

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Chicago's first non-Indigenous settler, Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, was a Black man of African descent who established the first permanent settlement at the mouth of the Chicago River in the late 18th century, laying the foundation for what would become one of the greatest cities in the world; and

WHEREAS, despite this legacy, African Americans in Illinois have endured centuries of systemic oppression, beginning with the introduction of slavery to the Midwest by French explorers in the mid-1700s, a practice that persisted even after Illinois was admitted to the Union as a "free" state in 1818; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois Black Codes (1819-1865) subjected free Black residents to oppressive restrictions, including the denial of voting rights, the inability to testify against white citizens, and prohibitions against gathering in groups, bearing arms, or serving in the militia, effectively rendering them second-class citizens in their own land; and

WHEREAS, the forced labor of Black people, including indentured servitude at the salt mines in southern Illinois, directly contributed to the economic foundation of the state while denying Black individuals the freedoms and opportunities afforded to others; and

WHEREAS, after the formal abolition of slavery in 1865, African Americans in Chicago continued to face racial discrimination through segregation, redlining, disenfranchisement, and systemic inequities in housing, employment, and education- many of which persist today; and

WHEREAS, the ongoing detrimental impacts of slavery and segregation are evident in present-day racial disparities in wealth, health outcomes, education, and access to economic opportunity, necessitating urgent and sustained efforts to address these injustices; and

WHEREAS, despite these injustices, Chicago's African American community has played a defining role in the City's cultural, economic, and political life, leading movements for civil rights, labor justice, and social change, while enriching Chicago with contributions in music, literature, business, and faith; and

WHEREAS, the City of Chicago acknowledges that historical injustices, rooted in slavery and systemic racism, have caused lasting harm that continues to the present day; and

WHEREAS, the City calls on both the City and the State of Illinois to take greater steps to repair the harm done to Black Americans as a result of slavery and segregation, including through policy reforms, economic investment, and community-driven initiatives that promote racial equity and justice; and

WHEREAS, a formal apology is a critical step toward truth, reconciliation, and justice, affirming the City's commitment to repairing past harms and building a more equitable future; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council formally apologizes to the Black citizens of Chicago for the historical injustices of slavery, segregation, systemic racism, and the policies that have perpetuated racial inequality.



LAMONT J. ROBINSON
Alderman, 4th Ward