

City of Manhattan Beach

Bruce's Beach Task Force Progress Report to Council

March 16, 2021

Councilmember Hildy Stern, Co-Chair

Councilmember Steve Napolitano, Co-Chair

Allison Hales

Anthony Lee

Isla Garraway

Lindsey Fox

Taylor Gamble

Amanda Park

Stephanie Caridad

Kristin Long Drew

Tyler St. Bernard

Lana Rizika

Kristi Ramirez-Knowles

Michael Jenkins

Jarett Margolis

Alternate: Eyana Carballo

Alternate: Laura Kainsinger

I. Introduction

The year 2020 was a turning point in the history and development of race relations in the United States. Violence and resulting demonstrations forced the nation to examine its history of racial oppression and collectively confront the racism faced by Black Americans today. The result has been a nationwide call to action to address and eliminate the effects of racism and racial exclusion that persist in American life.

Since before the founding of the United States, racism has been deeply ingrained in American society, and through to the current day Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color suffer from racism's continued presence in American life. Systemic racism limits Black, Indigenous, and People of Colors' access to wealth accumulation, employment, housing, healthcare, education, the justice system, and beyond. Complex networks of racially motivated discrimination against Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color, whether overtly adopted, subconscious, or practiced in the guise of legitimate policy, have divided our nation.

The racial reckoning of 2020 has provided the City of Manhattan Beach with specific opportunities to remember and confront the past and tackle the difficult but necessary steps forward. The history of Bruce's Beach provides a focus and space for this renewed work.

During the past year, Bruce's Beach and its history has been the catalyst for demonstrations, celebrations, education and cultural performances that bring new attention to the park and its history. Visitors to the park arrive with a new consciousness of its unjust past. Bruce's Beach has become a place of remembrance, visitation, reflection, celebration, and healing for the Black community and other residents of Manhattan Beach.

The City should embrace this development, with an eye toward acknowledging the harms of the past to bring the City together for the future. As young poet laureate, Amanda Gorman, wrote for the January 20, 2021 Presidential Inauguration:

And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us

but what stands before us

We close the divide because we know, to put our future first,

we must first put our differences aside

We lay down our arms

so we can reach out our arms

to one another

We seek harm to none and harmony for all

In this spirit, and in consideration of a century-old incident of racism, the City Council created the Bruce's Beach Task Force to chart a new course of apology, reconciliation, and inclusion for the city. The City charged the Task Force with recommending changes to the existing memorial plaque at Bruce's Beach and proposing new public art for the site. The Task Force is unanimous in its belief that while rewording the plaque is urgent, a new plaque and piece of public art at the park alone are not an adequate response to this moment in American history and the renewed cultural weight of Bruce's Beach in the city's history. We believe that a more expansive program of history, art, education, and community engagement is needed—a program that should integrate into a regular part of the city's civic life.

This moment of racial reckoning and reconciliation in the nation brings hope, promise, and possibility to Manhattan Beach. By examining our past, we will strengthen our future. By embracing diverse perspectives and fostering positive relationships, we can enhance the cultural fabric and overall prosperity of our community. The city will gain enormous advantages for present and future generations by more proactively welcoming diverse populations as residents and visitors, by interacting with them, learning from them, and discovering the full richness of American life. Manhattan Beach is and can continue to be an exciting community for everyone who lives, works, and visits here.

It is not the intention of this report to label or accuse everyone or any specific person or persons in Manhattan Beach as racist. Racism is nuanced and complex, a system not an event. We acknowledge that present day residents were not the residents who inflicted harm on the Bruces and others. Individuals alone are not to blame for systemic racism; however, we are all complicit in its harms, and must be accountable for its elimination. We as a community are better when we are all treated fairly, inclusively, and equitably, with respectful and socially just policies.

II. The Work Has Already Begun

A. EMPACT and the STAND UP Pledge

Much to our credit, the work of antiracism in this community has already begun. After the firebombing of the Clinton home in 2015, our community came together to make change. City leaders, school district leaders, members of the community, local business partners, and local religious leaders came together to form EMPACT. The group worked together to create the Stand Up Inclusion Commitment:

I commit to Stand Up against hate, prejudice, violence and bullying and STAND UP for respect and inclusion.

I will:

- **Speak out** when I hear someone being targeted because of their race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, ability, gender identity, or any other factor. If it is difficult to speak out, then I will stand next to the person who is being targeted and offer my support;
- **Talk about** how stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion make people feel and how they harm our society;
- **Ask myself**, “How do I want to be treated?” Before acting or speaking, I will consider the other person’s feelings and be kind, respectful and caring;
- **Not allow** a prejudiced slur to go either unchallenged or unreported. If I see something, I will say something;
- **Denounce** online hate, bullying, and discrimination, and report hurtful conduct whenever possible;
- **Unite and engage** with diverse communities and educate myself on how to be an effective friend and supporter;
- **Protect my neighbors** by being inclusive and building communities where everyone feels welcome.

In April 2017, the Manhattan Beach Unified School District adopted the Stand Up Inclusion Commitment. On Sept. 5, 2017 the Manhattan Beach City Council formally declared its support for the pledge with agenda item 17-0379. Mayor David J. Lesser, Mayor Pro Tem Amy Howorth, Councilmember Steve Napolitano, Councilmember Nancy Hersman, and Councilmember Richard Montgomery, unanimously adopted the Stand Up Inclusion Commitment.

B. Manhattan Beach Unified School District EDSJI Committee

The Manhattan Beach Unified School District established a board goal to continue to develop a climate of care, equity, diversity, social justice, and inclusion in all MBUSD schools:

- Communicate and Implement Social Emotional Learning Visual Framework.
- Focus on Student and Employee Safety.
- Emphasize MBUSD’s Inclusion Stand Up Commitment to create a safe environment for all stakeholders to engage in discussions about biases and honor everyone’s background or experience.
- Identify, strengthen, and incorporate diverse classroom resources that support the district’s emphasis on equity, diversity, social justice, critical reflection, and inclusion, through examples found in literature and historic or current events.

- Develop curricula that is reflective of each student's background and experience, and classrooms that are safe spaces for students to develop and express their voices.

C. Manhattan Beach Chamber of Commerce

The Manhattan Beach Chamber of Commerce formed the Diversity and Inclusion committee tasked with addressing diversity, inclusion and equality issues as they relate to the business community. The committee is comprised of 10 members and meets every Monday 12-1pm via Zoom. The Chamber held its first forum "You Can't Spell Community Without Unity" on February 4, 2021, a panel discussion on a variety of issues pertaining to discrimination and race.

In addition to the Unity event, the Chamber has also held multiple listening calls with community leaders, media, black business owners. It created a black-owned business category within the Chamber database and is continually looking to add more members in this category as well as helping all marginalized populations navigate business in Manhattan Beach. It is constantly advising the business community on how to navigate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). The Manhattan Beach Chamber of Commerce is endeavoring to increase diversity on its Board of Directors as well as working with each director to incorporate healthy DEI systems at their respective companies.

III. Charge and Mission

On September 1, 2020, the City Council formed the Bruce's Beach Task Force and charged it with addressing the history of Bruce's Beach, re-writing the text on the existing plaque at the park and considering an art installation. The mission evolved organically to include recommendations for a formal apology; community forums; and other measures intended to educate, enlighten, and engage the conversation among our residents to combat racial injustice.

IV. The Subcommittee Process

At its inaugural meeting on October 27, 2020 Bruce's Beach Task Force co-chairs, City Council members Steve Napolitano and Hildy Stern divided the Task Force into three subcommittees.

A. The History Subcommittee

B. The Resolution of Apology Subcommittee

C. The Community Forum Subcommittee

The subcommittees worked independently on their respective assigned tasks and formulated both work product and recommendations. The subcommittee work and recommendations have been approved by the Task Force as a whole and are presented in this final report.

V. Tasks and Work Done by the Subcommittees

A. History Subcommittee

The Bruce's Beach history subcommittee reviewed publicly available documents and sources in order to prepare an accurate chronology of events starting when the Bruce family acquired its first property in Manhattan Beach in 1912 through the renaming of the park and installation of the Bruce's Beach plaque in 2007. As part of this process, the subcommittee sought facts to support the motivation of many of the key figures of the time, the reported events, as well as evidence of racial injustice during the Jim Crow era. As part of the research process, the subcommittee conducted extensive research using primary sources, city council minutes and videos and interviews with Alison Rose Jefferson (author of "Living the California Dream, African American Leisure Sites During the Jim Crow Era") and former Mayor Mitch Ward. The subcommittee prepared a 30-page history of Bruce's Beach and Bruce's Beach park, attached hereto as Appendix 1. This document provided the historical framework for the proposed Resolution of Apology and the recommendations from the Community Forum Subcommittee.

B. Resolution of Apology Subcommittee

The Resolution of Apology subcommittee reviewed the resolutions produced by three other cities in the United States that have issued apologies for racism in the respective cities' histories (Glendale, CA; Spartanburg, SC, and Tampa, FL). The committee met with the Manhattan Beach Police Chief Derrick Abell and Manhattan Beach Community Manager Carrie Tai, and consulted with several experts in the area of affordable housing development, law, and funding. The subcommittee crafted a resolution of apology, set forth in full in Appendix 2, that the Task Force recommends be adopted by the City Council.

C. Community Forum Subcommittee

The Community Forum subcommittee agreed that community engagement, collaboration, and consultation were foundational to the success of the project. Therefore, they reached out to the public to begin a dialogue on the history of Bruce's Beach and how to address it adequately. They consulted Dr. Alison

Rose Jefferson, former Mayor Mitch Ward, Shannon Daut, Manager of Cultural Affairs for Santa Monica Arts Commission, Naomi Okuyama, Public Art Supervisor for Santa Monica, as well as April Banks, the Social Practice Artist overseeing the Belmar History + Art project. They had cordial and productive conversations with local activists Kavon Ward and Duane Shepard, both of whom support the Task Force's efforts. They spoke with MB Police Chief Derrick Abell, MB Community Manager Carrie Tai, and Eilen Stewart of the Cultural Arts Commission. They also opened communications with the Manhattan Beach School Board Committee on Equity, Diversity, Social Justice & Inclusion. The Subcommittee sponsored a successful Community Forum on February 25, 2021 attended by over 170 participants.

VI. Task Force Recommendations

As we conclude this phase of our work, the Task Force recommends that the City Council:

- 1.1** Support the creation, through the Arts Commission, of artwork memorializing the history of Bruce's Beach, as more particularly described in Appendix 3.
- 1.2** Concur with the process set forth in Appendix 4 for the creation of a new plaque at Bruce's Beach and allocate funding to allow installation of a new plaque by December 31, 2021.
- 1.3** Authorize the continuation of the Bruce's Beach webpage to host the History Subcommittee document (as it may be modified from time to time), share the continued work product of the Task Force, announce upcoming community events, and provide information about other City efforts to combat racial injustice.
- 1.4** Adopt the Resolution of Apology set forth in Appendix 2.
- 1.5** Authorize a minimum of one additional community forum in the Spring of 2021 as described in Appendix 6

VII. Conclusion

The Task Force thanks the City Council for creating the Task Force and giving us the opportunity to promote meaningful change in our community. As we have noted above, these are challenging issues. The greatest hope of the Task Force is that the recommendations set forth above outlined here will be the beginning of a process in our City. We have endeavored to respond to the Council's initial charge and look forward to addressing the aspirational issues addressed in Appendix 5 in the coming months.

APPENDICES 1 - 6

Appendix 1
History Report

CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH

Bruce's Beach Task Force: History Subcommittee Report

March 9, 2021

Councilmember Hildy Stern, Co-Chair

Councilmember Steve Napolitano, Co-Chair

History Subcommittee:

Allison Hales

Isla Garraway

Lindsey Fox

Kristin Long Drew

Tyler St. Bernard

INDEX

<u>THE PROCESS</u>	3
<u>TIMELINE OF EVENTS</u>	4
<u>1900-1912</u>	4
<u>The Role of George H. Peck, Jr.</u>	6
<u>1913-1924</u>	7
<u>The Role of the KKK</u>	10
<u>Complaint of Condemnation: 1924-1929</u>	11
<u>NAACP Swim-In</u>	17
<u>After 1929</u>	17
<u>The History of the Park</u>	18
<u>WORKS CITED</u>	25

THE PROCESS

The Bruce's Beach history subcommittee was tasked to go through publicly available documents and sources in order to prepare an accurate factual synopsis of the timeline of events that occurred from when the Bruce family acquired their first property in Manhattan Beach in 1912 through the renaming of the park and installation of the Bruce's Beach plaque in 2007.

As part of this process, the subcommittee sought to verify facts and clarify folklore surrounding the events of the eminent domain proceedings in Manhattan Beach in the 1920s. We compared the theses of Robert L. Brigham and Dr. Alison Rose Jefferson, as well as Dr. Jefferson's book, "Living the California Dream: African American Leisure Sites during the Jim Crow Era" with other reports from that time, specifically newspaper articles and government records.

This is by no means a final draft. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and a flood at the Los Angeles Hall of Records, we were unable to obtain documentation needed to clarify many claims. We've noted these instances were appropriate.

This is a "living document" that we are dedicated to updating as more time and resources become available.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1900-1912



Charles and Willie Bruce, Circa 1886. Courtesy of the California African American Museum.

Willie¹ Ann Bruce (b. 1862, Missouri), and her husband, Charles Aaron Bruce (b. 1860, District of Columbia) lived with their son, Harvey (b.1888) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where Charles worked as a cook². Between 1900 and 1904, their family moved to downtown Los Angeles and purchased a home at 1024 Santa Fe Avenue.³

During this same time, the town of Manhattan Beach was taking form. Between 1898 and 1901, the area four miles north of Redondo was known as Potencia, Spanish for “power” and what an ambitious group of businessmen hoped to harness from the ocean and convert into electricity⁴. The enterprise folded following a winter storm in 1899 that destroyed most of the pier and, thus, presumably, most of the wave motor.⁵

¹ There are some concerns that Mrs. Bruce's first name was actually “Willa”, but in the documentation we discovered, she is referred to as “Willie”, with the exception of the 1870 Census where she is listed as “William Walker” (her maiden name), and her son Harvey's marriage license. All sources can be found at the end of this document.

² Year: 1900; Census Place: *Albuquerque, Bernalillo, New Mexico*; Page: 6; Enumeration District: 0009; FHL microfilm: 1240999

³ 1904 LA City Directory, Los Angeles City Directory Co, Inc. Los Angeles, CA. Pg. 211

⁴ *Los Angeles Times*, “Los Angeles and Vicinity: Ocean Power,” December 11, 1897.

⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, “Reported Wreck of the Wright Wave Motor at Potencia-Notes,” January 15, 1899.

In September, 1901, John A. Merrill and his Manhattan Beach Company purchased the land formerly owned by the Potencia Townsite Company, to build a new resort along the

Pacific called "Manhattan Beach".⁶ George H. Peck, Jr. , would buy the area to the north of the pier from the Manhattan Beach Company in October of the same year called North Manhattan Beach.⁷ Despite the historic folklore claiming that the town's name was the result of a coin flip between Peck and Merrill, there is no concrete evidence to support this story.

In May, 1912, Mrs. Willie Bruce purchased Lot 8 of Block 5 in Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract from Los Angeles real estate agent Henry Willard. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that she paid \$1,225 for the 33' x 100' parcel between 26th and 27th streets on The Strand, west of Ocean Drive, which was "a high price compared to the cost of nearby lots."⁸ (*Please note: We were unable to receive deeds to confirm this information in time for this report. We will update this as soon as that becomes available.*)



(l-r) Meda (Mrs. Harvey) Bruce, Harvey Bruce, and Willie Bruce, presumably at the first incarnation of Bruce's Beach in 1912.

An advertisement in the *Liberator* announced that the June 17, 1912, opening of "Bruce Beach Front", a seaside resort for bathing and fishing would be a "grand affair"⁹. Guests would arrive to find "a small portable cottage with a stand that sold soda pop and lunches," rented bathing suits and provided access to bathing showers and dressing

⁶ *Los Angeles Herald*, "MANHATTAN BEACH Another New Resort to Be Opened to the Public", September 13, 1901.

⁷ Book of Deeds (Los Angeles), 1505, page 119.

⁸ *Los Angeles Times* (1886-1922); "Colored People's Resort Meets With Opposition", Jun 27, 1912; pg. I15

⁹ *Liberator*, "Bruce Beach Front", May 31, 1912, p. 5.

tents.¹⁰ While her husband, Charles, worked as a dining-car chef on the train running between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles, it was the 50-year-old Willie who ran the business and interacted with guests.¹¹

Within a week of opening, white landowners of “adjoining property” expressed agitation and began harassing guests¹². According to the *Times*, African Americans visiting the Bruces’ resort were blocked from easy access to the beach when “No Trespassing” signs were placed around the strip of ocean frontage spanning Peck’s pier (at 34th Street¹³) to 24th street - property owned by George H. Peck, Jr. - forcing them to walk a half mile in each direction to get to the water.¹⁴ It is unclear if these signs were placed at Peck’s request or even with his knowledge.

Despite the impediments, Black bathers were undeterred and so was Mrs. Bruce. “Wherever we have tried to buy land for a beach resort we have been refused,” Mrs. Bruce told the *Times*, “but I own this land and I am going to keep it.”¹⁵

The Role of George H. Peck, Jr.

Manhattan Beach resident, Robert L. Brigham, whose 1956 thesis “Land Ownership and Occupancy By Negroes In Manhattan Beach, California”, has served as a primary resource on the history of Bruce’s Beach, reported that George H. Lindsey, a white realtor and Manhattan Beach Resident, claimed that there had been a series of telegrams between Peck and his business associate/son-in-law Herb Culler regarding the Bruces and their guests. Lindsey told Brigham that the use of a long rope as a fence was the “direct result of telegrams between Culler and Peck”, who at the time was back east for business and allegedly told Culler to “do what he thought best.”¹⁶

It’s not possible to verify Lindsey’s accusation or Peck’s exact involvement, however, because we do not have access to those telegrams or any other record of such an exchange. Multiple sources, however, did state that there were barriers impeding access to the water from the Strand near the Bruces’ resort, which was owned by Peck at the time.

¹⁰ *Los Angeles Times* (1886-1922); “Colored People’s Resort Meets With Opposition”, Jun 27, 1912; pg. I15

¹¹ Jefferson, Alison Rose. “Living the California Dream: African American Leisure Sites during the Jim Crow Era.” University of Nebraska Press. 2020. P. 35.

¹² “Colored People’s Resort Meets With Opposition” pg. I15.

¹³ Peck’s Manhattan Beach Tract Map, Manhattan Beach Historical Society.

¹⁴ “Colored People’s Resort Meets With Opposition”, pg. I15

¹⁵ “Colored People’s Resort Meets With Opposition”, pg. I15

¹⁶ Brigham, p. 39.

A *Los Angeles Times* article written in 2002, 90 years after the Bruces' purchased their land, suggested that Peck took a proactive role in reserving and facilitating the sale of Manhattan Beach property to African Americans. According to the article, Peck "flouted tradition and set aside a two-block area fronting the ocean between 26th and 27th streets and Highland Avenue for minority residents."¹⁷ Furthermore, the wording of the current Bruce's Beach park plaque states that Peck "made it possible" for the beachfront property to be open to "all people". Following extensive review of government documents, newspaper articles, obituaries, interviews, and historian research from 1912 through 2021, there is no verifiable evidence from primary or other sources that Peck actually set aside land for this purpose or that he publicly objected to the harassment towards the Bruces and their guests following the development of their property.

1913-1924

As the popularity of the Bruces' resort grew within the Black community, some white residents of Manhattan Beach were concerned. In 1915, for example, H.D. Aron wrote to City Clerk Lewellyn Price requesting information on Lot 3, Block 5 in Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract -- three parcels north of the Bruces'. Price responded:

Confidentially, there is something about that block that is quite a detriment to the neighborhood, and that is that there is a colored family who live the year around on lot 8, which faces the ocean. Every so often they have a coon picnic and it is attended by about seventy-five to one-hundred-and-fifty coon pullman porters and their friends. You can imagine how much this would depreciate property values in that neighborhood. It is the only colored family that lives within the corporate limits of Manhattan. If it wasn't for that fact, I would consider this a bargain at about the assessed valuation.¹⁸

Despite any neighboring animosity, the Bruces' and their resort flourished. They were able to upgrade from their portable stand to a two-story brick building to accommodate more guests and provide more services.

On December 25, 1915, the *Manhattan Beach News* reported that "The negro population of Manhattan Beach... have had plans drawn for one of the finest apartment houses in this section of the beach." It would be two stories and include 30 dressing

¹⁷ Rasmussen, Cecila. "Resort Was An Oasis for Blacks Until Racism Drove Them Out", Los Angeles Times, July 21, 2002. B.4.

¹⁸ City Clerk Correspondence between H.D. Aron and Lewellyn Price, October 18, 1915. Courtesy of the Manhattan Beach Historical Society.

rooms on the ground floor with completion by summer 1916. The white-plastered building with a red tile roof was to resemble the Sadler building at the Strand and Marine and was slated to cost \$6,000.¹⁹

During the period between 1919-1926, at least six other African Americans purchased property in close proximity to Bruces' resort, four of them between 26th and 27th streets (blocks 5 and 12 of Peck's Manhattan Beach tract)²⁰.

In 1919, Major George and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau purchased the southern half of lot 4, block 12. The other half of their lot was purchased by Ms. Elizabeth Patterson in 1922. In 1923, Mrs. Mary Sanders bought lot 6, Block 12, as did Mr. and Mrs. Milton B. and Anna Johnson who had lot 1, Block 12.²¹ Additionally, John McCaskill and Elisa L. Irvin as well as Mr. and Mrs. James Slaughter purchased property on the south side of 26th Street, across from the Bruces'. The remaining parcels of land in that area were owned by white property owners, and had not been developed by 1924.²²

In 1920, Mrs. Bruce expanded her property when she purchased Lot 9 in Block 5, the lot immediately to the south of their existing lot, for \$10 from Charles and Anna Krause and Jessie Carson Drake.²³ In 1923, they allegedly built on it as well²⁴. Bruce's Beach had become a popular destination for Black families, providing accommodations and services to enjoy a weekend on the coast.

¹⁹ *Manhattan Beach News*. "Apartment House At Peck Pavilion", December 25, 1915. P. 4.

²⁰ Jefferson, p. 37.

²¹ This information was obtained from Brigham's thesis, p. 22. We have requested the deeds from the Assessor's Office, but are still waiting to receive them.

²² It is our goal to find out more information about every family involved in the eminent domain proceedings. Unfortunately, we did not have the time to elaborate on their stories here, but we will..

²³ Book of Deeds (Los Angeles) 7351 p. 254.

²⁴ Brigham, p. 17.

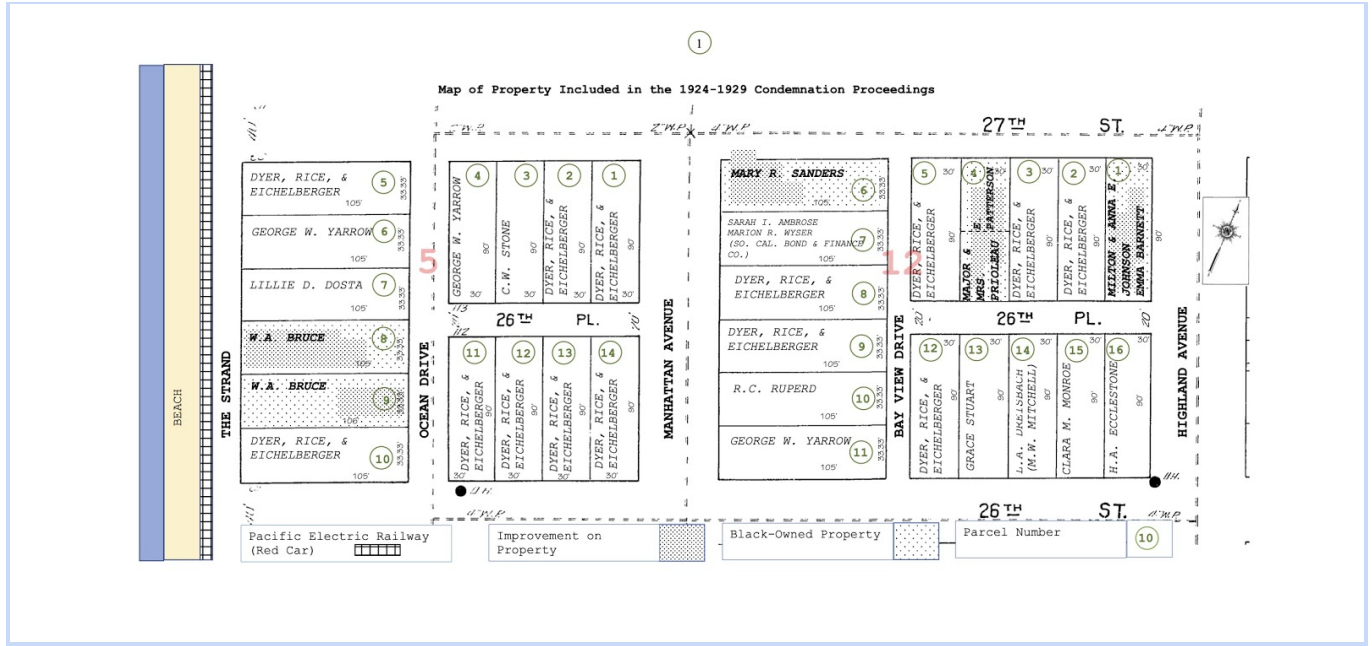


Photo Courtesy of the Manhattan Beach Historical Society

Miriam Matthews, Los Angeles’s first black librarian, said in an essay prepared for the California African American Museum, “You would take the Red Car down ... and spend a day on the beautiful beach or rent a room if you desired.”²⁵ Sundays were reserved for school gatherings and families, and the resort offered a getaway overlooking the Pacific

²⁵ Schoch, Deborah. “Erasing a Line Drawn in the Sand”, Los Angeles Times; Los Angeles, Calif. [Los Angeles, Calif]19 Mar 2007: B.1.

Ocean.” One guest remembered, "If one tired of the sand and surf, the parlor was available for listening to music or dancing.”²⁶

Per Robert Brigham and Dr. Alison Rose Jefferson, white neighbors resented the resort's growing popularity and prosperity of its African American owners by the early 1920s and were “concerned” about a “Negro ‘invasion’” and the impact it could have on property values. (*Note: Brigham only places the word “invasion” in quotes though it is unclear if that was a word used by Lindsey or by Brigham. Brigham frequently uses the phrase “Negro ‘invasion’” when describing the impetus for the condemnation proceedings.*)

The role of the KKK

It is also important to note that the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was showing its influence in the area at that time. On January 12, 1924, *The Redondo Breeze* published an ad that invited readers to a free lecture on “The Principles of the KKK and Ideals of Pure Americanism.”²⁷ *The California Eagle*, a prominent African-American newspaper from 1879-1964, reported on the front page of its July 4, 1924, issue that the KKK was operating unrestricted along the waterfront.²⁸ Cited in the article was an incident in Redondo Beach where KKK pamphlets were handed out to Black fishermen KKK membership rolls included many civic leaders and policemen, including the mayors of LA and Redondo²⁹.

While there was no evidence directly linking acts of harassment to the KKK, many of Brigham's interviewees reported racially-motivated incidents by residents. In one instance, Hugh MacBeth, lawyer for Mrs. Sanders and the Johnsons, said air was let out of tires in cars parked near the Bruces' resort while owners were at the beach.³⁰ Cassius Robbins, a member of the 1924 Manhattan Beach Board of Trustees, claimed that one night he “followed a siren to Bruce's Lodge where someone (supposedly a Klansman) had set fire to a mattress under the main building.”³¹ Mrs. Titus Alexander relayed a story of a Black-owned home on 23rd Street that was partially burned in 1926, allegedly by a white neighbor, upset that an African-American woman had purchased it.³² Mrs. Ethel Atkinson reported fake “10 Minutes Only” parking signs that were posted to deter

²⁶ Schoch, B.1.

²⁷ Brigham, p. 41.

²⁸ “Klans Operations”, *The California Eagle*, Volume 39, No. 10, July 4, 1924, p. 1

²⁹ <http://blogs.dailybreeze.com/history/2014/03/15/the-1922-ku-klux-klan-inglewood-raid/>

³⁰ Brigham, p. 40.

³¹ Brigham, p. 41.

³² Brigham, p. 77.

out-of-town Blacks from visiting the resort, and also said that a cross was burned in the hill above a Black-owned home.³³

Despite this harassment, Black residents and guests did not cease coming to the beach. According to reports from the *California Eagle*, it was just as popular as ever.

In the social ledger of Manhattan Beach will be found a most unique bathing party given by Mesdames Viola Smith, Bessie McCatskill and Carrie Ivin. At 10 o'clock the guests began to arrive at the cozy little beach home of the "Irvins and McCatskill's". After arriving each one was busy attiring herself in a most attractive bathing suit, cap and shoes for a dip in the ocean. Bathing was enjoyed until 2 o'clock P. M. when the guests were ushered into the canopied room where the tables were laden with all kinds of "goodies". The remainder of the afternoon was spent in sewing and dancing. The guests included Mesdames Adams of San Jose, D. Irving of San Francisco, and the Modern Priscilla Club, declared their hostess as ideal.

From the *California Eagle*, September 11, 1925

Complaint of Condemnation: 1924-1929

George Lindsey³⁴, a real estate agent in the North End of Manhattan Beach who arrived in the town in 1920, played a major role initiating the series of events leading to the condemnation and seizure of property from Black families residing near the Bruces' lodge. Brigham later interviewed Mr. Lindsey, who indicated that white landowners feared an "invasion" by members of the African American community.³⁵ Lindsey told Brigham that "education and co-operation will eventually solve the problem... perhaps in five hundred years or so" and until that time, he was serving the community by working toward a peaceful end to the "negro 'invasion'".

Lindsey allegedly approached the Board of Trustees³⁶ (now known as the City Council) in 1921, requesting action to discourage African Americans from establishing residency in Manhattan Beach. Brigham wrote: "Although sympathetic, the members of [the

³³ Brigham, p. 82.

³⁴ *U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

³⁵ Brigham, p. 44.

³⁶ Depending on when exactly in 1921 this happened, the Board of Trustees consisted of the following: Charles Ashton, Carl Bull, Malcolm Campbell, George Conkling, Richard Launer, Ernest Pentz, J.C. Richardson, Walter S. Robbins

Manhattan Beach Board of Trustees] were reluctant to take action lest they go on record as being bigots.”³⁷

In a 1987 letter to the *Beach Reporter*, longtime Manhattan Beach resident Helen Sinsabaugh wrote that Lindsey was concerned over “some highly irregular real estate activities certain agents were operating among people in inland areas occupied by blacks.”³⁸ Sinsabaugh, who lived at 2212 The Strand and was about 14 years old³⁹ at the time condemnation proceedings began, said that the realtor and other civic leaders were concerned about growing racial tensions in the community and met with “black leaders such as church pastors” to discuss the situation.⁴⁰

Lindsey discovered a legal means by which to shut down the Bruces’ resort through the Park and Playground Act of 1909. Sinsabaugh wrote that Lindsey learned of the “possibility of condemnation procedures for recreational civic use” through a series of real estate courses he had taken at USC. He and “several civic leaders” circulated a petition for support of this action and presented it to the Board on November 15, 1923.⁴¹

On January 3, 1924, the Manhattan Beach City Council passed ordinance 263, claiming eminent domain for a public park. Although it has been said that Live Oak Park had just been built nearby, the truth is that both the land between Highland and the Strand, 26th and 27th was being developed for a park at the same time as Live Oak Park. (Please see [The History of the Park](#) for further explanation.)

On June 19, 1924, Manhattan Beach enacted new laws with fines and penalties for violating ordinances (273-275) that prohibited new or additional development of bath houses and commercialized amusements near the Strand without Board of Trustee approval, and banning dressing/undressing in cars, tents, and temporary structures. Although these ordinances did not impact the Bruces’ existing resort, they were clearly designed to prevent any further development in Manhattan Beach by the Bruces or other African-Americans. On the same day, ordinance 276 passed unanimously; identical to ordinance 263, it indicated the intent for condemnation. Protests against the condemnation were deemed insufficient and dismissed.⁴²

³⁷ Brigham, p. 44

³⁸ Helen A. Sinsabaugh, letter. *The Beach Reporter*. (1987)

³⁹ Year: 1920; Census Place: *Manhattan Beach, Los Angeles, California*; Roll: T625_118; Page: 2A; Enumeration District: 542

⁴⁰ Sinsabaugh, letter.

⁴¹ Brigham, p. 45.

⁴² *Manhattan Beach News*. “Important Business at Council: All Park Protests Denied.” September 19, 1924. P. 1

On October 16, 1924, Manhattan Beach officials passed ordinance 282, which initiated legal proceedings for “acquisition by condemnation for public park purposes of Blocks five (5) and twelve (12) of Peck’s Manhattan Beach Tract...” In November, 1924, the city filed a lawsuit pursuing condemnation, which covered 30 lots. Five of these were owned by African American families, including their cottages and the Bruces’ lodge. The remaining 25 lots had no structures and were owned by white landowners. The Bruces, along with three other African American families sued the City of Manhattan Beach for racial discrimination in 1924.⁴³ (This statement warrants further research because the source is unclear if this was a separate lawsuit from the complaint of condemnation proceedings. A request for the files of the lawsuit is still pending.)

The *California Eagle* printed a letter from E. Burton Ceruti, Attorney for the L.A. Branch, N.A.A.C.P. on July 11, 1924, wherein he stated that Mrs. Bruce was “willing to sell her property and, even if a suit be instituted, would sell at a fair price at any time, and would abandon the suit at such time.”⁴⁴ By December, they had entered into the condemnation proceedings with Attorney Willis O. Tyler as their lawyer.⁴⁵

On February 4, 1927, the *Manhattan Beach News* published a front page article about a petition submitted by the Taxpayers Protective League to recall the Board of Trustees⁴⁶ for a number of legislative actions related to development along the Strand, as well as the park and playground proceedings.

In an adjacent article, C.A. Bruce, Willie Bruce and Harvey Bruce wrote a letter to their neighbors. In this letter, the Bruces express that “we have always felt and we hope we will be pardoned for plainly and bluntly saying so, that the attempt to make a park out of these two blocks was a direct slap at us because we were not born white people.” They went on to write that as taxpayers, this “hardship” targeting them was inconsistent with the “economy in expenditure of public money” and that the park is not filling any public need.⁴⁷

Reporting on recall, the *Los Angeles Times* said that it stemmed from citizens’ dissatisfaction with the condemnation and the purchase of the land under the Park and Playground Act. The *Times* reported legal proceedings began when “(t)he amount which the city officials agreed to give for the land was said to be greatly in excess of its

⁴³ Rassmussen.

⁴⁴ *California Eagle*. Ceruti, E. Burton. “Matter of Bruce’s Beach”, July 11, 1924, pp. 1 and 10.

⁴⁵ *California Eagle*. “Bruce’s Beach Fights Condemnation”, December 26, 1924, p. 1.

⁴⁶ The Board of Trustees to be recalled were: Merritt J. Crandall, Harold Dale, G.E. Delevan, Jr., Carl D. Edwards, and John F. Jones.

⁴⁷ *The Beach Reporter*, April 16, 1987

value.”⁴⁸ The results of the recall election favored the trustees: 549 in their favor and 135 were against.

In exchange for water service to North Manhattan, George Peck donated 2 beach lots to the city in 1927. These lots were then “leased” to Oscar Bessonette; it was later revealed that no rent was ever collected.⁴⁹

On May 16, 1927, the Bruces sent a letter to the City of Manhattan Beach whereby they turned over their “property and all improvements thereon and consent that you forthwith wreck, tear down and remove the building on said lots.”⁵⁰

In their original answer to the complaint of condemnation, Brigham reports that the Bruces requested \$70,000 for their property and \$50,000 in damages “due to the fact that if the property were condemned, they would be unable to purchase elsewhere in Manhattan.”⁵¹ Ultimately, they were granted \$14,500. They did not stay in Manhattan Beach.

(Note: We are still in the process of trying to acquire the files from the lawsuit -- especially as they were so heavily referenced in Brigham's thesis. When we have that information, we will update this document.)

A final judgement on the condemnation proceedings was delivered on June 10, 1929.⁵² The amount granted to each of the condemned property holders are from the following table in Brigham's thesis:

⁴⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, “Recall Favors City Trustees at Manhattan”, February 16, 1927, p. A10.

⁴⁹ Brigham, p. 85.

⁵⁰ Letter to the City of Manhattan Beach from Willie A. Bruce and Charles A. Bruce, May 16, 1927. Manhattan Beach Historical Society.

⁵¹ Brigham, p. 65.

⁵² Brigham, p. 67.

TABLE III
AMOUNTS GRANTED IN FINAL JUDGEMENT
TO HOLDERS OF CONDEMNED PROPERTY*

<u>Owner</u>	<u>Property</u>	<u>Settlement</u>
B. H. Dyer, R. L. Rice, and H. M. Eichelberger	Lots 1, 2, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, Blk. 5. Lots 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, and 12, Blk. 12.	\$21,147.31
C. W. Stone	Lot 3, Blk. 5.	1,325.71
Geo. W. Yarrow	Lots 4 and 6, Blk. 5. Lot 11, Blk. 12.	6,461.13
Lillie D. Dosta	Lot 7, Blk. 5.	2,911.23
W. A. Bruce	Lots 8 and 9, Blk. 5.	14,500.00
M. B. Johnson	Lot 1, Blk. 12.	1,273.04
Anna E. Johnson	Lot 1, Blk. 12.	1,273.04
Emma K. Barnett	Lot 1, Blk. 12.	1,342.08
Elizabeth Patterson	No. 1/2 Lot 4, Blk. 12.	1,865.66
Geo. and Ethel Prioleau	So. 1/2 Lot 4, Blk. 12.	1,874.37
Mary R. Sanders	Lot 6, Blk. 12.	4,129.09
Sarah I. Ambrose	Lot 7, Blk. 12.	1,075.00**
Marion R. Wyser	Lot 7, Blk. 12.	75.00
So. Calif. Bond and Finance Corp.	Lot 7, Blk. 12.	128.09

*Satisfaction of Judgement, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

**Amount of settlement not shown in Satisfaction of Judgement. This estimated amount is based upon award made at time of Interlocutory Decree.

TABLE III
(continued)

<u>Owner</u>	<u>Property</u>	<u>Settlement</u>
R. C. Ruperd	Lot 10, Blk. 12.	1,565.08
Grace Stuart	Lot 13, Blk. 12.	1,200.00
L. A. Dreisbach	Lot 14, Blk. 12.	913.95
M. W. Mitchell	Lot 14, Blk. 12.	25.00
Clara M. Monroe (Darlington)	Lot 15, Blk. 12.	1,200.00
H. A. Ecclestone	Lot 16, Blk. 12.	1,755.85
<hr/>		
TOTAL		\$66,040.63

NAACP Swim-In

Black families were still coming to Bruce's Beach even though police were now arresting them as “trespassers.” On July 4, 1927, a 19-year-old Black UCLA student, Elizabeth Catley, was arrested for swimming and “trespassing” on the “private beach.”⁵³ Manhattan Beach police refused to allow her to change into dry clothes and kept her in jail for five hours. In response, the newly formed Los Angeles chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) held their first peaceful protest on July 17, 1927, which was dubbed a “swim in.”⁵⁴ The lawyer for the NAACP, Hugh Macbeth, was able to obtain admissions from police officers, Bessonette, and Trustees that the signs were meant only to deter Blacks, prompting the force of signs’ removal. The next day, the California Eagle’s banner headline crowed: “NAACP Wins Beach Victory.”⁵⁵

After 1929

In 1930, the *Manhattan Beach News* praised the efforts of councilman John F. Jones who had “made it his particular aim” to force the Black residents from Blocks 5 and 12 because their “settlement” had “depreciated property values to a considerable extent and many sales were lost on this account.” The article continued: “Mr. Jones worked long and earnestly on this problem with the result that the negroes finally withdrew their occupancy of the MANhattan Beach property and the city is now free from that menace.”⁵⁶

Daugherty, one of the three original subdividers in Manhattan Beach (in addition to George Peck and John Merrill), was interviewed for a four-part essay entitled “A History of Manhattan.” In one excerpt published in the *Manhattan Beach News* on February 19, 1943 and reprinted on July 20, 1945 in the *Redondo Reflex*, Daugherty discussed the racist motivations behind the condemnation of the Bruces’ and other families’ land. “We tried to buy them out but they would not sell. There were several families in the blocks between 26th and 27th streets.....We had to acquire these two blocks to solve the problem, so we voted to condemn them, and build a city park there. We had to protect ourselves. Our attorneys advised the members of the council never to admit the real purpose in establishing the park, especially during the city council meeting.”⁵⁷

⁵³ *California Eagle*. “Jailed for Bathing.” Friday, July 8, 1927.

⁵⁴ Brigham, p. 86.

⁵⁵ Brigham, p. 93.

⁵⁶ *Manhattan Beach News*. “Jones’ Efforts Increase Values,” April 11, 1930. P. 1.

⁵⁷ *Manhattan Beach News*. “Negroes and Pier Building Were Manhattan Problems,” February 19, 1943, pp. 1 and 6.

The History of the Park

After the city condemned the land for a new park in place of the former resort, historic folklore says that the land sat empty for 30 years. Manhattan Beach resident, Robert Brigham, remembered looking at the empty lots during the 1940s and 1950s. They were covered with weeds and empty soda bottles.



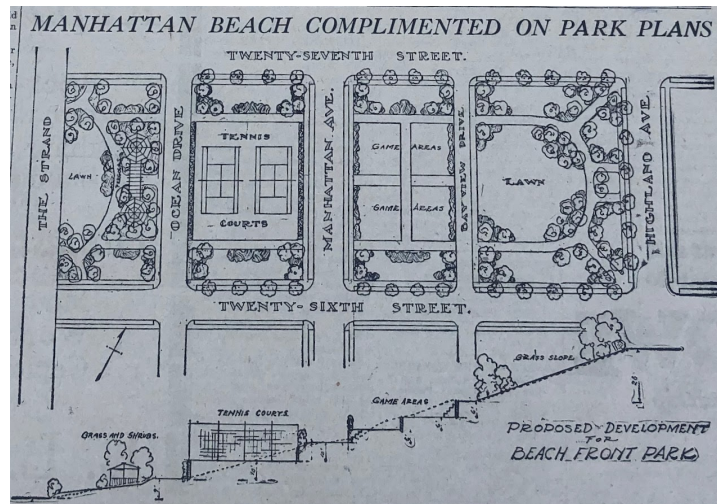
Photo Courtesy of the Manhattan Beach Historical Society

Beginning in 1932, however, Manhattan Beach City Council had petitioned the county for assistance in funding both the City Park between the Strand and Highland, and Live Oak Park off what was then called Railroad Drive. They hoped to use labor supplied by the County Welfare and Stabilization Program.⁵⁸

In February, 1933, the City of Manhattan Beach filed plans to utilize funds from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to build a beachfront park. The resolutions asked the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for 2580 “man days” for the improvement of the City Park, “being the block between Manhattan Avenue and Ocean Drive, 26th and 27th.” For the block between The Strand and Ocean, 1300 “man days” were requested, and between Manhattan Avenue and Bay View, 2400. The block between Bay View and Highland needed 2267 “man days”.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. July 21, 1932.

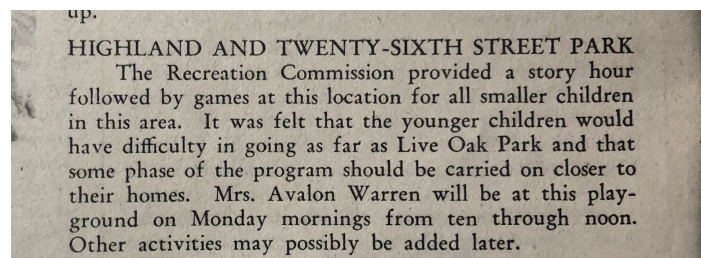
⁵⁹ Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. February 2, 1933.



From the *Manhattan Beach News*, March 17, 1933.

By August 11, 1933, the *Manhattan Beach News* reported that “Beach Front Park... has been graded and its terraced surface planted to moss, pending further development that will include extensive landscaping, game areas, and tennis courts.”⁶⁰

An 1945 issue of *Community Life* magazine, describes a children's story hour located at the playground at Highland and 26th st Park.⁶¹



A *South Bay Breeze* newspaper article published November 9, 1954 reported on a joint session between the City Council and the Recreation Commission discussing the development of park plans. By 1956, the area was landscaped into a terraced park that absorbed a portion of Bayview Drive.

The site was referred to as City Park and Beach Front Park until 1962, when the Kiwanis Club and the Manhattan Beach City Council sponsored a naming contest. The chosen name was Bayview Terrace Park.⁶²

⁶⁰ *Manhattan Beach News*, “Progress is Evident in Park Work”, August 11, 1933, p. 1.

⁶¹ *Community Life*, 1945

⁶² *South Bay Breeze*, November 9, 1954

After a failed effort to change the name of 15th street to Calle Culiacan at the February 5, 1974 City Council meeting, during the February 19, 1974 meeting, the Manhattan Beach Sister City Committee requested the city rename the park “Culiacan Terrace Park or its Spanish equivalent”. This was done before the “in view of the impending visit of Culiacan representatives for the change of officers on the city council and to make them feel more a part of the cultural exchange.” Parque Culiacan was designated on March 16, 1974.⁶³

In 1988, the mayor of Culiacan, Mexico no longer supported the Sister Cities Program, and dropped Manhattan Beach as their sister city. In 1989, a new sister city was established with Santa Rosalia of Baja California, Mexico.⁶⁴

On February 15, 2003, a group from Leadership Manhattan Beach, a community leadership program, proposed a class project called “Facts on Plaques”, a series of historical facts placed on plaques near points of interest. Class member Mark Davis also proposed a communitywide contest to rename Parque Culiacan with a name more relevant to the community. The council approved the project with the directive that the park not be named after an individual.⁶⁵

On April 15, 2003, the Leadership class returned to the City Council with the recommendation of renaming Parque Culiacan to Friendship Park. During the meeting, the Sister City Organization representatives protested the recommendation and stated that it was inappropriate to drop the original Sister City’s name Culiacan from the park. The City Council unanimously denied the recommendation of Friendship Park.⁶⁶

The council accepted a donation of \$3,600 from The Leadership Manhattan Class of 2003 and instructed staff to work with Leadership to develop a sign including all the history of Parque Culiacan.⁶⁷

At the City Council Meeting on May 6, 2003, Sandra Seville-Jones, co-manager of Leadership Manhattan Beach, presented wording based on the extensive research completed by Leadership. Councilmember Ward suggested deleting the word “tragic” from the plaque wording. However, Ms. Seville-Jones felt that the documentation supported the use of the word and it was an important factor in the emotional impact of the statement.⁶⁸ The final text read:

⁶³ MB City Council Minutes, February 19, 1974

⁶⁴ Parks & Recreation Minutes February 27, 2006

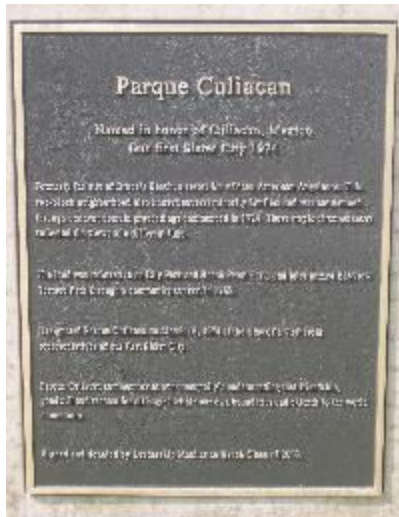
⁶⁵ MB City Council Minutes, February 18, 2003, Agenda Item 13

⁶⁶ MB City Council Minutes, April 15, 2003, Agenda Item 15, pg 6

⁶⁷ MB City Council Minutes, April 15, 2003, Agenda Item 15, pg 7

⁶⁸ MB City Council Minutes, May 6, 2003, Agenda Item 6.19, pg. 5

Parque Culiacan Named in honor of Culiacan, Mexico Our first Sister City 1974 Formerly the site of Bruce's Beach, a resort for African American Angelinos. This two block neighborhood also housed several minority families and was condemned through eminent domain proceedings commenced in 1924. Those tragic circumstances reflected the views of a different time. Signed and donated by Leadership Manhattan Beach Class of 2003.



Two years later, in December 2005, renaming the park was brought up again during MB City Council audience participation. Rosa Parks had died in October, 2005 prompting Manhattan Beach resident and activist, Patrick McBride, to request that the park be named after her as symbolic of the civil rights issues related to the park's history. Mr. McBride stated that Bob Brigham was also in support of remaining the park in honor of Rosa Parks. In response to Mr. McBride's comment, Mayor Fahey felt strongly that a name that addresses the history of the area would have more meaning than Parque Culiacan. Mayor Fahey asked the council if there was support for discussing changing the name of Parque Culiacan; Mayor ProTem Ward said he "didn't have any problem with discussing it" and City Manager Dolan suggested it be referred to Parks and Recreation for consideration and discussion before city council agendaize it.⁶⁹

Parks and Recreation met on February 27, 2006. Community member Patrick McBride spoke during audience participation on the history of Bruce's Beach and Rosa Parks. Parks Commissioner Lear agreed with other Commissioners and would be open-minded about considering a new park name that has a much more localized connection to the Manhattan Beach community, i.e. Bruce's Beach. The meeting minutes note that, "The Commission has an interest in sending the message that Manhattan Beach stands for,

⁶⁹ Manhattan Beach City Council Meeting recording, December 6, 2005

amongst other things, diversity and recognizing that the greatest blemish in our history is the events of the 1920s at Bruce's Beach". Commissioner Lear commended Mr. McBride's noble effort to communicate to the world that the City of Manhattan Beach stands for diversity and good will. The Commission voted against changing the name to Rosa Parks Park.⁷⁰

At the conclusion of the Manhattan Beach City Council meeting on April 18, 2006, during other council business, Mayor Mitch Ward, supported by Mayor ProTem Nick Tell and Councilmember Joyce Fahey, directed the Parks and Rec Department to look into renaming Parque Culiacan, with specific direction to look at the historical aspects of the area.⁷¹

The Parks and Recreation committee met on May 22, 2006. During audience participation, community members suggested keeping the name Parque Culiacan as well as the names Forgiving Park, Ocean View Park, Surf View Park and Bayview Terrace. Community member Patrick McBride suggested that the park's history had a huge civil rights significance, thus renaming the park Bruce's Beach would signify the historical relevance. Mr. McBride suggested that a lot of people think we should honor the Bruce Family and he suggested the city should honor the symbol that they stood for and the historical struggle that took place. Commissioner Paralusz agreed that the City Council's direction was to consider renaming the park to reflect historical events. Commissioner Paralusz was in favor of renaming the park Bruce's Beach to recognize our City's history. She suggested that we can't go back and change what happened, but could certainly address what had happened. Commissioner Paralusz then made a motion to recommend to the City Council in favor of changing the name Parque Culiacan to Bruce's Beach. The Committee voted 4-2 (Ayes: Cohen, Paralusz, Gill, Lamb; Nays: Harris, Lear)⁷²

At the City Council meeting on July 6, 2006, Parks and Recreation brought their recommendation of renaming Parque Culiacan to Bruce's Park or Bruce's Beach Park before council. Mayor Mitch Ward suggested that the discussion should be about the history of the land rather than the Bruce family, and referred to the role of the Bruce family as the "movement the Bruce family created as a result of George Peck". He shared an article from The Observer that invoked a portrayal of George H. Peck, as a generous businessman who helped his black neighbors in "bucking the practice of racial exclusion, opened up 2 blocks of land on the beach for African Americans to purchase."⁷³

⁷⁰ MB Parks and Recreation Meeting Minutes, February 27, 2006

⁷¹ Manhattan Beach City Council Meeting recording, April 18, 2006

⁷² MB Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes, May 22, 2006

⁷³ MB City Council Minutes & Recording, July 5, 2006

Residents gave emotional speeches during audience participation. Many of the name change supporters wore large paper hearts with “BB” written on them. Resident Oliver Coker read a letter on behalf of his wife, Lillian Light, saying this was “a chance to right a wrong and honor the Bruce Family... This name would make a statement that ‘we citizens of Manhattan Beach strongly oppose such acts of racial discrimination and will never again allow such acts to occur here’.” Resident Gail Runk said “history must never die because if history dies, the future dies with it. We have an opportunity to honor the past here...for the history the Bruce family enriched our city with.” Resident Patrick McBride, who started the name change discussion 6 months prior, and spoke on its behalf at every meeting, noted the name change also highlighted the significance of the non-violent protest by Elizabeth Catley, the NAACP, and the movement it inspired.⁷⁴

Mayor Ward said he supported the name change because he wanted to “honor the founder of this city, George Peck, for the vision that he had.” He felt it was a grave error to not recognize the true importance of the land. Mayor Pro Tem Tell indicated he would support changing the name of the park to Bruce's Beach. Mayor Mitch Ward made a motion, and Mayor ProTem Nick Tell seconded the motion. Councilmembers Jim Aldinger and Richard Montgomery voted against the name change. With the deciding vote, Councilmember Joyce Fahey voted in favor of changing the name to Bruce's Beach.⁷⁵

On November 8, 2006, city staff presented a report to the Manhattan Beach City Council suggesting text for the new plaque at Bruce's Beach park and asking for \$8,000 to be allocated from the City Council contingency fund. Manhattan Beach resident, Patrick McBride, asked for the item to be pulled from the consent calendar for discussion. During the discussion, McBride expressed concerns about where the plaque wording came from and why experts such as Robert Brigham and Alison Jefferson had not been consulted about the plaque wording. He was also concerned that significant history was not represented. Councilmember Ward stated that a complete history was unnecessary. Council Member Joyce Fahey and Mayor Nick Tell pushed for the inclusion of George Peck in the opening sentence of the plaque wording. Staff was directed to modify the wording to include historical information about George Peck and Bruce's Beach being the only beach open to African Americans at that time.⁷⁶

At the December 5, 2006 meeting, community member Patrick McBride, spoke and once again expressed concern regarding the accuracy of the history reflected in the plaque wording and the need for more time and consideration. He had shared the

⁷⁴ MB City Council Recording, July 5, 2006

⁷⁵ MB City Council Minutes & Recording, July 5, 2006

⁷⁶ MB City Council Minutes & Recording, November 8, 2006

plaque wording with the Center for Law in the Public Interest, a Los Angeles Civil Rights Firm. They were in disagreement with the plaque wording and felt that the driving out of the families was important to include. The council felt strongly that the focus remains on the positive. Mr. McBride shared that several months ago the Center had offered to help the city to raise money for an art piece and to help draw attention to the area and its historical significance. Councilmember Ward and Councilmember Aldinger served on the subcommittee to review the text.⁷⁷

Despite the concerns raised by Mr. McBride, the final wording was unanimously approved by council on December 5, 2006:

Bruce's Beach

In 1912, Mr. George Peck, one of our community's co-founders, made it possible for the beach area below this site to be developed as Bruce's Beach, the only beach resort in Los Angeles County for all people. Charles and Willa Bruce were the African American entrepreneurs who settled here, thus the name Bruce's Beach. This two-block neighborhood was home to several minority families and was condemned through eminent domain proceedings commenced in 1924. Those tragic circumstances reflected the views of a different time. The land was referred to as City Park and Beach Front Park and later named Bayview Terrace Park through a community contest in 1962. The park was designated Parque Culiacan on March 16, 1974, at the time of a visit from representatives of our first Sister City. The Manhattan Beach City Council renamed the park as Bruce's Beach in July 2006, commemorating our community's understanding that friendship, goodwill and respect for all begins within our own boundaries and extends to the world community. All are welcome. A project of Leadership Manhattan Beach Class of 2003.

⁷⁷ MB City Council Recording, December 5, 2006

WORKS CITED

BOOKS

Jefferson, Alison Rose. "Living the California Dream: African American Leisure Sites during the Jim Crow Era." University of Nebraska Press. 2020.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Letter to the City of Manhattan Beach from Willie A. Bruce and Charles A. Bruce, May 16, 1927. Manhattan Beach Historical Society.
- City Clerk Correspondence between Lewellyn Price and H.D. Aron, October 15-16, 1915. Manhattan Beach Historical Society.

MAPS

Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract Map, Manhattan Beach Historical Society.

MINUTES FROM MANHATTAN BEACH CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

- February 19, 1974
- February 18, 2003
- April 15, 2003
- May 6, 2003
- December 6, 2005
- July 5, 2006
- April 18, 2006
- November 8, 2006
- December 5, 2006

MINUTES OF THE OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA,

Minutes of the Office of the Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County, California, Monday, December 2, 1912.

MINUTES FROM THE MANHATTAN BEACH PARKS AND RECREATION MEETING

- February 27, 2006
- May 22, 2006

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

- "Apartment House At Peck Pavilion", *Manhattan Beach News*, December 25, 1915. P. 4.
- "Bruce Beach Front", *The Liberator*, May 31, 1912, p. 5.
- *The California Eagle*. June, 1924.
- *The Beach Reporter*, April 16, 1987
- "Colored People's Resort Meets With Opposition", *Los Angeles Times* (1886-1922); Jun 27, 1912; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. I15
- "Important Business at Council: All Park Protests Denied." *Manhattan Beach News*. September 19, 1924. P. 1
- "Negroes and Pier Building Were Manhattan Problems," *Manhattan Beach News*, February 19, 1943, pp. 1 and 6.
- Rasmussen, Cecila. "Resort Was An Oasis for Blacks Until Racism Drove Them Out", *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 2002. B.4.
- Schoch, Deborah. "Erasing a Line Drawn in the Sand", *Los Angeles Times*; Los Angeles, Calif. [Los Angeles, Calif]19 Mar 2007: B.1.
- Sinsabaugh, Helen A. letter. *The Beach Reporter*. (1987)
- *South Bay Breeze*, November 9, 1954
- *Links Inglewood raid and others forthcoming*

UNITED STATES CENSUS

- Year: 1870; Census Place: Oskaloosa, Jefferson, Kansas; Roll: M593_435; Page: 431A; Family History Library Film: 545934
- Year: 1900; Census Place: *Albuquerque, Bernalillo, New Mexico*; Page: 6; Enumeration District: 0009; FHL microfilm: 1240999
- Year: 1910; Census Place: *Los Angeles Assembly District 71, Los Angeles, California*; Roll: T624_81; Page: 9A; Enumeration District: 0130; FHL microfilm: 1374094
- Year: 1920; Census Place: *Manhattan Beach, Los Angeles, California*; Roll: T625_118; Page: 2A; Enumeration District: 542

PUBLISHED DISSERTATION

Brigham, Robert L. "Land Ownership And Occupancy By Negroes In Manhattan Beach, CA," diss., Fresno State College, May, 1956, p. 17.

VITAL RECORDS

- California, County Marriages, 1850-1952," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K8ZT-1CJ> : 9 March 2021), William

History of Bruce's Beach - Subcommittee Report - 03/09/2021

Walker in entry for Harry Bruce and Meda Mildred Simmons, 16 Jun 1921; citing Los Angeles, California, United States, county courthouses, California; FHL microfilm 2,074,270.

- *U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

[LINK TO APPENDIX AND RESOURCES](#)

Appendix 2

Resolution of Apology

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
ACKNOWLEDGING AND APOLOGIZING FOR HISTORIC RACIALLY
EXCLUSIONARY POLICIES AND PRACTICES AND COMMITTING TO REDRESSING
THE ENDURING NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF RACIAL EXCLUSION

The City Council of the City of Manhattan Beach does hereby resolve and order as follows:

Section 1. Racism and its Effects

- A. Racism is deeply ingrained in American society and has been since its founding, and continues to this day to undermine Black Americans and other communities of color. Historically and through to the current day, systemic racism limits Black Americans' access to wealth accumulation, employment, housing, healthcare, equally funded education, justice, and beyond.
- B. Racist practices in our country and community, both overtly adopted and exercised in the guise of legitimate policy, have formed a complex system of racially motivated discrimination against Black Americans and other persons of color, resulting in economic, educational, criminal justice, and health adversities.
- C. By this Resolution, the City of Manhattan Beach formally recognizes, acknowledges and regrets the institutionalization of racism that led to past injustices within this community. This acknowledgement is the first step in a formal apology, and its journey to becoming an anti-racist community that promotes equality and rejects racism and racial inequities.
- D. To heal and continue to evolve into a city of inclusion, the City of Manhattan Beach must redress the wrongs of its past. An apology has important symbolic value, but is incomplete without City leadership spearheading meaningful efforts to model core values and address persistent racial disparities and discrimination in our community.
- E. We as a community are better when we are all treated fairly, inclusively, and equitably, with respectful and socially just policies.

Section 2. Racism in Manhattan Beach: Bruce's Beach to Today

- A. During the years from 1912 to 1927, an emerging Black neighborhood took hold in the vicinity of Highland Avenue, the Strand, 26th Street, and 27th Street. Roughly a half dozen Black families purchased property in the neighborhood as residences or visitor-serving businesses, including Willa and Charles A. Bruce, Major George Prioleau and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, Milton and Anna Johnson, John McCaskill and Elisa L. Irvin, and James and Lulu Slaughter.
- B. Willa and Charles A. Bruce established a resort known as Bruce's Beach, with a restaurant, dancehall, changing rooms, and showers. Bruce's Beach became a popular destination for Black Americans from the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area to recreate and enjoy the City's beautiful beach and ocean.
- C. Beginning in 1912, historians have documented that both the Black homeowners and visitors to this neighborhood suffered intimidation, harassment, and discrimination on the basis of their race by Manhattan Beach government officials, the police department, members of a South Bay chapter of the Ku Klux Klan, and other white residents. These acts consisted of:
- (i) Unknown persons setting residences on fire and causing other forms of property damage;
 - (ii) Unknown persons letting out the air from tires of vehicles owned by Black visitors;
 - (iii) An adjacent property owner cordoning off property so as to force Black beachgoers to walk one-half mile from this neighborhood to access the ocean;
 - (iv) The City Council enacting ordinances sharply limiting the creation of new bathhouses and other visitor-serving facilities in direct response to the popularity of Bruce's Beach among the Black American community; and
 - (v) The City endeavouring to privatize the beach by entering into a sham lease of the adjacent beach with a white property owner in order to exclude Black Americans, and then causing its police department to arrest Black Americans (and only Black Americans) who ventured onto the beach.
- D. The purpose of these racially motivated actions was to make Manhattan Beach inhospitable to Black American residents and visitors. Manhattan Beach

residents at the time are on record expressing concern over the effect a Black population in Manhattan Beach would have on property values.

- E. When the acts of intimidation and harassment prior to 1924 did not have the desired effect of excluding Black Americans from the community, white residents, including realtors and civic leaders, pressured and persuaded the City Council to exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire the land for use as a public park. The park was not needed or important to the City; the land remained largely undeveloped for the next 30 years, and has remained unimproved in comparison to other city park land.
- F. The end result of the foregoing actions was to snuff out a flourishing Black American-owned business, which may have impacted Manhattan Beach's future demographics and contributed to a lack of diversity within the community. According to the 2010 census, Black Americans represent 0.8% of the total population of Manhattan Beach.
- G. In subsequent years, Black residents and visitors in the city have regularly reported instances of racial profiling and harassment committed by community residents and the Manhattan Beach Police Department.
- H. Continuing to this day, Black Americans continue to suffer the effects of racial discrimination when renting or purchasing property in the City of Manhattan Beach.
- I. As recently as 2015, an unknown person set fire to the home of a Black family, the culmination of a series of acts of vandalism on their property. An FBI investigation officially ruled the incident a hate crime.

Section 3. Apology

The City of Manhattan Beach formally apologizes for and condemns:

- A. The racially motivated, discriminatory and exclusionary aspects of the City's history and the resultant duress suffered by Black residents and visitors who were impacted by racist acts and City policies and practices.
- B. The role that the City itself played by tolerating racial discrimination and harassment by City residents that went unpunished, causing terror and intimidation among the Black community.
- C. The role that the City played conspiring to exclude Black Americans from its beach and utilizing its police force to enforce such exclusion by way of unlawful and unconstitutional arrests and prosecutions.

- D. The role that the City played enacting facially neutral ordinances with the well-documented intention to discourage the expansion of Black owned commercial hospitality enterprises and to stymie the increasing popularity of the City as a recreation destination for Black Americans in the greater Los Angeles area.
- E. The role that the City played, acquiescing to public pressure by pretextually exercising its powers of eminent domain, to dispossess Willa and Charles A. Bruce, Major George and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, and Milton and Anna Johnson of their rightful property, thereby eradicating a lively and growing Black American neighborhood.
- F. The misuse of government power towards Willa and Charles A. Bruce, Major George and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, and Milton and Anna Johnson. The City directly apologizes to these former property owners for unjustly depriving them of their property without a legitimate public purpose, as is required by the constitution.
- G. The resulting culture of exclusion that discouraged other Black families and families of color from making their home in Manhattan Beach, thereby contributing to calcified economic disadvantage and depriving them of the resources of the City of Manhattan Beach. The long-lasting consequence of this exclusion harmed those it indirectly discouraged and directly ejected from Manhattan Beach, as well as the city's existing residents and visitors.
- H. The City's delay of an overdue reckoning of racial injustice in our community, to the detriment of generations of Manhattan Beach residents.

Section 4. Redress

- A. The City Council pledges as a core value to reject racism and racial inequities in all forms by promoting and sustaining racial equity and justice, and by ensuring anti-racist principles and practices across leadership, staffing, and contracting.
- B. The City Council will review and revise policies, procedures, ordinances, values, goals, and missions through an anti-racism lens in an effort to promote racial equity, and end discrimination and harassment toward any person or group based on race or ethnicity.
- C. The City Council will implement the recommendations of the Bruce's Beach Task Force set forth in its Progress Report dated March 13, 2021 and consider ongoing recommendations put forth by the Task Force.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this __ day of _____, 2021.

MAYOR

Attest:

City Clerk

Appendix 3

Recommendations to the Cultural Arts Commission

- I. Create permanent public art installations at Bruce's Beach through the Cultural Arts Commission, making the history of racial exclusion in the city transparent.
- II. Hire a social practice artist who will engage city residents and others in the development of the art installations. The ultimate form of the art installations would, therefore, arise from community engagement. Since this engagement is essential, the goal of the social practice process will be to include all segments of the community in a conversation about the installations, and then to create art that reflects community sentiments.
- III. The Task Force envisions installations of art that would explain the history of Bruce's Beach in an exhibit within the park, adjacent to the Strand, or on the County property, with consideration given to the following ideas generated from brainstorming by the Task Force and community:
 - A. Be large enough that people can walk through it, into it, or around it, causing the viewer to slow down, think, and learn.
 - B. Be educational, perhaps by incorporating plaques, videos, quotes, old photos, etc. The art piece should tell the history of the Bruce's and the other families of the area. It then could delve into describing more modern racist acts committed here in Manhattan Beach and neighboring communities, and then perhaps teach viewers how racism still exists in our institutions and in our culture.
 - C. Include "contemplative spaces" and "conversation benches", spaces and places for the viewers to consider or discuss what happened then and what continues to happen now.
 - D. Be large and take up space on the grass to reinforce the importance of this subject and underscore how critical it is to learn about it.
 - E. Consider using the ocean as a theme, or creating spaces to integrate an ocean view, because that's what the patrons of Bruce's Beach were there to do.
 - F. Not be an entirely enclosed space, but be open to the sky, to emphasize our freedom in contrast to the lack of freedom the Bruce's and their patrons ultimately suffered. Some enclosed space might be necessary to a) emphasize that they did not have unlimited freedom to be here and enjoy the beach, and b) to create a dark enough space for any video installation.
 - G. Incorporate a place for visitors to place flowers.

- IV. Incorporate QR codes (Quick Response codes) on signage to connect people to a virtual exhibit that they can access on their own, at any time. For example, a specific code located near Lots 8 and 9 in Block 5, where the Bruces' resort stood, could, once scanned, inform visitors about the resort through original photos, newspaper clippings, and the like. By scanning the code with their smartphones or smart devices, visitors would be able to instantly learn more about the resort, see what it looked like in context, access original newspaper clippings and find links to additional information
- V. Work with innovative digital artists to develop an exhibit at the site of Bruce's Beach that would use Augmented Reality (AR). AR combines actual reality with altered reality for an immersive, educational experience using smart phones and similar devices. AR allows visitors using an app on their smart devices to access images, sounds, and specific visual elements of the era of Bruce's Beach, recreating scenes from 1920s Manhattan Beach.
- VI. Establish a space at Bruce's Beach as a location for cultural performances, art exhibits, and celebration of events of significance to the African American community and all other ethnic communities (such as Martin Luther King Day, Juneteenth, etc.). This space requires the creativity of the artist to avoid changing the character of or damaging the view from the park.
- VII. Use the Belmar Art+History project in Santa Monica as an inspiration for what can be created. Parenthetically, Santa Monica's budget for that project was \$500,000.

Appendix 4

Wording of the New Plaque at Bruce's Beach

- I. The wording for a new plaque should include carefully selected facts and messaging communicating the historic significance of Bruce's Beach, all families affected in the eminent domain ruling, and the NAACP swim-in; and the commitment of the city to a path of antiracism.
 - a. The History Subcommittee will propose new wording for the plaque. A professional or historical organization will review for historical accuracy after consensus from the Task Force. The Task Force requests that the City Council authorize an expenditure of up to \$1,000 for consultation fees.
- II. The Task Force recommends that the existing stone monument be replaced with an updated structure.

Appendix 5

Task Force Continued Efforts

The Bruce's Beach Task Force would serve as an advisory body to provide input to the City Council in support of the adopted September 5, 2017 Stand Up Commitment and the recommendations resulting from the continuing work of the Task Force, as described below. The Task Force would work with other South Bay leadership groups such as the El Segundo DEIC and the MBUSD EDSJI on city-wide projects, education and initiatives, and continue to develop a climate of care, equity, diversity, social justice, and inclusion in our community. The Task Force recommends that the City Council authorize it to explore the following initiatives:

1. Conduct an additional community forum in the Spring of 2021 with the goal of educating the community on the history of Bruce's Beach, promoting dialogue and community healing, community engagement, and providing a platform for residents to share their personal stories and experiences. Afterwards, consider the efficacy of conducting additional community forums.
2. Encourage Manhattan Beach homeowners, buyers, sellers, and real estate agents/brokers to (i) check documents in the chain of title on real property in the city, including any Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs) and (ii) if racial covenants are found, submit a Restrictive Covenant modification form to the County of Los Angeles to expunge the covenants. This would be a symbolic gesture to demonstrate rejection of racist practices of the past and signal that all are welcome in Manhattan Beach.
3. Assist the Manhattan Beach Police Department to expedite collection of race-based data with an eye to eliminating racial profiling. The Racial and Identity Profiling Act (AB953) requires that all Police Departments in the State of California collect race-based data, as overseen by the California Department of Justice. The MB Police Department is required to begin collecting this data by January 1, 2022, and reporting the data to the DOJ by April 1, 2023.¹ The Task Force seeks to enable regular RIPA data reports to the City Council on or before December 31, 2021.
4. Facilitate and encourage development of affordable housing units and attendant entitlements within the City.
5. Incentivize City property owners to dedicate rental units and ADUs/JADUs for use as affordable housing.
6. Facilitate the attendance by appropriate City personnel to a two-day Phase I workshop led by the Racial Equity Institute (REI). The mission of these workshops is to help a community grow in its understanding and analysis of

¹ <https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/ripa/ripa-board-report-2020.pdf>

structural racism, and to develop the tools needed to challenge patterns of power and to grow equity.

7. Join at no cost the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all, demonstrating Manhattan Beach's commitment to applying a racial equity lens toward creating a fair and just community, and rejecting all forms of bigotry, hatred, intolerance, racism and violence.
<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/about/our-approach/government/>
8. Hire a DEI expert or organization to audit and consult with the City.
9. Sponsor an annual scholarship of \$1,500 to high school students who will study African American history in college.
10. Sponsor a grant of \$1,000 to graduate students who pursue the study of the racial history of Manhattan Beach.
11. Create a professional educational media piece on the history of Bruce's Beach that would be easily distributable and accessible to South Bay residents and schools.
12. Recruit young people of color for internships in City government and the police cadet program.
13. Collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce to assist local businesses to actively solicit job and internship applications from people of color from outside the City.
14. Collaborate with the City Park and Recreation Department to organize swim instruction targeting youth of color in order to qualify them for the Los Angeles County Junior Lifeguard program or otherwise ensure safety and accessibility to the ocean.
15. Collaborate with the City Parks and Recreation Department and/or in collaboration with nonprofit organizations in order to recruit young people of color into beach volleyball instruction.
16. Collaborate with the City Parks and Recreation Department and/or in collaboration with nonprofit organizations in order to recruit young people of color into programs for water safety and surfing.
17. Diversify programming of the City's summer Concerts in the Park;
18. Organize multicultural youth and family sports and cultural events intended to create diversity and inclusiveness in Manhattan Beach.
19. Organize further Community Forums and Engagement as set forth in Appendix 6.
20. Create a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission (DEIC), tasked with studying and developing proposals to redress the enduring harmful impact of

systemic discrimination against Black Americans and other persons of color, increasing dialogue and awareness, advancing racial equity, and supporting educational and cultural programs for residents of the City of Manhattan Beach to focus on systemic racism and elevate culturally diverse artistic expression.

21. Collaborate with the County of Los Angeles as authorized by the City Council with regard to the future disposition of the County lifeguard headquarters on the land formerly owned by the Bruce's.

Appendix 6

Community Forum And Community Engagement

INTRODUCTION

In response to the civil unrest triggered by the killing of George Floyd in early 2020, the city put on a virtual forum on policing and partnerships, which was well attended and well received. We want to build upon this experience by holding additional, ongoing forums. Only by engaging the community and hearing their voices can racial healing truly begin. By holding ongoing community forums, we can educate residents, and the public in general, on the history of Bruce's Beach as well as provide a platform where people can share their personal stories and experiences.

We sponsored a successful Community Forum on February 25, 2021 and are proposing one additional virtual community forum in the Spring of 2021 . This forum will target students in middle and high school and will be co-created with members of the MBUSD's Committee on Equity, Diversity and Social Justice. The panel of speakers will include representatives from the MBUSD student body, MBUSD Committee on Equity, Diversity and Social Justice and Bruce's Beach History Subcommittee.

Of course, this is not enough. We believe that there must be ongoing community consultation and engagement to address the issues of racism in Manhattan Beach, past and present.

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY FORUMS

As the pandemic subsides and it becomes safe to do so, we hope to have in-person community forums. These forums are intended to explore various topics. These would include positive examples of progress in the areas of racial justice and equality, as well as discussions on community experiences of racism and microaggressions, discriminations in schools, State and National African American history, city apologies, discussion of Sundown Towns, black contribution to the forming of the nation, notable African American authors, etc.

DEDICATED WEBSITE AND VIRTUAL FORUM

Develop and maintain a robust and professional website that will attract the attention of the public and encourage them to explore and engage with the content presented. The website would present the history of Bruce's Beach, as developed by the history subcommittee, host a platform to announce community events and forums, and provide

a moderated space where the current experiences of people of color in Manhattan Beach can be shared and made visible. This can be accomplished, even anonymously, on the website with videos and written comments that are vetted before publication.

BUDGET

Website (set up costs)	Time	Cost	Budget
Domain Cost	1 (yearly)	\$50	\$50
Hosting Cost	12 (monthly)	\$25	\$300
Website Development	40 (hours)	\$100	\$4,000
Website Design	40 (hours)	\$60	\$2,400
Content (Videographer & Editor)	80 (hours)	\$85	\$6,800
Maintenance/Upkeep	1 (yearly)	\$1,000	\$1,000
Misc.	1 (yearly)	\$450	\$450
Total			\$15,000

*Estimated Yearly Website Upkeep Cost \$1,800 a year

* Can explore in kind donations to run the website