

To the Mayor and Town Council members:

We are writing to you with regard to the proposed resolution “Acknowledging Washington Grove’s Exclusionary Past.”

We feel it is essential that the town passes this resolution. It is a true and relatively complete acknowledgement of the actions or non-actions of the Washington Grove community which stain our history. Such an acknowledgement is necessary in order to declare a new path forward.

Our sister community, which bore the brunt of this racism, deserves a direct and honest acknowledgement. The documentation supporting it is very important, first, to make the statement meaningful to that community, and second, to ascertain that in the future, the truth of the past is not obscured. It is because things are forgotten, decade by decade, that so many in our country do not accept the fact of systemic and structural racism or think it is wildly exaggerated.

Yes, the resolution should include the years before the incorporation of the town. It is the same community. Those harmed, experienced the harm from the actions of “Washington Grove,” whether the Grove called itself an association or a town at the time. To only take responsibility for the history from 1937 on is certainly shirking reality.

One critic reacted to the proposed resolution as shaming the town. It does not. Shame conceals the past. To admit past wrongs shows pride in who we are today.

Please, as representatives of our town, help us take this important step. Help us reconcile our pride in our town with the reality of both its good and bad history. Let us take a step toward a time when Washington Grove might feel as comfortable for a Black American to call home as for anyone else.

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