

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO.141

Reps. Gay-Dagnogo, Rabhi, Tate and Cynthia Johnson offered the following resolution:

1 A resolution to honor 400 years of African American heritage
2 in the United States of America.

3 Whereas, The 100th Michigan Legislature recognizes, honors,
4 and acknowledges 400 years of African-American heritage in the
5 United States of America; and

6 Whereas, The Africans who came to Virginia in 1619 had been
7 taken from West Central Africa; and

8 Whereas, Africans were first brought involuntarily to the
9 shores of America, as the first Africans arrived in Virginia
10 because of the transatlantic slave trade; and

11 Whereas, The Africans were sold into bondage despite Virginia



1 having no clear-cut laws sanctioning slavery. Across three and a
2 half centuries—from 1501 to 1867—more than 12.5 million Africans
3 were captured, sold, and transported to the Americas. The English
4 ship, *White Lion*, arrived at Point Comfort, or present-day Hampton,
5 Virginia, toward the end of August 2019. John Rolfe, a prominent
6 planter and merchant, reported that “20. and odd Negroes” were
7 “bought for victuals.”; and

8 Whereas, The majority of Africans were acquired by wealthy and
9 well-connected English planters including Governor Sir George
10 Yeardley and the cape, or head, merchant, Abraham Piersey. It is
11 estimated that during the 300 years of the transatlantic slave
12 trade, between 12 million and 20 million Africans were transported
13 to the Americas as slaves. Of these, more than 400,000 were sent to
14 the 13 British colonies and, later, the United States. Current
15 estimates hold that more than 1 million Africans died on these
16 journeys; and

17 Whereas, Uncompensated labor served as a major foundation upon
18 much of the wealth found in the United States. By 1840, slave-
19 labor-produced cotton was 59 percent of United States exports and
20 became a driving force behind the Industrial Revolution. The
21 profits, while beginning from forced labor in the south, spread
22 across the nation as ports and merchants carried the product of the
23 labor. The extraction and accumulation of wealth from enslaved
24 Africans has created a direct, measurable economic disparity with
25 modern impact estimates ranging in the trillions. Enslaved Africans
26 laid the literal cornerstones of American institutions, such as the
27 U.S. Capitol Building, White House, Wall Street, and numerous
28 prominent universities; and

29 Whereas, Throughout the entire history of African-American

1 heritage, African-Americans not only persevered, African-Americans
2 thrived and successfully contributed to every aspect of American
3 society. Four hundred years after the first Africans were brought
4 to America against their will, African-Americans have proudly
5 volunteered in every American war, from the Revolutionary War to
6 the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of the most
7 successful business people, astronauts, athletes, leaders and a
8 President are African-Americans who are direct descendants of the
9 original Africans brought to this country as slaves; and

10 Whereas, Throughout perilous sacrifices, African American
11 citizens continue to contribute to the strength, will, history, and
12 culture of the United States; now, therefore, be it

13 Resolved by the House of Representatives, That the members of
14 this legislative body honor 400 years of African-American heritage
15 in the United States of America.