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Res. No. 1958

Resolution calling upon the United States Congress to pass H.R. 40, the Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act.

By Council Members Williams, Barron, Brewer, Comrie, Jackson, James, Mark-Viverito, Mendez, Richards, Rodriguez, Rose and Vann

Whereas, Slavery in Colonial America was first recorded in 1619, when a Dutch slave trader in Jamestown, Virginia, traded a group of African people he had captured and enslaved in exchange for food; and

Whereas, Legal enslavement of Africans and their descendants continued in Colonial America and, subsequently, the United States of America for nearly two-and-a-half centuries afterwards; and

Whereas, During this time, enslaved Africans and their descendants were subjected to an array of physical mistreatment, including but not limited to whipping, mutilation, rape, imprisonment and murder; and

Whereas, In addition to the physical brutality with which they were treated, enslaved Africans and their descendants were also denied access to education, humane working conditions, adequate medical care, religious

liberty, and any sort of personal freedom or citizenship; and

Whereas, By the time the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution was passed by the United States Congress and ratified by the states in 1865, formally abolishing slavery throughout the United States, about 4 million Africans and their descendants had been enslaved; and

Whereas, Despite the abolition of slavery in the United States nearly 150 years ago, the institutionalized discrimination it engendered has continued to plague African-Americans in many facets of their lives ever since; and

Whereas, To address the legacy left behind after the elimination of slavery, H.R. 40, the “Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act” was introduced; and

Whereas, If passed, H.R. 40 would recognize the magnitude of and the wrong produced by slavery, and acknowledge the fact that the United States has not adequately examined the consequences of institutionalized slavery on the affected populations; and

Whereas, To address this shortcoming, H.R. 40 would establish a commission that would study the institution of slavery, governmental support for the practice, discrimination against freed slaves and their descendants between the end of the Civil War and today, and the impact of slavery on contemporary African-Americans; and

Whereas, H.R. 40 would empower the commission to make several recommendations, including the manner in which to best educate the American public about its findings, as well as whether descendants of slaves are entitled to compensation for injuries resulting from the legacy of slavery, including the form of compensation; and

Whereas, H.R. 40 would mandate that these findings and recommendations be issued to the United States Congress within a year of its first meeting; and

Whereas, The only way the United States can address the legacy of its past injustices is if it truly studies their consequences and, if necessary, seeks proactive measures to reverse their damage; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United States Congress to pass H.R. 40, the Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act.

DMB
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7/10/13