

2013-J3340

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the visit of Frederick Douglass and the National Convention of Colored Citizens of the United States to the City of Syracuse, New York, to be celebrated during Black History Month 2014

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize important events which remind us of the rich and diverse heritage of our great State and Nation; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the visit of Frederick Douglass and the National Convention of Colored Citizens of the United States to the City of Syracuse, New York, to be celebrated during Black History Month 2014, in Syracuse, New York; and

WHEREAS, On October 4 -7, 1864, the National Convention of Colored Citizens of the United States met in Syracuse, New York, to discuss the state of the ex-slave post the Civil War; abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass was then President of the organization; and

WHEREAS, The National Convention for Colored Citizens of the United States' meeting in Syracuse drew delegates from all over the country; the historic gathering was arguably the largest event related to African-American's quest for freedom and justice to ever take place in the city; and

WHEREAS, During the National Convention of Colored Citizens of the United States' visit to Syracuse, a document modeled after the Declaration of Independence entitled "Declaration of Rights and Wrongs" was created, read, and subsequently submitted to and accepted by the United States Congress; and

WHEREAS, 150 years later, the Declaration of Rights and Wrongs is

still relevant today in many ways; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of the significance of this historic event, this Legislative Body is moved to record the powerful and evocative words of Frederick Douglass and the National Convention of Colored Citizens of the United States in their Declaration:

"Declarations of Rights and Wrongs

1. As a branch of the human family, we have for long ages been deeply and cruelly wronged by individuals whose might constituted their right; we have been subdued, secretly by the power of ideas, and openly by brute force, and have been unjustly deprived not only of many of our natural rights, but systematically debarred the privileges, opportunities and advantages freely accorded to other men.
2. We have been made to suffer well-nigh every cruelty and indignity possible to be heaped upon human beings; and often times for no fault of our own. We have been manipulated and conditioned via economic, political, social, intellectual, biological, emotional and physical warfare, which has been inflicted upon on our people by others fueled by fear and ignorance and, veiled by position and color of law.
3. We have been taunted by a passive-aggressiveness that suggests our inferiority and by agencies whose statute-books contained laws inflicting the severest penalties for the exercising of rights assured by our Constitution and our God; in the past we have been denounced as incurably ignorant and today as incurably violent; and, at the same time, have been through subtle manipulations, debarred from taking even the first step toward self-enlightenment and personal and national elevation; we have been declared incapable of self-government by those who refused us the right of experiment in that direction, and we have been deemed unpatriotic when expressing disdain by men and women who refused to level the playing field in a way that would provide honest equal opportunity, causing one to truly be proud to be an American.
4. As a people, we have been denied the ownership of our lives, our

bodies, homes, children, and the products of our own labor; we have been compelled, under threats of arrest and acts of violence, to submit to wrongs deeper and darker than the earth ever witnessed in the case of any other people; we have been forced to silence and inaction in full presence of the infernal spectacle of our sons groaning under the baton, our daughters fondled, our wives violated, and our properties vandalized, damaged and destroyed, while we ourselves have been led to the courts in shackles reminiscent of slave markets and sold under the laws of the Uniform Commercial Code to the highest bidder.

5. When the nation in her trial hour called her sable sons to arms, we gladly went to fight her battles: but were denied the pay accorded to others, until public opinion demanded it; and then it was tardily granted and today for our veterans shamefully, it remains the same. We have fought and conquered, but have been denied the laurels of victory. We have fought where victory gave us no glory and where captivity meant cool murder on the field, by gunfire or explosion; and yet no black man ever flinched.

6. We are taxed, but denied the right of representation. We are practically debarred the right of trial by jury; and institutions of learning which we help to support are cultural biased and economically closed against us.

We submit to the American people and world the following Declaration of our Rights, asking a calm reconsideration thereof:

1st. We declare that all men are born free and truly equal; that no man or government through colorable law has a right to annul, repeal, abrogate, contravene, or render inoperative, this fundamental principle, except it be for crime; therefore we demand the immediate and unconditional elimination of any attempts of suppression acted upon the people of urban communities around these United States.

2nd. That, as natives of American soil, we claim the rights of all others who occupy said soil: and that any attempt to deprive, remove, eliminate, or compromise our rights in any way is against the will of

the people, and therefore unjust; for here were we born, for this country our fathers and our brothers have fought, and here we intend to remain in the full enjoyment of enfranchised manhood, and its dignities.

3rd. That, as citizens of a Republican form of Government, we are able to enact our rights. We claim that we are, by right, entitled to

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respect; that due attention should be given to our needs; that proper rewards should be given for our services, and that the immunities and privileges of all other citizens and defenders of the nation's honor should be conceded to us. We claim the right to be heard in the halls of Congress; and we claim our fair share of the public domain, whether acquired by purchase, deed, patent, or judgment.

4th. That, emerging as we are from the long night of gloom and sorrow, we are entitled to, and claim, the sympathy and aid of the entire international community; and we invoke the considerate aid of mankind in this crisis of our history, and in this hour of continued sacrifice, suffering, and trial.

Those are our wrongs; these, a portion of what we deem to be our rights as men, as patriots, as citizens, and as children of the common Father. To realize and attain these rights, and their practical recognition, is our purpose. We confide our cause to the universal and just God, whose benign aid we solemnly invoke. To him we appeal."; and

WHEREAS, The October 1864 visit of the National Convention of Colored Citizens of the United States occurred while the American Civil War was still being fought; and

WHEREAS, The bravery, and the willingness of Frederick Douglass and the delegates at the National Convention of Colored Citizens of the United States to raise their collective voices in a call for liberty, and fight for the well-being of future generations, is deserving of the highest honor by all defenders of freedom and democracy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the visit of Frederick Douglass and the National Convention of Colored Citizens of the United States to the City of Syracuse, New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the City of Syracuse, New York.