

Co-Chair Stern's Alternative Resolution of Apology

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH ACKNOWLEDGING AND APOLOGIZING FOR THE CITY'S ROLE IN THE RACIALLY MOTIVATED CONDEMNATION OF PROPERTIES IN THE AREA KNOWN AS BRUCE'S BEACH AND TO COMMITTING TO PROMOTING RACIAL EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

The City Council of the City of Manhattan Beach does hereby find as follows:

A. During the years from 1912 to 1927, in and around the area bordered by Highland Avenue, the Strand, 26th Street, and 27th Street, seven 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, and other white residents. These acts consisted of:

- a. Unknown persons setting Black residences and a cross on the hill above one residence on fire and causing other forms of property damage;
- b. Unknown persons letting out the air from tires of vehicles owned by Black visitors;
- c. Adjacent property owners cordoning off property so as to force Black beachgoers to walk one-half mile from this neighborhood to access the ocean and placing false limits on time allowed for local parking spots.
- d. 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
- e. The City endeavoring 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 its power of eminent domain to acquire the land as a pretext for use as a public park. The land was not developed as a park for approximately 30 years.

F. The City condemned properties included those of Black property owners Willa and Charles A. Bruce, Major George Prioleau and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, Milton and Anna Johnson. Twenty-five other properties owned by ten White property owners were also condemned as part of the action. The only seized properties with structures on them belonged to black families.

G. As a result of the racially motivated condemnation proceedings undertaken by the City, a flourishing Black American-owned business was closed and a burgeoning Black neighborhood was scattered. This action, together with the now illegal practices of red-lining and racially restrictive property covenants, contributed to a lack of diversity within the community.

Now, therefore be it resolved that the City of Manhattan Beach formally apologizes for:

A. The City's racially motivated and discriminatory condemnation action to dispossess Willa and Charles A. Bruce, Major George and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, Milton and Anna Johnson of their rightful property. The City directly apologizes to these former property owners for unjustly taking their property under false pretenses.

B. The role that the City 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 in the 1920's, and the effect it had, to discourage Black Americans from living, owning a business and visiting Manhattan Beach which contributed to limiting Black Americans' access to wealth accumulation, employment, housing, healthcare, and equally funded education.

F. The City's overdue recognition of these events to the detriment of generations of Manhattan Beach residents.

The City Council hereby:

- A. Apologizes for such history which included racially motivated policies.
- B. Pledges to actively participate in confronting, and standing up against, racism, hate, intolerance and exclusion in our community.
- C. Pledges to promote racial equality and inclusion in city leadership, staffing, contracting, training, policy making and ordinances.
- D. Pledges to continue to seek opportunities for education and advise on issues of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

We remain committed to these principles as a community, in deeds as well as words. We don't seek to condemn or divide, rather, we seek understanding and healing. An apology can't change the events of one hundred years ago, nor are today's residents responsible for the past actions of others. However, we offer this apology as a foundational act for Manhattan Beach's next one hundred years and the actions we will take together to Stand Up against prejudice and hate, and to foster a community where all are welcome and treated with respect, fairness, trust and empathy.