



RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING, DENOUNCING AND APOLOGIZING ON BEHALF OF THE CITY OF CHARLESTON FOR THE CITY'S ROLE IN REGULATING, SUPPORTING AND FOSTERING SLAVERY AND THE RESULTING ATROCITIES INFLICTED BY THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY AND FURTHER, COMMITTING TO CONTINUE TO PURSUE INITIATIVES THAT HONOR THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THOSE WHO WERE ENSLAVED AND THAT ASSIST IN AMELIORATING REMAINING VESTIGES OF SLAVERY.

WHEREAS, Charleston (formerly Charles Town), founded in 1670, flourished in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries from a robust economy, made possible by the labor of enslaved people, centering on the production of rice, indigo and other commodities; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the adoption and legalization of the institution of slavery from the 15th to the 19th centuries, more than 15.5 million Indigenous Peoples and Africans were subjected to enslavement to develop North America, South America and the Caribbean, with an estimated two million Africans not surviving the Middle Passage; and

WHEREAS, fundamental to the economy of colonial and antebellum Charleston was slave labor, Charleston prospering as it did due to the expertise, ingenuity and hard labor of enslaved Africans who were forced to endure inhumane working conditions that produced wealth for many, but which was denied to them; and

WHEREAS, approximately forty percent of enslaved Africans arrived in North America at the ports of Charleston, with hundreds of thousands of African American citizens today being able to trace their ancestry to Africans arriving here; and

WHEREAS, the institution of slavery did not just involve physical confinement and mistreatment; it also sought to suppress, if not destroy, the cultural, religious and social values of Africans by stripping Africans of their ancestral names and customs, humiliating and brutalizing them through sexual exploitation, and selling African relatives apart from one another without regard to the connection of family, a human condition universal among all peoples of the world; and

WHEREAS, for a time, notwithstanding the Declaration of Independence tenet that all men are created equal, the federal law of the land as embodied in the Constitution did not recognize enslaved Africans as full-fledged humans, denying citizenship either in number or by way of access to basic rights of due process and equal protection of the law, a condition that persisted until 1865 with the enactment of the 13th amendment to the Constitution and 1868 with the enactment of the 14th amendment to the Constitution requiring State compliance with Constitutional mandates; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution, institutionalized discrimination continued in many parts of the country, with the enactment and enforcement of laws that would come to be known as Jim Crow that were designed to separate African Americans from their fellow citizens, to suppress and intimidate their

exercise of basic rights, as voting, and to frustrate educational opportunities that would create long-term loss of their personal and economic advancement; and

WHEREAS, basic decency requires an acknowledgment and apology for the City of Charleston's role in regulating, supporting and fostering the institution of slavery in the city and the past wrongs inflicted on African Americans here in Charleston and elsewhere, and an acknowledgment and an expression of gratitude for the significant contributions made to our community by talented and skilled African Americans that are reflected in the agriculture, architecture, artisanship, arts and cuisine of this City; and

WHEREAS, the City of Charleston has in recent times supported civil rights and social justice, and has taken measures to promote racial tolerance, such as the passage of the City of Charleston Public Accommodations Ordinance which provides for equal enjoyment and privileges to public accommodations; the City of Charleston Fair Housing Practices Ordinance which makes discrimination in housing illegal; the creation of the City of Charleston's Minority and Women Business Enterprise Development office; partnering with the Charleston County School District and education-focused organizations and programs to improve the quality of education in our schools and to encourage children to stay in school; and supporting the efforts of institutions and churches, including in a variety of ways the church members and community of the Mother Emanuel AME Church following the tragedy of June 2015; and

WHEREAS, the story of enslavement, discrimination and segregation of African-Americans and the dehumanizing atrocities committed against them should not be purged from, or minimized in the telling of Charleston's history; moreover, the faith, perseverance, hope, and triumphs of African-Americans and significant contributions to the development of this State and the nation should be embraced, celebrated, and retold for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, the City of Charleston acknowledges that these efforts to strive for equality and equity and opportunity in all areas of life for African Americans in Charleston must persist and therefore commits to the necessity of continuing to undertake and promote effective measures to assist in the amelioration of remaining vestiges of slavery.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Councilmembers of Charleston, in City Council assembled, that:

- a) We hereby denounce and apologize for the wrongs committed against African Americans by the institution of slavery and Jim Crow, with sincerest sympathies and regrets for the deprivation of life, human dignity and constitutional protections occasioned as a result thereof.
- b) A commitment is hereby made to promote in all City undertakings tolerance and understanding and equal and fair opportunity for all citizens to prosper, personally and economically, and to encourage others to treat all persons with respect and to eliminate prejudice, injustice and discrimination in our city.
- c) A commitment is hereby made to urge all businesses, institutions, organizations, and associations doing business or having activities in the City to strive for racial equality and work for equity in wages, healthcare, housing, and all other aspects of the lives of African Americans.
- d) A pledge is hereby given to continue to work with the Charleston County School District to address the quality of education for children in Charleston and in particular those who attend schools within the City of Charleston.
- e) A pledge is hereby given to promote an understanding of the contributions of African Americans to the economic success, beauty, and culture of this City by way of historic documentation in City art festivals, museums, public spaces, and monuments and to collaborate with other organizations to memorialize the unmarked cemeteries of Africans discovered throughout the City of Charleston and to reinter their remains.
- f) An assurance is hereby provided that the City will seek to promote racial harmony and acceptance by way of initiatives, such as the creation of an office of racial reconciliation, measures designed to educate and accommodate the exchange of ideas among all races and creeds, and to assist in the ever-present process of racial healing and transformation.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 2018.

John J. Tecklenburg, Mayor
City of Charleston

ATTEST:

Vanessa Turner Maybank,
Clerk of Council