

STATE OF MAINE

—
**IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND AND TWELVE**
—

**JOINT RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE MAINE STATE
MUSEUM AND PARTNERS FOR MOUNTING THE EXHIBIT
"MALAGA ISLAND, FRAGMENTED LIVES"**

WHEREAS, Malaga Island is a small, rugged island of less than one square mile situated in Casco Bay off the shores of the Town of Phippsburg and the Town of Harpswell; and

WHEREAS, from the 1860s to 1912, Malaga Island was home to a mixed-race Maine community of people of primarily Scottish, Irish, English, Native American and African American ancestry struggling to survive as boatmen, fishermen, carpenters and laundresses, as did many rural islanders of that era; and

WHEREAS, because of changes in the coastal economy, concerns that local taxpayers might become burdened by alleged "chronic pauperism" and statements made by the now-disgraced eugenics movement that claimed poverty and intemperance were genetic traits due to "impure blood," residents of Malaga Island were viewed by some Maine people with suspicion and disdain; and

WHEREAS, in 1911, amid such tensions, Governor Frederick Plaisted and his executive council led an expedition to investigate conditions on Malaga Island and subsequently paid \$417.00 to clear title to the island in the name of the State of Maine, which took possession of the island; and

WHEREAS, in 1912 the State of Maine evicted all Malaga Island residents from their homes, paying token sums for the homes, ordered the Malaga Island schoolhouse, wharves and houses removed or destroyed, dug up the island graveyard, jumbling all remains into common caskets where the deceased of Malaga Island lie in mixed graves to this day, and forcibly relocated 8 islanders to the Maine School for the Feeble-Minded at Pownal, where some spent the rest of their lives; and

WHEREAS, with Malaga Island deserted and the islanders dispersed or institutionalized, for 100 years the true story of Malaga Island disappeared into mystery and myth, a half-remembered legend deeply tinged with heartbreak, loss and shame, rarely referred to openly even by the scattered descendants of the islanders themselves; and

WHEREAS, in 2001, the Maine Coast Heritage Trust purchased Malaga Island, and it now serves as a nature preserve, a University of Southern Maine archaeological site, a landmark on the Maine Freedom Trail and a place of education, reflection and renewal; and

WHEREAS, in 2010 the One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Legislature, on behalf of the people of Maine, recognized with profound regret the tragic displacement of the Malaga Island residents in 1912; and

WHEREAS, on September 12, 2010 Governor John E. Baldacci met publicly on Malaga Island with descendants of the displaced islanders to acknowledge and repudiate the shameful eviction of their ancestors; and

WHEREAS, the Maine State Museum is constructing an exhibit, "Malaga Island, Fragmented Lives," scheduled for public viewing from May 19, 2012 to May 26, 2013, offering a factual history of this extinct community through contemporary photographs, news stories and individual statements by former residents, and through the archaeological remains of the possessions of some households; and

WHEREAS, this exhibit and related educational programs are funded in large part by private foundation gifts and based on research by museum staff and the work of many partners, including living descendants of the Malaga Island community; the Maine Coast Heritage Trust; the archaeology program at the University of Southern Maine; the NAACP Portland Branch; Maine Freedom Trails, Inc.; the Phippsburg Historical Society; the creators of the radio documentary, "Malaga Island: A Story Best Left Untold"; and numerous individual researchers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That We, the Members of the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Legislature now assembled in the Second Regular Session, on behalf of the people we represent, recognize with pride and hope for the future the extraordinary joint efforts of many people and institutions that will culminate in the historical exhibit, "Malaga Island, Fragmented Lives," and related educational programs; and be it further

RESOLVED: That suitable copies of this resolution, duly authenticated by the Secretary of State, be transmitted to the Maine State Museum, the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, the University of Southern Maine, the NAACP Portland Branch, the Phippsburg Historical Society, the 1772 Foundation, the Davis Family Foundation and the Emanuel & Pauline A. Lerner Foundation.