

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA**  
**SESSION 2007**

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**SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION DRSJR85297-LG-480B (03/22)**

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Sponsors:    Senator Rand.

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Referred to:

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1    A JOINT RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND REGRET OF THE  
2    NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE HISTORY OF  
3    WRONGS INFLICTED UPON BLACK CITIZENS BY MEANS OF SLAVERY,  
4    EXPLOITATION, AND LEGALIZED RACIAL SEGREGATION AND CALLING  
5    ON ALL CITIZENS TO TAKE PART IN ACTS OF RACIAL  
6    RECONCILIATION.

7            Whereas, Article 1, Section 1, of the Constitution of North Carolina, in  
8    concert with the American Declaration of Independence, proclaims, "We hold it to be  
9    self-evident that all persons are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator  
10   with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, the enjoyment of the  
11   fruits of their own labor, and the pursuit of happiness"; and

12            Whereas, involuntary servitude, as practiced within the borders of North  
13   Carolina in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, violated the precept that all persons are  
14   created equal and denied thousands and thousands of people of liberty, of the pursuit of  
15   happiness, of the ability to benefit from their own work, and, in many cases, of life  
16   itself; and

17            Whereas, the practice of slavery was embedded in constitutional provisions  
18   and laws enacted by predecessors to this General Assembly and other civil authorities of  
19   North Carolina; and

20            Whereas, the practice of slavery began shortly after the founding of the  
21   British Colony of Carolina, with a 1669 constitution that provided land to white  
22   colonists according to the level of their holdings in slaves and free black employees, 20  
23   acres per black male and 10 acres per black female; and

24            Whereas, even though North Carolina did not have as extensive a plantation  
25   system as other states in the American South, slavery had become entrenched in the  
26   State by the time of the American Revolution, so that at the founding of the United  
27   States three out of 10 North Carolina families owned slaves; and

1           Whereas, North Carolina took legal actions to deny freedom to black people,  
2 including an 1826 law that prohibited free blacks from entering the State, an 1830 law  
3 that prohibited anyone from teaching a slave to read or write, and a provision of the  
4 1835 Constitution denying free blacks the right to vote; and

5           Whereas, even as slaves engaged in back-breaking physical labor, endured  
6 squalid housing, and saw their families broken apart as spouses and children were sold  
7 from one owner to another, black men and women cultivated tobacco, cotton, and other  
8 crops in a largely agricultural state, built essential public facilities, and contributed to  
9 the creation and accumulation of wealth; and

10           Whereas, by the time of the American Civil War, North Carolina was home  
11 to 330,000 slaves, one-third of the State's population, and North Carolina joined the  
12 forces that fought to preserve a region and a society that had slavery as a defining  
13 characteristic; and

14           Whereas, in the aftermath of the Emancipation Proclamation and during the  
15 period know as Reconstruction, black residents of North Carolina not only gained legal  
16 freedom but also participated more directly in the public life of the State, to the extent  
17 that 20 black legislators were elected in 1868 to the General Assembly, and blacks  
18 continued to serve in State and local offices through the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century;  
19 and

20           Whereas, at the outset of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, North Carolina enacted laws that  
21 prevented black citizens from participating fully in a democratic society, including a  
22 1900 amendment that denied black citizens the right to vote and the segregation of black  
23 and white citizens into separate and unequal public schools; and

24           Whereas, as a result of dire economic and social conditions, black North  
25 Carolinians joined the "Great Migration" from the South to the North in the first half of  
26 the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, so that more than 270,000 people left the State between 1910 and  
27 1950; and

28           Whereas, despite the legacies of slavery and the imposition of laws that  
29 segregated blacks and whites in schools, public facilities, and in civic life, black North  
30 Carolinians persisted in faith and in hope for a better life, in their yearnings to  
31 participate fully in the economic and democratic life of their State and country; and

32           Whereas, North Carolina should celebrate the entrepreneurship of black  
33 citizens in building nationally recognized businesses; the founding and sustaining of  
34 colleges and universities that historically served black students; the many black North  
35 Carolinians who have provided leadership in law, civil rights, and governance to the  
36 State and nation; Now, therefore,

37 Be it resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring:

38           **SECTION 1.** The General Assembly issues its apology for the practice of  
39 slavery in North Carolina and expresses its profound contrition for the official acts that  
40 sanctioned and perpetuated the denial of basic human rights and dignity to fellow  
41 humans.

42           **SECTION 2.** The General Assembly urges schools, colleges, and  
43 universities, religious and civic institutions, businesses and professional associations to  
44 do all within their power to acknowledge the transgressions of North Carolina's journey

1 from a colony to a leading State, to learn the lessons of history in order to avoid  
2 repeating mistakes of the past, and to promote racial reconciliation.

3           **SECTION 3.** The General Assembly calls on all North Carolinians to  
4 recommit their State, their communities, and themselves to the proclamation of their  
5 nation's Declaration of Independence and their State Constitution that "all persons are  
6 created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights" – to work  
7 daily to treat all persons with abiding respect for their humanity and to eliminate racial  
8 prejudices, injustices, and discrimination from our society.

9           **SECTION 4.** This resolution is effective upon ratification.