

## Background for Why the Apology for Slavery from the City of Charleston is Needed Now

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The City of Charleston is the place where nearly half of all enslaved people entered North America. This city's beginning prosperity and robust economy were dependent upon the free labor, technical expertise, and craftsmanship of those peoples who were enslaved. Our City has continued to prosper and grow because of this history, and is now recognized as one of the top tourist destinations in the world.

**This is not an apology by any individual. It's an apology made on behalf of the City of Charleston** for its role in regulating, supporting and fostering slavery and the resulting atrocities inflicted by the institution of slavery.

**Healing can only begin after the recognition and apology of wrongs.** The recognition and apology is the first step of Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation and lays the groundwork for the deeper healing to follow.

**Charleston is not the first public body to apologize for slavery.** As an example, during the June 1995 Southern Baptist Convention, an apology was given to African Americans for "defending slavery in the antebellum South for condoning racism in our lifetime." Other cities, including Annapolis, Maryland and Macon Georgia, and 9 states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Connecticut and Virginia, have passed official resolutions apologizing for their roles in the institution of slavery.

Next steps for *SJRE Collaborative* following the successful passage of the Apology:

1. Continue to lay the groundwork for a base understanding of the history of racial inequity up through the current day through the *SJRE Collaborative's Living Your Truth Series*, and the work of our Engagement Partners Avery Research Institute for African American History and Culture, Race and Social Justice Initiative, YWCA (REI) and The Charleston Forum, among others
2. Work with the newly established Office of Racial Reconciliation to engage, fund and coordinate the *Truth Racial Healing and Transformation* Process for individuals and community leaders for the deeper healing to take place
3. Support and lead vital conversations that lead to actionable strategy and policy improvement for people of color in the areas of education, policing, gun violence prevention, healthcare, housing, economic justice, and expansion of voting rights and democracy
4. Encourage the development of culturally competent leaders who understand the rich and complex racial history of our community and are empowered to act with an equity lens
5. Promote racial equity while creating a new legacy of social justice within Charleston.

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*"A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus, but a molder of consensus."*

**Martin Luther King, Jr.**

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*"Many thoughtful people believe that an apology is the only meaningful way to acknowledge this undeniable fact."*

**The Honorable Judge Alex Sanders**

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*"Empathy - the ability to identify with someone else's suffering - is certainly a prerequisite for a genuine apology."*

**Danielle Ofri**

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*"A leader does not do what is popular and try to make it right, but does what is right and try to make it popular."*

**Rev. Nelson B. Rivers III, Charity Missionary Baptist Church**

More information about Social Justice Racial Equity Collaborative can be found online: [www.thesophiainstitute.org/social-justice-racial-equity-collaborative](http://www.thesophiainstitute.org/social-justice-racial-equity-collaborative)

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