

Labor Acknowledgment

Most modern-day U.S. institutions have benefited from the unaddressed legacy of stolen labor at the foundation of this nation and its vast and inequitable wealth.

We respectfully acknowledge our debt to the enslaved people, primarily of African descent, whose labor and suffering built and grew the economy and infrastructure of a nation that refused to recognize their humanity.

While the 13th Amendment to the Constitution technically ended “slavery” in the U.S., we know that slavery’s ongoing impacts are still felt by countless people forced – through violence, threats, and coercion – to work in the U.S.

We recognize our debt to exploited workers past and present whose labor was and continues to be stolen through unjust practices.

We acknowledge our collective debt to the Indigenous peoples of this land whose labor was forced and exploited, the Chinese immigrants who built railroads that allowed for westward American development, Japanese Americans whose properties and livelihoods were taken from them while incarcerated during World War II, and migrant workers from the Philippines, Mexico, and Central and South America who have worked Pacific Northwest farms and canneries.

We recognize the immigrant and American-born workers of African, Asian, and Central and South American descent whose labor remains hidden in the shadows but still contributes to the wellbeing of our collective community.

We recognize that our economy continues to rely on the exploited labor of incarcerated people, largely people of color, who earn pennies an hour while generating billions in goods and services each year. And we know there are many other people, too numerous to mention, who are prevented from reaping the true value of their labor by unjust systems and cruel practices.

We mourn their loss of life, liberty, and opportunity.

We acknowledge that the theft of labor is the theft of generational progress. Nearly all people of color have been robbed of the opportunity and wealth that their ancestors might otherwise have passed on to them.