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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, James Marion Sims developed pioneering tools and surgical techniques related to women's reproductive health, including a surgical technique to repair vesicovaginal fistula, and is credited as the "father of modern gynecology"; the 19th-century physician has been lionized with statues in New York City, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania; and

8

WHEREAS, Because James Sims conducted his research on enslaved black women without anesthesia, medical ethicists, historians, and others have called for those monuments to be removed or to be reconfigured as tributes to the enslaved women known to have endured his experiments, whose stories have been erased from history; and

14

WHEREAS, James Sims believed that black people didn't experience pain like white people, and that African Americans were less intelligent than white people; his medical practice was rooted in the slave trade; he built an eight-person hospital in the heart of the slave-trading district in Montgomery, and while most healthcare took place on the plantations, some cases were brought to doctors like Sims who treated slaves so they could continue to reproduce for their masters; and

1           WHEREAS, In 1845, James Sims began experimenting with  
2 surgical techniques to treat vesicovaginal fistula, a  
3 condition with no known cure, and for a long time, his  
4 surgeries were not successful; based on James Sims's medical  
5 records, the names of three of the female patients are now  
6 known, Lucy, Anarcha, and Betsey; the first one he operated on  
7 was 18-year-old Lucy, who had given birth a few months prior;  
8 she endured an hour-long surgery without anesthesia, during  
9 which she screamed and cried out in pain as nearly a dozen  
10 other doctors watched; it took her two to three months to  
11 entirely recover from the effects of the operation; after 30  
12 operations and four years of experimentation on 17-year-old  
13 Anarcha, an enslaved woman who had a very traumatic labor and  
14 delivery, he finally perfected his method; afterward, he began  
15 to practice on white women, using anesthesia; and

16           WHEREAS, In 1850, James Sims moved to New York and opened  
17 the first-ever Women's Hospital, where he continued testing  
18 controversial medical treatments on his patients; when any of  
19 his patients died, he placed blame on the "ignorance of their  
20 mothers and the black midwives who attended them"; he did not  
21 believe anything was wrong with his methods, and these beliefs  
22 affected more than his gynecological experiments; he also  
23 tested surgical treatments on enslaved black children in an  
24 effort to treat "trismus nascentium," or neonatal tetanus, with  
25 little to no success; and

1           WHEREAS, Today, James Marion Sims continues to loom large  
2           in the medical field and is celebrated as a medical  
3           trailblazer; currently, two of his statues remain, one in South  
4           Carolina and one outside of his old medical school; therefore,  
5           be it

6           RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE  
7           HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
8           we oppose honoring James Sims or anyone who supports racist  
9           ideology.