

House Resolution 3

By: Representatives Brooks of the 55th, Dawkins-Haigler of the 91st, Williams of the 168th, and Scott of the 76th

A RESOLUTION

1 Expressing profound regret for Georgia's role in slavery and expressing intent that this
2 resolution shall not be used in, or be the basis of, any type of litigation; and for other
3 purposes.

4 WHEREAS, slavery has been documented as a world-wide practice since antiquity, dating
5 back to 3500 B.C. in ancient Mesopotamia; and

6 WHEREAS, during the course of the infamous Atlantic Slave Trade, millions of Africans
7 became involuntary immigrants to the New World, and millions more died during passage;
8 the first African slaves in the North American colonies were brought to Jamestown, in 1619;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, the Atlantic Slave Trade was a lucrative enterprise, and African slaves, a prized
11 commodity to support the economic base of plantations in the colonies, were traded for
12 tropical products, manufactured goods, sugar, molasses, and other merchandise; and

13 WHEREAS, some African captives resisted enslavement by fleeing from slave forts on the
14 West African coast and others mutinied aboard slave trading vessels, cast themselves into the
15 Atlantic Ocean, or risked the cruel retaliation of their masters by running away to seek
16 freedom; and

17 WHEREAS, although the United States outlawed the transatlantic slave trade in 1808, the
18 domestic slave trade in the colonies and illegal importation continued for several decades;
19 and

20 WHEREAS, slavery, or the "Peculiar Institution," in the United States resembled no other
21 form of involuntary servitude, as Africans were captured and sold at auction as chattel, like
22 inanimate property or animals; and

23 WHEREAS, to prime Africans for slavery, the fundamental values of the Africans were
24 shattered, they were brutalized, humiliated, dehumanized, and subjected to the indignity of
25 being stripped of their names and heritage, women and girls were raped, and families were
26 disassembled as husbands and wives, mothers and daughters, and fathers and sons were sold
27 into slavery apart from one another; and

28 WHEREAS, a series of complex colonial laws were enacted to relegate the status of Africans
29 and their descendants to slavery, in spite of their loyalty, dedication, and service to the
30 country, including heroic and distinguished service in the Civil War; and

31 WHEREAS, the system of slavery had become entrenched in American history and the social
32 fabric, and the issue of enslaved Africans had to be addressed as a national issue,
33 contributing to the Civil War from 1861 to 1865 and the passage of the 13th Amendment to
34 the United States Constitution, which abolished slavery and involuntary servitude on
35 December 18, 1865; and

36 WHEREAS, after emancipation from 246 years of slavery, African-Americans soon saw the
37 political, social, and economic gains they made during Reconstruction dissipated by virulent
38 and rabid racism, lynchings, disenfranchisement of African-American voters, Black Codes
39 designed to reimpose the subordination of African-Americans, and Jim Crow laws that
40 instituted a rigid system of de jure segregation in virtually all areas of life and that lasted
41 until the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act; and

42 WHEREAS, throughout their existence in America and even in the decades after the Civil
43 Rights Movement, African-Americans have found the struggle to overcome the bitter legacy
44 of slavery long and arduous, and for many African-Americans the scars left behind are
45 unbearable, haunting their psyches and clouding their vision of the future and of America's
46 many attributes; and

47 WHEREAS, acknowledgment of the crimes and persecution visited upon other peoples
48 during World War II is embraced lest the world forget, yet the very mention of the broken
49 promise of "40 acres and a mule" to former slaves or of the existence of racism today evokes
50 denial from many quarters of any responsibility for the centuries of legally sanctioned
51 deprivation of African-Americans of their endowed rights or for contemporary policies that
52 perpetuate the status quo; and

53 WHEREAS, in 2003, during a trip to Goree Island, Senegal, a former slave port, President
54 George W. Bush stated, "At this place, liberty and life were stolen and sold. Human Beings
55 were delivered and sorted, and weighed, and branded with the marks of commercial
56 enterprises, and loaded as cargo on a voyage without return. One of the largest migrations
57 of history was also one of the greatest crimes of history ... Small men took on the powers and
58 airs of tyrants and masters. Years of unpunished brutality and bullying and rape produced
59 a dullness and hardness of conscience. Christian men and women became blind to the
60 clearest commands of their faith and added hypocrisy to injustice ... For 250 years the
61 captives endured an assault on their culture and their dignity ... While physical slavery is
62 dead, the legacy is alive. My nation's journey toward justice has not been easy, and it is not
63 over. The racial bigotry fed by slavery did not end with slavery or with segregation ... and
64 many of the issues that still trouble America have roots in the bitter experience of other
65 times ... We can finally judge the past by the standards of President John Adams, who called
66 slavery 'an evil of colossal magnitude'..."; and

67 WHEREAS, in Georgia, the vestiges of slavery are ever before African-American citizens,
68 from the overt racism of hate groups to the subtle racism encountered when requesting health
69 care, transacting business, buying a home, seeking quality public education and college
70 admission, and enduring pretextual traffic stops and other indignities; and

71 WHEREAS, European and African nations have apologized for their roles in what history
72 calls the worst holocaust of humankind, the Atlantic Slave Trade, and racial reconciliation
73 is impossible without some acknowledgment of the moral and legal injustices perpetrated
74 upon African-Americans; and

75 WHEREAS, an apology for centuries of brutal dehumanization and injustices cannot erase
76 the past, but confession of the wrongs can speed racial healing and reconciliation and help
77 African-American and white citizens confront the ghosts of their collective pasts together;
78 and

79 WHEREAS, the story of the enslavement of Africans and their descendants, the human
80 carnage, and the dehumanizing atrocities committed during slavery should not be purged
81 from Georgia's history or discounted; moreover, the faith, perseverance, hope, and endless
82 triumphs of African-Americans and their significant contributions to the development of this
83 state and the nation should be embraced, celebrated, and retold for generations to come; and

84 WHEREAS, the perpetual pain, distrust, and bitterness of many African-Americans could
85 be assuaged and the principles espoused by the Founding Fathers would be affirmed, and
86 great strides toward unifying all Georgians and inspiring the nation to acquiesce might be
87 accomplished, if on the eve of the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the first
88 permanent English settlement in the New World, the state acknowledged and atoned for its
89 pivotal role in the slavery of Africans.

90 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
91 GEORGIA that this body expresses profound regret for this state's participation in the
92 process of slavery, further atones for the involuntary servitude of Africans, and calls for
93 reconciliation among all Georgians.

94 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that it is the intent of the General Assembly that this
95 resolution shall not be used in, or be the basis of, any type of litigation.

96 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
97 and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to each
98 state elected official, the executive director of the Georgia Commission on Equal
99 Opportunity, the Board of Regents, the Georgia School Boards Association, the Georgia
100 Congressional Delegation, the Georgia Municipal Association, the Association County
101 Commissioners of Georgia, and the Georgia Association of Black Elected Officials, so that
102 they may further disseminate copies of this resolution to their respective constituents in order
103 that they may be apprised of the wisdom of the General Assembly in this matter.