

DRAFT RESOLUTION

TITLE: Establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Process for the City of Madison

WHEREAS, the City of Madison was incorporated in 1856, and

WHEREAS, Madison has been home to Black residents since at least 1839; and,

WHEREAS, in 1900, Madison's Black population was 69 people, divided into only 19 households. Most of them were transplanted from Milwaukee or migrated from southern states. This small community was instrumental in welcoming other African Americans who moved to Madison during the period because hotels and most landlords would not house Black people: and,

WHEREAS, in local writer, Muriel Simms's book, *SETTLIN' Stories of Madison's Early African American Families*, the author stated that "early African Americans came to Madison to find work or attend school". Despite most having formal education and various academic degrees, they were relegated to domestic, janitorial, maintenance and other menial jobs.

WHEREAS, early African Americans living in Madison faced racial discrimination in all facets of their lives, especially in renting options and home ownership; and,

WHEREAS, Redlining has its origins in the development of government homeownership programs in the 1930s that offered insured mortgages as a form of aid during the Depression: and,

WHEREAS, Black neighborhoods were often deemed too risky for investment, and were indicated by color-coded maps. Racially restrictive covenants were included in deeds of homes to prevent people of color from moving into predominantly white neighborhoods; and,

WHEREAS, one example would be, Black celebrity chef Carson Gulley and his wife faced multiple and persistent instances of housing discrimination in Madison between the 1930s and the 1950s, finally being able to purchase land to build a home in the Crestwood development in 1953 after a contentious housing co-operative meeting to remove the restrictive covenant from the deed; and,

WHEREAS, zoning and restrictive covenants worked together in Madison in the 1920s and 1930s, when realtors were looking at how essentially to develop the west side as exclusive, often restricted suburbs, and how essentially to concentrate noxious things like industry, and keep it on the east side; and

WHEREAS, that meant then that zoning policy in Madison, such as where industry is going to go, where can commerce go and what's going to be exclusively residential, tracks with existing, at the time, patterns of industrial use barriers such as railroad tracks and racial demography as well; and

WHEREAS, we get the pattern where the most contaminated, unsafe and essentially restricted or boxed-in areas ... also became areas ... where essentially you have some of the most marginalized people in Madison living. You essentially can look at the combination of racial segregation and land use in Madison as reflected by what happened in cities across the country over time; and

WHEREAS, gentrification couldn't happen without this sort of older configuration of redlining, of discriminatory zoning, of associating property value with race. It's really hard to see any element of urban planning or urban life that is untouched by a long history of segregation.

WHEREAS, in the mid-20th century, Madison did not prevent the destruction of the ethnically diverse Greenbush neighborhood in south Madison in a quest for “urban renewal”; and, a 1963 Capital Times headline declared *Beld Street Area Decays Under Absentee Ownership- Owners Strangling Negro Ghetto*.

WHEREAS, in according to 1960 census information, a Black wage earner in Madison made \$2,339 per year, compared to \$4,220 for white earners; and these disturbing trends continue to this day; and,

WHEREAS, even now, Madison is known as a “tale of two cities” due to its stark racial and ethnic disparities; and

WHEREAS, as of 2019, the ratio of the annual household income of the top 20% to the bottom 20% of households in Madison is 4.8 to 1; and,

WHEREAS, there are dramatic racial disparities in rates of income poverty in Madison, with 3.6% of the white population experiencing income poverty, in contrast to 22.8% of the Black population; and,

WHEREAS, in 2013, the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families Race to Equity Project published *Race to Equity: A Baseline Report on the State of Racial Disparities in Dane County*, which documented extreme disparities in many aspects of life; and,

WHEREAS, as of 2019, although Black residents make up 5.5% of the Dane County population, 45.9% of the individuals incarcerated in the Dane County Jail are Black; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2021 report by the JFA Institute, “about 10% of all Blacks are arrested at least once a year in Dane County as opposed to 1% for all other racial and ethnic groups”; and,

WHEREAS, Madison has disparities in the rate of health insurance coverage by race and ethnicity, with 2.6 percent of white residents being uninsured, as compared to 9.3 percent of Black, Madisonians; and,

WHEREAS, in 2011, Department of Public Instruction data showed that Madison’s black students were significantly less likely to graduate high school on time (49.9%) than African Americans living elsewhere in the state (63%). In 2019, 10.4% of Black students scored proficient or advanced in math, compared to 60.6% of white students. In social studies, 13.2% of Black students scored in one of the top two categories in 2018-19, with 67.7% of their white peers doing the same.

WHEREAS, in January 2014, the City of Madison approved a resolution ([RES-14-00919](#)) recognizing the role of the Common Council in addressing institutionalized bias and proactively advancing racial equity;

WHEREAS, in 2019, the City of Madison approved a resolution ([RES-19-00731](#)) recognizing racism as a public health issue; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Madison establishes a Truth and Reconciliation Implementation Workgroup] chosen by the City of Madison Equal Opportunities Commission to research and make recommendations on how to create a truth and reconciliation process for Madison that engages Black residents and organizations in a citywide effort to address and repair the harms perpetuated on Black individuals and communities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Workgroup will be staffed by the Department of Civil Rights and include key stakeholders representing Black community members and organizations that serve Black communities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Truth and Reconciliation Implementation Workgroup will undertake the following tasks:

- Meet at least bi/monthly
- Design and facilitate the implementation of a Truth and Reconciliation Process.
- Host a community forum/s to allow opportunities for Black residents to voice their grievances around past injustices within the City of Madison.
- Facilitate a community forum/s with expert presenter/s on reconciliation and healing.
- Draft a report to submit to the City of Madison's Equal Opportunities Commission and then introduced to the Madison Common Council detailing policy recommendations that the City of Madison could implement to address past wrongs.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Truth and Reconciliation Workgroup will provide a final report to the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Common Council by December 31st, 2022

Sources:

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Muriel Simms, *SETTLIN' Stories of Madison's Early African American Families*, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2018