

Resolution 2015-08

A RESOLUTION ACKNOWLEDGING THE RACIALLY EXCLUSIONARY PAST OF GOSHEN, INDIANA, AS A 'SUNDOWN TOWN'

WHEREAS, the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America and the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. Flag establish liberty and justice for all in this nation; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Census reported that the “Negro” population of Goshen in 1890 was 21, but by 1910 it was 2; and

WHEREAS, historical studies by multiple independent researchers confirm that Goshen was a “sundown town” for approximately the first two-thirds of the 20th century; and

WHEREAS, such towns excluded—often by social and cultural means, including police profiling—members of non-white racial and ethnic groups, particularly African Americans, from living in said jurisdictions or even being inside the city limits after sundown; and

WHEREAS, the Goshen City Utility, the Goshen Mayor’s Office, and the Goshen Chamber of Commerce put the City’s exclusionary reputation in writing in a number of publications from the mid-1930s to the late 1970s; and

WHEREAS, some real-estate developers and residents of Goshen subdivisions used and reinforced restrictive language in property deeds and covenants that kept African Americans from purchasing property and living in those subdivisions for several decades in the 20th century; and

WHEREAS, there is written, oral, and pictorial documentation that some Goshen residents did not support Goshen’s exclusionary attitudes and practices, but there also is written, oral, and pictorial documentation that a pro-white mentality prevailed among some of Goshen’s citizenry and leadership for many decades in the 20th century; and

WHEREAS, the Goshen Ministerial Association (GMA) in 1964 issued a public statement expressing dismay regarding residents’ fears of “Negroes” moving to Goshen—and called for open and fair housing; and

WHEREAS, healthy individuals and healthy communities are able to recognize past mistakes (“sundown town” activities in Goshen were and remain unacceptable and contrary to our U.S. Constitution), admit when they have been wrong, and resolve to make improvements in the future; and

WHEREAS, Goshen already has made significant progress in promoting racial equality—as symbolized by establishing in 1996 an annual Diversity Day and the Human Relation Commission (which had been part of the GMA), approving in 2000 the placement at Goshen’s City limits of welcoming signage that said “We Promote Tolerance” and “Embracing Diversity,” and instituting in 2004 the Community Relations Commission as part of City government; and

WHEREAS, the City of Goshen, Goshen Chamber of Commerce, Goshen Community Schools, Goshen College and others are working together to tell the compelling stories (past and present) of our increasingly diverse community—all for the good of Goshen; and

WHEREAS, Goshen residents are justifiably proud of how we seek to work toward the common good of everyone in the community—and in pursuing that goal the City of Goshen would be uncommonly great in acknowledging our community’s “sundown town” past.

NOW, THEREFORE, AS THE COMMUNITY OF GOSHEN, INDIANA, WE HEREBY:

- Acknowledge the racist and exclusionary aspects of Goshen's "sundown town" history, along with the pain and suffering that these practices caused; and
- Resolve to follow the example and counsel of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by examining our own hearts today, then seeking to eliminate from our thoughts, words, and actions all racism, prejudice, and discrimination—replacing those negative characteristics with the positive attributes of acceptance, harmony, and a spirit of cooperation; and
- Commit to being an uncommonly great community through our advocacy for equality and justice for all; and
- Plledge to work toward the common good in building a community where people of all races and cultural backgrounds are welcome to live and prosper; and
- Summarize this resolution in nine words: *It happened, it was wrong, it's a new day.*

PASSED by the Goshen Common Council on March 17, 2015.

Allan Kauffman
Allan Kauffman, Presiding Officer

Attest:

Tina M. Bontrager
Tina M. Bontrager, Clerk-Treasurer

PRESENTED to the Mayor of the City of Goshen on March 18, 2015, at 3:00
a.m. (p.m.)

Tina M. Bontrager
Tina M. Bontrager, Clerk-Treasurer

APPROVED and ADOPTED on March 19, 2015.

Allan Kauffman
Allan Kauffman, Mayor