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A RESOLUTION ENDORSING THE ENACTMENT OF BILLS A602/S3164 THE "NEW JERSEY REPARATIONS TASK FORCE ACT"

Resolution #24R-128 WHEREAS, the "New Jersey Reparations Task Force Act" will authorize research and development of reparatory proposals and recommendations to address the generational harms caused by New Jersey's role in America's institution of slavery and its legacy of systemic racial discrimination; and

WHEREAS, Ewing Township is a multicultural and diverse city which is home to 11,709 Black people according to the 2020 census, who make up more than 29.1% of the town's population; and

WHEREAS, from 1619 to 1865, approximately 4,000,000 Africans and their descendants, under a practice that was constitutionally and statutorily sanctioned, were enslaved in the United States and the colonies that became the United States; and

WHEREAS, the system of slavery that flourished in the United States constituted an immoral, shameful, and inhumane deprivation of the life, liberty, humanity, citizenship, and cultural heritage of Africans and denied them also, among other things, the fruits of their own labor upon which this country, and its economy, was built; and

WHEREAS, slavery took root very deeply in New Jersey, as with its southern neighbors, slavery played a key role in New Jersey's economic development. New Jersey was known as "the slave state of the North." In the early 17th Century, the first enslaved African people arrived in New Netherland, a Dutch settlement established in the Mid-Atlantic, which included portions of present-day New Jersey. When New Jersey was settled as a colony, white settlers received 150 acres of land and were eligible to receive an additional 150 acres for every enslaved person they brought with them. As the demand for labor increased, the number of enslaved African people imported to New Jersey increased. By 1790, there were 11,500 enslaved people in New Jersey, making it home to more enslaved people than all of New England. In 1704, the Province of New Jersey introduced the "Slave Code," which prohibited enslaved Africans and free Africans from owning property and made certain actions, like staying out past curfew, illegal for Black people. By 1830, over two-thirds of all enslaved people in the North were held in New Jersey. Although New Jersey outlawed the importation of enslaved Africans in 1786 and enacted the "Gradual Abolition Act of 1804" to abolish slavery gradually, New Jersey was the only Northern State to actively enforce the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, the State Legislature passed "Peace Resolutions" in 1863 denying President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and later voted against the 13th amendment to the United States Constitution, only ratifying the amendment to abolish

slavery after it had already become part of the United States Constitution, thereby making New Jersey the last Northern state to abolish slavery; and

WHEREAS, in 1830 Ewing Township's number of free Blacks was 154, by 1860 that number had reduced to 149. In comparison, during the same time period, the white population grew from 1,086 to 2,078, showing the challenge living in Ewing Township was for African Americans; and

WHEREAS, an overwhelming body of scholarship; historical, legal, political, economic, sociological, cultural and community evidentiary documentation, and the modern day lived experiences of the descendants of enslaved Africans form the basis for inquiry into the ongoing effects of the institution of slavery and its legacy of persistent systemic structures of discrimination on living Black people and communities in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the legacy of slavery has given rise to systematic and persistent racism which still pervades American society and has resulted in inequities in access to democracy, infrastructure, youth justice, housing, education, healthcare along with racial wealth gaps and segregation, the effects of which are still felt and endured by Black communities and residents of Ewing, to this day; and

WHEREAS, access to democracy: New Jersey suffers from racialized voter disenfranchisement, denying the vote to over 100,000 people in prison, on parole, or on probation, according to State data. Over half are Black, though Black people comprise just 15 percent of the State's population. The racism of the criminal justice system is directly imported into the franchise; and

WHEREAS, youth justice: Generations of Black kids have experienced racism in the youth justice system. Just two years after the Civil War, New Jersey opened Jamesburg, its largest youth prison for boys. Today, Black children are almost 18 times more likely to be locked up than white children, the highest disparity rate in America, even though Black and white children commit most offenses at similar rates. As of February 9, 2022, just 11 white children are incarcerated in New Jersey, compared to 65 Black children, according to State data; and

WHEREAS, housing and the racial wealth gap: New Jersey also experienced racially restrictive covenants that prohibited Black people from buying, leasing, or occupying property based on race, and redlining, which targeted Black people who were refused housing loans. That legacy of systemic housing discrimination spills into today's vast discrepancy in New Jersey homeownership rates: 75.9 percent for white households and 38.4 percent for Black households. Because homeownership is a primary driver of wealth, Black and Latino people in New Jersey confront one of the worst racial wealth gaps in America. The median net worth for New Jersey's white families is \$309,000, the highest in the nation. For New Jersey's Black and Latino families, it is incredibly just \$5,900 and \$7,020, respectively. New Jersey also leads the nation in home foreclosures, according to ATTOM Data Solutions; and

WHEREAS, to address these systemic challenges in New Jersey, the "New Jersey Reparations Task Force" will research, write, and publish a report that will examine the institution of slavery in New Jersey as well as the extent to which the State of New Jersey and the Federal government prevented, opposed or restricted efforts of Black people to thrive upon the ending of slavery and make recommendations for what remedies should be proposed in New Jersey and outline policy

recommendations that seek to repair the harm that has resulted from America's original sin in the Garden State; and

WHEREAS, the urgency for the establishment of this task force is compelling. The elder African-American population, some of whom are the grandchildren of formerly enslaved Black people and can bear direct witness to some of the severest forms of racism and oppression, is advancing in age. As too many generations of Black people have already passed without the benefit of any remedies for the injustices they endured, it is important that New Jersey make the establishment of this task force imperative; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Ewing, County of Mercer, State of New Jersey that it fully endorses the enactment of the “New Jersey Reparations Task Force” bill; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Municipal Clerk is hereby directed to forward a certified copy of this resolution to the New Jersey Assembly and the New Jersey Senate, including the Township’s local representatives of those bodies.

IT IS SO RESOLVED.

Certification:

I, Kim J. Macellaro, Municipal Clerk of the Township of Ewing, hereby certify that the above is a true copy of a Resolution adopted by the Governing Body of the Township of Ewing at a Regular Meeting of the Municipal Council of the Township of Ewing, County of Mercer, State of New Jersey held on the 28th day of May 2024.




Kim J. Macellaro, CMC
Municipal Clerk