

A STATEMENT OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
ACKNOWLEDGING, EMPATHIZING, AND CONDEMNING THE CITY'S ROLE IN THE
RACIALLY MOTIVATED CONDEMNATION OF PROPERTIES IN THE AREA KNOWN
AS BRUCE'S BEACH:

The City Council of the City of Manhattan Beach does hereby find as follows:

- A. During the years from 1912 to 1927, in and around the area bordered by 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, after being turned away at other seaside cities, 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 some Manhattan Beach government officials, and other White residents. These acts reportedly consisted of:
 - a. Unknown persons setting residences on fire and causing other forms of property damage;
 - b. Unknown persons letting out the air from tires of vehicles owned by Black visitors;
 - c. An adjacent property owner cordoning off property per the then legal laws of Segregation, so as to force Black beachgoers to walk one-half mile from this neighborhood to access the ocean;
 - d. 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
 - e. The City endeavoring 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 ostensible purpose of these actions was to make Manhattan Beach inhospitable to Black American residents and visitors. Some 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. Some White residents, including realtors and civic leaders, pressured and persuaded the City Council to exercise its power of eminent domain to acquire the land for use as a public park.
- F. The City-condemned properties included those of Black property owners Willa and Charles A. Bruce, Major George Prioleau and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, Milton and Anna Johnson. Twenty-five other properties owned by eighteen White property owners were also condemned as part of the action.
- G. As a result of the racially motivated condemnation proceedings undertaken by the City, a flourishing Black American-owned business was closed. A burgeoning Black neighborhood was forced to relocate to other areas of Manhattan Beach. This included four of the five Black families and all of the White families. The Bruce Family decided to leave the area.

Now, therefore be it stated that the City of Manhattan Beach formally Acknowledges, Empathizes, and Condemns:

The City's racially motivated eminent domain action to dispossess Willa and Charles A. Bruce, Major George and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, Milton and Anna Johnson, as well as White property owners, of their property.

The Manhattan Beach of today is not the Manhattan Beach of one hundred years ago. The community and population of the City of Manhattan Beach are loving, tolerant and welcoming to all. We reject racism, hate, intolerance and exclusion.

Today's residents are not responsible for the actions of others 100 years ago. However, we offer this Acknowledgement and Condemnation as a foundational act for Manhattan Beach's next one hundred years and the actions we will take together, to the best of our abilities, in deeds and in words, to reject prejudice and hate and promote respect and inclusion.

By a 4-1 vote, with Councilmember Stern voting no, the City Council approved this statement on April 6, 2021.

/s/ Suzanne Hadley
SUZANNE HADLEY
Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/ Liza Tamura
LIZA TAMURA
City Clerk