

RESTON BLACK FOCUS WHAT? WHY? HOW?

INTRODUCTION

Reston Black Focus is a group formed by black Restonians who are concerned that black people participate as citizens of Reston and that black culture and life styles not be lost. Reston Black Focus will serve as a framework for black cultural, educational, and civic activities. The following paragraphs discuss some of the reasons for having such a group, present the organizational structure and the current concerns and active projects of Reston Black Focus.

BASIC PREMISES

A new town is special to a black man. We support the Reston concept: a diverse integrated community where men can comfortably and meaningfully live, work and raise families. The developer has indicated that Reston will be in large part what its citizens make it. Black Restonians have an even larger stake in the complete fulfillment of the Reston concept than do most citizens; the black family has limited choices. Black people must be able to look to "new towns" for housing, schooling and recreational facilities unencumbered by the built in racism prevalent in "old" urban and suburban systems.

This special, personal involvement that we feel in the success of the Reston concept is accompanied by unique capabilities to participate in guiding Reston's development. Black people have seen and experienced the worst of urban environments. We have seldom participated in the decision-making but have often lived in and with the results of laissez-faire and "standard operating procedures". From these experiences black people have developed keen sensitivities to the potential ramifications of certain types of expedient and "sound business" decisions. These sensitivities are useful guides for examining and if necessary proposing alternatives to the policies and practices of the developers and other groups active in the community.

We also know that the black middle class cannot avoid the negative ramifications of political and economic exploitation of black people. None of us has made it until all of us have made it. Thus, the conditions of low income families in Reston, of black people in the immediate vicinity and in the entire metropolitan Washington, D. C. area are relevant to the successful development of this new town.

American society forces on the black citizen an awareness that he is something different, but offers few opportunities for establishing identity or collective worth. We have been robbed of our cultural traditions, and of the knowledge of our artistic, social and scientific accomplishments - the natural basis for establishment of collective worth. We must assure that we are not invisible men with no past. We need to intensely explore our history, our culture and the creation of this society. We must come to better understand ourselves and present to our children a non-racist view of who they are and their relationships to each other and to the positive development of America.

Black people working together on their unique problems does not mean opposition to anyone, anymore than Jewish, Italian or Irish people working together. Reston Black Focus would, however, oppose decisions in the community which would allow it to drift back to the old patterns of neighborhood exclusiveness by race and class. These patterns have consistently destroyed the ability of American society to change and grow. A new town must, if it is to be truly open, have all kinds of people in positive encounters with each other - to lose their fears of the unknown other.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Reston Black Focus is intended as a framework for a number of activities rather than a formal organization. As such there is no membership. The names of people interested in participating in or supporting various activities are kept on a mailing list. People on this list will be informed about general concerns and specific activities. All are urged to support or expand present activities, start new activities or otherwise communicate with Reston Black Focus. To provide coordination of the various activities there is a standing committee on organization. This committee consists of the people who are primarily responsible for on-going activities. The members of this committee select an overall coordinator.

ACTIVITIES

Specific activities are started whenever there is a recognized need, a desire and a person (or persons) who is willing to assume primary responsibility. Activities are generally oriented to:

1. Educational and cultural development
2. Rearing of black children
3. Concerns of black Restonians with the Development of Reston
4. Relationships among black Restonians

The current concerns and active projects of Reston Black Focus include:

1. The presentation of suitable materials on the black American heritage in cooperation with the Lake Ann Elementary School Social Studies program.
2. Assuring that the school and county libraries have a large selection of books concerned with black art, literature, and history.
3. The development and presentation of a continuing program of black cultural enrichment for children and youth.
4. The number of black people in sales, management and planning positions with Gulf-Reston Inc.
5. Business and employment opportunities for blacks in Reston industrial developments.
6. The availability of Jobs at all skill levels, in all trades for blacks in the continuing construction activities at Reston.
7. The development of new concepts for diverse, vital neighborhoods.
8. The sponsoring of a black arts festival in Reston during Labor Day weekend.
9. Assisting in assimilating black families living in state subsidized housing in Reston into the larger community.
10. The sponsoring of adult study groups on black art, music and literature.
11. Developing communication and relationships with other black people in the surrounding areas.
12. Maintaining a swinging, non uptight, friendly atmosphere in Reston.