

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN

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Installing an Educational Plaque at Bruce's Beach

Bruce's Beach park in Manhattan Beach is a scenic plot of green grass with a beautiful view of the ocean and easy access to the Manhattan Beach strand and the beach. Many local residents, Los Angeles County visitors, and tourists from far away enjoy this park, but they likely don't know the troubling history behind it. In the 1920s, the land was the site of a small African American enclave in Manhattan Beach that centered around a resort owned by Willa and Charles Bruce, colloquially referred to as "Bruce's Beach," that welcomed Black patrons, who were restricted from accessing other public beaches, from all over Southern California to enjoy a day at the beach. This successful business, as well as the African American patrons, faced the ire of surrounding white neighbors, and the Manhattan Beach City Council, motivated by racism, used its power of eminent domain to condemn the property and force the Bruces and four other Black families who developed land in the vicinity (the Patterson, Sanders, Johnson, and Prioleau families) to relocate. Nearly a century later, this history was brought into the public discourse during the 2020 Juneteenth Celebration hosted by the local Anti-Racist

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Movement organization. Many local residents who had previously been unaware of the negative history behind the park began demanding that something be done to recognize and address it.

The Manhattan Beach Bruce's Beach History Advisory Board diligently researched the history of Bruce's Beach and came up with proposed language to include on informational panels. They hosted multiple public meetings to gather input, gathered photographs to accompany the history, and went through multiple renditions of proposed language. Since the property that once belonged to Willa and Charles Bruce currently belongs to Los Angeles County, the County is in the position to install an educational panel on the very land that was once the location of the Bruce's Beach resort. The panel would be accessible to people strolling along the strand, visiting the park, exercising at the nearby outdoor gym, or just enjoying a day at the beach. Although we cannot change what happened in the past to Willa and Charles Bruce, we can keep their legacy alive by sharing their story and ensuring that the racism they faced does not get erased or white-washed. Understanding our history is an important first step to addressing the wrongs of the past and moving forward together.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Internal Services Department to collaborate with the Fire Department, Department of Beaches and Harbor, the Chief Executive Office's Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) Initiative, and all other relevant departments to pursue erecting an educational panel (or panels) on the County-owned property nearby the historic site of Bruce's Beach detailing the history of the land, and to work with the former members of the Manhattan Beach Bruce's Beach History Advisory Board on the proper language and design of the panel/s.

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