

2001 ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION 56

July 5, 2001 – Introduced by Representatives MORRIS-TATUM, YOUNG, TURNER, WILLIAMS, COGGS, RILEY, POCAN, WASSERMAN and PLOUFF, cosponsored by Senators GEORGE and DECKER. Referred to Committee on Judiciary.

1 **Relating to:** urging Congress to enact H.R. 40 of the 1st Session of the 107th
2 Congress, which acknowledges the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality,
3 and inhumanity of slavery and establishes a commission to examine the
4 institution of slavery and make recommendations to Congress on appropriate
5 remedies.

6 Whereas, approximately 4,000,000 Africans and their descendants were
7 enslaved in the United States and colonies that became the United States from 1619
8 to 1865; and

9 Whereas, the institution of slavery was constitutionally and statutorily
10 sanctioned by the government of the United States from 1789 through 1865; and

11 Whereas, in 1865, the Freedmen’s Bureau, created by the government to help
12 newly freed slaves, pledged 40–acre parcels and the loan of a federal mule to work
13 the land, but President Andrew Johnson reneged on the pledge; and

1 Whereas, the slavery that flourished in the United States constituted an
2 immoral and inhumane deprivation of Africans’ life, liberty, African citizenship
3 rights, and cultural heritage, and denied them the fruits of their own labor; and

4 Whereas, sufficient inquiry has not been made into the effects of the institution
5 of slavery on living African–Americans and society in the United States; and

6 Whereas, H.R. 40 establishes a commission to:

7 “(1) examine the institution of slavery which existed from 1619 through 1865
8 within the United States and the colonies that became the United States, including
9 the extent to which the Federal and State Governments constitutionally and
10 statutorily supported the institution of slavery;

11 (2) examine de jure and de facto discrimination against freed slaves and their
12 descendants from the end of the Civil War to the present, including economic,
13 political, and social discrimination;

14 (3) examine the lingering negative effects of the institution of slavery and the
15 discrimination described in paragraph (2) on living African–Americans and on
16 society in the United States;

17 (4) recommend appropriate ways to educate the American public of the
18 Commission’s findings;

19 (5) recommend appropriate remedies in consideration of the Commission’s
20 findings on the matters described in paragraphs (1) and (2); and

21 (6) submit to the Congress the results of such examination, together with such
22 recommendations”; and

23 Whereas, California has enacted Chapter 934, Statutes of 2000, which directs
24 the California commissioner of insurance to investigate and report to the California

1 legislature and the public all records of insurance companies regarding slaveholder
2 insurance policies, and determine whether the insurers profited from slavery; and

3 Whereas, a National Reparations Convention was held this year in Chicago at
4 which, according to the *Wisconsin State Journal* of February 11, 2001, convention
5 participants joined a growing group of academics, activists, and governmental
6 officials who believe that repaying African-Americans for the 246 years of unpaid
7 labor of their ancestors could relieve poverty and hopelessness among modern-day
8 African-Americans; and

9 Whereas, it was reported in the *Wisconsin State Journal* of February 11, 2001,
10 that one reason why people are now willing to talk about reparations may be that
11 other groups victimized because of their religion, skin color, or nationality have won
12 apologies and even cash payments for their suffering; and

13 Whereas, a letter of formal apology and \$20,000 were given by the U.S.
14 government to each Japanese-American held in internment camps during World
15 War II; and

16 Whereas, Austria has established a \$380,000,000 fund to compensate Nazi-era
17 slave laborers; and

18 Whereas, it was reported in the *National Post* of September 23, 2000, that some
19 of Germany's largest corporations agreed to pay billions of dollars in reparations to
20 individuals enslaved in their factories during the Second World War and that the
21 Anglican Church in Canada faces bankruptcy as a result of claims arising from
22 aboriginals who were abused in Church homes; and

23 Whereas, Representative F. James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin, the House
24 Judiciary Committee Chairman, has indicated that it is too early to determine
25 whether H.R. 40 will be on the Committee's agenda; now, therefore, be it

