State of California

California Apology for the Perpetration of Gross Human Rights Violations and Crimes Against Humanity, with special consideration for African Slaves and their Descendants

The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

Whereas, In 2020, the people of California established the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, with a Special Consideration for African Americans Who are Descendants of Persons Enslaved in the United States (Task Force) and required the Task Force to address, among other things, how the State of California will offer a formal apology on behalf of the people of California for the perpetration of gross human rights violations and crimes against humanity on African slaves and their descendants, and how California laws and policies that continue to disproportionately and negatively affect African Americans as a group and perpetuate the lingering material and psychosocial effects of slavery can be eliminated.

Whereas, Based on the Task Force's evidentiary findings and recommendations outlined in the report to the Legislature as required by the statute, the people of the State of California hereby acknowledge being a beneficiary of the forced enslavement of African slaves brought to California and the subordination of Black Californians that continued following the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Whereas, Well after California entered the Union and declared itself a free state outlawing slavery, more than 2,000 enslaved African people were brought to California from 1850 to 1860.

Whereas, The California Supreme Court enforced fugitive slave laws until 1865, stating that the antislavery law in the California Constitution was merely a "declaration of a principle."

Whereas, Throughout the state's history, California's executive, judicial, and legislative branches continuously denied African slaves and their descendants basic humanity and fundamental liberties.

Whereas, Moreover, California's cities, counties, special districts, joint powers authorities, and other quasi-governmental entities exerted demonstrable undue pressure upon African slaves and Black Californians throughout the territory.

Whereas, California industries benefited from ill-gotten gains based on chattel slavery in the form of agricultural and other industrial production. The State of California should consider reviewing these gains in order to potentially fund reparatory efforts.

Whereas, California courts prevented Black citizens from testifying in legal proceedings against a white person, and California's Legislature vehemently opposed Congressional civil rights laws and delayed ratification of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, hindering Black Americans the right to citizenship, due process under the law, and right to vote.

Whereas, California further disenfranchised Black Californians by enacting deliberate racial barriers such as poll taxes and literacy tests, prohibiting interracial marriage, and passing antimiscegenation laws in its first legislative session in 1850.

Whereas, California constructed monuments, memorials, markers, and plaques to preserve and memorialize Confederate principles, glorifying subjugation, slavery, and white supremacy.

Whereas, From the brutality of enslavement to extrajudicial police killings, state-sanctioned violence at all levels of government, such as lynching, coercive sterilization, torture, and property destruction inflicted death, physical injury, and psychological harm on Black Californians.

Whereas, California openly sanctioned widespread segregation and discrimination against African Americans in workplaces, educational facilities, and public spaces, and enacted predatory licensing laws, fire and safety codes, and antinuisance laws to disrupt African American businesses and patrons.

Whereas, Discriminatory housing policies, including redlining, residential zoning ordinances, and loan practices, produced persistent housing segregation and longstanding inequities in home ownership for Black Californians.

Whereas, State and local governments targeted property owned by African Americans for renewal and development projects employing unjust uses of eminent domain, often without providing just compensation, yet those same authorities enacted and enforced laws that historically excluded African Americans from outdoor recreation, public transit, and other public infrastructure.

Whereas, The eugenics movement thrived in California and thousands of African Americans were forcibly sterilized or were the subjects of medical experiments without valid consent.

Whereas, According to the United Nations Principles on Reparation, an apology, when combined with material forms of reparations, provides an opportunity for communal reckoning with the past and repair for moral, physical, and dignitary harms.

Now, Therefore, be it Resolved by the Governor of the State of California; and the California Senate President Pro Tempore; the Speaker of the California State Assembly; and the Chief Justice of California concurring;

Resolved, The State of California recognizes and accepts responsibility for all of the harms and atrocities committed by the state, its representatives thereof, and entities under its jurisdiction who promoted, facilitated, enforced, and permitted the institution of chattel slavery and the enduring legacy of ongoing badges and incidents from which the systemic structures of discrimination have come to exist.

Resolved, The State of California apologizes for perpetuating the harms African Americans faced by having imbued racial prejudice through segregation, public and private discrimination, and unequal disbursal of state and federal funding and declares that such actions shall not be repeated.

Resolved, The State of California acknowledges the work of the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, with a Special Consideration for African Americans Who are Descendants of Persons Enslaved in the United States. This task force, established by Assembly Bill 3121 (2020), detailed the harms faced by African Americans in California and provided numerous legislative recommendations, including this formal apology.

Resolved, The State of California affirms its role in protecting the descendants of enslaved people and all Black Californians as well as their civil, political, and sociocultural rights.

Resolved, The State of California humbly asks for forgiveness from those affected by past atrocities, both deliberately and negligently, and acknowledges and affirms its responsibility to end ongoing harm.

Resolved, The State of California commits to restore and repair affected peoples with actions beyond this apology.

Dated this 26th day of September, 2024

Gavin Newsom
Governor of California

Robert Rivas
Speaker of the Assembly

THE GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Mike McGuire
Senate President pro Tempore

Patricia Guerrero
Chief Justice of California