

Resolution of Apology

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH ACKNOWLEDGING AND APOLOGIZING FOR HISTORIC RACIALLY EXCLUSIONARY POLICIES AND PRACTICES AND COMMITTING TO REDRESSING THE ENDURING NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF RACIAL EXCLUSION

The City Council of the City of Manhattan Beach does hereby resolve and order as follows:

Section 1. Racism and its Effects

- A. Racism is deeply ingrained in American society and has been since its founding, and continues to this day to undermine Black Americans and other communities of color. Historically and through to the current day, systemic racism limits Black Americans' access to wealth accumulation, employment, housing, healthcare, equally funded education, justice, and beyond.
- B. Racist practices in our country and community, both overtly adopted and exercised in the guise of legitimate policy, have formed a complex system of racially motivated discrimination against Black Americans and other persons of color, resulting in economic, educational, criminal justice, and health adversities.
- C. By this Resolution, the City of Manhattan Beach formally recognizes, acknowledges and regrets the institutionalization of racism that led to past injustices within this community. This acknowledgement is the first step in a formal apology, and its journey to becoming an anti-racist community that promotes equality and rejects racism and racial inequities.
- D. To heal and continue to evolve into a city of inclusion, the City of Manhattan Beach must redress the wrongs of its past. An apology has important symbolic value, but is incomplete without City leadership spearheading meaningful efforts to model core values and address persistent racial disparities and discrimination in our community.
- E. We as a community are better when we are all treated fairly, inclusively, and equitably, with respectful and socially just policies.

Section 2. Racism in Manhattan Beach: Bruce's Beach to Today

- A. During the years from 1912 to 1927, an emerging Black neighborhood took hold in the vicinity of Highland Avenue, the Strand, 26th Street, and 27th Street. Roughly a half dozen Black families purchased property in the neighborhood as residences or visitor-serving businesses, including Willa and Charles A. Bruce, Major George Prioleau and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, Milton and Anna Johnson, John McCaskill and Elisa L. Irvin, and James and Lulu Slaughter.
- B. Willa and Charles A. Bruce established a resort known as Bruce's Beach, with a restaurant, dancehall, changing rooms, and showers. Bruce's Beach became a popular destination for Black Americans from the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area to recreate and enjoy the City's beautiful beach and ocean.
- C. Beginning in 1912, historians have documented that both the Black homeowners and visitors to this neighborhood suffered intimidation, harassment, and discrimination on the basis of their race by Manhattan Beach government officials, the police department, members of a South Bay chapter of the Ku Klux Klan, and other white residents. These acts consisted of:
- (i) Unknown persons setting residences on fire and causing other forms of property damage;
 - (ii) Unknown persons letting out the air from tires of vehicles owned by Black visitors;
 - (iii) An adjacent property owner cordoning off property so as to force Black beachgoers to walk one-half mile from this neighborhood to access the ocean;
 - (iv) The City Council enacting ordinances sharply limiting the creation of new bathhouses and other visitor-serving facilities in direct response to the popularity of Bruce's Beach among the Black American community; and
 - (v) The City endeavouring to privatize the beach by entering into a sham lease of the adjacent beach with a white property owner in order to exclude Black Americans, and then causing its police department to arrest Black Americans (and only Black Americans) who ventured onto the beach.
- D. The purpose of these racially motivated actions was to make Manhattan Beach inhospitable to Black American residents and visitors. Manhattan Beach

residents at the time are on record expressing concern over the effect a Black population in Manhattan Beach would have on property values.

- E. When the acts of intimidation and harassment prior to 1924 did not have the desired effect of excluding Black Americans from the community, white residents, including realtors and civic leaders, pressured and persuaded the City Council to exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire the land for use as a public park. The park was not needed or important to the City; the land remained largely undeveloped for the next 30 years, and has remained unimproved in comparison to other city park land.
- F. The end result of the foregoing actions was to snuff out a flourishing Black American-owned business, which may have impacted Manhattan Beach's future demographics and contributed to a lack of diversity within the community. According to the 2010 census, Black Americans represent 0.8% of the total population of Manhattan Beach.
- G. In subsequent years, Black residents and visitors in the city have regularly reported instances of racial profiling and harassment committed by community residents and the Manhattan Beach Police Department.
- H. Continuing to this day, Black Americans continue to suffer the effects of racial discrimination when renting or purchasing property in the City of Manhattan Beach.
- I. As recently as 2015, an unknown person set fire to the home of a Black family, the culmination of a series of acts of vandalism on their property. An FBI investigation officially ruled the incident a hate crime.

Section 3. Apology

The City of Manhattan Beach formally apologizes for and condemns:

- A. The racially motivated, discriminatory and exclusionary aspects of the City's history and the resultant duress suffered by Black residents and visitors who were impacted by racist acts and City policies and practices.
- B. The role that the City itself played by tolerating racial discrimination and harassment by City residents that went unpunished, causing terror and intimidation among the Black community.
- C. The role that the City played conspiring to exclude Black Americans from its beach and utilizing its police force to enforce such exclusion by way of unlawful and unconstitutional arrests and prosecutions.

- D. The role that the City played enacting facially neutral ordinances with the well-documented intention to discourage the expansion of Black owned commercial hospitality enterprises and to stymie the increasing popularity of the City as a recreation destination for Black Americans in the greater Los Angeles area.
- E. The role that the City played, acquiescing to public pressure by pretextually exercising its powers of eminent domain, to dispossess Willa and Charles A. Bruce, Major George and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, and Milton and Anna Johnson of their rightful property, thereby eradicating a lively and growing Black American neighborhood.
- F. The misuse of government power towards Willa and Charles A. Bruce, Major George and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, and Milton and Anna Johnson. The City directly apologizes to these former property owners for unjustly depriving them of their property without a legitimate public purpose, as is required by the constitution.
- G. The resulting culture of exclusion that discouraged other Black families and families of color from making their home in Manhattan Beach, thereby contributing to calcified economic disadvantage and depriving them of the resources of the City of Manhattan Beach. The long-lasting consequence of this exclusion harmed those it indirectly discouraged and directly ejected from Manhattan Beach, as well as the city's existing residents and visitors.
- H. The City's delay of an overdue reckoning of racial injustice in our community, to the detriment of generations of Manhattan Beach residents.

Section 4. Redress

- A. The City Council pledges as a core value to reject racism and racial inequities in all forms by promoting and sustaining racial equity and justice, and by ensuring anti-racist principles and practices across leadership, staffing, and contracting.
- B. The City Council will review and revise policies, procedures, ordinances, values, goals, and missions through an anti-racism lens in an effort to promote racial equity, and end discrimination and harassment toward any person or group based on race or ethnicity.
- C. The City Council will implement the recommendations of the Bruce's Beach Task Force set forth in its Progress Report dated March 13, 2021 and consider ongoing recommendations put forth by the Task Force.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this __ day of _____, 2021.

MAYOR

Attest:

City Clerk