- Research Update
 - Chair Sims-Alvarado goes over news coverage from last month's research update and new research focus
 - One of the highlights of the presenters from a month ago is that they were able to share with us their ability to gather the names of every single slave holder in Fulton County from 1853 to 1865. And this is groundbreaking research because what you normally would see are the names of the slaveholders from the slave schedule for 1850 and 1860 and you will see a list of the ages of those who were enslaved. But what is unique about what they were able to uncover is that for individuals that were over the age of 90, the census taker actually recorded the names of those over 90 and that's rare. So it really comes down to who is the census taker that will have the ability to do this. I think the oldest person they found was a woman who was actually a hundred 3 years old. So she was enslaved before America became America, when it was actually under British control under King George III. And so it'll be really interesting to see who were the descendants of this woman. And just to think that a person had been enslaved. For over, well, almost a century. I'm not sure at what point this person became enslaved if this person was African born. That's one of the things that I will like to encourage the researchers to find.
 - We are also looking at how individuals were being brought in. And there may be a possibility to pinpoint how individuals were transported in and the railroads may have actually served as the domestic slave trade.
 - But the challenge, and the beauty about their work is filling in the gap between 1851 to 1859. And they are able to identify the names of slave holders from the text digest records. From looking at those names they are now able to see how much money Fulton County collected from having individuals enslaved. And from that number, from that information, we're able to determine how much Fulton County profited off of individuals being enslaved. When we looked at the percentage of the value of the

enslaved compared to the entire property value it's between 40 to 60%. So when people start saying, well, my family did not enslave individuals. The money that Fulton County is receiving from individuals being enslaved actually provides services to even non-slave holding family members such as the building of roads and the sewer system. So you began to see how everyone is connected to slavery.

- Secretary Meng research update: Another focus area of the research project is on convict lease labor and that work starts with building a new data set just like we saw last month with the new data set of enslaved persons and slaveholders in Fulton County. So this first step is to build a data set of contracts for convict lease labor as well as individuals who were convicts who were forced to participate in these labor camps and contracts used to build county infrastructure. There's a group at Georgia Tech called DataWorks that the mission is to hire an upskill individuals who've been historically excluded from computing. With the end goal of diversifying computing and diversifying data work in general. So we've mostly hired local, young, Black adults to learn how to do data work and to work with Georgia Tech researchers. They put together a scope of work for this and that the team has gotten funding actually from the AIAI network which is Atlanta Interdisciplinary Artificial Intelligence network. It's a out of Emory University, but it's also got folks from Georgia Tech and folks from Morehouse who are studying, what AI and data means in the context of of Atlanta specifically and taking very much a humanities-based approach to this and they've been giving out grants to people who are doing work that's at the intersect of data, AI, and social justice. So they've gotten funding to work on building this data set. We met with, the archivist, Mr. John Wright. Last week and learned what he has been doing to conduct this research. And we will meet next week with the chair to go over specifically the steps to start building this data set because I think they've already identified where in the records we can start pulling names and building the data.
- Chair Sims-Alvarado reviews previous work with Mr. John Wright: Speaking of John Wright, you may remember him from working on the, end of the year report. And John Wright is the senior librarian in special collections at the Downtown Central Library. John has gathered thousands of documents since we started the task force and we asked for assistance. You've probably heard a lot of information about the Chattahoochee Brick Company. Right. But John has actually gathered the names of multiple individuals who had contracts with full to county jails. And there were approximately about 12 labor camps in Fulton County. He also shared with me, there's a lot of names as part of this one file and looking at convicts in Georgia from as early as like 1819 to like the 1970. And the names of individuals are not even listed by county. They're not. You know, there's no group just for Fulton County, but it's the names of everyone. And you have to go through each line and just look for Fulton County. And looking at how individuals are documented. Prior to 1865 you have individuals who are listed by complexion So you may have someone who's dark with blue eyes and you're like, okay, but what does that mean? You may have someone who's tan, then they start listing people.

By as yellow and you're like, okay, how are people being defined racially? And so it's kind of difficult to pinpoint. Exactly who we're actually jailed by Fulton County prior to 1865, but I did see Black and I was like, okay, now let me go through and let me see what how individuals are actually classified. But once you get into 1865, you begin to see people are identified racially by black. Mainly Black and White. And one thing that stood out to me is that the numbers for individuals who were incarcerated as early as 1865, the numbers slowly tick up. So it's going to be interesting to see from the researchers the speed and which and the rate, the percentage of African-Americans who are incarcerated after 1865. And the charges being brought against them and their years of sentencing and where they are sent to and the names of the contractors of these of the labor camps. And, and then more importantly, what are the goods and services that individuals who are incarcerated are producing. And how is the county using and benefiting from these individuals being incarcerated. So those are the things that we're looking at some individuals you would have a company that would go to the county and they will say, well, we want X number of individuals, X number of laborers over this number of years. And what we saw is that you would have a group of people that would come together and get a long-term contract for 20 years. For a certain amount of money. So let's say if the contract. Was for \$50,000 for 20 years. How much are these individuals paying a piece? Okay, \$2,500 a year. How many labors are they getting? So these are the type of questions that we have to ask. And then also what are, I mean, how can you see the tangible products that that those who are. That those are incarcerated are actually producing. Are they the bricks for the courthouse? Are they the books for the schools? The streets we know, but where else do we see them? Are they the bricks on the governor's house? Because the person who you have is William English who was the major contractor, the major person who benefited from convict labor and his son will eventually take over the company, but he lives across the street from the governor's mansion on was that West Paces Ferry? So these are the type of things that we're beginning to see. But we're just, but we're just scratching the surface.

- Question from Ann Hill Bond: So with the convict leasing portion do we have a date for that because convict leasing was technically on paper outlawed, and then chain games came, and then the different iteration. So how are we working through the different iterations of it?
 - Chair: We haven't decided yet because the researchers are really just starting to look at it and really haven't even documented it yet. One of the other things that we saw that was quite interesting was that, Governor Bullock, the first Republican governor, he is supportive of African Americans during reconstruction he even introduced the Georgia law in 1871 that became known as the KKK Act. The other name for it became the Enforcement Act which stated that by law, you cannot use intimidation at the polls. Okay, and this act is also a way to put an end to the KKK in Georgia. He also ordered through the Georgia Act that the military stays to

protect African Americans during reconstruction because he understood once you move the military then the Democrats can actually regain power and actually intimidate African-Americans. And one of the things that they would do was actually prevent them from being able to exercise their rights at the polls. But after he did this, what is strange is that this is the same man that introduced convict labor camps. He also pushed for the passing of the fourteenth amendment in order for Georgia to be readmitted back into the union but part of that was for him to be able to receive a federal contract in order to have control over the railroads. What would the railroads do? Okay, I mean, how would the roads be built? Through convict labor. But eventually he's actually run out of the state of Georgia by the KKK. And he's even threatened by the KKK. And he had to leave the state of Georgia. He doesn't come back to Georgia until 1895 to introduce Booker T Washington during the Atlanta Cotton Exposition and Booker T. Washington said that Black people be the main source of labor in the South. And Henry Grady said that white men would be the owners of the industry. It's complicated, right? But these are the things that we're just coming across. The question that you just asked - are we documenting it in a way where it begins to change and where it goes from being convict labor to chain gains but whether they are in chains or not it's all still slavery.

- Ann Hill Bond will be included in the Convict Lease Labor timeline and research discussions moving forward.
- Question from Attorney Denvall Stuart: Are you looking the time prior to when Fulton County becomes a count?
 - Chair Sims-Alvarado: Well this is where it gets a little complicated in the study. When Fulton County formed as a count, you have to go back and look at the minutes of the meeting to ask the question, Why? Why would they decide? To be annexed as a county. So Fulton County is formed from Henry County, all of Campbell County. Campbell Count actually had more people enslaved than the portion of Dekalb that became known as Atlanta. There's Milton County, Henry County, and then it becomes this very large county, which is present day, Fulton County. But when Fulton County is formed, they have assets already because they've been collecting on people enslaved for years. So we're like, okay, how do we count that in because, and what would the commissioners say regarding our study if we're saying, okay, we're looking at Fulton County as a county and when do the clock begins but these counties, Campbell and Milton had slavery long before. How do we calculate them en? How do you calculate them in to the study about the number of people in enslaved and for how long, and how much money the county collected on these individuals. That's

where we're trying to figure out and how we incorporate it within the narrative. If we begin to look at the prior to 1852 then the amount of money that Fulton County collected is gonna be extremely large. So, we'll need your help on that.

- Vice Chair Coleman responds: First of all, forgive me for my tardiness. Old friend of mine has a popular saying that goes on t-shirts that says “Atlanta, we full” Traffic is absolutely ridiculous. Just to kind of pick you back on that. We're going on 3 years. Here. 2 and a half years, real strong as far as meeting. What we have sparked in this state is the interest in other reparations task force. Madam Chair, and I participated in a Atlanta Metro coalition conference call a month ago and that coalition has vowed to continue to meet. Why is that important? Because some of the neighboring counties, you know, have a longer history than Fulton.. Obviously for the record we're only dealing with Fulton but the question was asked about going back prior to that so, and I'm happy to see so many people in the seats today. It seems like we are starting to get some momentum. But just know that you know we are going to work with neighboring counties and the overlapping of these counties in these various cities so just to elaborate on going back before the county exists.
- Chair Sims Alvarado: And Mr. Graves, I mean, I know we're not supposed to call on people in the audience, but Mr. Ian Graves who's to my right. I wanted to acknowledge you and you gave public comments tonight and you asked the question about Freedmen. So one of the things that we saw within our records is that as we are performing the study and looking at those who were enslaved you have to also look at those who were quasi free, persons of color. And we saw individuals who were European immigrants who were not citizens, they were taxed 25 cents and they had to pay a tax to the county every year to be registered. But for those who were free and not enslaved, but Black, they had to have a guardian and they had to pay an annual tax of \$5 per person. And if they failed to, if they fail to pay that annual \$5, anybody with an inflation calculator? We should keep that around, right? I don't know what it would be today, but you have one group of individuals who are being taxed 25 cents and just because you are a Black, you are being taxed \$5. The failure to pay that and imagine if you had a family of 6, if you were part of my family, you had like 13 people, and that was in the 1970. But imagine for a family of 6, okay, a husband and wife and 4 children, you're talking about \$30 a year that you have to pay every single year and the humiliation of having to go to the county and to have someone to stamp or to sign that you are a registered free person in the United States, and you're still not even considered to be a full citizen. And who knows how long that person may have been free, could have been born free in the United States since the 1600s. But the fact that every single year you have to pay a fee on your citizenship. You know when and we just learned this just recently like last week right to find this within the record. And Dr. Meng said, wait a minute, “Someone had to pay a tax on being free?” And having to carry around a piece of paper that says that you're free and your response was what? She said, “That's apartheid.” Yes. So we talk about

the enslaved, but what about individuals who sought their own freedom? They may have run away. They may have purchased their freedom. They may have been born free. They may have fought for their freedom. May have killed for the freedom. Okay, we don't know their stories. But we also have to keep them in mind as well too. And the fact is that the county benefited from all black bodies. So I just wanna state that for the record. So these are the like the little things that we're coming up and we're having gotten into the study just looking through records. But these are the type of questions that are coming up.

New Business

- Public Comment Bylaw Discussion
 - Vice Chair Coleman: I've been hearing a couple of complaints about the public comment being at the very beginning of the meeting. I honestly think that public comment people should be able to come and hear what we have to say and then comment on it not coming in and be the first ones to come in and then hear what we got to say. proposes that the task force move public comment to the end of meeting. And want to see what you all felt about that.
 - Chair Sims-Alvarado: Let's take it around the room.
 - Each member of the task force shares comments on the topic.
 - Motion by Vice Chair Coleman to move public comment from the beginning of our meeting to end of new business. I would like to also include that the sign-up would go on until after old business; and also that there are no extension to public comment. It will be the same amount of time that has always been allowed unless this body sees forth to extend it. Seconded by Dr. Simanga. Nay - Butts Osby , Sykes. Yay - Littles, Thompson, Hill Bond, Fann, Meng, Sims-Alvarado, Coleman. No abstentions. Motion passes.
- Nominations and Voting for Task Force Executive Committee Members
 - Secretary Meng reads Article IV of the Task Force's bylaws related to the responsibilities of the officers of the executive committee (attached).
 - Motion by Littles to have the current officers continue for another term. Motion is seconded by Fann. Yay: Littles, Thompson, Hill Bond, Fann, Sykes, Meng, Sims-Alvarado, Coleman, Butts Osby. No nays. No abstentions.
- Question from Bishop Fann: When we have public comments do we read the public comments will start at this time and will extend only to a certain time?
 - Chair Sims-Alvarado: It is in our bylaws and I think that we need to make sure that that's stated every meeting because we have new people who come at every

meeting and it's so wonderful to see so many people here today. But, thank you, Mr. Fann. I think that that needs to be announced at the beginning of every meeting especially and maybe even twice because we see people walk in. And they may not know that this is the time period in which you sign up and maybe before we give public comments, maybe I know I'm willing to.

- Motion by Littles to amend the agenda for those who came late to sign up and speak. Motion is seconded by Sykes. Yay: Littles, Thompson, Hill Bond, Fann, Sykes, Meng, Sims-Alvarado, Coleman, Butts Osby. Nays: none. Abstention: none. Motion passes.
- Vice Chair Coleman: Madam Chair while we're waiting, Brother Thompson, I just want to thank Dante' Thompson for that letter to the mayors in Fulton County. There are 15 cities that make up Fulton County. But we already know Atlanta's on board. We're developing a task force, but Thompson drafted a letter that will soon have the approval that we're sending to each one of the mayors just making them aware of our existence and eventually it will be an encouragement to develop their own task force. And the reason that's important is because we're gonna have to work with these local municipalities, especially as a relates to some of these land grabs and other things that we'll get into further but so if you guys belong to right now it is the city of South Fulton who erected well, legislatively passed one year ago and there's no one filling those seats. In Atlanta up under the leadership of Councilman Bond, I think they're in the process of filling those seats. So if anybody is familiar with any of the other cities. You know, we will be encouraging them to erect and fill their own reparations task force so we can work in unison.

End of Meeting

Donte' Thompson: Madam Chair and Vice Chair, I just want to respectfully say this. I think the third time I've heard it and I might be coming from a bias standpoint because I am friends with Mike Russell. We've been in several organizations together. I understand some people have their opinion about Mike Russell. That's fine. Everybody has their own opinion. I think you should speak to Mike Russell directly to ask him for his opinions on reparations and you probably will get an understanding on his thoughts about reparations, and not what he might have said in a media post or tweet. I think you should speak with him directly, understand him, and understand his points of views about reparations and then you can have a genuine conversation about if we should remove him or not.

Vice Chair Coleman: Let me just piggy back on that if you don't mind. And I, you know, and we're not gonna get messy here, you know, so please everybody whose heart's beating fast, don't let it stop we're not gonna get messy. When we step out in the public. When we take on, you know, roles such as these. Of course, we're not elected officials, but we're appointed by elected officials. And we live in the era, in the age of social media and every time that you post, tweet or whatever you are technically making an official public comment. Now, if you're not in a public capacity then the public doesn't have an opportunity to challenge, ridicule, or critique your public comments. And for the record, it has been the public that has asked for his resignation. I don't think anyone here has said that. So I would just simply close with Mr. Thompson, I agree, you

know, it's good to get to know someone. But in this day and age, one needs to be very cautious about what they put out publicly, especially when they plan on taking seats and expect that type of criticism and ridicule.

Ann Hill Bond: Thank you. I just needed to make a comment about using the website and so forth and thinking through if there is an opportunity to print or pass out or have something on hand, then I would like to possibly see that because we do have a digital divide. And everybody can't get to the website or, you know, have internet access or something like that. So I just wanted to make that less of an area of barrier of entry. Like the frequently asked questions. If there's an opportunity to print that out like something to just, you know, if somebody new comes in they'll have it as a takeaway.

Rodney Littles: I appreciate the opportunity to follow up on the Vice Chair's comments about other localities and government entities participating in the state. I just like for the record for information on February 15th at the state capital, HB 955 Sponsored by State Representative Roger Bruce that I had the opportunity and the pleasure to work on as part of his legislative staff. We'll have a hearing and a press conference by the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus supporting the bill. It would set up a commission similar to what we've done in Fulton County to look into the state's impact on chattel slavery and the descendants. This is not the first year the bill has been introduced. This is the third year, second session. I've worked on it so I know. I think the climate is such that people are waking up to the issue that we need to have truth, reconciliation, and repair in America. It's past time. We can not go back trying to close the books on what built this country. We cannot do that. So anyone who supports the concept to have the state look at this, on February 15th, a week from today, it'll be happening at the capital, 2:00 pm press conference and a public hearing. I learned a lot by being part of this task force. To get to see the work. And I think it needs to be done at the state level also. So I would encourage folks to participate in the audience, online, and in our audience here if they would like to do so. Will it pass? Interesting question. It has been brought to the attention of the speaker. Representative Bruce met with the speaker on this issue. The conversation I cannot disclose here but it's doing a lot better than I would have thought. And based upon the passage of the anti-semitic legislation that took 2 years in the state of Georgia, I don't see why this can't be considered. One of the issues that's before the legislature is a sporting gambling bill. And it requires 2/3 majority in either house, both houses to pass a referendum bill for sports betting. The caucus is being pressured to use their votes for the sports betting in exchange for HB 955. It is time that those who represent us who's claimed to have our interest at heart, negotiate on our behalf. And not, excuse my French, waste their vote.

Dr. Simanga: I think that we have to be careful about participation in the task force. Each of us is appointed by a commissioner. And it's not really, we're not looking for everybody to agree. At least I'm not. I think the people should be heard. They had different opinions. We just got through talking about that. But on this commission too that we don't have to have all the same opinions. At the end, we're going to vote on it and whoever has the majority vote is what we're going to present to the commissioners. But I think it causes disturbance down the line because who's to say that okay we don't want Kasheik to be the chair and they mount a movement against you or anybody in this room? The commissioners appointed us and today, you know, either we

resign or they say, yeah, I don't want you on there anymore. Then we should just play it out. We can go down the rabbit hole of who has the right to be here. But it's going to kill us.

Adjourn

Public Comment

Tina Francis

Hi my name is Tina Francis and I am a resident of the Fulton County area. I wanted to be a part of this task force because I'm interested in the community and I would really love to be a part of it.

Ian Graves

This is my first time in a meeting. I just wanted to be sure that when we talk about reparations we are talking about what is known as freed men, lineage-based reparations. And that comes about because you know in the court house there was a news article that came out where they found that in the records, black people were held as property and they were passed down from one generation to the next. And I just wanted to make sure that we know that that's a unique experience to the Freedmen. Whereas you have a benefit if you're if you're not a Freedman and you come here to America and you're just like the immigrants. You're given government benefits. I think we take for granted that black people have been through a lot of harms. They've been through redlining, segregation, and a lot of things like that kind of preempt us from being able to be full citizens. And I think until we are able to be full citizens, I think. We have to make sure we focus on that, lineage-based harm that goes back centuries. Thank you.

Keith Carriat

My fellow Black Americans know me as Brother Carriat. I'm here to speak for the Peterson and Williams family that have been residents here in Fulton County since the late 1800s. I want to keep the main thing, the main thing here tonight. Reparations for Black Americans are strictly lineage based. That consists of one component. And that is direct cash payments. Bottom line. flat out. Now the qualifiers are the original copper color people who can trace their lineage back to the 1870 census. Right? The ones that were reclassified as black, colored, Negro, Malotto, nothing else. We as Black Americans are owed a debt, and we definitely have the invoice. Got it.

Theresa Morgan

Good evening. Can you hear me? Okay, great. Hey, everybody. Yes, it's me. Thank you. For hosting this and, Mark has already addressed one of the issues I was gonna come in here about. And that was heavy. Having us come down here during rush hour during the middle of the week. I was going to ask that you move it around Fulton County. We have libraries, we have community centers, and we have other days of the week that may be a little bit better to get a bigger turnout. But my second issue, and luckily I don't have to bring that up, Marcus, you have addressed that. My second issue is. I just wanna make this part of public record. One of the members of this task force. We found a tweet that he made. And I'd like to share it with you. To make sure that it is recorded. And this was done by Mike Russell. On 8/16/22. He states: "Reparations is another excuse for failure. People come here from other cultures with nothing, can't speak the language, and within a generation, surpass the majority of Americans because of their values and they're work ethic. Stop whining. Start working. For what you want to achieve." I just wanted to share that with you all if you weren't aware. I have reached out to Bridget Thorne and asked that he be removed and replaced. Because if you feel that way about correcting the wrongdoings of an entire race of people. I don't feel that you should be in this seat. And thank you for your time.

Eric Curtis

Okay, great. Mr. Marcus, I appreciate you for offering the town slot to be changed to speak. I did get in here late. I apologize. Traffic is crazy coming through everyday so I appreciate it. Also, Ms. Morgan, I appreciate that comment you just laid out there and I would second her motion if I could. Alright, putting it out there that he needs to be removed. With that being said though, I do pay like very close attention to what goes around as far as these different reparations task forces around the country, and I notice a lot of different things coming out of the California reparations task force. And I want to be clear when I'm saying that certain things that are in the task force as far as the language has to be tightened up. And I'm not saying that you guys are not doing it correctly because from where I've been listening and paying attention and I know I came in hot the first time I came to speak to you all, but for what I've been paying attention you guys have been doing a stellar job at making sure that you're detailing every little thing along the way. So thank you all. With that being said, I just want to make sure that we keeping the language airtight because we can't just say it goes for African Americans or Black people. We have to make sure that it's very airtight so that we don't have another affirmative action jumping our way and it's going

to everyone. So would that being said, I think. I think that was it for me. Thank you.

Eric Wilder

My name is Eric Wilder. Thank you. I just wanted to first express gratitude for what you all are doing, the work that you've been doing. This is cutting edge, society building work and I'm proud of Fulton County that you all are doing it. That's the main thing I wanted to say. You talked about the FAQ on the website. Just coming in and finally finding y'all like no, finding out about you and then finding the space. Have a one pager printed out to say just kind of orient me within the ecosystem of what work has been done. You know, where you're at and in the course of your work, what the vision is. Would be just helpful to orient within the space and then, you know, maybe beyond myself would be helpful probably for folks that have questions to know kind of how, how to seat their questions. So that was an ask I guess and then 2 questions. Is there a space where you've identified places where folks can help, needs that the task force has? Just personally so that I can know where to plug in. And then the other question, I think I might have forgotten. So yeah, just thank you.