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HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 57

Offered March 7, 2012

Commemorating the arrival of Africans to Virginia.

Patrons—Ward, BaCote, Brink, Bulova, Carr, Dance, Englin, Filler-Corn, Herring, Hope, Howell, A.T., Ingram, James, Joannou, Johnson, Keam, Kory, Lewis, Lopez, McClellan, McQuinn, Morrissey, Plum, Scott, J.M., Sickles, Spruill, Surovell, Tyler, Ware, O. and Watts

WHEREAS, on August 20, 1619, the first documented Africans to arrive in North America on British-occupied territory on land known today as the Commonwealth of Virginia came ashore at Point Comfort, today's Fort Monroe in Elizabeth City County, now present-day Hampton; and

WHEREAS, the first Africans to arrive in present-day Hampton were captured during the conflict with Portugal and the village of Ndongo in the Angola region of Africa, where they endured a death march of over 150 miles from their homeland to the coastal city of Luanda where they were held in camps awaiting their inevitable journey along the Transatlantic Slave Trade route to an unknown destination to be sold into slavery; and

WHEREAS, in May of 1619, 350 Africans from the Angola region of Africa were loaded on the Portuguese ship *Sao Joao Bautista* and headed for Vera Cruz, Mexico, where the Africans were to be sold as slaves, but before reaching their destination they were attacked by the ship *White Lion* and the English ship *Treasurer*, where they took 60 Africans and headed to Virginia where they intended to sell their human cargo; and

WHEREAS, on August 20, 1619, John Rolfe, widower of Pocahontas, witnessed at Point Comfort the first landing of African slaves who were designated as indentured servants, but most subsequently became slaves for life; and

WHEREAS, the Africans who arrived in Hampton were among the over 15 million Africans to be removed from the continent of Africa and transported around the world through the Middle Passage where millions died from disease and starvation and those who survived the voyage were sold as property to provide uncompensated labor to work in the coal mines and tobacco and cotton fields, in building construction, and as field hands and house servants throughout the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the first Africans brought to Point Comfort, and others imported later and dispersed throughout Virginia, embraced a rich Bantu culture that respected elders and cherished children and were skilled in farming, herding, textile weaving, blacksmithing, and music that was instrumental in the early development and success of the colonies and for the past centuries their cultural diversity and quest for equal rights has greatly enhanced the quality of life for all citizens of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, descendants of those first Africans who came ashore in Hampton were integral in the development of Hampton and the Commonwealth of Virginia and their cultural and spiritual beliefs impacted the nation; three escaped slaves seeking asylum at Freedom's Fortress became contrabands of war, which was instrumental in the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation and the passage of the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1865 that abolished slavery; and

WHEREAS, the Transatlantic Slave Trade and New World exploration contributed to the dispersement of Native American Indians in the United States, which resulted in a significant moral, political, and ethical human tragedy that changed the world, and although history and its impact on past generations cannot be changed, it can be recognized and valuable lessons for future generations learned from the perils and transgressions of people's inhumanity toward one another; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Delegates hereby commemorate the arrival of Africans to Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the City of Hampton as an expression of the House of Delegates' respect for the contributions of descendants of Africans to the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

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