

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 5

By Hardaway

A RESOLUTION to create a special joint committee to study the impact of slavery and segregation on African Americans in Tennessee.

WHEREAS, during the period of 1619 through 1865, approximately 4,000,000 Africans and their descendants were enslaved in the New World and the colonies that became the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, slavery was practiced within the borders of Tennessee from its founding; by 1860, Tennessee's 275,719 slaves represented nearly one quarter of the total population and were engaged in urban, industrial, and agricultural slavery; and

WHEREAS, the system of slavery, having been sanctioned and perpetuated through the laws of Tennessee and the United States, ranks as the most horrendous depredation of human rights in our nation's history; and

WHEREAS, although slavery was officially abolished with the passage of the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1865 after the end of the Civil War, African-Americans soon saw the fleeting political, social, and economic gains they made during Reconstruction eviscerated by racism, lynching, enforced segregation, and other insidious practices; and

WHEREAS, one hundred years after emancipation, the rigid system of de jure racial segregation known as "Jim Crow" persisted; not until the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act would this system of separate and unequal treatment of American citizens be abolished; and

WHEREAS, sufficient inquiry has not been made into the continuing effects of the institution of slavery and the impact of segregation upon living African-Americans and Tennessee society; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that a special joint committee of the General Assembly be appointed to study and report its findings on the impact of slavery and segregation on African Americans in Tennessee, such study to include the following:

(1) A review of the institution of slavery as it existed prior to 1865 within the United States and the colonies that became the United States of America;

(2) An examination of examples of systemic discrimination, including federal and state laws, that were enacted to deny former enslaved persons and their descendants their rights as citizens of the United States during the period between the end of the Civil War and the present;

(3) An identification and examination of the lingering, pervasive effects of slavery and discrimination upon living African-Americans and Tennessee society;

(4) A review of the official apologies for slavery passed by the states of Alabama, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Virginia, as well as the official apology enacted by the United States Congress in 2008; and

(5) Any proposed recommendations as to issues that must be considered in the development of public policy in Tennessee, including a proposal for an official apology by the State of Tennessee for slavery and segregation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee shall consist of three (3) members of the House of Representatives and three (3) members of the Senate, to be appointed by the respective speakers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all appropriate state agencies shall provide assistance to the special joint committee upon request of the chair.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all legislative members of the special joint committee who are duly elected members of the General Assembly shall remain members of such

committee until the committee reports its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall be convened by the member with the most years of continuous service in the General Assembly, and at its first meeting shall elect a chair, vice-chair, and such other officers the committee deems necessary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall timely report its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the One Hundred Sixth General Assembly no later than February 1, 2009, at which time the committee shall cease to exist.