

**RESOLUTION
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BOWIE, MARYLAND
IN THE EFFORT OF ADVANCING RACIAL AND INTERSECTIONAL EQUITY**

WHEREAS, in 1619, the first Africans – seized from a captured Portuguese slave ship – reached the British colonies in Point Comfort, Virginia, near Jamestown, and were sold as slaves; and

WHEREAS, in 1640, a Virginia court sentenced John Punch, an African, to a lifetime of slavery after he attempted to flee his service, marking the first legal sanctioning of slavery in the colonies; and

WHEREAS, in 1662 the Virginia royal colony approved a law stating that children born in the colony would take on the social status of their mother, which meant that children could be born into slavery, making African ancestry synonymous with institutional slavery; and

WHEREAS, in 1664, Maryland passed a law making Black men, women, and children enslaved for life; and

WHEREAS, at the founding of the United States in 1776, slavery was legal in all 13 colonies, still represented by the 13 stripes on the American flag today, and under the law, enslaved persons were treated as property to be bought, sold or given away; and

WHEREAS, in 1787, at the United States Constitutional Convention, delegates created the three-fifths clause, which defined how enslaved persons would be counted when determining a state's total population, rendering the worth of an enslaved person as 3/5 of a person and;

WHEREAS, Black men, women, and children were bought and sold as slave labor for nearly 250 years and suffered unspeakable acts of violence, including assault, rape, mutilation, and murder at the hands of their captors; and

WHEREAS, by the year of 1800, enslaved persons made up fifty eight percent (58%) of the population in Prince George's County; and

WHEREAS, in 1863, Abraham Lincoln declared enslaved persons in rebelling states free with the Emancipation Proclamation, though slaves in Prince George's County, as part of the Union, would not be freed until November 1864; and

WHEREAS, slavery was not officially abolished in all the United States until the Thirteenth Amendment was passed in 1865; and

WHEREAS, the Civil Rights Act of 1866 guaranteed citizenship to all males born within the jurisdiction of the United States, though Black citizens faced persistent discriminatory treatment; and

WHEREAS, many states instituted Black Codes, or Black Laws, used to restrict the civil and political rights of newly emancipated Black Americans as well as forcing them to work for lower wages than Whites; and

WHEREAS, the Black Codes would be the first in a long line of systematic oppression instituted at all levels of government, to restrict the freedoms of Black Americans; and

WHEREAS, in 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified giving Black men the right to vote, though they faced laws and loopholes restricting them from exercising that right; and

WHEREAS, gerrymandering, poll taxes and literacy tests systematically disenfranchised Black voters who, as former enslaved persons, had no wealth, earned lower wages, and had not received needed education; and

WHEREAS, the Fifteenth Amendment prompted a century of violence from radical white supremacist groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, aimed at suppressing Black Americans and keeping them from exercising their rights, including the right to vote; and

WHEREAS, numerous states adopted Jim Crow laws perpetuating racist legal and social systems from before Civil War, resulting in the treatment of Black Americans as second-class citizens: and

WHEREAS, the United States saw over a century of state-sanctioned violence against Black citizens, enterprises, and communities despite the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments and the adoption of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968: and

WHEREAS, Oden Bowie, who served as Governor of Maryland from 1869 to 1872, was among the state's largest slaveholders and increased the number of enslaved persons he owned when he assumed control of Fairview; and

WHEREAS, when thousands of houses were built and sold during a seven-year period of unprecedented growth in Bowie, Levitt & Sons refused to sell new homes to Black residents, and the discriminatory sales practices only stopped when compelled by a County open-housing ordinance in 1967; and

WHEREAS, Black Americans across the country continue to experience inequalities in many aspects of daily life including, but not limited to, policing, housing, education, employment, and health, which erodes the quality of life of Black citizens and undermines their equal participation in society and government; and

WHEREAS, the killings of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, Alton Sterling, Philando Castille, Stephon Clark, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, as well as numerous others unlawfully detained, maimed, or injured, have once again forced our community and country to confront the unacceptable devaluation of Black life; and

WHEREAS, approximately fifty-three percent (53.2%) of the residents of the City of Bowie today identify as Black or African American, and an additional ten percent (10%) identify as other non-White races and ethnicities; and

WHEREAS, Bowie residents deserve government that supports their dignity and demands their fair and equal treatment; and

WHEREAS, it is indisputable that Black lives matter and the lives of people of color matter; and

WHEREAS, discrimination has historically and recently taken many insidious forms, targeting numerous vulnerable groups of people, and deserves the attention of federal, state, and local government.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Bowie, Maryland directs the City Manager, or his appointed staff, to develop with the City of Bowie Diversity Committee by October 19, 2020 proposals for a citywide review of all City of Bowie policies and practices to ensure ongoing best practices in non-discrimination, to continue to the work of promoting intersectional equity, and to further the city's active partnership in the work of building social justice.

INTRODUCED by the Council of the City of Bowie, Maryland at a regular meeting on the ____ day of September, 2020.

PASSED by the Council of the City of Bowie, Maryland at a regular meeting on the ____ day of September, 2020.

Attest:

Awilda Hernandez
City Clerk

Timothy J. Adams
Mayor