

Glendale Leads California in Publicly Apologizing for Its 'Sundown Town' Past

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Glendale, where less than 2 percent of residents identify as Black, has become the first California city—and the third in the nation—to publicly apologize for its racist history, with the city council unanimously passing a resolution this week addressing its history as a “sundown town,” a term applied to places that barred Black people from being in city limits after dark.

The resolution is seen among activists and council members as an important first step in addressing larger issues of systemic racism in the city.

“[The city] has that legacy and it makes sense to address that head-on,” Glendale City Councilman Dan Brotman said, adding that the resolution commits local officials “to look at how we conduct affairs in Glendale and look at how racism may be playing a role.”

The resolution comes through the efforts of local Black activists, who have been working to get Glendale, once the headquarters of the American Nazi Party, to take ownership of its painful, fraught past.

Tara Peterson, an organizer for the Coalition for an Anti-Racist Glendale told [NBC Los Angeles](#) there was value to acknowledging what the city once was, but also articulating its current values and its plan to address and redress its problems going forward.

“It’s extremely empowering and makes a community feel like they can come together and now we can think about healing and reconciliation,” said Peterson.

Tanita Harris-Ligons echoed Peterson’s comments in an interview with the [Los Angeles Times](#) pointing out that when she first moved to Glendale in 2008, locals kept asking her where she was visiting from—a subtle but clear indication, she says, that they couldn’t register a Black person might actually live there.

Her experiences, as well as those of her son, prompted Harris-Ligons to start the community and advocacy group Black in Glendale, which also backed the recent resolution.

“To me, this resolution symbolizes shifting your mindset and shifting your consciousness about inclusivity and acknowledging that there are other people in Glendale,” she said.

As the LA Times notes, despite its reputation as a progressive vanguard for the rest of the country, California was historically home to at least 100 “sundown towns”—a name derived from signs that used to appear on city borders warning Black people to stay away once the sun set. Though Jim Crow was never codified in California the way it was in the South, towns like Burbank and Pasadena also shared some of the same exclusionary practices, like segregating swimming pools and barring non-whites from housing.

In at least 50 California towns, Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans were the primary focus of sundown laws during the 1870s and 1880s, James Loewen, a sociologist and historian told the Times.

While there were never explicit “sundown” laws officially in Glendale’s books, city records show officials routinely restricted the movement of people of color in the southern California city, such as police physically escorting nonwhite people outside Glendale city limits.

With its latest resolution, Glendale joins just two other American cities—La Crosse, Wis., and Goshen, Ind.—that have publicly acknowledged and apologized for its sundown past. As NBC Los Angeles reports, the Glendale city council says part of the resolution includes hiring an investigator to analyze the city’s racial history and connect it to how racial bias may be impacting its current hiring practices, housing and police policies.

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