

# Thoughts and Talking Points on Presenting the Declaration of Inclusion to Your Town

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Page</u>
Background: Declaration of Inclusion (DOI) .....	1
The Declaration of Inclusion (as adopted by various towns).....	3
Presenting the DOI to Your Town or Group.....	4
Rationale for Adopting a DOI.....	5
Middlebury Selectboard Statement of Equity and Racial Justice .....	6

**“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, Owner  
 Royal’s Hearthside Restaurant, Rutland, Vermont, 1964 to 1993  
 Who’s Who in Black America  
 Board Member, National Restaurant Assoc.  
 Board Member, Culinary Institute of America  
 Member, U S. Culinary Olympic Team

The intent of the Declaration of Inclusion (DOI) 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, that it invites all to bring their families and friends as well as their talents and skills, that Vermont is a community of people who will treat them fairly, provide encouragement and support for their interests and bring the full resources of the State, cities and towns to ensure their well-being and security.

**At the town level:** Include in the town’s website, employee manuals, police protocols, newsletters, economic development marketing materials, etc.

**At the state level:** Include in major addresses by leading state officials, printed materials used to welcome visitors, policy and operating procedures, external communications, public relations pieces, etc.

**At the organizational level:** Include in policies, operating procedures and similar documents used by labor unions, law enforcement agencies and academic institutions throughout the state.

More specifically, the goals of the DOI are 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, also, 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, a state which is struggling to maintain its population and therefore 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.

To date, the towns of Franklin, Pittsford, Waterbury, Moretown, Middlebury, and Brandon have approved and adopted our DOI.

For questions or discussion: Al Wakefield ([al@wakefield-global.com](mailto:al@wakefield-global.com) or 802-770-3958), or Bob Harnish ([rharnish24@gmail.com](mailto:rharnish24@gmail.com) or 802-779-7714)

**Town of \_\_\_\_\_ 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 will protect these classes to the fullest extent of the law.

As a town, we formally condemn discrimination in all of its forms and commit to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community.

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

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## **Presenting the DOI to your town or group**

Thank you for helping to make Vermont a more inclusive and diverse state. We know that each town or organization is different and that the strategy for gaining adoption and implementation of the DOI may be different.

Following are some ideas to consider as you prepare to present the DOI. We have purposely tried to focus our thoughts on the positive aspects of diversity as being more likely to win favor, acknowledgement and endorsement.

1. Depending on the selectboard or group you are addressing, you may want to present it at one meeting and then return to it at the next meeting and hope for a motion to adopt.
2. Prior to your 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 to give further reasons for support and to answer any questions.
3. Some members of the organization may wish to change the wording and that should be fine, provided the basic thoughts are preserved, and the designated groups are considered and continue to be included. The document is designed to be open to modification.
4. Ultimately, the goal is to have statewide adoption, with the governor actively endorsing it at the state level and making it one of the guiding principles in all departments of state government.
5. Speaking with those who may be reluctant, do not see a need for such a statement, or even oppose the DOI may be useful as well as it provides the opportunity to discuss and hopefully resolve such statements as:
  - “We don’t have those problems here.”
  - “I am not a racist. Why do we need such a statement in our town?”
  - “We like our town as it is. Vermont is fine without bringing this stuff up.”
  - “If it’s not an issue, why are we talking about this?”
6. There may be doubt about how to implement, monitor, and assess progress on the implementation of the DOI. Turning words into action is not easy. Since each community is different, with different needs and at different stages of social and economic development, we suggest follow-up discussions led by a skilled discussion leader. He/she may be a respected member of the community who has embraced the concept and is willing to take on this challenge. You may also wish to consider a professional facilitator who has the relevant experience and has lived and worked in Vermont. There are very competent consultants here and we would be pleased to assist you in identifying those potentially interested in working with you.

Thank you for your interest in moving the Declaration of Inclusion forward. The time is right. Justice, Equity and Inclusion are much in the news and the concept of true and meaningful equality is long overdue. Our Founding Fathers would be pleased with our actions.

## **Rationale for Adopting a Declaration of Inclusion (DOI)**

As you prepare to present the DOI to your town or group, consider some of the reasons and suggestions below, putting them 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. The statement 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 brought skills, ambitions, religious tradition, 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 counties have the most dynamic economy in Vermont and also the most diverse population. Diversity brings creativity which leads to solutions and a richer life for all.

We all want our cities and towns (and our state) to grow in a healthy way, to increase our tax base, as well as 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 the low fertility rate and young people leaving the state for careers elsewhere. In addition, the remaining population is aging and putting a strain on underfunded state resources.

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

With working from home becoming well accepted, people are moving to Vermont and bringing jobs, new skills and capabilities. They embody the way our world will look in 10 to 20 years; their presence may inspire other talented folks to move to our 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 for those responsible for the town's economic development – that is, it's their part of their toolbox of reasons why someone should locate a business here, perhaps choosing our town (or state) over another.

A declaration such as this would mark our 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 it champions.

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. Let's continue the tradition and 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 DOI 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 selectboard members, town managers, and others.]



**Town of Middlebury**  
**77 Main Street**  
**Middlebury, VT 05753**

## **Middlebury Selectboard Statement of Equity and Racial Justice**

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

Farhad Khan; Lindsey Fuentes-George; Dan Brown; Esther Thomas

**MIDDLEBURY SELECTBOARD**