

Robin Rue Simmons is the Founder and Executive Director of FirstRepair, a new not-for-profit organization that advocates for local reparations, nationally. She is the former 5th Ward Alderman for the City of Evanston, IL, where she led, in collaboration with others, the passage of the nation's first and only municipal funded reparations legislation.

Rue Simmons was born and raised in the segregated 5th Ward of Evanston, a city of 75,000 on the shores of Lake Michigan on the northern border of Chicago.

She laid the foundation for her life's work in 1998 when she became a residential real estate broker. Troubled by the wealth disparities and concentrated poverty she witnessed locally and saw in other urban communities, she wanted to help young adults begin to build wealth through homeownership.

As an entrepreneur, she launched and operated multiple businesses, including a bookstore in the 5th Ward, that also offered free afterschool programming, and a construction company in Evanston that employed Black tradespeople, developing dozens of affordable houses funded by the Illinois Neighborhood Stabilization Program. She continues to manage a handful of residential and commercial properties that she owns in Evanston.

Most recently, Rue Simmons was the Director of Innovation and Outreach for Sunshine Enterprises, a not-for-profit on Chicago's South Side, which has supported over one thousand entrepreneurs (virtually all African American and three quarters women) in launching or growing their businesses.

Rue Simmons served as alderman from 2017-2021, serving on multiple committees and chairing several. During her tenure, she prioritized improving the lived experiences of and expanding opportunities for Black residents in Evanston, most notably through her work on reparations. The local reparations initiative will be funded by the first \$10 million of adult use cannabis sales tax revenue collected by the City and the first stage of the reparations program will focus on home ownership. Rue Simmons will continue as a member of the City Council's Reparations Committee.

Rue Simmons is a commissioner of the National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC), a member of the Legislative Committee of the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA), and was a fellow at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference/McCormick Theological Seminary. She previously served as a board member for the National League of Cities' National Black Caucus of Local Elected Leaders, a board member of Evanston's Connections for the Homeless, and the President of the Evanston Black Business Alliance.

Rue Simmons has received numerous awards for her reparations and other public service work including the Urban One Honors' Reparations Ambassador Award (Stacey Abrams and Nikole Hannah-Jones are among those also being honored); the Dearborn Realist Board's Vernon Jarrett Legislative Award; the Democratic Party of Evanston's Liz Tisdahl Award; the Route Fifty

Elected Official of the Year Award; the Realist Women's Council of Illinois' Community Impact Award; and the Family Focus Community Leadership Imani Award. She has also been featured in numerous national and international publications, on television and radio, and in podcasts for her work on local reparations including The New York Times, The Washington Post, National Public Radio, The Guardian, ABC's Nightline, and CNN.

Rue Simmons attended the University of Nevada, Las Vegas where she majored in communications. She has two grown children and one grandson. She is an avid double dutcher and recently joined the 40+ Double Dutch Club on Chicago's South Side.