



Legislation Text

File #: R-47-19, Version: 1

Slavery - 1619 - The Beginning of America's Unforgettable Sin - For the purpose of recognizing the beginning of an excruciatingly horrendous period in the history of America and in the history of the City of Annapolis that began exactly 400 years ago in 1619; recognizing the unbelievable pain that continues; and pledging to chart a path moving forward.

**CITY COUNCIL OF THE
City of Annapolis**

Resolution R-47-19

**Introduced by: Alderwoman Pindell Charles, Alderwoman Tierney,
Mayor Buckley, Alderman Rodriguez, Alderman Gay, Alderman Savidge,
Alderwoman Finlayson, Alderman Arnett, and Alderman Paone**

A RESOLUTION concerning

Slavery - 1619 - The Beginning of America's Unforgettable Sin

FOR the purpose of recognizing the beginning of an excruciatingly horrendous period in the history of America and in the history of the City of Annapolis that began exactly 400 years ago in 1619; recognizing the unbelievable pain that continues; and pledging to chart a path moving forward.

WHEREAS, The first 19 or so Africans to reach the English colonies, many from Sub-Saharan Africa, arrived in Jamestown, Virginia in 1619, were brought here to these shores in bondage by English privateers who seized them from their African homeland; and

WHEREAS, This practice has also been described as "The MAAFA, which is a Kiswahili term for "terrible occurrence" or "great disaster," and has also been referenced by very well respected scholars as "The Black Holocaust" when millions of Africans died during the journey of captivity from the west coast of Africa to the shores of America, known as the Middle Passage"; and

WHEREAS, Slavery-human trafficking-became the legal institution of human chattel in America; and

WHEREAS, Slaves were treated as legal forms of property and could be bought, sold, or given away like any other personal property, and, such as a horse, could be worked and bred; and

WHEREAS, Slaves were required to perform harsh and backbreaking work, combined with suffering from inadequate nutrition and bad water, unbearable and extreme weather conditions, exhaustion, health and environmental challenges, such as diseases that preyed upon their compromised immune systems, extreme mental and emotional anguish, the forced separation of families-husbands from their wives and children, mothers from their own children who were then forced

to care for their masters' children, etc.-along with their inability to move freely, among many, many other hardships; and

WHEREAS, These harsh conditions increased slave resistance and, therefore, led owners, masters, and overseers to rely upon violence for control of their slaves, imposing intimidation, fear, and terror, and using extreme physical punishment upon them, such as whipping, shackling, hanging, beating, torture, burning, mutilation, branding, imprisonment, execution, and even lynching; and

WHEREAS, Our U.S. Constitution sanctioned and condoned slavery, servitude, and human bondage as evidenced by the "Fugitive Slave Clause" (Section 2 of Article IV) and the "Three-Fifths Compromise (Section 2 of Article I); and

WHEREAS, Likewise, many colonies and states enacted local codes and laws that sanctioned and condoned slavery, servitude, and human bondage, including, but not limited to, anti-literacy, unlawful assembly, and owning firearms; and

WHEREAS, Many of America's founding fathers, U.S. Presidents, and prominent politicians and leaders bought, sold, and gave away slaves, and personally were also a part of the breeding process themselves; and

WHEREAS, Throughout history, the "conflicted dilemma" of slavery continued to invoke inordinate discussions as to how to reconcile or justify or explain this very unexplainable and "peculiar institution"; and

WHEREAS, One of the most acceptable and notable practices of maintaining slavery, servitude, and human bondage was to ensure that slaves remained illiterate, unable to read and write, and uninformed; and

WHEREAS, Our own City of Annapolis was not absolved from this cruel and inhumane practice of slavery-being a very proactive perpetuator and participant in promoting the slave trade; and

WHEREAS, Annapolis was recently designated as a "Site of Memory associated with the Slave Route Project" by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; and

WHEREAS, Annapolis is one of 42 locations across the continental United States and one of five sites in the State of Maryland identified as being a Middle Passage port of entry, a place where children, women, and men in bondage first placed their feet after leaving the continent of Africa; and

WHEREAS, A historic marker will be placed at the Annapolis City Dock that will commemorate the lives of enslaved Africans-those who perished and those who survived-who were forced to endure the arduous and extraordinarily and unbelievably long trans-Atlantic journey known as the Middle Passage; and

WHEREAS, The sale of human beings and forced slave labor built the early economy of this City-a city that has been the capital of the State of Maryland since 1695 and a city that also served as the capital of this newly formed American nation in 1783; and

WHEREAS, Enslaved Africans and their descendants were denied equal and equitable ownership in the

development of this Country based upon immoral, unrighteous, and baseless scientific theories and beliefs; and

WHEREAS, Discrimination caused inequities and a lack of upward mobility for the descendants of these enslaved Africans; and

WHEREAS, The end of the Civil War, which was 250 years after the first slaves arrived in America, followed by Emancipation, Reconstruction, the Civil Rights Movement, and other progressive movements, resulted in some significant gains, nevertheless, the question must be asked: “How much progress can be made by formerly enslaved people, who continued to suffer discrimination post-emancipation, if people, who have always been free are progressing steadily?”; and

WHEREAS, We must all accept and learn from this extraordinarily painful history of our Country, our State, our County, and our City; and

WHEREAS, The result of these past practices continue to negatively affect the descendants of these enslaved Africans throughout our Country; and

WHEREAS, Quoting the Spanish philosopher, essayist, poet, and novelist George Santayana in a 1948 speech to the House of Commons, Winston Churchill changed Mr. Santayana’s quote slightly when he said (paraphrasing), “Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it.”; and

WHEREAS, Learning this history, as not to repeat it, assists our City greatly in recognizing that we are then mandated to pursue and assist in pursuing “liberty and justice for all” Annapolitans in every aspect of daily life; and

WHEREAS, The Mayor and City Council are and should be at the forefront of supporting this Resolution on this 400th anniversary of this most painful part of our past; and

WHEREAS, The Mayor and City Council mark this moment in time, by honoring those millions of Africans and African Americans who lost their lives to the scourge of slavery and those who suffered unimaginably at the hands of domestic terrorists acting solely upon racist motivations; and

WHEREAS, The Mayor and City Council desire to continue to pursue a path toward a “One Annapolis”-where we listen and communicate with one another with respect, understanding, civility, and dignity; and

WHEREAS, The Mayor and City Council hereby pledge to chart a path moving forward.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ANNAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL that the Mayor and City Council support this Resolution on this 400th anniversary of slavery in America.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY THE ANNAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL that the Mayor and City Council desire to continue to pursue a path toward a “One Annapolis”-where we listen and communicate with

one another with respect, civility, and dignity.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY THE ANNAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL that this Resolution, “Slavery - 1619 - The Beginning of America’s Unforgettable Sin”, is hereby approved.