



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1039

Resolution calling upon on the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor sign A.3080A/ S.2904A in relation to establishing the New York State Community Commission on Reparations Remedies to examine the impacts of the institution of slavery, subsequently racial and economic discrimination against African-Americans, and recommend appropriate remedies.

By Council Members Barron, Miller, Kallos, Cornegy, Van Bramer, Rosenthal, Adams and Cumbo

Whereas, Millions of enslaved Africans in the United States spent their lives providing unpaid skilled labor and were subject to execution, torture, extreme physical abuse, systemic and state sanctioned rape and sexual violence; and

Whereas, On December 13, 1711, the New York City Common Council passed a law establishing the city's first slave market, at which African-Americans and Native Americans were to be purchased, hired and sold; and

Whereas, By 1730, New York City was the second-largest slave-owning city in the country with 42 percent of the population being owners of enslaved African-Americans; and

Whereas, Prior to the American Revolution, there were more enslaved Africans in New York City than in any other city except Charleston, South Carolina; and

Whereas, Enslaved African-Americans were the economic engine of the City, having prepared land for agriculture, built infrastructure of roads, constructed City Hall and built the wall after which Wall Street is named; and

Whereas, In the abolition of slavery, New York State was one of the early pioneers effectively ending slavery in 1827, 38 years prior to the national abolition of slavery, yet racism, discrimination, segregation, and anti-black violence continued; and

Whereas, By the 1850s, the City was profiting immensely from the illegal international slave trade to Southern United States, Brazil and Cuba; and

Whereas, In July 1863, the Draft Riots occurred where approximately 100 people were killed in Manhattan and Brooklyn, 100 buildings were destroyed and 11 Black men were lynched, tortured and mutilated, with some hanged from lamp posts and burned; and

Whereas, In 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime; and

Whereas, Amongst other national and local policies that targeted and criminalized Black people, policies such as the 1973 Rockefeller Drug Laws, passed by New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller to deter drug use and sales, served as a catalyst to the mass incarceration of Black people; and

Whereas, The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America defines reparations as a process of repairing, healing and restoring a people injured because of their group identity and in violation of their fundamental human rights by governments, corporations, institutions and families; and

Whereas, In addition to reparations owed for the shattering impacts of the Federally-declared War on Drugs campaign of the 1970's and the ongoing mass criminalization of Black people, The Movement for Black Lives, also recognized as "M4BL," has identified several other demands for reparations for all Black people; and

Whereas, Reparations are owed for the systemic denial of access to quality educational opportunities, the capital extracted from Black communities through environmental racism, slavery, food apartheid, housing discrimination and racialized capitalism, and the cultural and educational exploitation and erasure of Black communities; and

Whereas, The United Nations outlines five conditions that must be met for full reparations, including cessation or assurance of non-repetition, restitution, compensation, satisfaction and rehabilitation; and

Whereas, Therefore, reparations cannot be achieved merely through an apology or investment in

underprivileged communities, unless accompanied by acts of repair and efforts to leverage power, influence and resources to ensure all acts of harm have ceased with guarantee of non-repetition; and

Whereas, A.3080A/ S.2904A, sponsored by Senator James Sanders Jr. and Assemblymember Charles Barron, acknowledges the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity of slavery in the city of New York and the state of New York and establishes the New York State Community Commission on Reparations Remedies; and

Whereas, Slavery's impact on New York remains significant and perpetuates a growing wealth disparity and socioeconomic disposition that African-Americans today face as a result of historical, discriminatory policies and ongoing segregation; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon on the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor sign A.3080A/ S.2904A in relation to establishing the New York State Community Commission on Reparations Remedies to examine the impacts of the institution of slavery, subsequently racial and economic discrimination against African-Americans, and recommend appropriate remedies.

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