

RESOLUTION NO. 23-0037

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH ACKNOWLEDGING AND APOLOGIZING FOR THE CITY'S ROLE IN THE RACIALLY MOTIVATED CONDEMNATION OF PROPERTIES IN THE AREA KNOWN AS BRUCE'S BEACH

RECITALS

- a. During the years from 1912 to 1927, in and around the area bordered by Highland Avenue, the Strand, 26th Street, and 27th Street, five Black families purchased property as residences or visitor-serving businesses, including Willa and Charles A. Bruce, Major George Prioleau and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, and Milton and Anna Johnson.
- 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, and other white residents. These acts consisted of:
 - i. Unknown persons setting residences on fire and causing other forms of property damage;
 - ii. The City Council enacting ordinances sharply limiting the creation of new bathhouses and other visitor-serving facilities, creating obstacles for traditional beachgoing experiences i.e. changing into bathing suits and making parking difficult in the area around Bruce's Beach, in direct response to the popularity of Bruce's Beach among the Black American community; and
 - iii. 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 purpose of these racially motivated 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. When the acts of intimidation and harassment prior to 1924 did not have the desired effect of excluding Black Americans from the community, some white residents, including realtors and civic leaders, pressured and persuaded the Board of Trustees, the precursor to 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 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 and a burgeoning Black neighborhood was scattered. This action, together with the now illegal practices of red-lining and racially restrictive property covenants, contributed to a lack of diversity within the community.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH FORMALLY APOLOGIZES FOR:

1. The City's racially motivated and discriminatory condemnation action to dispossess Willa and Charles A. Bruce, Major George and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, Milton and Anna Johnson, and all other property owners of their rightful property. The City directly apologizes to these former property owners for unjustly taking their property under false pretenses.
2. The role that the City played by tolerating racial discrimination and harassment by City residents that went unpunished, causing terror and intimidation among the Black community, including other nearby Black property owners John McCaskill, Elzia Irvin, James and Lula Slaughter, and James and Anna Janet Leggett, as well as the Black visitors who sought beach access here.
3. 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.

4. 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.
5. The City's overdue recognition of these events to the detriment of generations of Manhattan Beach residents.

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

To that end, the City of Manhattan Beach unanimously adopted the Stand Up Inclusion Commitment on September 5, 2017, which states:

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.

We remain committed to these principles as a community, in deeds as well as words. We don't seek to condemn or divide, rather, we seek understanding and healing. An apology can't change the events of one hundred years ago, nor are today's residents responsible for the past actions of others. However, we offer this apology as a foundational act for Manhattan Beach's next one hundred years and the actions we will take together to Stand Up against prejudice and hate, and for respect and inclusion. It is long overdue.

ADOPTED on April 4, 2023.

AYES:
NOES:
ABSENT:
ABSTAIN:

RICHARD MONTGOMERY
Mayor

ATTEST:

LIZA TAMURA
City Clerk