

## **SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 14**

Whereas, in 1720, Philippe Francois Renault introduced Negro slavery to Missouri when he brought 500 Negroes with him from Santa Domingo to work the lead mines in the Des Peres River section of what is now St. Louis and Jefferson Counties; and

Whereas, in Missouri, as in all other slave states, economic conditions determined the number of slaves in a given locality. Since Missouri was largely agricultural, most slaves were employed in the fertile bottomlands, which bordered the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and their tributaries. Without a single staple crop, Missouri never developed large plantations as did the cotton states; and

Whereas, in 1860, only 36 counties had 1,000 or more slaves. In general, most of the Missouri slave owners held only one or two slaves. Missouri slaves were used in a wide variety of tasks, and were employed as valets, butlers, handy men, field hands, maids, nurses, and cooks; and

Whereas, to keep the Blacks "in their place", a series of laws, known as slave codes, were drawn up. Under the territorial slave code of 1804, slaves were made personal property, and each revision of the law was drafted with this precedent in mind. The State Constitution of 1820, for example, provided that slaves were not to be emancipated "without the consent of their masters, or without paying them, before such emancipation"; and

Whereas, a slave was not permitted to keep a gun in Missouri. If he was caught carrying a gun, he was to receive 39 slashes and forfeit the gun. Slaves who participated in riots, attended unlawful assemblies, or who were guilty of making seditious speeches, were subject to

whipping. Slaves guilty of conspiracy, rebellion, insurrection, and murder were put to death; and

Whereas, other laws further dehumanized the Blacks. Negroes or mulattoes "who should commit or attempt to commit assault upon White women would be mutilated." However, since a slave woman was chattel, a White man who raped her was guilty of trespass on the master's property; and

Whereas, slaves who offered resistance to their owners and overseers were to be given 39 stripes. Slaves lifting their hands in opposition to white persons, except in self-defense, were to be punished at the discretion of the justice of the peace, with not more than 39 lashes; and

Whereas, in 1825, a law was passed declaring Blacks to be incompetent as witnesses in legal cases involving whites; and

Whereas, in 1847, one of the harshest laws which further dehumanized the slave was enacted. In that year, an ordinance specifically prohibited the education of Negroes was passed. Anyone operating a school or teaching reading and writing to any Negro or mulatto in Missouri could be punished by a fine of not less than \$500 and up to six months in jail. This law was a direct result of an ever increasing conviction on the part of slave holders that literacy led to rebellion; and

Whereas, even in death the races were generally separated. Usually there were "white" and "colored" cemeteries in every area of the State; and

Whereas, throughout the slavery period in Missouri there were persons, Black and White, who advocated the abolition of slavery both locally and nationally. These abolitionists were a hated group in a slaveholding state because they threatened the continued existence of an

institution which provided for cheap labor. Because of their deep animosity toward persons who challenged their way of life, pro-slavery forces generally dealt severely with abolitionists; and

Whereas, discrimination followed the Negroes into the Army during the Civil War. Negroes, like Whites, were promised a bounty but not until the war was over did they receive it. While White soldiers received \$13 a month, Negro soldiers were given \$10 a month. Blacks were given inferior weapons and materials, inadequate medical care, and if captured, were killed until Lincoln and Grant threatened to treat captured Confederate soldiers in a similar manner; and

Whereas, the Civil War held out bright hopes for Missouri Blacks. The War had a tremendous effect upon the Negro soldier. He went into the army as a property, he came out a man. It restored his humanness. Legally Blacks were free, but the road ahead was one of bitter trials and disappointments for them; and

Whereas, when the Civil War ended, Missouri free Blacks found themselves in an extremely precarious position. Economically, they could no longer depend upon their masters for subsistence. Used to farming, domestic service, or other menial pursuits, many free Blacks continued to work for former masters, others wandered to the towns looking for jobs, while still others wandered aimlessly about. This led some Whites to mistakenly regard Blacks as leeches basking in the sun, expecting to be supported by White people; and

Whereas, there was little more interaction between the races in the schools than there was in the churches. The Missouri Legislature passed a set of school laws which took effect March 15, 1866. Among the provisions was one which

stated that separate schools should be provided for Negro children where they numbered more than 20 in a district; and

Whereas, conditions at the first "Colored School", however, were very bad and inadequacy of the physical plant alone contributed to great absenteeism. The cry then went up that Negroes were not interested in education and that their irregular attendance at schools was sufficient proof; and

Whereas, Missouri was not ready to be "reconstructed" in their racial views during the Reconstruction period and there was no reason to believe they would have a change of heart after it. The doctrine of "separate but equal" facilities gained constitutional sanction in the 1896 United States Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Segregation by de facto methods had become so entrenched in Missouri society that by the time of that decision Missourians did not feel the need to create ordinances of separation. In fact, it was only in the area of education that integration was expressly prohibited; and

Whereas, in 1943, the Missouri Legislature killed a civil rights bill that would have given Blacks equal access to public places, such as restaurants and theaters; and

Whereas, until 1944, St. Louis' two major league baseball teams, the Browns and the Cardinals, had restricted Blacks to the bleachers and pavilion at Sportsman's Park; and

Whereas, today, the status of Black Missourians is far from encouraging. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s has lost a great part of its impact. Disagreement among Black leaders themselves as to the optimum strategy of achieving equality of citizenship, the conservative tide that has swept the country since 1968, together with the dilemma of liberal Whites who are uncertain whether their

assistance is desired by some Blacks, all have acted to dim the bright hopes of the 1960s:

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the members of the Missouri Senate, One Hundred-Second General Assembly, First Regular Session, the House of Representatives concurring therein, hereby formally apologize for the State of Missouri's role in slavery.