

Resolution

Acknowledging Washington Grove's Racially Exclusionary Past

WHEREAS, racial disparities have existed in America for centuries, to the detriment of Black communities and people of color, and persist across wealth, health, education, the criminal justice system, and beyond; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Washington Grove is committed to honestly and directly undoing, where it exists and for which it has authority and responsibility as a municipal government, the effects of systemic racism, bias, discrimination, and inequities that impact the quality of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for Washington Grove residents and our neighbors; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Public Health Association (APHA) has declared racism a serious public health threat [1]; and

WHEREAS, Montgomery County has determined that racism is a public health crisis in Montgomery County that affects all members of our community and deserves action from all levels of government and civil society [2]; and

WHEREAS Maryland, Montgomery County, and the Town of Washington Grove were locations where Jim Crow racist policies were widely in force, and the legacy of institutional racism continues to be the cause of disparities in income, wealth, and opportunity for African Americans [3-5]; and

WHEREAS, African Americans (especially from the nearby community of Emory Grove) were employed in Washington Grove and paid wages lower than those of white people for equivalent work [6]; and

WHEREAS this standard applied to the segregated schools in Montgomery County, where for decades teachers at the substandard 'colored' school called "Washington Grove" (known also informally as "Emory Grove") – were paid less than half what equivalently experienced and credentialed white teachers were paid at the white school Washington Grove children attended [7]; and

WHEREAS substandard segregated 'colored' schools hindered African American students' pace of advancement and contributed to lower intergenerational mobility compared to white students [4]; and

WHEREAS at its founding the Town of Washington Grove specified that homes adopt racially restrictive covenants and deed restrictions that kept African Americans and other marginalized communities from purchasing property in Washington Grove, and that homes in Washington Grove continued to adopt such covenants into the 1950s [8]; and

WHEREAS these pay discrepancies and ownership restrictions have been contributing factors in the lower wages, lower ownership rates, smaller inheritance values of estates, and dramatically lower generational family wealth of African Americans [9]; and

WHEREAS Washington Grove practiced race-based exclusionary policies, such as rejecting a theater group's application to use its auditorium because the theatre group would not agree to excluding African Americans from attendance at its shows and accepting Washington Grove's train station that required African Americans to use a separate area [10]; and

WHEREAS Washington Grove sought to restrict access by others in the camp meeting era, closing its gate in 1897 to African Americans attending the camp meeting in Emory Grove so that people traveling to or from Emory Grove were forced to walk in the road on Washington Grove Lane and, from 1972-1980, prevented the county from construction of a sidewalk on the Washington Grove section, so that the county sidewalk ended at the border of the town contributing to an unwelcoming stance toward neighbors [11]; and

WHEREAS for decades Washington Grove was widely known for its annual parade and minstrel shows in which performers adopted 'blackface' costumes which disregarded the dignity of and mocked African Americans, and ignored the damaging history of slavery [12]; and

WHEREAS, Washington Grove understands the importance of examining its role in institutional racism, both historically and currently, and is ready to embark on a journey towards racial equity; and

WHEREAS, Washington Grove believes in and strives to live by values of inclusion, equity and justice, and unequivocally condemns Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, racism, sexism, xenophobia and bigotry of any kind in rhetoric or in action; and

WHEREAS, Washington Grove welcomes all people and recognizes the rights of individuals to live their lives with dignity, free from discrimination based on their religion, spirituality or belief, race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or immigration status; and

WHEREAS Washington Grove envisions a Town that fosters diversity, equity, and inclusion;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF WASHINGTON GROVE does hereby resolve, declare, and determine, as follows:

(A) The Mayor and Town Council of Washington Grove acknowledge, apologize for, and condemn all racially-motivated, discriminatory, or exclusionary aspects of the Town's history, and deeply regret the pain, hurt, and suffering that has been caused; and

(B) The Mayor and Town Council of Washington Grove and its representatives will continue to engage in individual and collective work to understand bias; and

(C) The Mayor and Town Council of Washington Grove will continue to examine any policies or practices that may have the effect of being racially biased or harmful, and to foster an unbiased and inclusive environment that is free of discrimination and harassment toward any person or group; and

(D) The Mayor and Town Council of Washington Grove and their representatives shall treat all persons in a fair, equitable and objective manner, without consideration of their race ethnicity, national origin, gender, religious dress, ability or disability or other individual characteristics; and

(E) The Mayor and Town Council of Washington Grove and their representatives will promote inclusion and equity, and will stand up to bigotry, hatred, intolerance, racism, and violence; and

(F) The Mayor and Town Council of Washington Grove and their representatives will work to support ties with neighboring communities, especially Emory Grove, and consider the welfare of our neighbors and work with our neighbors in policies or decisions that the Town advances so that the results are to the benefit of all: and

(G) The Mayor and Town Council of Washington Grove unequivocally reject racism in all its forms and are committed to working towards building an antiracist Washington Grove where people of all races and cultural backgrounds are welcome to live and prosper.

Adopted this ____ day of _____, 2023.

Proposed Statement for the Town web page:

"The Town of Washington Grove acknowledges [*\(link to Town Resolution\)*](#) the effects of generational and institutional racism, and its consequences that continue to impact people today. These lessons of our history cannot be ignored. The Town is committed to advancing racial equity and social diversity to improve the wellbeing of people who live, work, play, and do business in our Town, by:

"1) identifying and rectifying the policies, practices, and behaviors that perpetuate racism, discrimination, and other negative racial-based outcomes and

"2) cultivating an inclusive and fair environment where all people in Washington Grove and also our neighbors, thrive in the areas of health, economic vitality, and connectedness."

References

- [1] Media Statement from CDC Director Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH, on Racism and Health, April 8 2021 <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s0408-racism-health.html>
- [2] Press release-Montgomery County Council June 16, 2020 https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=25454&Dept=1
- [3] Eugene L. Meyer, "A Shameful Past" Bethesda Magazine March 29, 2021 updated April 5, 2021 <https://bethesdamagazine.com/2021/03/29/a-shameful-past/>
- [4]William J. Collins and Marianne H. Wanamaker "Up from slavery? African American intergenerational economic mobility since 1880" June 13 2017 <http://equitablegrowth.org/working-papers/African-American-intergenerational-mobility/>
- [5] Thomas N. Maloney, "African Americans in the Twentieth Century" African Americans in the Twentieth Century (eh.net) <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/african-americans-in-the-twentieth-century>
- [6] For example, in 1914, J. H. Nugent was paid \$1.50 per full day's work which included human waste collection from residents of Washington Grove. R. Shantz "Grove Gatherings" Wheaton Print Shop 1975 p. 44-45, also for people employed from Emory Grove see page 63 and 104-105 for photos.
- [7] Nina H. Clarke and Lillian B. Brown, "History of the Black Schools in Montgomery County", MD 1872-1961, , Vantage Press, 1978 p. 34. In 1937 the Montgomery County teacher pay disparity was successfully contested in Gibbs vs Broome, Thurgood Marshall's first breakthrough case which set the stage for Brown vs. Board of Education 1954 (p.50-55). Substandard conditions are discussed throughout this book, including a 1912 survey on page 36, "nearly all of the colored schools are in a more or less dilapidated condition" and goes on to list problems with heating, lighting, seating, instructional materials, water supply, and unsanitary toilets. Also for an updated listing and history of black schools, see Ralph D. Buglass and Sharyn R. Duffin, https://mchdr.montgomeryhistory.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.12366/461/Buglass_Segregated-Schools-of-MontgomeryCounty_2021.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y accessed Nov 16, 2022.
- [8] Philip K. Edwards, "Washington Grove 1873-1937" Independently published, 1988 p. 336 -337. In 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Shelley v. Kraemer that racial covenants prohibiting the sale of real estate to blacks and other minorities are unconstitutional. Nonetheless many covenants remained in deeds, and were honored in spirit if not in law as

redlining and other restrictive practices emerged: Sarah Shoenfeld and Mara Cherkasky, <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/racially-restrictive-covenants-bloomington/> April 03, 2019.

[9] The black-white economic gap remains as wide as in 1968 - The Washington Post <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/06/04/economic-divide-black-households/>

[10] Philip K. Edwards, "Washington Grove 1937-1977" Independently published, 1999 p. 78-84, P.K. Edwards "Washington Grove 1873-1937" p. 187

[11] Philip K. Edwards, "Washington Grove 1873-1937" Independently published, 1988 p. 137 and P.K. Edwards "Washington Grove 1937-1977" Independently published, 1999 238-239, 273-274, and describing the personal experiences of African Americans walking along Washington Grove Lane: "'Boundary St meant to stay out if you were black" Oral history, Richard Tyler and others, Emory Grove Washington Grove walking tour, June 5 2022, filmed by Yvette Gause, accessed on Facebook June 6 2022.

[12] Example news articles include The Sunday Star Aug 14 1910 "A large audience in the big auditorium...visitors from all parts of the county attended"; Washington Herald, Sept 3, 1911; Washington Herald, Sept 1, 1912 "Prior to the show the minstrel troupe paraded through the Grove...the performance opened with a chorus by the circle of more than thirty black faces"; The Sunday Star Aug 1 1912; Evening Star Sept 3, 1913 including the racist song "When Uncle Joe Plays a Rag"; The Sunday Star Sept 5 1915 "the company, consisting of thirty-seven minstrels, spared no efforts to make the event a big success"; The Sentinel June 24,1927 "The Washington Grove Band will give a minstrel and concert in the Germantown Hall" <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> Also, describing a photo in the Washington Grove archives of "A formal portrait of the performers (about 40), most dressed in white pants and shirts with bow ties and their faces in "blackface": <https://washingtongrovemd.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/179191C1-99C8-4B7B-A59B-667833924430>

[Washington Grove Minstrel Show September 2, 1916 - September 2, 1916 | Town of Washington Grove \(pastperfectonline.com\)](https://washingtongrovemd.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/179191C1-99C8-4B7B-A59B-667833924430)