



# UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

## *Student Government Association*

### Resolution 31-13

#### **A Resolution to Honor and Memorialize Enslaved Peoples at the University of Georgia**

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Sponsored by: Briana Hayes, Senator for College of Public Health; Alexis Watson, Senator At-Large; Johanna Mercurio, Senator At-Large; Jessica Story, Senator for Grady College; George Alexander, Senator At-Large; Samuel Bryant, Senator At-Large

WHEREAS, the University of Georgia was founded in 1785 in Athens, Georgia during the period of southern slavery; and,

WHEREAS, the University of Georgia was constructed and maintained by an extensive network of slave labor<sup>4</sup>; and,

WHEREAS, the University of Georgia Board of Trustees official minutes contains, at minimum, thirty-nine mentions of purchasing slave labor<sup>4</sup>; and,

WHEREAS, there is extensive archived documentation on student interactions with enslaved peoples, including using blackface as mockery, as well as several assaults and a maiming of University slaves<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>; and,

WHEREAS, the University of Georgia benefitted from the labor of slaves, including the few whose names are known: Dick Cary, Davy Hull, Billy Hull, Sam [Harris] Watkins, Bishop Lucius Henry Holsey, Lewis “Old Tub” of the Christy family, Louis of the Demosthenian Literary Society, and Alfred, Caroline, Elvir, Hanson, Louisa, and Sophia of the Church family<sup>1, 2, 3, 4, 16</sup>; and,

WHEREAS, slave labor on campus was tasked with cleaning student apartments, whitewashing buildings, toting water for the University, maintenance, construction on the buildings, and doing odd jobs for faculty members and students at their discretion<sup>4</sup>; and,

WHEREAS, there lies a monument across from the Arch that honors Athenians who served in the Confederate Army and a plaque at the entrance of North Campus that pays tribute to the Confederacy, which fought to keep Black bodies enslaved; and,

WHEREAS, the chapel bell, now an icon and beloved tradition of the University of Georgia, was originally used to denote religious services, emergencies, and class changes, for which slaves Dick Cary and Sam [Harris] Watkins were utilized as two of known the bell-ringers<sup>16</sup>; and,

WHEREAS, many buildings across campus are named after presidents and founders of the university, most of whom are known to have owned slaves which were used in tasks benefitting the University, including, but not limited to, Abraham Baldwin, Alonzo Church, Moses Waddel, and Andrew Lipscomb<sup>15</sup>; and,

WHEREAS, many community members and students do not feel as though the University of Georgia adequately, publicly acknowledged its past entanglement with slavery, nor acknowledged the substantial contributions that enslaved peoples made towards the establishment and success of the University; and,

WHEREAS, the mission of the University of Georgia is to “foster the understanding of and respect for cultural differences necessary for an enlightened and educated citizenry” ; and,

WHEREAS, renowned universities such as Harvard University, Brown University, Columbia University, Princeton University, Rutgers University, University of Virginia, University of North Carolina, Washington and Lee University, George Mason University, William and Mary University, and Georgetown University have all implemented memorials, dedications, and/or programs that acknowledge their university’s history as it pertains to slavery<sup>6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14</sup>; and,

WHEREAS, fellow southeastern colleges such as the University of Mississippi, the University of Alabama, the University of South Carolina, Furman University, Clemson University, and Wesleyan College have all publicly recognized their past involvement with slavery through research, plaques, public transparency, and/or involvement in “Universities Studying Slavery,” a multi-institutional collaborative program<sup>5, 14</sup>; and,

WHEREAS, at the University of Georgia, only 7.7 percent of the student population identify as Black or African American, while the state of Georgia has one of the highest state populations of Black and African American people, totaling 31.4 percent<sup>13</sup>; and,

WHEREAS, faculty from the Institute of African American Studies, the History Department, the Anthropology Department, and the College of Environment and Design have all voiced support of student-lead efforts to acknowledge slavery and honor the University slaves, both those discovered and undiscovered; and,

WHEREAS, in the spring of 2018, leaders of the African Student Union, the UGA Chapter of NAACP, and several other leaders of Black student organizations voiced their personal support and the support of their peers towards a University effort to acknowledge slavery and honor the enslaved peoples held and utilized by the University;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the 31st administration of the Student Government Association, will, on behalf of the student body, stand publicly in support of further honoring the history of enslaved peoples at the University of Georgia; and,

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we encourage the University of Georgia to, in collaboration with the University's and Athens' Black and African American community leaders, construct a permanent, physical monument on North Campus dedicated to all enslaved peoples held and utilized by the University of Georgia and serving as a permanent reminder of their sacrifices and struggles made on behalf of the University of Georgia and the lasting contributions they have made towards the foundation and continued success of the University; and,

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we encourage the University of Georgia to dedicate the chapel bell in Dick Cary and Sam Watkins' names, so that students and community members may know the names of those slaves whose records were maintained and know the legacies that Cary and Watkins made towards a landmark of the University; and,

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we encourage the University of Georgia to join the many universities that are already members of the multi-institutional collaborative project Universities Studying Slavery (USS), which was organized through the University of Virginia, in order to contribute our own research and experiences as well as to learn from those of our peers; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, we encourage University of Georgia to become a model within higher education for research and transparency as it pertains to our involvement with slavery, ensuring that, for generations to come, the enslaved peoples of the University of Georgia will not have been held in vain and that their memory shall live on with proper respect, intentionality, and honor through whatever means necessary.

## CITATIONS

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