



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0217-2002, **Version:** *

Res. No. 217

Resolution calling upon the City Council to declare its support for plaintiffs Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, Mary Lacey Madison, Andrea Carrington and all others similarly situated, in their efforts to seek restitution in a federal class action suit brought against the corporations that are alleged to have participated in and directly profited from the abhorrent institution of slavery.

By Council Members Barron, Comrie, Foster, Rivera, Sanders, Seabrook, Serrano and Vann

Whereas, Over eight million Africans and their descendants were enslaved in the United States from 1619 to 1865; and
Whereas, By the end of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, somewhere between eight and twelve million Africans had arrived in the New World to be sold off as slaves; and
Whereas, Historians estimate that one slave perished for every individual who survived capture and transport to the New World, meaning that as many as twelve million perished in addition to those who lived only to lead the dreaded life of a slave; and
Whereas, Not only did slavery result in the extinguishing of millions of Africans, but eviscerated whole cultures, languages, and religions, and wrenched from its victims and descendants their history, memories and families; and
Whereas, In addition to the South, many enslaved Africans arrived in the Dutch colonial city of New Amsterdam that later became New York City, where such slaves were integral in building many structures, such as Trinity Church, the City streets and the wall from which Wall Street takes its name and which protected the colony from military strikes; and
Whereas, These slaves lived cheek to jowl, in attics, hallways, and beneath porches, and in death they were banished to the Negro Burial Ground one mile outside the City, which holds between ten and twenty thousand bodies; and
Whereas, About forty percent of these buried bodies were children who died from malnutrition, and most of the adult bodies showed signs of death by hard labor; and
Whereas, Slavery was outlawed in 1865, yet continued on a smaller scale de facto until as recently as the 1950's; and
Whereas, Even for those who were "freed," their lives remained locked in quasi-servitude due to legal, economic, and psychic restraints that effectively blocked their economic, political and social advancement; and
Whereas, Slavery fueled the prosperity of the young nation by providing as much as forty million dollars in unpaid labor, which some estimate to have appreciated to a current value of more than one trillion dollars; and
Whereas, A class action suit has been brought in the United States District Court, for the Eastern District of New York by descendants of slaves, seeking restitution for the atrocities of slavery and the cruel aftermath it has engendered; and
Whereas, The Plaintiffs in this brave and noble class action are represented by Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, Mary Lacey Madison and Andrea Carrington; and
Whereas, The Defendants in the action are corporate entities that have allegedly used and/or profited from slave labor and have retained the benefits and use of those profits and products derived from that slave labor; and
Whereas, Defendant corporations allegedly knew that the plaintiff class was subject to physical and mental abuse and inhumane treatment; and
Whereas, FleetBoston, a named defendant in the lawsuit, is alleged to have financed some of the business of slave trading; and
Whereas, CSX, another named defendant, is alleged to have operated numerous railroad lines that were constructed or run by slave labor; and
Whereas, AETNA Inc., also named in the lawsuit, is alleged to have insured slave owners against the loss of their human chattel; and
Whereas, There are alleged to be many other corporations that have participated in and profited from slavery; and
Whereas, The United Nations has pronounced the Trans-Atlantic slave trade to be a crime against humanity; and
Whereas, A crime has been committed, a people have been injured by this crime, and compensation for these injuries are due; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, That the City Council declares its support for plaintiffs Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, Mary Lacey Madison, Andrea Carrington and all others similarly situated, in their efforts to seek restitution in a federal class action suit brought against the corporations that are alleged to have participated in and directly profited from the abhorrent institution of slavery.

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