June 28, 2023

Dear Reparations Task Force Members,

“America needs a new story—one that is honest and inspiring and that doesn’t shy away from its racial history—to guide us toward realizing a thriving multiracial democracy.” That is the opening to Angela Glover Blackwell’s Spring 2023 Stanford Social Innovation Review article titled, “Achieving a Multiracial Democracy.” We at the Weingart Foundation agree that America, and California specifically, needs to tell the truth of its history to effectively address and repair the damage of enslavement and the continued structural racism designed to oppress Black people that now hurt so many more. Standing firmly in our mission to advance racial, social and economic justice in Southern California, the Weingart Foundation is pleased to add its name to the growing list of nearly 300 organizations that have endorsed the groundbreaking work and report of the California Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans (Task Force).

The Weingart Foundation’s commitment to racial and socioeconomic equity is grounded in our understanding of this country’s history of Indigenous genocide, theft of land, enslavement, and the subsequent decades of government practices that not only excluded Black Americans from equal and meaningful participation but also inflicted generational harm that continues to this day. Today we also recognize that the source of the wealth that we steward benefited from racist policies and practices.

We applaud the Task Force’s research and report that outlines in great detail the compounding and ongoing harms specifically experienced by Black Americans in California including enslavement, exclusion from political participation, racist housing policies, prohibiting education, racial terror, disproportionate justice system involvement, exclusion from employment, and the racial wealth gap. This history, including the specific role of California’s state and local government, is not fully taught and not well known - such as its support of enslavement, even as a free state. We simply cannot achieve true racial justice if we are not honest about the legacy of racial injustice that led to the harmful conditions so many Black and other Americans face today.

Narrative and storytelling are important tools in our repair and healing. They are also key to shaping perception and policy. It is with this understanding that we invested in the community engagement and communications aspects of the Task Force’s work. The California Wellness Foundation and the Weingart Foundation were the first private foundations to support the Ralph J. Bunche Center at UCLA to facilitate a community engagement strategy for the Task Force in partnership with trusted Black-led nonprofit organizations. The Weingart Foundation is also supporting a public education project on the Task Force’s report including the development of a docuseries that will highlight and summarize the findings and recommendations made by the Task Force.

As a Foundation committed to addressing structural racism and the legacy of anti-Blackness, long-term investment in Black leadership and organizing in Black
communities is a core part of our grantmaking to individual nonprofits and through collaborations like our $5 million commitment to the California Black Freedom Fund. However, this does not and cannot replace the transformational power of government sponsored reparations for the generations of state sponsored harm to Black Californians. African Americans have advocated for financial restitution since this Country first defaulted on its promise to provide reparations after the Civil War. While advocacy at the Federal level remains, California has the opportunity to lead among states in this nation by finally implementing appropriate remedies of rehabilitation, restitution, and compensation for African Americans. Although we already sense momentum waning since the loud calls for racial justice in 2020, we hope the State follows through on the remarkable work and recommendations of its Reparations Task Force.

Racial justice is this Foundation’s north star. We know this is a long-term struggle and what propels us forward is the growth and support of movements for justice. We are proud to be in a state that is leading the movement for reparations and to endorse the report and recommendations of the California Reparations Task Force. This is a matter of long-overdue justice for the cascading harms of enslavement and racial discrimination experienced by African Americans and an important step in achieving a more equitable and just Southern California for all.

Sincerely,

Miguel A. Santana
President and CEO

Joanna S. Jackson
Vice President, Programs