

Hello, my name is Chris Stuart and I have worked for the city over 7 years now. I come before you today, along with a few other class members in the audience, to shed light on the class action lawsuit going on and that The City of Long Beach discriminates against its Black employees. All we want is to be treated fairly. During my tenure, the city refused to promote me, underpaid me and unfairly targeted me. I have seen many non-Black employees be advanced and paid fairly by the city, while the opposite is true for Black city employees. These actions have negatively impacted my family's financial and emotional well-being.

The city has made many statements acknowledging the systemic racism in Long Beach, yet leadership has failed to take meaningful steps to remediate racism within its own workforce and is instead fighting us in court. Soon after this lawsuit was filed in 2021, the city began to disingenuously implement equity and inclusion programs and promote a few Black employees.

What we are seeking in this class action is to be heard and to have the City learn how its policies and procedures suppress pay and career enhancement of its approximately 800 Black employees. We want to know why the City does not perform any racial analysis of its P30 out of class-work appeals. We want to know why Black employees are disproportionately placed into lower paying jobs or are in positions that have less job security and less room for advancement. We want to know why Black employees are targeted for retaliation if they raise any concern about inequity or disparate treatment.

Even after investing in higher education and obtaining certifications to become viable candidates for promotions, Black Employees are intentionally overlooked for these opportunities. We remain stuck for years in antiquated job classifications typically at the top step of our classification with no opportunities for career advancement. These years of low pay significantly impact our retirement savings, making us work well into our retirement years.

The city leadership should not just try to sweep all of this under the rug. These are citywide problems that have citywide solutions that will benefit all employees and ensure fairness and transparency. The City should not be trying to use legal machinations to delay or dismiss our case. The city should be engaging with current and former Black employees to understand its blind spots and how it has allowed systemic racism to fester and go unchecked.

I humbly ask for all of you to consult your conscience and do the right thing, not just make statements to appear to be concerned. We are looking for real leadership to join us to solve long standing problems that divide us, rather than connect us.

- To date almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million has been paid by the City for legal fees to fight the class action. This money should be spent on improving policies that produce unequal employment opportunities for Black COLB employees.
- The City of Long Beach needs to more adequately value its employees. In addition to a desperately needed citywide cost of living increase, Long Beach needs to invest in racial equity in its workforce. Black city employees like myself have been undervalued, underpaid, underpromoted, and under protected for far too long. According to the 2018 Workforce Demographics Report, 65% of the City's Black employees make under \$60,000, compared to 34% of white employees.
- I am asking you to add a workforce racial equity audit to the budget. We need to rectify racial inequities and compensate the countless Black employees who have been passed over for promotion after promotion while their non-Black peers receive numerous promotions over the years, who perform multiple positions and out of class work without proper compensation, who have been stuck at their top pay step for years, who have sat on several eligible lists without receiving a promotion, who have been punished for reporting discrimination and unfair pay and promotion practices, and whose complaints of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation have been dismissed and mishandled. We need to reevaluate the City's current classification system, promotion practices, and EEO complaint practices and build in more structural and trauma-informed safeguards to prevent discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.
- The City's Adopted Fiscal Year 2023 Budget initiatives to hire three additional Civil Service employees, spending \$100k towards a learning management system, and providing \$100k to the Ethics Commission is not enough. We need policy changes, pay equity adjustments, and back pay.

Thank you for your time.