DECLARATION OF INCLUSION

A Vermont Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Initiative

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Historic Roots

"When you move to Vermont, bring with you what you did that made you a success, and adapt it to The Vermont Way." - Ernie Royal



Ernie Royal was the owner of Royal's Hearthside Restaurant in Rutland, Vermont, from 1964 to 1993.

He was recognized in Who's Who in Black America, and served as a board member for the National Restaurant Association and Culinary Institute of America. He was also a member of the U.S. Culinary Olympic Team.

He was Vermont's first Black restaurant owner, the first Black board member of the National Restaurant Association Board, and a mentor to many.

Background

Distressed by recent catastrophic events unfolding across the country relating to human rights, justice, and equality, Bob Harnish, a long-time resident of Pittsford, decided to do something. His concern led him to Al Wakefield, a former businessman in the Rutland area, who shared similar distress and felt a need to do something "hands-on."

The intent of the Declaration of Inclusion is to indicate and reinforce the message to all visitors, residents, and those thinking about or planning to come and stay, that:

- Vermont is a welcoming community
- Vermont invites all to bring their families and friends, as well as their talents and skills
- Vermont is a community of people who will treat them fairly, provide encouragement and support for their interests
- Vermont will bring the full resources of the state, cities, and towns to ensure their well-being and security

Background

More specifically, the goal of the Declaration is to:

- Highlight the fact that we as Vermonters are not fully aware of the systemic racism that is present in our majority "white" society
- Raise consciousness about the importance of diversity, the positive effect that diversity can have on our economy, and on equity and justice
- Emphasize the importance of preparing our youth to live and prosper in the more diverse society in which we all will soon be living
- Tell the world at large that Vermont welcomes all people to our state, which is struggling to maintain its population and its ability to fund basic programs for its citizens
- Attract people with myriad skills and traditions to Vermont to live, work, and raise families in a state that values and encourages diversity in its population
- Focus attention on examining employee manuals, police protocols, and hiring practices to promote fairness and equity in applying legislation, ordinances, etc., within our towns and the state as a whole
- Employ best practices in coaching municipal and state employees, including police, to value and respect all citizens

Background

Evidence of Commitment

Town Level

Inclusion in the town's website, employee manuals, police protocols, newsletters, economic development marketing materials, etc.

State Level

Inclusion in major addresses by leading state officials, printed materials used to welcome visitors, policies and operating procedures, external communications, public relations pieces, etc.

Organizational Level

Inclusion in policies, operating procedures, and similar documents used by labor unions, law enforcement agencies, and academic institutions throughout the state.

Goal Statement

To have each Vermont municipality adopt and implement a Declaration of Inclusion. *Adopt* means formal approval by the municipality's governing body. *Implement* means the enactment and furtherance of plans, policies, programs, procedures, and relevant training that support and advance the intent and spirit of the Declaration.

Read the Declaration of Inclusion

The Town of ______ condemns racism and welcomes all persons, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, age, or disability, and wants everyone to feel safe and welcome in our community.

As a town, we formally condemn all discrimination in all of its forms, commit to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community, and will strive to ensure all of our actions, policies, and operating procedures reflect this commitment.

The Town of ______ has and will continue to be a place where individuals can live freely and express their opinions.

By the _____ Selectboard on _____ 2021.

Why Adopt a Declaration of Inclusion?

A town or city adopting a Declaration of Inclusion is making a statement to its citizens and to others that this is a town that believes in treating everyone fairly, recognizing that "everyone" does not look or act alike, that we expect our municipal government to abolish any language in ordinances, hiring practices and police protocols that favor the white majority or diminish the rights of others.

A town or city may not necessarily be reacting to a prior incident or situation but, in most cases, will just be doing what is right and fair for all citizens – present and future.

A welcoming town thrives because it encourages diversity, which brings new vitality to the economy and increased tax revenue.

Presenting the Declaration

Following are some ideas to consider as you prepare to present the Declaration. We know that each town or organization is different and that the strategy for gaining adoption and implementation of the Declaration may be different.



HOW TO PRESENT

Depending on the Selectboard or group, you may want to present it at one meeting and return to it at the next meeting and request a motion to adopt.

FIND AN ALLY



Prior to the second meeting, you may be wise to approach a friendly member to support the Declaration of Inclusion, speak to it, and make the motion to adopt. We recommend that you be present at both meetings for support and to answer any questions.

REWORDING THE DECLARATION OF INCLUSION



The organization/Selectboard may wish to change the wording. This is acceptable provided the basic thoughts are preserved, the designated groups are considered, and they continue to be included.

Presenting the Declaration

THE GOAL



The goal is to have statewide adoption, including at the state level. Governor Scott issued a Proclamation of Inclusion in May 2021. You can read it in the support for the Declaration section!

HAVE A CONVERSATION



Speaking with those who may be reluctant, do not see a need for the statement, or even oppose the Declaration may be useful as well. Doing so provides an opportunity to discuss and hopefully resolve statements such as: "We don't have those problems here" and "I am not a racist. Why do we need such a statement in our town?"



THE PATH FORWARD

There may be doubt about the ways to implement, monitor, and assess progress on the Declaration. Turning words into action is not the easiest. Since each community is different, with different needs and different stages of socioeconomic development, we suggest followup discussions led by a skilled discussion leader. He/she/they may be a respected member of the community, a professional facilitator, or a competent consultant. We can help identify those potentially interested in working with you.

Declaration Talking Points

As you are preparing to present the Declaration of Inclusion to your town or group, you might consider some of the reasons and suggestions below and put these thoughts into your own words.

I believe that this town has always treated people respectfully and fairly so we should say it with a forceful statement. By stating it, it then becomes a message that we welcome all people and we thrive when we have a diverse population. Think of the Irish, Italians, and Poles who came here to work in the marble and granite industries and the important heritage they brought with them. Vermont would not be the culturally rich state it is without these immigrants and many more. These people all brought skills, ambitions, religious traditions, interesting food, unique customs, and so much more.

The United States as a whole is the most diverse country on earth and the most successful by almost any measure. And, it is no coincidence that Burlington and Chittenden county have the most dynamic economy in Vermont, as well as the most diverse population. Diversity brings creativity that leads to solutions and a richer life for all.

Historically Vermont has been, and still is, one of the least diverse states, but our children will be living in a more diverse community of people in this country. Let's prepare our children by encouraging and promoting diversity in our town and schools, encouraging them to be comfortable with people of all backgrounds and beliefs so they can survive and thrive in the world.

Declaration Talking Points

We all want our cities and towns (and our state) to grow in a healthy way, to increase our tax base, and fund our schools and roads. To make this happen we need to welcome all people. We need to reach out, proactively, to the world at large, with the message that **WE WELCOME ANYONE** who wants to live and work and add richness to our state. Currently, the population in Vermont is static or declining with low fertility rates and young people leaving the state. The remaining population is aging and putting a strain on underfunded state resources.

With remote work becoming well accepted, people are moving to Vermont, bringing with them jobs, new skills, and capabilities. They embody the way our world will look in 10 to 20 years and their presence may inspire other talented folks to move to our town and state. These new residents will be remodeling homes and building new ones, their tax dollars paying for better-funded services. With a more vibrant and interesting economy, more of our young people will want to stay, work, and raise their families in Vermont.

A Declaration of Inclusion is another tool in the "toolbox" of those responsible for the town's economic development, that is, their toolbox of reasons why someone should locate a business here, perhaps choosing our town (or state) over another.

Declaration Talking Points

A Declaration such as this would mark the town and its leaders as a forward-thinking community of people, stepping out in front for what we know is right and deeply rooted in the values that America and Vermont say they champion.

We all have heard that America is a "melting pot" of people from all over the world; America has always welcomed diverse people and embraced their cultures, languages, foods, customs, religions, and traditions. This is nothing new. Let's continue the tradition. Let's take this small but affirmative step toward the American ideal as stated in our precious Constitution.



Add your own thoughts to these reasons and end by urging adoption of the Declaration of Inclusion or something similar and making it an integral part of the guiding principles of the town.

Be prepared to provide copies of the Declaration to Select Board members, town managers, and others.

J. Alvin Wakefield

Al Wakefield has been a resident of Vermont for over 35 years, most of that in Mendon. As many others have done, Al and his family came to the community to ski, enjoy the great outdoors, and the more relaxed life that Vermont affords.

During their first visit here, the Wakefields dined at Royal's Hearthside Restaurant, met Ernie and Willa Royal, and subsequently acquired both the restaurant as well as the newly established Royal's Gourmet Food Market.

Al's visits with the Royals and, subsequently, with Preston Smith, Frank Punderson, and Otto Iannanatuoni – all long-time residents and successful business owners – convinced the Wakefields that they would be accepted and could continue to build their dreams here.

After two years, the Wakefields sold the enterprises and Al went on to build an international executive search firm, operating from Mendon and New York City.

Contact Al

al@wakefield-global.com | 802.770.3958

Robert (Bob) Harnish

Bob Harnish moved to Vermont in 1964 in response to the lure of skiing after college and a three-year tour in the Air Force. He and his wife, Breda, purchased Summit Lodge, which they later sold to buy the Cortina Inn.

The couple had no children of their own, but over the years they "took underwing" a Puerto Rican boy, George Valentin, and two Hmong (Laotian) kids, Sheng and Maisian Vang. All three have moved on, after getting college degrees, to have families and impressive careers. These relationships have made clear to Bob the struggles faced by people in the BIPOC and AAPI communities in Vermont as well as other states.

Hospitality is in Bob's DNA. This goes beyond innkeeping to the whole of Vermont as a state that will benefit enormously in terms of diversity, culture, vibrancy, tax dollars, and much more by letting the world know that people of all backgrounds are welcome. Bob resides in Pittsford.

Contact Bob

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Norman Cohen

Norman Cohen has been in Vermont for 50 years, having been offered the position of Assistant U.S. Attorney in 1969. Norman married and raised his family in Rutland; one daughter still lives here. He entered private practice in 1973, formed the law firm of Cohen and Rice in 1985, and retired from the practice of law in 2019.

Norman has served on many local municipal and non-profit boards including the Rutland Town School Board, the Rutland Town Planning Commission, and is active in Rutland's Project VISION and Habitat for Humanity of Rutland County.

Bringing with him his knowledge of law and his expertise in "word crafting" acquired from six years of sports writing, Norman adds depth to our small team whose goal is to increase diversity in Vermont.

Contact Norman

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Liz DiMarco Weinmann, MBA

Liz DiMarco Weinmann is a Strategic Growth Specialist, Nonprofit Leader, Business Educator, and Author. She guides and advises high-energy executives and board members at small-to-mid-size nonprofits, foundations, and educational institutions that want to achieve revenue growth through actionable strategic plans, bottom-line focused marketing initiatives, and fundraising campaigns to cultivate, secure, and sustain support from major donors, foundations, and corporations.

Liz possesses over thirty years of experience and expertise in business development, financial growth, and stakeholder engagement at global marketing services firms, nonprofits, and higher education, primarily in New York and Washington, D.C. Since 2002, she has helped diverse leaders to improve resource productivity and raise millions of dollars, with a focus on advancing the vision, mission, capacity, and values of organizations that have a strong commitment to achieving positive societal impact.

Liz has been an enthusiastic and engaged resident of Rutland for 40 years.

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Contact Liz

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Support for the Declaration of Inclusion

We're on our way to our goal of a Declaration of Inclusion being adopted and implemented by each of Vermont's 246 towns and cities!

A sample of towns, cities, and our consulting collaborators

The Town of Franklin The first to adopt

Brandon Middlebury Pawlet Pittsford Rutland City Shrewsbury South Hero Tinmouth Waterbury West Rutland Woodstock Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT)

Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA)

Rutland Young Professionals (RYP)

Proclamation of Inclusion

State of Vermont Executive Department

WHEREAS,

Vermont and Vermonters have a rich history of celebrating freedom and diversity, including the abolition of slavery in 1777, activism in the abolitionist movement, our embrace of European immigrants to work in mines and quarries, recognition of same sex marriage; state recognition of Abenaki peoples; and protection of undocumented immigrants from potentially overreaching federal enforcement; and

WHEREAS,

despite Vermont's tradition of leadership in freedom and diversity, historically Vermont has been and still is one of the least racially and ethnically diverse states in the country; and

WHEREAS,

one of the silver linings to be found after the pandemic may be that remote work may continue to be well accepted and people have moved and are moving to Vermont bringing jobs, new skills and capabilities and cultural and racial diversity; and

WHEREAS,

people and families who have moved or who are moving to Vermont may inspire others to move as well, inevitably adding richness in diversity of history and experience to our State; and

WHEREAS,

with more vibrant communities, businesses and restaurants and cultural activities, facilities and resources, more of Vermont's young people will want to stay, work and raise their families in Vermont; and

WHEREAS,

it is essential for all to know, Vermont seeks to achieve equality and equity and to create a culture in which racial, ethnic and other cultural disparities are openly acknowledged and addressed and where no one person is more likely to experience society's benefits or burdens than any other person; and

WHEREAS,

the State of Vermont is committed to growing and nurturing a diverse society in which we want our youth to live and prosper; and

WHEREAS,

the State of Vermont is committed to identifying overt and implicit bias and systemic racism throughout State government systems and functions, and to eliminating racial, ethnic and other cultural disparities that may now exist within State government as one of the state's largest employers and as a provider of a variety of essential services to the public at large; and

WHEREAS,

the State of Vermont has demonstrated leadership and has achieved notable and laudable success in addressing racial and other disparities through the work of the Director of Racial Equity and the Racial Equity Advisory Panel, as well as the Governor's Racial Equity Task Force working to address systemic bias in our State systems and institutions, examine existing law on hate crimes, evaluate systems of support and look to increase civic participation among racially diverse populations; the Agency of Transportation through its Office of Civil Rights; the Agency of Education through partnerships with professional associations in antibias efforts; the Human Resources Department through its work building more inclusive representation in the State government workforce; the State's Human Rights Commission; and the Office of the Attorney General's Civil Rights Office; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Safety has provided leadership through its Fair and Impartial Policing Initiative, as well as comprehensive policy work on hiring and promotions, data collection, use of force, body worn cameras, greater transparency regarding improper conduct and attempts to achieve comprehensive law enforcement training modernization and cultural change.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Philip B. Scott, Governor, hereby proclaim as follows:

1. The State of Vermont formally condemns discrimination in all of its forms and welcomes all people who want to live and work and add richness to our State, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, age, or disability and will protect these classes to the fullest extent of the law.

2. Let the second week of May be known as Inclusion Week to emphasize these ongoing efforts to make Vermont a more inviting state for all people.

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3. I call upon all Vermonters to denounce prejudice, to openly acknowledge and address our own implicit bias and welcome and celebrate all people, of all races, colors, religions, national origins, sex, gender identity or expression, ages, disabilities, and continue to work together to ensure every individual can live freely, equitably, and express their opinions free from fear, intolerance and prejudice.

Given under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of Vermont on this 7th day of May, A.D. 2021.

Philip B. Scott Governor



Inclusion Week Proclamation

State of Vermont Executive Department

Proclamation 21-061, A Proclamation of Inclusion signed on May 7, 2021, established the second week of May as Inclusion Week; and

WHEREAS, Vermont strives to be a leader in protecting hard-fought civil rights, and is committed to eliminating hatred and bigotry in all systems and institutions to improve outcomes for all Vermonters and build more multicultural and socially cohesive communities; and

WHEREAS, Vermont must create a culture in which racial, ethnic and other cultural disparities are openly acknowledged and addressed; and

WHEREAS, Vermont has demonstrated leadership in this regard through the creation of a Racial Equity Advisory Panel, Racial Equity Task Force and the hiring of the Executive Director of Racial Equity; and

WHEREAS, the State must and will continue to address the challenges of achieving racial and ethnic equity across Vermont and to nurture the diverse society in which we want our youth to live and prosper; and

WHEREAS, Vermont will continue to welcome all persons with myriad skills and traditions to work, live and raise families; and

WHEREAS, we must bring state and local leaders, agencies and interested parties together across Vermont to examine existing law on hate crimes, evaluate systems of support and look to increase civic participation among racially diverse populations; and

WHEREAS, we also urge those same leaders and all Vermont residents to denounce prejudice and welcome all persons, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, age, or disability, and to protect these classes to the fullest extent of the law. I, Philip B. Scott, Governor, hereby proclaim May 9-15, 2021 as INCLUSION WEEK in Vermont.

Given under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of Vermont on this 7th day of May, A.D. 2021.

Philip B. Scott Governor



Britting of Wilson

Brittney L. Wilson Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs

Letter of Support Rutland Young Professionals



The Rutland Young Professionals (RYP) Board of Directors is proud to support the Declaration of Inclusion created by Rutland County residents Al Wakefield, Bob Harnish, and several others.

Rutland Young Professionals is an all-inclusive organization focused on creating a vibrant Rutland Region. We engage with our community, create social and professional networking opportunities, and work to build a region that attracts and retains young professionals – young professionals of different races, ethnicities, genders, religions, sexual orientations, political affiliations, and more. Rutland Young Professionals is committed to making the Rutland Region a great place to work, live, learn, and play. We are also committed to doing our part to ensure that everyone – especially our diverse friends, colleagues, and members – feels comfortable and safe in our community.

We believe that diversity – in backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences – make us stronger as both a community and an organization. Our differences should be valued and embraced.

We know that there are many benefits to adopting the Declaration of Inclusion, but it is especially important for the demographic we serve, and Vermont as a whole. More young professionals are leaving the state every year. Vermont must continue to grow both culturally and economically in order to attract and retain young professionals. Vermont is home to the third oldest population in this country, so awareness and support of activities that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in all of its forms are critical to ensure that we continue welcoming young professionals in the Rutland Region and beyond. Our hope is that these individuals will choose to make their home in the Rutland Region, raise families here, start businesses, and become engaged in their respective communities.

For these and many other reasons, we strongly support the adoption of the Declaration of Inclusion – or an alternative version if deemed more appropriate – by all 27 towns and cities in the Rutland Region.

The Rutland Young Professionals Board of Directors

We Are One Rutland

Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region



Saying it was disturbed by national and local events related to racism, Rutland County's leading economic development organization on Tuesday took a stand on behalf of inclusion, diversity and community.

The Board of the Chamber and Economic Development of the Rutland Region approved a resolution denouncing bias and discrimination and creating a new committee to ensure the organization does its part going forward.

"We have a social and moral obligation to lead," CEDRR said in a statement. "We can no longer remain silent and must in fact speak out to condemn discrimination of all kinds and embrace diversity in our communities. It makes economic sense, but far more important, it's the right thing to do."

The board unanimously approved the resolution, and directed the Executive Director Lyle Jepson to establish a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee that will be charged with, but not limited to, the development of a DEI Strategic Plan. The resolution requires the plan to include education, projects and activities to address bias, racism and discrimination as well as increase diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the CEDRR organization and the entire Rutland Region.

The resolution also directs the executive director to develop strategies that increase the understanding of systemic racism, equity, access to opportunity, diversity and inclusion among CEDRR staff, board members, committees, and members. It further encourages all members to support CEDRR and Jepson in this important and essential journey.

"We are alarmed, disturbed and concerned by national and local events and discourse relating to racism and intolerance of diversity," Jepson said. "Remaining silent is no longer an option -- and we know words are not enough, so we are poised to examine our own implicit biases and root out barriers to opportunity for everyone within our membership and our community." CEDRR Board Chair John Casella II said the resolution is critical for the community.

"This is a long overdue and needed period of transformation, and CEDRR believes that with a spirit of openness, humility, and respect, we can not only learn from one another, but we can create a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community where all can feel safe and where all can feel they belong and can thrive," Casella said.

"We are one Rutland," Jepson said. "We are actively listening with our minds, our hearts, and with open arms. We are prepared for the 'essential journey' to an inclusive community and country."

Our Vision for "Project Inclusion"

Ultimately the goal is to increase diversity in Vermont and abolish racism with general acceptance by the public and respect for the dignity of all people.

The Declaration of Inclusion being adopted by towns and the Governor's Proclamation on inclusion provide recognition but not strategic direction, policy sustainability, or operational guidance.

Diversity in our population is an important component required for vital and dynamic town, city, and state economies but how to achieve that diversity and the way to gain acceptance by the largely white population are equally important aspects to consider.

Community leaders at all levels in Vermont must prioritize equity, diversity, and inclusion in their decision-making and we should require them to step down if they are unwilling to address their own or the community's biases before making decisions. Municipal leaders and law enforcement officials must engage effectively with community members on the subject of systemic racism, racial justice, public safety, and law enforcement. They need to engage the public in conversations on these and other issues important to an increasingly diverse population.

Community and state leaders can work closely with the many organizations already existing, organizations such as Rutland Forward, Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity, Vermont's Local Solutions and Community Action Team, the Vermont Equity Caucus, Project VISION, Vermont Council on Rural Development, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and many more. In addition, and very important, is the Vermont Office of Racial Equality and its Executive Director, Xusana Davis.

The difficult work is just beginning but the rewards will be enormous.

– Bob Harnish

Statement of Equity & Racial Justice

Middlebury, Vermont Selectboard

Human diversity can be defined as differences in race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical and/or mental capabilities, and religious beliefs, among other differences; and all of these vast diversities exist among and between the residents of The Town of Middlebury.

The Middlebury Selectboard stands with our community and commits to being more visible, vocal, and supportive in our efforts to ensure equity and racial justice and to directly address systemic and overt racism and implicit bias. We are ready to assist and, with Town staff, will do our best to make a difference.

As leaders, the Middlebury Selectboard commits to strengthen the trust in our community by employing Town staff team members who reflect the values of integrity, compassion, and respect for the diversity of all individuals, and demonstrate these high moral values every day.

What follows are concrete ways that we are addressing these issues. We will continue to add to this list throughout the coming months. We welcome your input.

COMMITTEE. The Selectboard has formed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Workgroup composed of three Selectboard members – Farhad Khan, Dan Brown, and Lindsey Fuentes-George - tasked with vetting our options for moving forward with our DEI work. The Selectboard is also considering converting the DEI Workgroup to a full Committee, which would potentially include staff members as well as members of the general public.

PARTNERSHIPS. The Selectboard commits to broadening our partnerships in ways that will amplify all of our efforts and help effect real change around these critical issues.

REPRESENTATION. The Selectboard encourages diverse candidates to apply for staff and board positions. We will work to implement new ways to broaden and enhance this outreach.

EDUCATION. The Selectboard commits to investing in additional staff and board training around topics related to implicit bias, racism, and equity at the municipal level. We will also share these resources with the public.

RESOURCES. The Selectboard will work to identify and partner with experts, affected communities and organizations to provide a digital toolkit of resources, including reporting mechanisms, and information available to members, partners, and staff.

REPORTING. The Selectboard will publicize avenues for community members and staff to report racist or discriminatory incidents.

COMMUNICATIONS. The Selectboard commits to including diverse voices, perspectives, and imagery in our messaging and publications.

Brian R. Carpenter, Chair Heather Seeley, Vice Chair Nick Artim

Updated August 31, 2021

Designed and edited by

