

1 enrolled in the schools of the State of Rhode Island; now, therefore be it

2           RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission, to be known as "The 1696 Historical  
3 Commission," so named in honor of the first documented group of enslaved Africans to arrive in  
4 Rhode Island at Newport in 1696 on the brig Seaflower, be and the same is hereby created  
5 consisting of fifteen (15) members: one of whom shall be the Secretary of State, or designee; one  
6 of whom shall be the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, or designee; one of  
7 whom shall be the Executive Director of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage  
8 Commission, or designee; and twelve (12) of whom shall be public members, four (4) of whom  
9 shall be appointed by the President of the Senate, four (4) of whom shall be appointed by the  
10 Speaker of the House, and four (4) of whom shall be appointed by the Governor.

11           The public members shall be residents of this state, chosen with due regard to broad  
12 geographic representation and ethnic diversity, who have an interest in the history of Rhode  
13 Island, the African slave trade and slavery in Rhode Island and America and the contributions of  
14 African-Americans to our society. Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in the same  
15 manner as the original appointment.

16           The purpose of said commission shall be to develop a comprehensive African American  
17 history curriculum for all K-12 public schools in Rhode Island. Said curriculum should include,  
18 but not be limited to, the history of persons of African heritage, including the history of African  
19 peoples before the political conflicts that led to the development of slavery, the passage to  
20 America and Rhode Island, the enslavement experience in America and Rhode Island, abolition,  
21 and the contributions of Africans to America and Rhode Island.

22           The commission shall develop, in consultation with the Department of Education,  
23 curriculum guidelines for the teaching of information on the African slave trade, slavery in  
24 America and Rhode Island, the vestiges of slavery in this country and state, and the contributions  
25 of African-Americans to our country and state.

26           The commission shall make recommendations on facilitating the inclusion of the history  
27 of persons of African heritage, including the history of African peoples before the political  
28 conflicts that led to the development of slavery, the passage to America and Rhode Island, the  
29 enslavement experience in Rhode Island and America, abolition, and the contributions of African  
30 Americans to Rhode Island and America and any related special programs in the educational  
31 system of the state, with the goal of funding and implementing such curriculum for the start of the  
32 September, 2016 K-12 public school year.

33           Every local board of education is requested to incorporate the information developed by  
34 the commission in an appropriate place in the curriculum of elementary and secondary school

1 students in the state; and

2 On facilitating the inclusion of the history of persons of African heritage, including the  
3 history of African peoples before the political conflicts that led to the development of slavery, the  
4 passage to America and Rhode Island, the enslavement experience in Rhode Island and America,  
5 abolition, and the contributions of African-Americans to Rhode Island and America and any  
6 related special programs in the educational system of the state, with the goal of funding and  
7 implementing such curriculum for the start of the September, 2016 K-12 public school year.

8 The Secretary of State, or designee, shall serve as the chair and the Commissioner of  
9 Education, or designee, shall serve as the vice-chair of the commission. The presence of a  
10 majority of the authorized membership of the commission shall be required for the conduct of  
11 official business.

12 The membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

13 The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission and Rhode Island  
14 Department of Education shall provide staff support for the Commission.

15 All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,  
16 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or  
17 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

18 The commission is authorized to prepare all reports by January 1, 2015 for the Governor  
19 and the Legislature regarding its findings and recommendations on facilitating the inclusion of  
20 the history of persons of African heritage, including the history of African peoples before the  
21 political conflicts that led to the development of slavery, the passage to America and Rhode  
22 Island, the enslavement experience in Rhode Island and America, abolition, and the contributions  
23 of African-Americans to Rhode Island and America and any related special programs in the  
24 educational system of the State, with the goal of funding and implementing such curriculum for  
25 the start of the September, 2016 K-12 public school year.

26 The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to provide  
27 suitable quarters for said commission; and be it further

28 RESOLVED, That the commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the  
29 General Assembly and the Governor no later than January 6, 2015, and said commission shall  
30 expire on February 15, 2015.

=====  
LC004756/SUB A  
=====

EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

J O I N T R E S O L U T I O N

CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO BE KNOWN AS "THE 1696  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION" OF RHODE ISLAND AND THE UNITED STATES

\*\*\*

1           This resolution would create a fifteen (15) member special legislative study commission  
2 whose purpose it would be to develop curriculum guidelines for the teaching of information on  
3 the African slave trade, slavery in America and Rhode Island, the vestiges of slavery in this  
4 country and state, and the contributions of African-Americans to our country and state, and who  
5 would report back to the General Assembly and the Governor no later than January 6, 2015, and  
6 whose life would expire on February 15, 2015.

=====  
LC004756/SUB A  
=====

2015 -- S 0079

=====  
LC000693  
=====

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2015

---

JOINT RESOLUTION

EXTENDING THE REPORTING AND EXPIRATION DATES OF THE SPECIAL  
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO BE KNOWN AS "THE 1696 HISTORICAL  
COMMISSION" OF RHODE ISLAND AND THE UNITED STATES

Introduced By: Senators Metts, Pichardo, Nesselbush, Crowley, and Sheehan

Date Introduced: January 21, 2015

Referred To: Placed on the Senate Consent Calendar

1           RESOLVED, That the special legislative commission created by resolution No. 397  
2   passed by the General Assembly at its January session, A.D. 2014, and approved July 1, 2014,  
3   entitled "Joint Resolution Creating a Special Legislative Commission To Be Known as "The 1696  
4   Historical Commission" of Rhode Island and the United States is hereby authorized to continue  
5   its study and make a report to the General Assembly on or before August 1, 2015, and said  
6   commission shall expire on October 15, 2015; and be it further

7           RESOLVED, That the time for reporting authorized by resolution No. 397 passed by the  
8   General Assembly at its January session, A.D. 2014, and approved July 1, 2014, be and the same  
9   is hereby rescinded.

=====  
LC000693  
=====

EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

J O I N T R E S O L U T I O N

EXTENDING THE REPORTING AND EXPIRATION DATES OF THE SPECIAL  
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO BE KNOWN AS "THE 1696 HISTORICAL  
COMMISSION" OF RHODE ISLAND AND THE UNITED STATES

\*\*\*

- 1 This resolution would extend the reporting date of the special legislative commission to
- 2 be known as "The 1696 Historical Commission" from January 6, 2015 to August 1, 2015, and
- 3 said commission would expire on October 15, 2015.

=====  
LC000693  
=====

# Rhode Island African American History Curriculum Guide Outline

By: 1696 Historical Commission

Approved: July 27, 2015

## Mission – 1696 Historical Commission

The mission of the 1696 Historical Commission is to promote knowledge of the integral role of Africans and later African Americans in the history and heritage of Rhode Island. Interdisciplinary studies of the African-American experience will identify and relate to the core values of the Declaration of Independence, Constitution of the United States of America and the Rhode Island Royal Charter of 1663. These studies will empower all Rhode Island students to develop attitudes of awareness, appreciation and acceptance of the dignity of every person through a learning experience of a more inclusive history of Rhode Island and U.S.

## Why an African American History Curriculum?

Rhode Island history is the collective memory of its entire people and throughout the year, educators must recognize the important roles that people of all walks of life played in the building of our state and our nation. The interdependence between these people is what made our state and country strong and our history unique. To tell the story completely, it must be inclusive. Africans and African Americans have made and continue to make major contributions to the world's history and cultures. This legacy has its roots in Ancient Africa and adaptations are worldwide including here in the State of Rhode Island. Historically, Rhode Islanders of African heritage have been a part of our state since the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and in present day, African heritage can be seen in our many Rhode Island residents of African, bi-racial, Latino, Cape Verdean, Caribbean, and Native backgrounds. Most importantly, the inclusion of an African American history curriculum will augment and enrich what students learn and how history is taught in our communities.

## African American History Commission Objectives

- Design and implement an African and African American History curriculum.
- Reinforce that African American History is American History.
- Equip teachers to work with an increasingly diverse student body and the community.

- Expand the teaching of African American content so it is fully integrated into the curriculum on a year-round basis.
- Establish that the African American history curriculum initiatives should be implemented as a seamless part of Rhode Island Department of Education's curriculum.

### Curriculum Guideline Organization

The curriculum should be inclusive in academic disciplines and include: history, visual arts, literature, anthropology, music and sociology. This guide is organized into fourteen lesson units. Each unit represents one chronological period of the African heritage experience, beginning with the evolution of the African continent, the Trans-Atlantic experience and ending with the year 1990. Each unit is divided into three main sections including:

1. Historical Background
2. Core Lesson Plans
3. Materials + Resources

Unit 1: Africa Beginnings

Unit 2: Africa, Europe, and the Settlement of the Americas, 1492-1620

Unit 3: African Enslavement in Colonial America & Rhode Island, 1620-1800

Unit 4: Africans in the Revolutionary Era, 1750-1785

Unit 5: What is Africa to me? What is America to Me? 1785-1800

Unit 6: African Heritage Experience during the Industrial Revolution, 1800-1860

Unit 7: Civil War and Reconstruction Eras, 1860-1890

Unit 8: The Great Migration and WWI Era, 1900-1920

Unit 9: Gilded Age Rhode Island In Color, 1900 - 1930

Unit 10: The 1930s: The Great Depression

Unit 11: World War II: The Struggle for Equality at Home and Abroad, 1940-1945

Unit 12: The Immediate Postwar Years, 1945-1953

Unit 13: The Civil Rights and Black Power Era: Gains and Losses, 1954-1990

Unit 14: The African American Heritage Today, 1990 - Present

**1696 Historical Commission Meeting  
Monday, June 15, 2015  
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Rhode Island State House  
Room 203**

**Agenda**

- I. Welcome & Introductions
  - Secretary Gorbea
  - Commission members
  
- II. Purpose of the Commission
  
- III. Discuss Work Plan
  
- IV. Public Comment
  
- V. Adjourn

The State House is accessible to persons with disabilities. Individuals requesting interpreter services for the hearing impaired or needing other accommodations, please contact Betty Sepe by phone at 401.222.2357 or email at [bsepe@sos.ri.gov](mailto:bsepe@sos.ri.gov).

Secretary of State, Room 217, State House, Providence, RI 02903

1696 Historical Commission Meeting  
Minutes of June 15, 2015

The members of the 1696 Commission met on June 15, 2015, at 11:00 a.m. in Room 203 of the Rhode Island State House.

Commission members present:

Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea, Chairperson  
Mary Ann Snider, RI Department of Education, Vice Chairperson  
Keith Stokes, Mayforth Group  
Julia Jordan-Zachery, Providence College  
Valerie Tutson, RI Black Storytellers  
Theresa Moore, T-Time Productions  
Joanna Doherty, RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission  
Edward Sanderson, RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission  
Joyce Stevos, RI Black Heritage Society  
Rochelle Lee  
Mary Gwann  
Geraldyn Ducady, Haffenreffer Museum, Brown University  
Paul Gaines, Jr., Retired Educator

Commission members absent:

Elyssa Tardiff  
Barrymore Bogues  
Marcia Ranglin-Vassell

Staff present:

Melissa Long, Deputy Secretary of State, Director of Administration  
Ken Carlson, Reference Archivist  
Tom Evans, State Librarian  
Jason Martiesian, Director of Legislative Affairs  
Andy Andrade, Rhode Island Department of Education

Guests:

There were no guests in attendance.

I. Welcome & Introductions

Secretary Gorbea called the meeting to order at 11:20 a.m.

II. Purpose of the Commission

Secretary of State Gorbea opened the meeting by asking the members their goals for the commission. Many of the responses focused on the importance of teaching African American history comprehensively and not simply one month during the year.

In addition, the importance of making the curriculum relevant to both students and teachers so there is an interest in the subject matter. It is critical that the teachers are included in the process so that this curriculum is not seen as a burden but as a benefit to the education of the students.

Also, incorporating technology into the learning and teaching curriculum should be a focal point of the commission's work. Technology can assist in bringing the curriculum to the students in exciting and innovative ways to improve the learning experience. The Department of Education has a new technology platform and teacher resource library.

Rhode Island is fortunate to have an abundance of primary and secondary source information on African American history however we do not make it available as much as we should. Our state has the potential to be a national model in the teaching of African heritage and history.

No votes were taken.

### III. Discuss Work Plan

There was discussion of the legislative deadlines included in the extension resolution passed earlier this legislative session. The commission is charged with reporting back to the legislature by August 1, 2015 with the commission expiring October 15, 2015.

The Commission discussed using the following foundational pieces for the curriculum:

1. Making clear connections to existing RI Standards;
2. Building educator knowledge through pre-service or in-service training; and
3. Integrating social media and technology.

The commission can find some guidance and assistance in developing the curriculum from what other states have developed. It was suggested that the Rhode Island Foundation could be contacted to possibly underwrite the process for curriculum development.

Secretary Gorbea stated that between now and August 1, 2015 the commission would get together to discuss and agree upon the standards to build the curriculum on. The Secretary suggested the possibility of holding a three hour retreat.

A sub-committee was formed to shape the work of the commission. The sub-committee is comprised of the following:

Rochelle Lee  
Mary Gwann  
Geraldyn Ducady  
Valerie Tutson  
Theresa Moore  
Julia Jordan-Zachery  
Mary Ann Snider  
Keith Stokes

There was discussion around documenting what information already is available and how to collect this information.

Keith Stokes put together a timeline of African American history that he will distribute for the potential to be a guide in the commission's work.

No votes were taken.

IV. Public Comment

No public comment.

V. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:17 p.m.

Hand-outs:

2014 – H.7490, Substitute A – Creating a Special Legislative Commission to be known as “The 1696 Historical Commission” of Rhode Island and the United States

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText14/HouseText14/H7490A.pdf>

2014 – S.2418, Substitute A - Creating a Special Legislative Commission to be known as “The 1696 Historical Commission” of Rhode Island and the United States

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText14/SenateText14/S2418A.pdf>

2015 – S.0079 – Extending the reporting and expiration dates of the Special Legislative Commission to be known as “The 1696 Historical Commission” of Rhode Island and the United States

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText15/SenateText15/S0079.pdf>

General Assembly Press Release – “Assembly OKs bill to develop curriculum for teaching African-American history in public schools”

<http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/pressrelease/layouts/RIL.PressRelease.ListStructure/Forms/DisplayForm.aspx?List=c8baae31-3c10-431c-8dcd-9dbbe21ce3e9&ID=9948>

RI Black Heritage Society and RI Historical Society exhibit flyer “Black Education in Rhode Island”

**1696 Historical Commission Subcommittee Meeting**  
**Wednesday, July 15, 2015**  
**9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**  
**Rhode Island State House**  
**Room 203**

**Agenda**

- I. Welcome
  
- II. Develop Commission Work Plan
  - Discuss Curriculum Consultant
  
- III. Public Comment
  
- IV. Adjourn

The State House is accessible to persons with disabilities. Spanish translation services will be available at the meeting. Individuals who do not speak English or Spanish languages or who are hearing impaired may contact Betty Sepe by phone at (401) 222-2357 or email at [bsepe@sos.ri.gov](mailto:bsepe@sos.ri.gov) to request an interpreter.

Si esta información es necesaria en otro idioma, llame al (401) 222-2357.

Se esta informacao e neccessario emu ma outro lingua, contate por favor (401) 222-2357.

Secretary of State, Room 217, State House, Providence, RI 02903