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TO: The Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director 
Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: April 6, 2026

RE: **RESOLUTION SUPPORTING UN RECOGNITION OF THE TRAFFICKING OF
CAPTURED AFRICANS AND AFRICAN DESCENDANTS AND OF RACIALIZED
CHattel ENSLAVEMENT OF AFRICAN DESCENDANTS AS THE GRAVEST CRIME
AGAINST HUMANITY**

City Council Member Angela Whitfield Calloway has requested that the Legislative Policy Division produce a resolution in support of the United Nations resolution entitled, "Declaration of the Trafficking of Enslaved Africans and Racialized Chattel Enslavement of Africans as the Gravest Crime against Humanity," as passed on March 25, 2026. The requested resolution is attached.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to use if we can be of further assistance.

BY CITY COUNCIL MEMBER WHITFIELD CALLOWAY

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING UN RECOGNITION OF THE TRAFFICKING OF CAPTURED AFRICANS AND AFRICAN DESCENDANTS AND OF RACIALIZED CHATTEL ENSLAVEMENT OF AFRICAN DESCENDANTS AS THE GRAVEST CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY

- WHEREAS** The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring the trafficking of enslaved Africans and their descendants to be “the gravest crime against humanity,” calling for reparations as a tangible step toward reparative remedies;¹ and
- WHEREAS** The resolution calls upon the United Nations member states to engage in discussions on reparative justice, including a full and formal apology, measures of restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, assurances against future violations, and changes to laws, programs, and services to address racism and systemic discrimination;² and
- WHEREAS** Reparations are a remedy for a debt long owed, arising from centuries of stolen labor, stolen land, stolen wealth, family separation, racial terror, and state-sanctioned discrimination and violence, and are intended not as charity but as redress, repair, and restitution for historic and continuing harms; and
- WHEREAS** The legacy of the trafficking of Africans, racialized chattel enslavement, and post-emancipation subjugation did not cease with formal abolition, but was reconstituted through sharecropping, convict leasing, Jim Crow segregation, redlining, educational inequity, housing dispossession, and racially discriminatory criminal legal systems, including in Detroit; and
- WHEREAS** Detroit has a deep history of reparations advocacy, evolving from the pioneering federal lobbying of “Reparations Ray” Jenkins and Congressman John Conyers Jr. to the 2021 voter-approved municipal Reparations Task Force (DRTF), initially chaired by great Queen Mother JoAnn Watson, a lifelong advocate for reparations for the descendants of slaves;³ and
- WHEREAS** As its first recommendation, the Detroit City Council Reparations Task Force (DRTF), formally requested and advanced a resolution in support of H.R. 40, the *Commission to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans Act*, recognizing federal reparations as necessary to address the enduring harms of slavery, racial discrimination, and their continuing impacts, including through financial compensation and other forms of repair;⁴ **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**
- RESOLVED** That the Detroit City Council recognizes reparations as redress for a debt owed, and supports reparative measures including apology, restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, assurances against future violations, and changes to laws, programs, and services that perpetuate racial inequity, **AND BE IT FURTHER**
- RESOLVED** That the Detroit City Council hereby affirms and supports the United Nations General Assembly’s recognition that the trafficking and enslavement of forcibly captured Africans and their ethnogenetic progeny constitute the gravest crime against humanity, **NOW BE IT FINALLY**
- RESOLVED** That the Detroit City Clerk transmit copies of this resolution to the Mayor of the City of Detroit, the United Nations General Assembly, and the African Group of the United Nations.

¹ General Assembly: 75th plenary meeting, 80th session – International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, U.N. Audiovisual Libr. (Mar. 25, 2026), <https://media.un.org/avlibrary/en/asset/d354/d3548828>.

² The Associated Press, *U.N. Calls for Reparations to Remedy the “Historical Wrongs” of Trafficking Enslaved Africans*, NPR (Mar. 26, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/03/26/nx-s1-5761896/un-reparations-slavery-africa>; G.A. Draft Res. A/80/L.48, *Declaration of the Trafficking of Enslaved Africans and Racialized Chattel Enslavement of Africans as the Gravest Crime against Humanity* (Mar. 17, 2026).

³ <https://www.bridgedetroit.com/joann-watson-detroits-queen-mother-and-defining-political-leader-has-died/#:~:text=She%20was%20the%20first%20woman,repairs%20for%20descendants%20of%20slaves>.

⁴ Detroit, Mich., *A Resolution in Support of House Bill H.R. 40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act*, Feb. 20, 2024.