# Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer, Sr. 57<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

AB 3089 – Apology Act for Gross Human Rights Violations, with Special Consideration for Slavery Descendants

#### SUMMARY

AB 3089 will provide acknowledgment of, and an apology for, the perpetration of gross human rights violations related to human enslavement, and the State's perpetuation of the lasting badges and incidents of slavery within its territories.

### BACKGROUND

In 2020, the Legislature approved, and Governor Gavin Newsom signed, <u>AB 3121 (S. Weber, 2020)</u>, establishing the California Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, with a Special Consideration for African Americans Who are Descendants of Persons Enslaved in the United States (Task Force).

That law required the Task Force to, among other things, recommend "how the State of California will offer a formal apology on behalf of the People of California for the perpetration of gross human rights violations and crimes against humanity on African slaves and their descendants."

Statute required the Task Force to "identify, compile, and synthesize the relevant corpus of evidentiary documentation of the institution of slavery that existed in the United States," including and specifically, California's role in the slave trade; and required the submission of a <u>written report of evidentiary findings</u> and recommendations to the Legislature.

Statute further charged the Task Force with providing recommend remedies to California laws and policies that continue to disproportionately and negatively affect African Americans and perpetuate the lingering material and psychosocial effects of slavery.

During <u>two years of public hearings</u>, the Task Force heard countless hours of testimony from expert witnesses and citizens, and received hundreds of pages of preserved historical records from government agencies, private entities, and citizens, establishing that millions of Africans and their descendants were brutally enslaved and traded as property, propelling California's ascension to prosperity during the Gold Rush Era. The Task Force report further outlines the myriad of ways that these harms continue to plague Black Californians today.

California's Legislature authorized slave-owners to hold persons in bondage so long as the owner claimed to have entered the state with their enslaved property before 1850. Similarly, courts permitted slave-owners to move freely with enslaved persons so long as the slaveholder claimed to only reside here temporarily, and the California Supreme Court ordered fugitive slaves back to their owners, despite California being claiming itself a free state.

From inception to present day, much of the nation's prosperity is built from the systematic subjugation of African Americans, yet only nine states (Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia) have enacted some form of recognition for their respective involvement in these harms.

As California continues to lead the nation's innovation spaces, it must be steadfast in the reconciliation of the difficult truths about its past and the sacrifices made.

### THIS BILL

AB 3089 will offer the formal acknowledgement of, and apology for, California's role in forced human enslavement, affirm the state's guarantee of remediation and non-repetition, and provide for the permanent public access of such apology in the California State Capitol building and the California State Archives.

**SUPPORT** (continued on next page)

- American Civil Liberties Union, California Action
- Alliance for Reparations, Reconciliation, & Truth

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#### SUPPORT (continued)

- California Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- Black Equity Collective
- California African American Chamber of Commerce
- California Association of Realtors
- California Black Power Network
- California Federation of Teachers, American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
- California Reparations Task Force Members Don Tamaki, Dr. Cheryl Grills, and Lisa Holder
- California Teachers Association
- Catalyst California
- Democrats of Rossmor
- Equal Justice Society
- Greater Sacramento Urban League
- Live Free California
- Multi-Faith Action Coalition
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, California-Hawaii State Conference (NAACP)

## CONTACT

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