**Resolution Title:** **Resolution in Support of H.R. 40: "The Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act"**

**Submitted by:** **Professional Staff Congress, Local 2334**

Whereas, U.S. Congressman John Conyers introduced H.R. 40, " The Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act," a Commission to:
(a) examine the institution of slavery in the US from 1619 through 1865 and the extent to which the Federal and State Governments constitutionally and statutorily supported the institution of slavery; (b) examine discrimination against freed slaves and their descendants from the end of the Civil War to the present, including economic, political, and social discrimination; (c) examine the lingering negative effects of slavery and the discrimination on living African Americans and on society in the United States; (d) recommend appropriate ways to educate the American public of its findings; (e) recommend appropriate remedies in consideration of its findings; and (f) submit to the Congress the results and recommendations of such examination.

Whereas, the following Congresspeople have signed on to the bill: Brady, Cummings, Davis, Fattah, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Kilpatrick, McCarthy, McDermott, Meeks, Millender-McDonald, Norton, Owens, Rangel, Rush, Schakowsky, Thompson, Towns, Waters and Watson; and

Whereas, there is a scandal at the center of American history, for slavery was a primary economic system of this country from 1619 to 1865, with millions of Africans traded as commodities and forced to participate in the most extreme form of labor abuse; and

Whereas, there has never been in this country a national, public conversation about the labor and human rights scandal at the center of our economic and psychic history, nor has there been a systematic attempt to address the complex issue of reparations for a human rights abuse for people whose ancestors suffered as slaves; and

Whereas, the absence of such a conversation has deformed our national life, allowing what Toni Morrison describes as a false American "innocence" to persist (*Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*) and inhibiting us from moving forward beyond denial toward a collective examination of what it means to live in a post-slavery society; and

Whereas, H.R. 40 is not a simplistic demand for financial reparations, but rather a careful call for research, study, education, conversation and finally, recommendation to Congress; and

Whereas, there is now a highly developed body of thought on the complex issue of reparations to descendants of victims of human rights abuse, developed by such organizations as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the U.N. World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, 2001), which took reparations as one of its central issues; and

Whereas, other countries, notably South Africa and Brazil, have turned national attention toward the issue of reparations for racist abuses; and

Whereas, we as educators, as labor unionists and as people who have dedicated our lives to an ideal of public service, have a special obligation to participate in a long-overdue public conversation about slavery; and

Whereas, the New York State United Teachers at its 2003 Representative Assembly passed a resolution to support H.R. 40; therefore

Be it resolved, that the American Federation of Teachers endorse H.R. 40: "The Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act," and urge Congresspersons to enact this bill into legislation.

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I hereby certify that the above resolution was approved for submission to the 2004 AFT Conventionby the:

**Delegate Assembly** at a meeting held on **May 27, 2004**

Signed: _____ _____

(President) (Secretary)

**Professional Staff Congress** **Local 2334**

Local or Retiree Council Name AFT#