

LAW, JUSTICE, AND ETHICS

Resolution LJE-20-37

A RESOLUTION ON COMMEMORATING 400 YEARS OF CONTRIBUTIONS OF AFRICANS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES.

WHEREAS, August 2019 marks the 400th anniversary of the arrival of enslaved Africans to colonial Virginia in August 1619;

WHEREAS, states and federal government are working to recognize the 400th anniversary in a variety of forms and fashions;

WHEREAS, the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first known enslaved Africans in colonial North America and the tragic history of American slavery that began with that event are being marked nationally, with the establishment by the U.S. Congress of the "400 Years of African American History Commission";

WHEREAS, the 400 Years of African American History Commission will develop and carry out activities throughout the United States to commemorate the arrival of Africans;

WHEREAS, the commission will also celebrate the contributions African Americans have made since 1619, despite the debilitating effects of slavery and racial discrimination;

WHEREAS, the transatlantic slave trade resulted in an estimated twelve million enslaved Africans being shipped as cargo across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries;

WHEREAS, the largest numbers of slaves were taken to the Americas during the eighteenth century, when, according to historians' estimates, nearly three-fifths of the total volume of the transatlantic slave trade took place;

WHEREAS, throughout our nation's history, African Americans have met with a litany of broken promises and unrealized intentions, from the failure to honor guarantees of freedom for slaves who fought for American independence in the Revolutionary War and the perversion of Reconstruction-era policies designed to ensure an equitable assimilation of recently freed slaves to our government's initial failure and habitual resistance to meaningfully enforce various panaceas of legislation and constitutional protections amid terroristic and murderous campaigns visited upon African Americans between the Jim Crow Era and the height of the Civil Rights Movement;

WHEREAS, today, inequity still remains among African American populations, with families' net worth being less than a late-model car, and the same families topping the list of nearly every poverty-related statistic, despite a plethora of social welfare policies; and

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WHEREAS, as a country, it is imperative that we recount our history, both noble and vile, in order to find positive paths to a future in which every American may live peacefully in a world of true equality enriched by the cultural history of all our peoples.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) joins governments and organizations across this nation in solemn remembrance of the 400th year anniversary of the transatlantic slave trade and recognize the achievements of African Americans over the last 400 years;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL urges states to develop and implement educational materials to be used in K-12 schools to educate students about the achievements of Africans and African Americans over the last 400 years;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL urges states to develop a 400 Years of African American History Commission to develop and carry out activities to commemorate the achievements and contributions of African Americans over the last 400 years; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials as appropriate.

SPONSOR: Representative Harold Love, Jr. (TN)

Committee of Jurisdiction: Law, Justice, and Ethics Policy Committee

Certified by Committee Co-Chair: Representative Reginald Meeks (KY)

Ratified in Plenary Session: Ratification Date is December 6, 2019

Ratification is certified by: Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter (SC), President