

PROCLAMATION

WE THE RESIDENTS OF ASBURY PARK acknowledge over a hundred year history of racial and socio-economic disparity and a lack of inclusion in the city and pledge individually to rectify

Asbury Park was founded in 1871 and the population has always been racially and socio-economically diverse. From the very beginning, the white founders of the town enforced race and class based segregation, dividing black and white populations by Main Street and the Railroad tracks; lower income communities of color on the West Side and higher income white communities on the East Side. While there have been strides toward equality the divide has continued. Even today the city struggles with redevelopment that is lopsided in favor of the East Side and is not always inclusive of or beneficial to those on the West Side. This was demonstrated at recent meetings where residents were encouraged to provide input to the City Master Plan. At these meetings planning for the future of Asbury Park, professionals who were presenting as well as volunteers taking input were over 90% white.

The villain of this disparity is systemic racism, which gives institutionalized benefits to people of European descent and disadvantage to people of color. This is often referred to as “white privilege”. This expression (to paraphrase The Washington Post) is a term that many white Americans instinctively don’t trust or believe to be real. It is a set of unearned assets that white people in America can count on each day but to which many remain oblivious. In areas of health, education, housing, and criminalization (among others) it advantages white people over people of color regardless of wealth, gender or other factors.

Residents feel that if we don’t do something now to stem the tide of inequitable redevelopment propelled by white privilege, we will lose the cultural diversity that is the heart and soul of Asbury Park.

WHEREAS, according to census data provided in the 2006 Master Plan, the population of Asbury Park is 76% people of color but boards, commissions and city administration are disproportionately white, and

WHEREAS, by definition “white privilege” results in cultural advantages in a non-inclusionary manner, and residents of Asbury Park choose not to support, encourage or otherwise foster this practice, and

WHEREAS, we the undersigned residents of Asbury Park continue to practice, explore, celebrate and share their cultural differences and histories, and

WHEREAS, we the undersigned residents of Asbury Park recognize that systemic racism has resulted in white privilege and has existed in our country for centuries and in Asbury Park since its founding, and

THEREFORE, we the undersigned residents of Asbury Park are seeking to act to eliminate such inequalities and non-inclusionary practices, each in our own way as our resources and powers allow and

THEREFORE, we the undersigned residents acknowledge that such inequalities exist today and pledge to take action to overcome such inequities and make Asbury Park a city of inclusion.

The vision of signers of this Proclamation is to bridge the diversity gap within our beloved city. We are committed to expand our understanding of our cultural differences while deepening our appreciation for each other’s cultural upbringing. We will work toward gaining a greater understanding of our similarities and differences with the intention of gaining a heightened sense of compassion and respect for one another.

February, 2019