

OFFERED BY COUNCILOR TANIA FERNANDES ANDERSON



## CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

### RESOLUTION TO ACKNOWLEDGE, CONDEMN, AND APOLOGIZE FOR THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE CITY OF BOSTON IN THE TRANS-ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE AND THE ONGOING DETRIMENTAL IMPACTS EXPERIENCED BY THE BLACK PEOPLE OF BOSTON

**WHEREAS,** The institution of Slavery in the Americas was a historically unique endeavor of criminality, and that the particular experience of Boston's Black community negatively impacted by its dastardliness is unique from the experiences of other ethnic groups in Boston in light of its horrific particularities; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Boston was likely the initial site utilized for the importation of enslaved Africans on February 26th, 1638, reportedly arriving on a ship returning from the Caribbean named the Desire, in which, after docking, the enslaved Africans were forced to live lives of servitude, separated from their homeland, families, languages, and customs; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Slavery was first legalized in Massachusetts in 1641, making Boston complicit in the Pan-European project and practice of trading Africans and Indigenous people for money, rum, and sugar, among other goods, as a means of rapacious wealth accumulation, which incorporated the widespread practice of enslavement in the Caribbean and South America as directed by the forces of European colonialism, which proceeded to kidnap a conservative estimate of 15 million people from Africa from the 15th to the 19th centuries; *and*

**WHEREAS,** The practice of African enslavement in Boston, and the flourishing of the New England region, was supported by the the Massachusetts Bay Colony slave codes authored by its first Governor, John Winthrop, which created conditions wherein kidnapped Africans would be deprived of gainful participation within the economy and would be forever separated from their families, stripped of independence, robbed of their cultural connections and impeded from citizenship and civic participation; *and*

**WHEREAS,** The developing economy of Boston was dependent upon the importation of enslaved Africans and the practice of slavery within the city of Boston with the enslaved working in local industry without compensation, relegating Africans'

and the descendants of kidnapped Africans' the right to education, equal housing, the freedom to choose a career and equal healthcare options; *and*

**WHEREAS,** The number of enslaved Africans living in Boston increased 350 percent between 1704 and 1752 and that Boston slaves were often exported directly from the Caribbean islands to work in Boston and were routinely denied full participation in endeavors of commerce equal to whites in Boston; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Peter Faneuil, after whom Faneuil Hall is named, was one of the richest slave traders in Boston, a member of an oligarchical merchant class who brought and sold slaves as a matter of wealth building, and was a Boston resident who died owning five slaves; *and*

**WHEREAS,** According to the historian Jared Ross Hardest, almost 25 percent of all white Bostonians who had estate inventory taken between 1700 and 1775 possessed enslaved Africans who served as butlers, maids, courtiers, beer makers, drivers, cooks and producers of clothing; *and*

**WHEREAS,** The legacy of slavery is connected to present-day trauma and economic, political, social and racial disparities across the United States generally and in Boston specifically, where we see the ongoing manifestations of systemic white supremacy and racism reflected in poor housing options, public education and income inequality suffered by a preponderance of Black people in Boston; *and*

**WHEREAS,** According to a 2015 Federal Reserve study the average net family worth of a Black family in Boston was \$8, compared to approximately \$250,000 for the average white family, which reflects both the echoes of historical structures of enslavement and institutionalized racism and the ongoing manifestations of what essentially functions as a de facto system of Jim Crow, IE segregation in fact if not necessarily codified by law; *and*

**WHEREAS,** According to a King Boston 2022 report, that comprehensively details the "harm" done to Boston's Black community in relations to slavery and structural racism in Boston, Black-owned businesses were awarded a dismayingly dismal total of 0.4% of the total city contract dollars between 2014 and 2019; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Boston has been recognized as the Cradle of Liberty, as a place where freedom has been celebrated and developed, and as a city to which thousands from across the globe flock to learn of how the ideas of liberty, equality and the pursuit of happiness are foundational to democracy; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Recently Boston's leadership identified racism as a public health problem in the city and that a commitment has been made to use all of the city's resources, including its Offices and Departments of Human Services, Business and Culture, to engage in activities that alleviate anti-Black institutional racism within city

government and across the personal and public realms of Boston; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

***RESOLVED:*** That the city council assembled: Hereby denounces the historical practices of slavery aided and abetted by the city government of Boston; and

- 1) Expresses its deepest and most sincere apology for the city's connection and responsibility in the transatlantic slave trade, the death, misery, and deprivation that this practice caused; and commits towards actions that include the following:
  - a) A pledge of removing prominent anti-Black symbols in Boston while developing opportunities to build structures that reflect racial repair and reconciliation; and
  - b) Pledge to elucidate and educate Bostonians on the history of the transatlantic slave trade and the ways it occurred and impacted Boston's past and present systems of oppression; and
  - c) Commit to creating a registry of truth and reconciliation so that Bostonians who wish to express regret for past injustices can express their remorse; and
  - d) Vow to dedicate policies and efforts to repair past and present harm done to Black Americans via systemic racism in various realms of city life, including housing, healthcare, education, and the workplace.

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