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## N.C. Senate apologizes

### History of bias, slavery prompts 'contrition' vote

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RALEIGH, N.C. — The North Carolina Senate apologized Thursday for the Legislature's role in promoting slavery and Jim Crow laws that denied basic human rights to the state's blacks.

Following the lead of lawmakers in neighboring Virginia, the Senate unanimously backed a resolution acknowledging its "profound contrition for the official acts that sanctioned and perpetuated the denial of basic human rights and dignity to fellow humans."

"This is a way to reflect upon this and express our understanding and our regret for official actions of our state," said Senate Majority Leader Tony Rand, a Democrat and the bill's primary sponsor.

Such an apology, Rand added, would help us "to try to be better children of God and better representatives of all the people of this state."

The resolution recounts a long history of discrimination against North Carolina's black population, from the first slaves in the British colony of Carolina in 1669 through the Civil War and then Jim Crow laws that promoted inequality into the mid-1900s.

"The state went out of its way to deny its people the right to life and liberty," said Democratic Sen. Tony Foriest, who is black. He recalled during the Senate's debate the segregation he experienced as a child.

The North Carolina House would have to approve the measure for it to be formalized. A similar resolution is pending in the state House, which adjourned for the Easter holiday weekend on Thursday without taking any action.

Black senators said they were pleased to see the resolution pass but added that lawmakers also should help improve the quality of life of blacks who still suffer from the effects of slavery and discrimination. They called for improvements to the state's education system and for giving black-owned businesses more access to state contracts.

"This is a noble gesture, but I urge you, don't let it end here," Democratic Sen. Larry Shaw said.

Several white senators recalled their own links to slavery. Democratic Sen. Bill Purcell said his grandfather had owned slaves.

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