



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Text

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RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHICAGO DESCENDANTS OF ENSLAVED AFRICANS REPARATIONS COMMISSION

WHEREAS, exactly four centuries ago, the transatlantic slave trade began from the west coast of Africa to America resulting in approximately 4,000,000 Africans and their descendants being enslaved in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the institution of slavery was constitutionally and statutorily sanctioned by the United States government and its predecessor Colonies from 1619 through 1865. Although the da jure institution of slavery ended with the Emancipation Proclamation, it continued de facto through such onerous policies as Jim Crow and the Black Codes. Such nefarious discrimination provided significant advantages to white individuals and corporations, while disadvantaging African Americans and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, 2019 also marks the 100th anniversary of the "Chicago Race Riot," precipitated by the death of Eugene Williams, an African American youth who had accidentally drifted into a white swimming area at a segregated beach near 29th Street. The unrest lasted from July 27 and ended on August 3, 1919, causing 38 deaths and 537 injuries. African American neighborhoods near white areas were attacked by white gangs. Thousands (mostly African-Americans) lost their homes. Some African Americans organized to defend and protect themselves while the city's police department often turned a blind eye or even joined in the mayhem. The mayor at that time exacerbated the situation by refusing to ask the governor to send in the Illinois National Guard even though the guardsmen had been called up, organized in the city's armories and made ready to intervene; and

WHEREAS, additionally, this December marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Black Panther Party Chairman, Fred Hampton and Defense Captain Mark Clark. On Dec 4, 1969, the Cook County State's Attorney, along with members of the Chicago Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, staged a pre-dawn raid on the Black Panther Party Headquarters. The subsequent investigation found that the Chicago police fired between ninety and ninety-nine shots while the Panthers had only accidentally discharged one shot when the gun Mark Clark held fell from his hands as he was shot to death; and

WHEREAS, African Americans continue to suffer extraordinary disparities in economic, educational, health, housing, unemployment and poverty outcomes. African Americans have been disproportionately incarcerated and been victims of torture and police abuse. Although African Americans account for 31 percent of Chicago's population, they account for 80 percent of the victims of gunshot wounds and deaths throughout the past 10 years. During this last decade, the City of Chicago has paid out nearly \$1 Billion in wrongful death lawsuits against the Chicago Police Department where

primarily citizens of African descent were the victims; and

WHEREAS, more than 30 percent of African American families live below the poverty line in Chicago compared to less than 10 percent for white families. The unemployment rate for African Americans in Chicago is approximately 20 percent and for whites it is less than 5 percent. The median family income for African Americans is \$36,720, compared to \$81,702 for white families and \$47,308 for Latino families; and

WHEREAS, the African American infant mortality rate is approximately three times higher than Whites and the community areas with the highest rates of infant mortality cluster on the south and west sides of the city; and

WHEREAS, high school graduation rates for African American males in Chicago Public Schools is 64.7 percent, the graduation rate for white males is 82.1 percent. African American students are expelled at four times the rate of Latinos and 23 times the rate of whites; and

WHEREAS, in 2000, the City of Chicago City Council passed a resolution in support of U.S. House Resolution 40 (HR 40), The Commission to Study Reparations Proposals for African Americans Act. The Illinois State Senate Joint Resolution 0031 passed in the 94th General Assembly established the Illinois Transatlantic Slave Trade Commission. This Commission examined the institution of slavery and its lingering impact on African Americans in Illinois. The Commission filed two reports in 2007 and 2008 with recommendations to deal with structural racism and inequity; and

WHEREAS, in 2002, under Title 11 of the Municipal Code of Chicago, the City of Chicago City Council codified Title the Slavery Era Disclosure Ordinance (Chapter 2-92-585), making it mandatory for all businesses seeking city contracts, not just insurance companies, to research and report any slave trade history, with documentation to be filed with the Department of Procurement; and

WHEREAS, in the 99th and 100th Illinois General Assemblies, the House passed unanimous resolutions calling on a Presidential Commission to Study Reparations that specifically details the economic impact of the slave trade, the use of slave labor, and how Emancipation, while freeing slaves of their literal bonds and ending an immoral practice, did not guarantee equity in education, employment, housing, and access to quality affordable health care as well as a proposal for reparations and how those reparations can help overcome obstacles that still exist today in education, employment, housing, health care, and justice; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that we, the mayor and members of the City of Chicago City Council, gathered together this 18th Day of September, 2019 AD, do hereby direct the Committee on Health and Human Relations to draft an ordinance to create the Chicago Descendants of Enslaved Africans Reparations Commission charged with a mission to engage the City of Chicago and its citizens of African descent in full reparations measures with the cessation and guarantees of non-repetition, restitution, compensation, satisfaction, and rehabilitation ... outcomes that are consistent with international

norms, standards and laws for reparations as developed by the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Commission shall:

- 1) Ensure equity, equality, and parity for citizens of African descent in Chicago who are mired in poverty,
- 2) Consider what forms redress may take including, but not necessarily limited to, rehabilitative reparations, i.e. closing the racial gaps in homeownership, educational funding, healthcare, government contracts, etc.
- 3) Ensure that the above-mentioned measures are being implemented and progress is being made,
- 4) Hold public hearings to discuss implementation of the above recommendations,
- 5) Educate the public on its mission, and
- 6) Report annually to the City of Chicago City Council their findings regarding their progress toward implementation of its mission.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the Commission shall include the Mayor or her designee. Five Members of the city council, and ten members from the public, at least eight members from the public must be members from the eligible impacted community. The appointed members shall be from a broad section of the African American community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission shall be codified within the Municipal Code of Chicago under Chapter 2-120 and become a permanent commission of city government for 20 years to ensure, monitor and comply with the intended outcomes and dictates of its mission.

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• City Clerk

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