

LEON COUNTY RESOLUTION NO. 24- 11

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA, TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND APOLOGIZE FOR THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY AND RACISM IN LEON COUNTY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

RECITALS

WHEREAS, the system of slavery and the visceral racism against persons of African descent was entrenched in the Nation’s social fabric; and

WHEREAS, slavery was not officially abolished until the passage of the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1865 after the end of the Civil War; and

WHEREAS, the system of racial segregation known as “Jim Crow,” which arose in certain parts of the Nation following the Civil War, was a direct result of the racism against persons of African descent engendered by slavery; and

WHEREAS, at Florida’s Constitutional Convention of 1885, the Florida Legislature mandated racial segregation in schools and prohibited interracial marriages which marked the beginning of segregation under Jim Crow in Florida and Leon County; and

WHEREAS, there were at least four documented lynchings in Leon County between 1897 and 1937 – Pierce Taylor, Mick Morris, Ernest Ponder, and Richard Hawkins; and

WHEREAS, a historical marker has been placed under an oak tree at Cascades Park, near the site of the County’s old jail, to memorialize the four victims of racially motivated violence; and

WHEREAS, as a result of segregation and limited opportunities afforded to African Americans under Jim Crow, Leon County’s African American community established the Smokey Hollow neighborhood, a community of African American families, social organizations, cultural institutions, and businesses in the 1890s; and

WHEREAS, in the 1960s the Smokey Hollow neighborhood was demolished and its residents displaced to make way for public infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, in 2015 the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency constructed the Smokey Hollow commemorative site to tell the story of the Smokey Hollow community; and

WHEREAS, Florida’s 1885 Constitution remained in effect until 1968, which enabled the furtherance of separate and unequal societies for whites and African Americans; and

WHEREAS, in 1956, Reverend Dr. Charles Kenzie Steele led the community in organizing the Tallahassee bus boycott, the second major bus boycott in the United States; and

WHEREAS, in the 1960s, members of Leon County’s African American community organized lunch counter sit-ins at McCrory’s and Woolworth’s; and

1 WHEREAS, these events have been memorialized through the Tallahassee-Leon County Civil
2 Rights Heritage Walk, a sidewalk memorial constructed in 2013 which tells the story of peaceful
3 protests and demonstrations that sought desegregation and equality in our community; and
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5 WHEREAS, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 marked a major milestone in the Civil
6 Rights Movement in America; and
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8 WHEREAS, nearly 100 years after emancipation from slavery, Congress approved the Civil
9 Rights Act of 1964 which banned discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national
10 origin.
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12 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF LEON
13 COUNTY, FLORIDA, that:
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15 **Section 1. Leon County apologizes for the enslavement and segregation of African Americans.**
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17 The Board acknowledges the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity of
18 slavery and Jim Crow laws.

19 The Board apologizes to African Americans, on behalf of the people of Leon County for the
20 wrongs committed against them and their ancestors who suffered under slavery and Jim Crow laws.

21 The Board expresses its recommitment to the principle that all people are created equal and
22 endowed with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

23 The Board expresses its commitment to recognize the misdeeds committed against African
24 Americans under slavery and Jim Crow, and to work toward eliminating racial prejudices, injustices,
25 and discrimination from our society.

26 The Board celebrates the strides that our community has made toward racial equality, including
27 the free and fair elections of Leon County Commissioners, Constitutional Officers, and State
28 Delegation Members who represent the diverse population of the electorate.

29 Leon County Government is honored to be the home of Florida A&M University, the top public
30 Historically Black College and University in the country, for its continued excellence in cultivating
31 Black scholars and leaders within our community.

32 Leon County Government continues to lead the charge against racial inequality in our words,
33 deeds, and initiatives, like facilitating crucial community dialogue through the Created Equal program,
34 an annual citizen engagement event which connects residents of diverse backgrounds, education, and
35 age to encourage frank conversations on race and racial inequity.

1 **Section 2. Effective Date.**

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This resolution shall become effective immediately upon its adoption.

DONE, ADOPTED AND PASSED by the Board of County Commissioners of Leon County, Florida, this 20th day of February, 2024.

LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA

DocuSigned by:

Carolyn D. Cummings

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By: _____

Carolyn D. Cummings, Chair
Board of County Commissioners

ATTESTED BY:

Gwendolyn Marshall Knight, Clerk of Court
& Comptroller, Leon County, Florida

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By: *Gwendolyn Marshall Knight*
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APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Chasity H. O'Steen, County Attorney
Leon County Attorney's Office

By: *Chasity H. O'Steen*
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