

Resolution #21-0139
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**RESOLUTION CALLING FOR FEDERAL AND STATE ACTION TO ESTABLISH A
COMMISSION TO STUDY THE ISSUE OF REPARATIONS FOR
BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN CITIZENS**

WHEREAS, between 1619 and 1865, an estimated 4,000,000 people of African descent were unjustly enslaved in the colonies and the United States;

WHEREAS, slavery represented an irreconcilable contradiction to our nation’s founding upon the ideals of liberty and justice;

WHEREAS, the early American economy was built using the uncompensated and forced labor of enslaved people of African descent who worked, under inhumane conditions, in fear of physical violence or death, and were denied the right to share in the wealth created by their labor;

WHEREAS, by 1860 there were nearly 4 million slaves, worth over 3.4 billion, making them the largest single financial asset in the entire U.S. economy, worth more than all of America’s manufacturing, railroad and all of the productive capacity of the United States put together;

WHEREAS, on December 6, 1865, the United States Congress ratified the 13th Amendment to the Constitution thus abolishing slavery in the United States “or any place subject their jurisdiction...” “... except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.”;

WHEREAS, despite ratification of the 13th and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution, Black/African Americans were nevertheless denied meaningful opportunities to fully participate in society, and were subjected to discrimination and punishment under “Black Codes” also referred to as “Black Laws”, which immediately proceeds the period of de facto and de jure

segregation commonly referred to as the “era of Jim Crow” to ensure that a system in which white citizens benefited at the expense of African American citizens remained;

WHEREAS, even after the legal end to segregation and the passage of the Civil Right Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, Black/African Americans continue to be denied equal access to education and skill development, healthcare, safe neighborhoods, affordable housing, mortgages and capital to purchase homes and invest in businesses necessary to generate wealth and create job opportunities with their communities, access to other meaningful opportunities to eliminate the racial wealth gap, and access to equal protection under the law;

WHEREAS, slum clearance and urban renewal programs destroyed homes, businesses, churches, and cultural institutions within neighborhoods where Winston-Salem’s Black/African American residents lived, worked, shopped and worshiped, thereby eliminating accrued wealth and destroying vehicles for generating future wealth and replaced them with infrastructure projects such as the Cherry/Marshall Expressway, US Highway 52, and what is now known as Salem Parkway;

WHEREAS, the laws of the United States Government and the State of North Carolina as presently written do not allow for the direct payment of reparations to individuals who have experienced human rights violations, and systemic racism;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City of Winston-Salem apologizes for its role in the enslavement of Black/African American people, its enforcement of de facto and de jure segregation, its promotion and implementation of prejudicial and discriminatory policies, practices, and procedures, and its refusal to provide equal protection under the law as required by the 14th Amendment and other laws of the nation and state;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City of Winston-Salem,

1. Apologizes for its participation in slum clearance and urban renewal programs that, while providing infrastructure allowed the city to grow, did so at the expense of multiple successful black businesses and homes in the eastern portion of the city
2. Calls on the United States Congress to pass H.R. 40, which would establish a federal commission to study and develop a reparations proposals for Black/African Americans, which would examine the legacy of slavery and discrimination in the United States and make recommendations to Congress to regarding remedies to address their lingering impacts;
3. Calls on the North Carolina General Assembly to pass similar legislation and complete a parallel process;
4. Calls on the African American History Initiative to develop for publishing on the City of Winston-Salem website, a narrative of the history of the Black/African American churches, businesses, neighborhoods, and cultural institutions that were lost to slum removal and urban renewal projects such as the Cherry/Marshall Expressway, US Highway 52 and what is now known as Salem Parkway
5. Direct the City Manager to give, at a minimum, a bi-annual update to the City Council on the progress of work performed pursuant to this resolution;
6. Requests that the City Clerk forward copies of this resolution to the Governor of the State of North Carolina, the City of Winston-Salem Delegation to the North Carolina General Assembly and United States House of Representatives, and the North Carolina Delegation to the United States Senate.