



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** Res 1709-2013, **Version:** \*

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### Res. No. 1709

Resolution calling on the State of New York to make active the Amistad Commission and promote a curriculum, such as the Underground Railroad curriculum, that teaches African-American history in New York public schools.

By Council Members Barron, Jackson, Williams, Cabrera, Chin, Comrie, Dickens, Dromm, Eugene, Ferreras, Gennaro, James, King, Koppell, Mark-Viverito, Mendez, Palma, Richards, Rose, Van Bramer and Vann

Whereas, It is the duty of the Department of Education (DOE) to educate and inspire students of all ancestries; and

Whereas, According to the New York City DOE, African American students constitute about one-third of the students in the New York City public school system; and

Whereas, In 2005, the New York State Legislature created the Amistad Commission to promote the teaching of black history in public schools; and

Whereas, According to the Commission's website, New York State's Amistad Commission is charged with researching and surveying the extent to which the African slave trade and slavery in America is included in the curricula of New York state schools, and making recommendations to the Governor and Legislature regarding the implementation of education and awareness programs in New York concerned with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country, and the contributions of African-Americans in building our country; and

Whereas, This Commission has arguably not fulfilled its mandate; and

Whereas, According to media reports, nearly four years after its creation, the Commission had not yet met, and as of 2011, had not yet appointed all of its members; to date, the Commission has only met a few times; and

Whereas, According to Black New Yorkers for Educational Excellence, there is no curriculum in place in New York City schools that teaches black history in a systematic manner; and

Whereas, The lack of adequate incorporation of black history in the school curriculum overlooks a crucial aspect of the history of the United States and minimizes the accomplishments, contributions and struggles of African-Americans; and

Whereas, Neglecting black history in our schools is a disservice to all New York City students, but above all, is damaging to the well-being of African-American students and their communal and individual self-awareness; and

Whereas, There is a need for New York City schools to emphasize the significance of black history; and

Whereas, Inclusion of the Underground Railroad curriculum, a name used to describe a curriculum which teaches students of all ages about enslaved Africans throughout American history, would foster and promote a more culturally sensitive learning environment for students, and bestow upon the African-American community a much needed recognition of the importance of black history by New York City's educational institutions; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the State of New York to make active the Amistad Commission and promote a curriculum, such as the Underground Railroad curriculum, that teaches African-American history in New York public schools.

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