

Statement on Introduction of Resolution “Acknowledging Washington Grove’s Racially Exclusionary Past”

I am pleased to introduce this resolution acknowledging Washington Grove's racially exclusionary past and committing us to do better.

As described in the resolution, Washington Grove, like many towns in the United States, engaged in practices that intentionally barred people of color from our community life. It is time to publicly admit these failings, apologize for them, and pledge to do better today and in the future.

Why a resolution? We could leave this issue in the hands of the RASEC committee and let them continue their good work of providing educational workshops, walks, and opportunities to connect with our neighboring communities such as Emory Grove. As a Town we don't *have* to do anything.

But sometimes saying nothing really is saying something. If we are aware of racism and discrimination in our midst we have a responsibility to speak out against it. We cannot leave any doubt as to where we stand.

What about the fact that we ourselves did not participate in discriminatory acts? Isabel Wilkerson, in her book “Caste,” provides an answer:

We in the developed world are like homeowners who inherited a house on a piece of land that is beautiful on the outside, but whose soil is unstable loam and rock, heaving and contracting over generations, cracks patched but the deeper ruptures waved away for decades, centuries even. Many people may rightly say, “I had nothing to do with how this all started. I have nothing to do with the sins of the past. My ancestors never attacked indigenous people, never owned slaves.” And, yes. Not one of us was here when this house was built. Our immediate ancestors may have had nothing to do with it, but here we are, the current occupants of a property with stress cracks and bowed walls and fissures built into the foundation. We are the heirs to whatever is right or wrong with it. We did not erect the uneven pillars or joists, but they are ours to deal with now.

Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents* (2020), page 16.

I have spoken to many in Town – and I’m sure you have as well - who are ready to deal with these issues and are committed to making Washington Grove a more inclusive place.

I hope you will join me in moving this resolution forward.

Barbara Raimondo
Town Councilor
February 13, 2023