

# Reparations commission holds hearing in Rochester

**Justice Marbury**

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The New York State Community Commission on Reparations Remedies hosted a public hearing March 4 at the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester to discuss the impact of slavery and systemic discrimination through community engagement and research.

The hearing centered on Rochester's history, highlighting the displacement of Black communities caused by urban renewal policies, including the destruction of the historic Clarissa Street neighborhood and the development of the Inner Loop.

The NYSCCRR comprises nine commissioners from across the state. Its goal is to develop actionable and equitable recommendations for reparative policies in New York state.

"We are really proud that New York state is only the second state to establish a statewide effort to look at reparations and its enduring harm," said Seanelle Hawkins, chair of the NYSCCRR. "California — you all know — is the first, and we are the second, so it provides New York an opportunity to lend itself as a leader in this work."

During the hearing, presentations were given on urban renewal and the history of slavery in New York state and Rochester.

The public comment portion of the evening allowed attendees three minutes to share their own experiences with racism, discrimination, and the enslavement of their ancestors. They were also able to give the commission feedback and suggestions on what to propose.

Many of the 31 people who signed up to speak said they would like their reparations in the form of cash, education, health care, "40 acres and a mule," and reform in the carceral system.

If you want to share your testimony, email [ReparationsCommission@reparations.ny.gov](mailto:ReparationsCommission@reparations.ny.gov) or call 518-473-3997.