

To the Washington Grove Town Council

I have been a Washington Grove resident for 34 years, and have raised three daughters in this community. As a member of Washington Grove United Methodist church, I have had the opportunity to participate in joint discussions and events over the years with Emory Grove UMC. With the murder of George Floyd, there arose among many a plea to remember that “Black Lives Matter”, and to understand what that really means in terms of systemic racism in our past and present world. Young people that grew up in Washington Grove started RASEC, the Racial and Social Equity Committee, to address all the many facets of community life that affect racial and social justice. At the same time, Gretchen and I joined a community group lead by Rev. Timothy Warner of Emory Grove UMC, called “The Montgomery County Coalition for Racial Justice”, and participated in a subgroup called “Learning to be Antiracist Together”. In the group, we had extensive reading and discussions in which we learned much about the history and current effects of racism on folks that we have gotten to know closely.

I joined a RASEC working group formed to work on a proposed racial equity statement for the town. Upon researching this topic, I learned that a statement alone was deemed hollow and meaningless unless it was accompanied by some serious reflection on the past. I found examples where a statement was accompanied by a resolution or other statement of apology, and that this has been an essential part of reconciliation. Presidents Reagan, Clinton, Bush, and Obama have all done apologies to harmed groups, and we are all familiar with the Truth and Reconciliation work in South Africa. Canada’s apology for the ‘Head Tax’ is yet another model.

In researching Washington Grove’s history with regard to race, I was saddened to see how white supremacy reigned in this community for so long. From racial covenants, to blackface minstrel shows, to restricted access, equal pay issues, as well as from so many failures to take positive actions where such actions could have promoted racial equity, it is a fraught past. This was compounded by hearing accounts from folks in the Emory Grove community. RASEC and Emory Grove organized a history walk in June 2022 from Emory Grove to Washington Grove as an opportunity to share between the communities, attended by around 100 people. I learned so much that I did not know about the rich history of Emory Grove. But the most profound moment for me was when we reached Boundary St, we were stopped by Richard Taylor, who recounted that when he was growing up, “Boundary St. meant that if you’re black, you are not welcome here”. He described what that meant for him, and others that had grown up in Emory Grove echoed his sentiments.

We need to learn of the wrongs committed in our community and as a community apologize for those wrongs. While today’s residents were not the ones who participated in actions long ago, in many ways, we are still connected to those wrongs. We live in cottages built with underpaid black labor, we live in homes that had racial covenants, we use our historical status to gain advantages without having acknowledged the oppression that is also part of our history. We see that harm has been done here, and there needs to be a reckoning and apology for that harm.

The Resolution is an opportunity for the Town to start getting on the right path of racial equity. The Resolution is long, and I wish it were shorter, but the harms done were many, and we can have the character to take the time to do this right. By doing so, it will be a reminder so that any time something comes up in the town’s future, an extra measure of consideration will be given to racial justice impacts and we can continue on a commitment to do better. I am excited about the building of a new

community in Emory Grove, and look forward to what can be accomplished when we are on the right footing looking to a just future.

Sincerely,

Dick Cavicchi

127 Grove Ave

Washington Grove, MD