



Legislation Text

File #: 57670, **Version:** 1

Fiscal Note

No appropriation required.

Title

Recognizing and Honoring 400 years of African American's Heritage and Contributions in the United States of America.

Body

WHEREAS, the epic story of African people, on the continent and scattered throughout the diaspora, has not factually or fully been told and important facts such as the African explorers who came free to North America, and early achievements by Africans, such as the domestication of animals, iron smelting and numerous inventions, are largely unknown by most; and,

WHEREAS, the African explorers from Egypt, Ghana and other countries came to these North American shores, left evidence of their presence and then returned to their home countries and African exploration and contributions are documented in They Came before Columbus: The African Presence in Ancient America by historian Ivan Van Sertima; and,

WHEREAS, in August 1619, there is documentation that free Africans, enslaved twice, first by Portuguese slave traders and then by slavers on an English warship, arrived chained in the English colony of Virginia; and,

WHEREAS, these African people, recorded upon arrival as ``20 and odd Negros," were part of a larger group of West Africans enslaved by Portuguese slave traders on their way to Vera Cruz; and,

WHEREAS, the White Lion, an English warship, flying a Dutch flag, and operating under Dutch letters of marque captured the Portuguese ship, and transported the Africans to Virginia and were put ashore at Old Point Comfort, in what is now Hampton, Virginia; and,

WHEREAS, their arduous journey testifies to the triangular trade route severing family connections between African people on the continent, in North and South America and the Caribbean; and,

WHEREAS, these enslaved people were sold as involuntary laborers or indentured servants and slavery had not been legally institutionalized, but Africans, unlike European involuntary laborers or indentured servants, were never given the date of expected freedom - they were perpetually enslaved; and,

WHEREAS, the historic arrival of the group of ``20 and odd Negros" marked the beginning in colonial America where people from Africa were taken unwillingly from their homeland, transplanted, and committed to lifelong slavery and to racial discrimination that lasts today; and,

WHEREAS, August 2019 marked 400 years since the first arrival of Africans to present day America and those who are the descendants of these original Africans, forcibly removed and enslaved in Virginia 400 years ago, celebrate that they are still alive; and,

WHEREAS, African Americans have contributed enormously to the well-being of every aspect of this country from economics to science and the arts; and,

WHEREAS, the descendants thank their creator and all of their ancestors for this resilience, beauty, courage

and love that is our legacy from these 20 honorable slaves and the strength that they brought inside their hearts from mother Africa; and,

WHEREAS, those descendants who now live in Wisconsin, acknowledge the early African American pioneers who came both free and enslaved to this state; and,

WHEREAS, two Black settlements were founded in the 1800's, Cheyenne Valley in Vernon County and Pleasant Ridge in Grant County; and,

WHEREAS, their story is neither fully told, nor well known in Wisconsin either, yet African Americans have founded towns in Wisconsin, such as Freedom and Chilton; and,

WHEREAS, Madison and the surrounding area, for hundreds of years, has been home to African American homeowners, farmers, businesses and prominent leaders; and,

WHEREAS, today's descendants also celebrate the contributions of African Americans in Wisconsin up to the present day; and

WHEREAS, in honoring the original 20 Africans in 1619 who survived the slave experience to travel and settle throughout the United States, including Wisconsin, we honor their enduring determination to be free,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Common Council recognize and honor the 400 years of African American's Heritage and Contributions in the United States of America.