

1 INTERIM RESOLUTION 2007-002

2
3 EXPRESSING PROFOUND REGRET FOR ARKANSAS'S ROLE IN
4 SLAVERY.

5
6 WHEREAS, slavery has been documented as a worldwide practice since antiquity, dating
7 back to 3500 B.C. in ancient Mesopotamia; and

8
9 WHEREAS, during the course of the infamous Atlantic Slave Trade, millions of Africans
10 became involuntary immigrants to the New World, and millions more died during passage; the
11 first African slaves in the North American colonies were brought to Jamestown, in 1619; and

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13 WHEREAS, the Atlantic Slave Trade was a lucrative enterprise, and African slaves, a
14 prized commodity to support the economic base of plantations in the colonies, were traded for
15 tropical products, manufactured goods, sugar, molasses, and other merchandise; and

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17 WHEREAS, some African captives resisted enslavement by fleeing from slave forts on
18 the West African coast and others mutinied aboard slave trading vessels, cast themselves into the
19 Atlantic Ocean, or risked the cruel retaliation of their masters by running away to seek freedom;
20 and

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22 WHEREAS, although the United States outlawed the transatlantic slave trade in 1808, the
23 domestic slave trade in the colonies and illegal importation continued for several decades; and

24
25 WHEREAS, slavery was unfortunately part of the culture of the State of Arkansas, as the
26 state's slave population grew from eleven percent (11%) in 1820 to twenty-five percent (25%) by
27 1860; and

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29 WHEREAS, slavery, or the "Peculiar Institution," in the United States resembled no
30 other form of involuntary servitude, as Africans were captured and sold at auction as chattel, like
31 inanimate property or animals; and

32
33 WHEREAS, to prime Africans for slavery, the fundamental values of the Africans were
34 shattered – they were brutalized, humiliated, dehumanized, and subjected to the indignity of being
35 stripped of their names and heritage; women and girls were raped; and families were
36 disassembled as husbands and wives, mothers and daughters, and fathers and sons were sold into

1 slavery apart from one another; and

2
3 WHEREAS, a series of complex colonial laws were enacted to relegate the status of
4 Africans and their descendants to slavery, in spite of their loyalty, dedication, and service to the
5 country, including heroic and distinguished service in the military; and

6
7 WHEREAS, the system of slavery had become entrenched in American history and the
8 social fabric, and the issue of enslaved Africans had to be addressed as a national issue,
9 contributing to the Civil War from 1861 to 1865 and the passage of the 13th Amendment to the
10 United States Constitution, which abolished slavery and involuntary servitude on December 18,
11 1865; and

12
13 WHEREAS, after emancipation from two hundred forty-six (246) years of slavery,
14 African-Americans soon saw the political, social, and economic gains they made during
15 Reconstruction dissipated by virulent and rabid racism, lynchings, disenfranchisement of African-
16 American voters, Black Codes designed to reimpose the subordination of African-Americans, and
17 Jim Crow laws that instituted a rigid system of de jure segregation in virtually all areas of life and
18 that lasted until the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act; and

19
20 WHEREAS, throughout their existence in America and even in the decades after the
21 Civil Rights Movement, African-Americans have found the struggle to overcome the bitter legacy
22 of slavery long and arduous, and for many African-Americans the scars left behind are
23 unbearable; and

24
25 WHEREAS, acknowledgment of the crimes and persecution visited upon other peoples
26 during World War II is embraced lest the world forget, yet the very mention of the broken
27 promise of "40 acres and a mule" to former slaves or of the existence of racism today evokes
28 denial from many quarters of any responsibility for the centuries of legally sanctioned deprivation
29 of African-Americans of their endowed rights or for contemporary policies that perpetuate the
30 status quo; and

31
32 WHEREAS, in 2003, during a trip to Goree Island, Senegal, a former slave port,
33 President George W. Bush stated, "At this place, liberty and life were stolen and sold. Human
34 beings were delivered and sorted, and weighed, and branded with the marks of commercial
35 enterprises, and loaded as cargo on a voyage without return. One of the largest migrations of
36 history was also one of the greatest crimes of history. Small men took on the powers and airs of

1 tyrants and masters. Years of unpunished brutality and bullying and rape produced a dullness and
2 hardness of conscience. Christian men and women became blind to the clearest commands of
3 their faith and added hypocrisy to injustice. For 250 years the captives endured an assault on
4 their culture and their dignity. While physical slavery is dead, the legacy is alive. My nation's
5 journey toward justice has not been easy, and it is not over. The racial bigotry fed by slavery did
6 not end with slavery or with segregation and many of the issues that still trouble America have
7 roots in the bitter experience of other times. We can finally judge the past by the standards of
8 President John Adams, who called slavery 'an evil of colossal magnitude' ... "; and
9

10 WHEREAS, European and African nations have apologized for their roles in what
11 history calls the worst holocaust of humankind, the Atlantic Slave Trade, and racial reconciliation
12 is impossible without some acknowledgment of the moral and legal injustices perpetrated upon
13 African-Americans; and
14

15 WHEREAS, an apology for centuries of brutal dehumanization and injustices cannot
16 erase the past, but confession of the wrongs can speed racial healing and reconciliation and help
17 African-American and white citizens confront the ghosts of their collective pasts together; and
18

19 WHEREAS, the story of the enslavement of Africans and their descendants, the human
20 carnage, and the dehumanizing atrocities committed during slavery should not be purged from
21 Arkansas's history or discounted; moreover, the faith, perseverance, hope, and endless triumphs
22 of African-Americans and their significant contributions to the development of this state and the
23 nation should be embraced, celebrated, and retold for generations to come; and
24

25 WHEREAS, the perpetual pain, distrust, and bitterness of many African-Americans could
26 be assuaged and the principles espoused by the Founding Fathers would be affirmed, and great
27 strides toward unifying all Arkansans and inspiring the nation to acquiesce might be
28 accomplished, if the state acknowledged and atoned for its role in the slavery of Africans; and
29

30 WHEREAS, acknowledging that there is a difference between what is wrong and right,
31 and that slavery as an American "Institution" was a wrong committed upon millions of Black
32 Americans and that their ancestors are the beneficiaries of such wrongs, including, but not limited
33 to, segregation under Jim Crow, housing discrimination, discrimination in education, and other
34 ills inflicted upon black people; and
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36 WHEREAS, the Legislative Council and citizens of the State of Arkansas are conscious

1 that under slavery many atrocities and gross violations of human rights were imposed upon black
2 people, and that acknowledging these facts can and will avert future tragedies, be they in the
3 Sudan, or other parts of the world; and
4

5 WHEREAS, the fiftieth anniversary of the integration of Central High School presents an
6 ideal opportunity for the state to acknowledge its unfortunate history with slavery, express its
7 regret for those actions, and reemphasize its commitment to avoid such actions in the future,
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9 NOW THEREFORE,

10 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF THE EIGHTY-SIXTH
11 GENERAL ASSEMBLY:
12

13 That the Legislative Council expresses its profound regret for the State of Arkansas's role
14 in slavery and that it asks forgiveness for the wrongs inflicted by slavery and its after-effects in
15 the United States of America; the Legislative Council expresses its deepest sympathies and
16 solemn regrets to those who were enslaved and those descendants of slaves, who were deprived
17 of life, human dignity, and the constitutional protections accorded all citizens of the United
18 States; and the Legislative Council encourages the remembrance and teaching about the history of
19 slavery, Jim Crow laws, and modern-day slavery, to ensure that these tragedies will neither be
20 forgotten nor repeated.
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22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that it is the intent of the Legislative Council that this
23 resolution shall not be used in, or be the basis of, any type of litigation.
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25 Respectfully submitted,
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28 Senator Gilbert Baker
29 District 30
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Senator Steve Bryles
District 15
31

32 Representative Steve Harrelson
33 District 1
34

Representative Michael Lamoureux
District 68
35
36

EXPRESSING PROFOUND REGRET FOR ARKANSAS'S ROLE IN SLAVERY

Paul Miller #10

Signature & District

R. K. ... #8

Signature & District

Johnny Bowen #55

Signature & District

Lion Sullivan

Signature & District

Spidley Smith #92

Signature & District

Ray Smith 19

Signature & District

CHIX #74

Signature & District

Buddy Lovee #50

Signature & District

Lamond Cornwell #28

Signature & District

Charollette Wagner #17

Signature & District

John Paul Capps, Senate Dist 29

Signature & District

Joan Cash #75

Signature & District

Janet Johnson #29

Signature & District

Signature & District

R. Rick ... #24

Signature & District

Signature & District

Sue Madison Senate 7

Signature & District

Signature & District

David Evans Dist 50

Signature & District

Signature & District

Bill Abernathy #22

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