

H. Res. 272

In the House of Representatives, U. S.,

May 1, 2007.

Whereas the United Kingdom outlawed the African slave trade in 1807 by passing the Slave Trade Abolition Act which recognized that “the African Slave Trade, and all manner of dealing and trading in the Purchase, Sale, Barter, or Transfer of Slaves, or of Persons intended to be sold, transferred, used, or dealt with as Slaves, practiced or carried on, in, at, to or from any Part of the Coast or Countries of Africa, shall be, and the same is hereby utterly abolished, prohibited, and declared to be unlawful”;

Whereas the transatlantic slave trade entailed the kidnapping, purchase and commercial export of Africans, mostly from West and Central Africa, to the European colonies and new nations in the Americas, including the United States, where they were enslaved in forced labor between the 15th and late 19th centuries;

Whereas the term “Middle Passage” refers to the horrific part of the transatlantic slave trade when millions of Africans were chained together and stowed by the hundreds in overcrowded ships where they were forced into small spaces for months without relief as they were transported across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas;

Whereas historians claim that it is not possible to give an accurate number of slaves imported to the Americas from Africa, but scholars estimate that, at minimum, between 10,000,000 and 15,000,000 Africans survived the Middle Passage, were imported as chattel through customs houses and ports across the Americas, and were sold into slavery;

Whereas historians agree that many slaves arrived in the Americas ill with infections and diseases, disabled from the iron chains that bound them or from the physical abuse they endured, or traumatized by rape;

Whereas historians estimate that 10 to 50 percent of the Africans who were shipped from the continent perished during the Middle Passage as a result of physical abuses, torture, malnutrition, disease, infection, suicide or repercussions from their resistance to their bondage;

Whereas Africans' resistance to the transatlantic slave trade culminated in revolts—collective acts of rebellion—against slave ships and their crews during the Middle Passage, and rebellions against slavery occurred frequently on colonial and post-colonial plantations throughout the Americas;

Whereas historians estimate that 1,200,000 men, women, and children were later separated from their families and displaced from their communities by being sold to slaveholders in other regions, colonies, States, and nations in the inter-American and domestic slave trade that took place through much of the 19th century;

Whereas the transatlantic slave trade is commonly recognized by historians as the largest forced migration in world history;

Whereas, as a result of the slave trade, an estimated 80,000,000 to 150,000,000 persons of African descent live in Latin America and the Caribbean, making them the largest population of persons of African descent outside of Africa;

Whereas the institution of slavery, which enslaved Africans, their progeny and later generations for life, was legally sanctioned by the colonial governments and later the nations and States engaged in slavery, including the Government of the United States, through most of the 19th century;

Whereas slavery in the United States, during and after British colonial rule, included the sale and acquisition of Africans and African Americans as chattel property in interstate and intrastate commerce;

Whereas enslaved Africans and African Americans were defined as property that passed to heirs under inheritance laws of the British colonial rule and later under the laws of the various States;

Whereas enslaved Africans adapted to their environment and created a new, rich culture that marked the development of the African American community and continues to strongly impact culture and society in the United States today;

Whereas the slavery that flourished in the United States constituted an immoral and inhumane dispossession of human life, liberty, and citizenship rights and denied Africans and African Americans the fruits of their own labor;

Whereas the treatment of enslaved Africans and African Americans in the colonies and the United States included

the deprivation of their freedom, exploitation of their labor, psychological and physical abuse, separation of families, and the targeted efforts to repress their culture, language, and religion through legal and social restrictive measures;

Whereas enslavement has been defined as a crime against humanity pursuant to the Nuremberg Charter (Agreement for the Prosecution and Punishment of the Major War Criminals of the European Axis, entered into force on August 8, 1945 (82 U.N.T.S. 279)), and subsequent international tribunals for war crimes;

Whereas the United Nations has adopted various treaties, declarations, and conventions and hosted conferences that condemn slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, and has acknowledged that such acts were barbaric in their nature and were appalling tragedies;

Whereas the slave trade and the legacy of slavery continue to have a profound impact on social and economic disparity, hatred, bias, racism, and discrimination, and continue to affect people of African descent throughout the Americas today; and

Whereas March 25, 2007, marked the 200th anniversary of the Slave Trade Abolition Act enacted by the British Parliament: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the historical significance of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade to the people of the United States and to the world;

(2) respects the memory of those who died as a result of slavery, including through exposure to the horrors of the Middle Passage and in revolt against, and resistance to, enslavement;

(3) supports the preservation of historical records and documents in private collections, local and State governments, shipping ports, and corporations in the United States and throughout the Americas relating to the transatlantic slave trade and the centuries of slavery that followed; and

(4) urges increased education of current and future generations about slavery and its vestiges by honoring their significance in United States history and the history of other nations of the Americas with appropriate research, scholarship, curriculum, textbooks, museum exhibits and programs, library resources and programs, and cultural programs and activities.

Attest:

Clerk.