

BY COUNCIL PRESIDENT MARY SHEFFIELD

RESOLUTION OF APOLOGY TO THE BLACK RESIDENTS OF DETROIT

WHEREAS, the mission of the Detroit City Council is to promote the economic, cultural, and physical welfare of Detroit's citizens through Charter-mandated legislative functions; and

WHEREAS, the City of Detroit acknowledges its historical role in perpetuating systemic racism and discrimination against Black residents, which has resulted in generations of harm, inequality, and injustice; and

WHEREAS, the City recognizes the painful history from the 1920's to the present day, including events such as the 1943 Detroit race riot, where racial tensions erupted into violence resulting in deaths and injuries predominantly within the Black community; and

WHEREAS, the City acknowledges that throughout the 1960's police misconduct in Detroit and its brutality served as a broader effort to control blacks, contain them in segregated neighborhoods, and relegate them to second class citizenship; and

WHEREAS, the City recognizes the devastating impact of the 1967 riot, which stemmed from decades of racial segregation, police brutality, and economic disparities leading to widespread destruction of Black neighborhoods, loss of lives and displacement of families; and

WHEREAS, the City acknowledges the brutality of police squads such as the Big 4 and STRESS (Stop the Robberies, Enjoy Safe Streets) which was responsible for the death of two dozen people, many in questionable circumstances, and almost all the victims were black;¹ and

WHEREAS, the City acknowledges the 1992 death of motorist Malice Green at the hands of Detroit police officers after being struck on the head 14 times with a heavy flashlight² is only one amongst many instances where a black Detroiter has lost his life due to police brutality; and

WHEREAS, the City acknowledges in 2003 after an investigation documented police abuses ranging from excessive use of deadly force to poor conditions of confinement, city officials entered into two consent agreements with the U.S. Justice Department to clean up the cruelties in DPD³; and

WHEREAS, the City recognizes the failure to adequately address the educational needs of black students, offering inferior curriculums to Black Students, practicing racial gerrymandering with attendance boundaries, and overloading classes in black schools, perpetuating a "separate and unequal" education system;⁴and

WHEREAS, the City recognizes that through policies put into place by the city, the insidious practice of redlining, which systematically denied black residents access to housing loans and

¹ Bill McGraw, Detroit Free Press, DPD's troubled relationship with Black Detroiters spans decades, June 14, 2020

² Ibid, B. McGraw

³ Ibid, B. McGraw

⁴ Jeffery Mirel, the Rise, and Fall of an Urban school system: Detroit 1907-81. Second edition (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Regional, 1999)

resources isolated the Black community into specific areas that were systematically disinvested,⁵ and

WHEREAS, the City recognizes the deliberate actions taken to disenfranchise Black residents through urban planning decisions, such as the construction of freeways and industrial factories, which resulted in the destruction of vibrant Black neighborhoods like Black Bottom and Paradise Valley, displacing thousands of families and destroying hundreds of Black owned businesses; and

WHEREAS, the City acknowledges that the construction of freeways, including Interstate 75 and Interstate 375, routed through established black communities, irreparably harmed Detroit's black population by eliminating opportunities to create generational wealth, and further perpetuating social and economic disparities; and

WHEREAS, the City acknowledges the harmful impacts of discriminatory practices in employment, healthcare, and other areas, which have disproportionately affected Black residents and perpetuated cycles of poverty and marginalization; and

WHEREAS, the City recognizes that these actions were part of a broader pattern of systemic racism and institutionalized discrimination that continues to impact Black residents to this day;

NOW, therefore be it resolved by the Detroit City Council:

1. The City of Detroit hereby formally apologizes to its Black residents for the historical and ongoing injustices, discrimination, and harm inflicted upon them.
2. The City acknowledges and condemns the legacy of systemic racism and its profound impact on the lives of Black residents.
3. The City commits to addressing the root causes of racial inequality and injustice by implementing policies and initiatives aimed at promoting racial equity, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of civic life.
4. The City pledges to work collaboratively with Black community leaders, organizations, and residents to develop and implement strategies to dismantle systemic racism and promote racial justice.
5. The City commits to providing resources, support, and opportunities to Black communities to address disparities in education, employment, housing, healthcare, and other areas of concern.
6. The City reaffirms its commitment to fostering a culture of respect, understanding, and tolerance, where all residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, or background, are treated with dignity and equality.
7. The City calls upon other governmental entities, institutions, and organizations to join in this commitment to confront and eradicate racism in all its forms.
8. The City encourages ongoing dialogue, education, and awareness efforts to promote racial healing, reconciliation, and understanding among its residents.

This resolution shall take effect immediately upon its passage.

⁵Ibid,13

