

RASEC Resolution FAQs

The RASEC Leadership team (Paula Puglisi, Ted Stanhke, Dick Cavicchi, Chazz Wilson, Betsy Klinger) created this document to address concerns and questions about the resolution document put forth by RASEC.

What is systemic racism?

“Systemic racism is said to occur when racially unequal opportunities and outcomes are inbuilt or intrinsic to the operation of a society’s structures. Simply put, systemic racism refers to the processes and outcomes of racial inequality and inequity in life opportunities and treatment. Systemic racism permeates a society’s (a) institutional structures (practices, policies, climate), (b) social structures (state/federal programs, laws, culture), (c) individual mental structures (e.g., learning, memory, attitudes, beliefs, values), and (d) everyday interaction patterns (norms, scripts, habits). Systemic racism not only operates at multiple levels, it can emerge with or without animus or intention to harm and with or without awareness of its existence. Its power derives from its being integrated into a unified system of racial differentiation and discrimination that creates, governs, and adjudicates opportunities and outcomes across generations. Racism represents the biases of the powerful (Jones, 1971), as the biases of the powerless have little consequence (Fiske, 1993).”

Banaji MR, Fiske ST, Massey DS. *Systemic Racism: Individuals and Interactions, Institutions and Society*. Cogn Res Princ Implic. 2021 Dec 20;6(1):82. doi: 10.1186/s41235-021-00349-3. PMID: 34931287; PMCID: PMC8688641.

What is racial equity?

“Racial equity is a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color. <https://www.raceforward.org/about/what-is-racial-equity-key-concepts>”

What is antiracism?

These definitions come from respected resources.

"Antiracism is the **active process** of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably." (NAC International Perspectives: Women and Global Solidarity)

On being antiracist, Ibram X. Kendi, a prominent author and professor of history and international relations, tells us that it is not enough to simply say you are not racist. One must strive to be actively antiracist instead, through one's own thoughts, actions, and engagement with the world.

Does engaging in antiracism mean special treatment for individuals based on race?

No, it does not. Engaging in antiracism means acting to promote equity by changing systems, organizational structures, policies, practices, and attitudes. Applied to Maple Lake, antiracism does not mean going against town policies to allow people who are not part of the town to use the lake. It means equal enforcement of the associated policies for the lake. There should not be any differential treatment based on race for anyone. For example, if identification is required to use the lake, everyone’s id should

RASEC Resolution FAQs

be checked, not just those who people perceive to not be part of the town. Likewise, those who are perceived to belong should be required to show id since that is the policy in place.

Who are these apologies for?

We agree with what Blatz et al, 2009 wrote in the journal "Political Psychology" "a government apology is public and aimed at present and future audiences that include members of the non-victimized majority, as well as the previously victimized group. As some of these audiences may know little about the injustice, "everything counting as the apology must be spelled out; nothing can be taken for granted or remain ambiguous."

Why apologize for things done in the past? Why not just look forward?

Apologies by governments at all levels are a long-standing, normal, and ethical response to wrongs done. Examples of apologies by other town governments are available on the Town website and they follow this paragraph. In our research, we learned that a forward-looking statement alone was often received as hollow and meaningless without serious reflection on the past. Failing to deal with the past silences those who did and may still bear the brunt of those wrongs and communicates at the very least an indifference to their experience.

Glendale, CA resolution <https://justice.tougaloo.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/GlendaleResolution.pdf>

Goshen, IN resolution https://goshenindiana.org/media/uploads/0/9031_03-18-15-Council-Resolution.pdf

Why does the resolution cover the time period of the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association, since the Town was not directly responsible for those policies and actions?

Just as we celebrate a 150th anniversary that goes back to the start of the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association, this apology also goes back to that time. It is in the Washington Grove community where these things happened. 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 regardless of when it happened.

Why is it necessary to include information about racism and its impact in the broader society? Why not stick to the specific facts in Washington Grove?

By recognizing racism in larger societal structures beyond Washington Grove, we acknowledge that such racism was and remains harmful to those injured by the local actions in and by Washington Grove. We recognize the web that links local acts of racism to the nation's past and present. This recognition shows that we are aware of the cumulative effects of racism and white supremacy and that our focus is on those harmed and our contribution to that harm. We also recognize that inaction, living with racism and not doing anything about it, has also contributed to the harm. Similar clauses appear in other town's resolutions.

RASEC Resolution FAQs

Isn't it unfair to itemize events that occurred in WASHINGTON GROVE without acknowledging the context of the times and not considering the intentions of the individuals in Town?

It is not unfair.

The more we try to figure out people's intentions, the more we are deflecting from the actual issue at hand. The actions taken were intended to have an impact -- the racially restrictive covenants were designed to keep non-whites out; ending the sidewalk before reaching Washington Grove was designed to make it more difficult for neighboring residents to reach Washington Grove; rejecting the theater group's application was intended to ensure that theater shows would not be open to Black Americans. Regardless of whether or not these actions reflected broader attitudes in society at the time, or whether racial hatred was the primary motivation behind all of the individuals involved in making the decisions -- these practices excluded people on the basis of race and the harm from them was visited primarily on Black Americans. Focusing on the possible intentions of the white community once again places the hurt feelings of the dominant white culture above the pain inflicted on non-white people and marginalized communities whose actual lives were impacted for generations. This is the definition of white fragility. When WASHINGTON GROVE focuses on how we are reacting to hard, well-documented truths, we are continuing to inflict pain by insisting that we matter more than those who have been harmed, which is part of white supremacy whether conscious or unconscious.

Where can I find more information about Washington Grove history?

A particularly good resource to start with is the two-volume history of Washington Grove published by former mayor Phillip Edwards in 1988 and 1999, based on painstaking research in the Town Archives and vetted in detail by several community editors. Edwards did not shy away from the unpleasant part of the history and acknowledged institutional and other forms of racism when he saw it.

Shouldn't the Town adopt a Resolution which considers the opinions of all the residents?

Town residents' opinions are being considered. There was a public forum and opportunity for residents to add to the public record. However, leaders often adopt policies without unanimous agreement. Sometimes leaders must take that leap to truly lead and move the community forward.

Some Washington Grove residents recall positive interactions between residents from Washington Grove and Emory Grove. Why does the Resolution seem as if Washington Grove residents treated Emory Grove residents poorly?

Positive interactions, whether factual or as part of a façade, does not mean Emory Grove residents were not poorly treated. Perhaps guided by experiences of people choosing to be civil regardless of how they were being treated simply makes life easier. It is not an agreement. It's a practical approach to keeping the peace while trying to earn a living. However, the history of Washington Grove, is adequately documented with these factual accounts of this poor treatment of Emory Grove residents and African Americans: unequal wages, minstrel shows, segregation, exclusionary policies, racial covenants, and being listed as a sundown town, for example. More powerful examples include the testimony of those who have lived experience. During the walking tour on June 5 (Ref [11]) Emory Grove resident Richard Tyler stated, "Boundary St. meant to stay out if you were black" which was confirmed by others along the tour. Others such as Taurean Reign have discovered Washington Grove's past through research. He

RASEC Resolution FAQs

has talked about Washington Grove and read its racial covenants on YouTube, with over 1000 views as part of his Sundown [Town] series. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vse-EGHJOs>

Why are the charitable acts of Washington Grove towards Emory Grove being discounted?

Engaging in charitable activities does not negate racist acts against African Americans. Providing examples again centers the discussion on those who inflicted the harm instead of those who were impacted by these racist acts.

Workers were hired from Emory Grove, not because they could get cheaper help, but to offer them the financial advantage of employment. Even today many people in Town hire people of color for landscaping, domestic work, and care of our elderly. Is this inherently discriminatory today?

It is not in the hiring of people, but rather the unequal pay where the problem lies. This documented lack of equal pay across most classes of work is a significant reason that Emory Grove homes were not improved, and because of poor condition, justified the demolition of properties as part of the urban renewal that took place there. This constituted a real economic harm to our neighbors and displacement of some of the members of this community that is important for us to recognize, and that is still built into today's disparities.

Wasn't the "colored" school called Emory Grove, not Washington Grove? Since it was illegal for white children to attend "colored" schools and vice versa nationwide, why is this even mentioned in the Resolution?

It is correct that the official name of this school was, indeed, "Washington Grove", however, it was informally widely referred to as "Emory Grove". Regardless of the name, the inequities in the school systems are an example of the broader issues of school segregation which lasted in MD until 1954. We cannot ignore that fact or the legacy of harm that continues to the present. By not contesting the status quo, our community was complicit in the harm that was done.

From the beginning, Washington Grove has had a very strong musical tradition which included minstrel shows. Henry Louis Gates has acknowledged that the minstrel show for decades was the most popular form of local musical entertainment in the country. Why is Washington Grove singled out for this?

It is important that people know that the blackface minstrel shows of Washington Grove were well publicized as established by the newspaper clippings of the day, and contributed significantly to establishing the "whites only" nature of Washington Grove. Regardless of how popular the form was, it was racist and hurtful, and is something that needs to be recognized in our community and reckoned with. Henry Louis Gates has written "all along, the issue had been about the fabrication of hateful imagery in order to justify robbing black people of their dignity, their constitutional rights and their economic potential."

Why isn't blackface ok if African Americans are participating in events where this is present?

Blackface is a mockery of African Americans and their painful history. The imagery associated with this expression deeply rooted in the depiction of plantation slaves and blackface minimizes the terrible acts associated with this. The other issue of the day is that there was a power dynamic which resulted in few opportunities for African Americans to perform. This power dynamic allowed whites to create for

RASEC Resolution FAQs

themselves a "happy negro" myth, which in fact had no basis in reality. Additionally, using the example of African Americans who participated in racist acts as a way of denying or justifying racist acts, is unfortunately an all-too-common response that White people engage in.

Names were mentioned in the references. Washington Grove residents loved music and they were honorable and insisted on treating everyone with respect and kindness regardless of race. Why was their participation in musical events racist?

To clarify, regarding the mention of names, we would only say that again, names of Washington Grove residents are not mentioned in the resolution, nor the resolution reference list. The references from the newspapers of the day, for example, give not only names, but also give an indication of the popularity of the event, lists of songs sung, and other details. This is a part of the public record, and it is important that this history not be censored or sanitized. We must come to terms with the fact that songs that include lines like "Mammy waddles all around the cabin floor. Yelling Uncle Joe, gimme more, gimme more" were sung in our spaces. For our apology to be sincere we need to be fully cognizant that this happened here.

Why was the 1961 vote on the auditorium associated with racism?

In 1949, the Town Council of Washington Grove effectively stopped a proposed theatre project to go forward, saying "authority to use the auditorium be revoked at any time if the race segregation problem was not handled in accordance with the established exclusion policy of the town." This decision led in part to decreased use and ultimately the deterioration of the auditorium. By 1961 the auditorium was in such disrepair that a vote was taken which resulted in its demolition.

Why do the photos in the Town Hall and on the Town website show people walking through Washington Grove to the Emory Grove Camp Meeting? Edwards' book mentions a burglary as the reason for the 1897 gate closure. "

The order of events is important for this inquiry. The photos were taken before the gate closure, which happened in 1897. The burglaries being spoke of did take place and were committed by an Emory Grove resident. However, the arrest for the burglaries occurred in 1892, 5 years before the gate closure. It is unfortunate that the Edwards book forms a correlation between the burglaries and the closing of the gate, which has been used as an excuse to deflect responsibility for this inhospitable act toward Emory Grove camp meeting attendees. The use of "safety" to justify racist actions has been a common thread in history, even the racial covenants were expressed in terms of 'sanitation'. As a community we need to be aware of this history, so that in the future, we do not continue this practice going forward.

Why is it not acknowledged that some residents' family members were instrumental in the construction of a walkway along Washington Grove Lane to be used safely by Town residents and residents to the north of Town including Emory Grove?

Washington Grove resisted the County's effort to build the sidewalk, and for 10 years, the sidewalk ended at the boundary of Washington Grove. The factual account of this matter is told in Philip Edwards' book, which documents the history of Washington Grove. The Edwards book was fully reviewed by the family member in question as noted in the book's preface. Everything on the sidewalk issue in the reference document comes directly from the book, whose information comes from Town Archives.

RASEC Resolution FAQs

Does the resolution need to be so long and detailed?

The harms done were many over a long time. Not including specific details of what took place would have inevitably meant watering the resolution down or whittling it away, which is a form of gaslighting. If we are trying to build trust with neighboring communities, the whole truth must be acknowledged, and Washington Grove must hold itself accountable for the wrongdoings. The detail is an attempt to communicate humility, integrity, sincerity, and respect.

Why does the proposed resolution include footnotes?

The clauses in this resolution are supported by references so everyone can check for themselves their validity. The references also support the education of our community, so that folks can gain a greater understanding of the history. Children can learn and discuss these facts as they grow up and that will enhance their interest in exploring further the town's history as well as their understanding of the world.