

By: Representative Perkins

To: Rules

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 12

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION APOLOGIZING FOR THE WRONGS OF
2 SLAVERY, AND EXPRESSING REGRET FOR MISSISSIPPI'S ROLE IN SLAVERY,
3 AND URGING RECONCILIATION.

4 WHEREAS, slavery has been documented as a worldwide practice
5 since antiquity, dating back to 3600 B.C. in ancient Mesopotamia;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, during the course of the infamous Atlantic Slave
8 Trade, millions of Africans became involuntary immigrants to the
9 New World, and millions more died during passage, and the first
10 African slaves in the North American colonies were brought to
11 Jamestown in 1619; and

12 WHEREAS, the Atlantic Slave Trade was a lucrative enterprise,
13 and African slaves were traded for tropical products, manufactured
14 goods, sugar, molasses and other merchandise; and

15 WHEREAS, although the United States outlawed the
16 transatlantic slave trade in 1808, the domestic slave trade in the
17 colonies and illegal importation continued for several decades;
18 and



19 WHEREAS, slavery in the United States resembled no other form
20 of involuntary servitude, as Africans were captured and sold at
21 auctions as chattel, like inanimate property or animals; and

22 WHEREAS, the system of slavery had become entrenched in
23 American society, and the issue of enslaved Africans contributed
24 to the American Civil War from 1861 to 1865, leading to the
25 passage of the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution,
26 which abolished slavery and involuntary servitude on December 18,
27 1865; and

28 WHEREAS, after emancipation from slavery, African Americans
29 saw the political, social and economic gains they made during
30 Reconstruction dissipated by racism, lynchings, disenfranchisement
31 of African-American voters, and Jim Crow laws that instituted a
32 rigid system of segregation, which lasted until the passage of the
33 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act; and

34 WHEREAS, throughout their existence in America and even in
35 the decades after the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans
36 have found the struggle to overcome the legacy of slavery long and
37 arduous, and for many African Americans the scars left behind are
38 unbearable, haunting their psyches and clouding their vision of
39 the future and of America's many attributes; and

40 WHEREAS, during the 1995 Regular Session, the Mississippi
41 Legislature, in an act to remove any tainted perception of our
42 state, formally ratified the 13th Amendment to the United States



43 Constitution and abolished slavery with passage of Senate
44 Concurrent Resolution No. 547; and

45 WHEREAS, in 2003, during a trip to Goree Island, Senegal, a
46 former slave port, President George W. Bush stated, "At this
47 place, liberty and life were stolen and sold. Human beings were
48 delivered and sorted, and weighed, and branded with the marks of
49 commercial enterprises, and loaded as cargo on a voyage without
50 return. One of the largest migrations of history was also one of
51 the greatest crimes of history . . . Small men took on the powers
52 and airs of tyrants and masters. Years of unpunished brutality
53 and bullying and rape produced a dullness and hardness of
54 conscience. Christian men and women became blind to the clearest
55 commands of their faith and added hypocrisy and injustice . . .
56 For 250 years, the captives endured an assault on their culture
57 and their dignity . . . While physical slavery is dead, the legacy
58 is alive. My nation's journey toward justice has not been easy,
59 and it is not over. The racial bigotry fed by slavery did not end
60 with slavery or with segregation . . . and many of the issues that
61 still trouble America have roots in the bitter experience of other
62 times . . . We can finally judge the past by the standards of
63 President John Adams, who called slavery an 'evil of colossal
64 magnitude' . . ."; and

65 WHEREAS, in Mississippi, the vestiges of slavery are ever
66 before African-American citizens, from the overt racism of the



67 hate groups to the subtle racism encountered in many aspects of
68 daily life; and

69 WHEREAS, European and African nations have apologized for
70 their role in what history calls the worst holocaust of humankind,
71 the Atlantic Slave Trade, and racial reconciliation would be
72 promoted by the acknowledgment of the moral and legal injustices
73 perpetrated upon African Americans; and

74 WHEREAS, an apology for centuries of brutal dehumanization
75 and injustices cannot erase the past, but admission of the wrongs
76 can speed racial healing and reconciliation and help both
77 African-American and other American citizens confront the negative
78 aspects of their collective pasts together; and

79 WHEREAS, the story of the enslavement of Africans and their
80 descendants and the dehumanizing atrocities committed during
81 slavery should not be purged from Mississippi's history or
82 discounted; moreover, the faith, perseverance, hope and endless
83 triumph of American citizens and the significant contributions of
84 African Americans to the development of this state and the nation
85 should be embraced, celebrated and retold for generations to come;
86 and

87 WHEREAS, the distrust and bitterness of many African
88 Americans could be assuaged, and the principles espoused by the
89 founding fathers would be affirmed, and great strides toward
90 unifying all Mississippians and inspiring the nation might be



91 accomplished if the state acknowledged its role in the slavery of
92 Africans; and

93 WHEREAS, acknowledging that slavery as an American
94 "institution" was a wrong committed upon millions of African
95 Americans and that the ancestors of other American citizens were
96 the beneficiaries of this wrong would recognize the suffering of
97 African Americans; and

98 WHEREAS, the State of Mississippi, and its citizens are aware
99 that under slavery many atrocities and violations of human rights
100 were imposed upon African Americans, and acknowledging these facts
101 can and will avert future tragedies; and

102 WHEREAS, the State of Mississippi has a long history of civil
103 rights involvement and is on the cutting edge of effective
104 measures to promote racial tolerance:

105 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
106 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING
107 THEREIN, That we express our profound regret for the State of
108 Mississippi's role in slavery and that we apologize for the wrongs
109 inflicted by slavery and its aftereffects in the United States of
110 America, express our deepest sympathies and solemn regrets to
111 those who were enslaved and to the descendants of those slaves,
112 for being deprived of life, human dignity and those constitutional
113 protections accorded all citizens of the United States, and we
114 encourage the remembrance and teachings about the history of



115 slavery, Jim Crow laws and modern day slavery, to ensure that
116 these tragedies will neither be forgotten nor repeated.

117 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That it is the intent of the
118 Legislature that this resolution shall not be used in, or be the
119 basis of, any type of litigation.

120 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
121 furnished to each state elected official of Mississippi; the
122 Commissioner of Institutions of Higher Learning; the President of
123 the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,
124 Mississippi Chapter; the Director of the Southern Christian
125 Leadership Conference, Mississippi Chapter; requesting that they
126 further disseminate copies of this resolution to their respective
127 constituents so as to apprise them of the sense of the Mississippi
128 Legislature in this matter; and to the members of the Capitol
129 Press Corps.

