WA State Democratic Party Adds Reparations to the Candidate Platform in 2026!

The 2026 WA State Democratic Party Platform now includes:

"THE WASHINGTON STATE DEMOCRATIC PARTY SUPPORTS BOTH THE STUDY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF REPARATIVE ACTION, REMEDIES AND RECONCILIATION FOR THE DESCENDANTS OF VICTIMS OF UNITED STATES CHATTEL SLAVERY WHOSE ANCESTORS' WELL DOCUMENTED SLAVE LABOR AND PATRIOTIC MILITARY SACRIFICES HELPED BUILD THIS COUNTRY AND GIVE BIRTH TO THIS GREAT NATION."

Reparations means to repair, to make whole, to repay a debt that is owed.

In 2024, State Democrats included the study of these reparations in the State Platform.

In 2025, the Washington State Legislature passed a law to study reparations, ESSB 1567, or *The Charles Mitchell and George Washington Bush Study on Reparative Action for Washington State's Descendants of Victims of United States Chattel Slavery*.

Charles Mitchell was a 13-year-old enslaved boy who escaped from Olympia via the Puget Sound 'underground railroad' in 1860 to freedom in Victoria, BC. Because of attempts via the courts to re-enslave him, his case is well documented. At that time, 20% of Vancouver Island's population were Black residents, many of whom escaped conditions of enslavement along the US West Coast.

The study will research slavery and its legacy in Washington and recommend reparative actions. Additional funding for this study, beyond limited state allocations, may be available with confirmation that a qualifying study can be conducted under the law. California and Illinois have completed studies, New York's is underway.

Putting reparations on the Platform continues the good work. Washington has a history of acknowledging injustice and supporting reparations. See, 2026 House Resolution 4692, *Honoring Japanese-Americans who suffered relocation and internment during World War II.*

When did the connection to slavery begin? The birth of our country depended on the slave labor economy to produce cotton, tobacco, rice, and other goods to fund the Revolutionary War. Without that funding, and the 5,000 slaves who were part of the colonial army, the United States wouldn't exist.

Similarly, Washington State wouldn't exist without the taxes on goods produced by slave labor that funded US expansion in 1848 to create the Oregon Territories which later split to become Washington Territory and then Washington State. Slavery in Washington was upheld by the territorial legislature which in 1857 passed a resolution supporting the US Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision.

This decision allowed slave owners to retain ownership of enslaved persons who had escaped to or had been brought into a state or territory that prohibited slavery. The man who enslaved Charles Mitchell was appointed by the territorial government as its official surveyor.

The legacy of slavery continues to leave its mark in Washington in the visible gaps among descendants of victims of US chattel slavery in wealth, homeownership, education, health, and employment compared to the rest of the population. **It's time to unite against this legacy and support reparations for descendants of victims of US chattel slavery as**

expressed in the 2026 State Democratic Party Platform.