



EMPLOYMENT &
HUMAN SERVICES

MEMORANDUM

Kathy Gallagher, Director

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To: All Staff, Code 2A

Date: March 23, 2021

From: Kathy Gallagher, Director, and EHSD Executive Team

Subject: Racism, Acts of Violence against Community Members

Once again, we have an unwelcome occasion to write to you about acts of violence and racism in our society that target particular community members.

On March 16, 2021, a 21-year-old man admitted to murdering six Asian Americans at three separate businesses in Atlanta, Georgia. While authorities are still investigating the motivation behind these killings, we know that acts of hate and violence against members of the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community have escalated during the past year, and a large portion of the victims have been women and the elderly. According to the advocacy organization Stop AAPI Hate, there are more than 700 reports of anti-Asian hate incidents since March 19, 2020 right here in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2021 alone, three Asian-American elders were killed.

It is no longer enough to express our deep sadness and anger over the hateful acts terrorizing our residents. Even while composing this, we learned of yesterday's senseless murders of 10 people at a Boulder, Colorado, grocery store. Our hearts go out to the victims' loved ones and community members reeling from this and all recent tragedies.

In the midst of outrage at the systemic racism against African-American, Asian, Latino and other minority groups, recent events involving racial violence underscore the need for each of us to address the personal and societal hatred we often see at the core of our institutions and suffering communities.

As our Middle Eastern-American community members suffered backlash after 9/11, and the Latinx community confronted national administrative policies and rhetoric that engendered fear, Asian Americans are today suffering the hateful effects of misleading, racist statements that include referring to COVID-19 as the "Chinese virus" or "kung-flu." Unfortunately, discrimination and inequities are not new for any of these communities. However, media coverage often overlooks hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans, victims or observers often underreport them, and anti-racist groups do not necessarily advocate about them. For some, the recent events are just beginning to open up an awareness that racism can also include the AAPI community as a target.

Contra Costa County is proud of its identity as a vibrant place to live and work, with diversity being a key contributing factor. Nearly 25 percent of the population was born outside the United States, almost half coming from Asia. As with all racial and ethnic groups, the Asian American Pacific Islander community is *our community*. They are our neighbors, our customers and our colleagues. Approximately 10 percent of the EHSD workforce identifies as AAPI, with members across bureaus and all types of positions.

Too many in our community are living in fear today about how others may act out based on race. As we come together in condemning all forms of racism, we help create the environment to eradicate it. In the coming months, EHSD's **Equity and Inclusion Core Team** will be working closely with our recently-hired Equity and Inclusion Consultant to help shape our department's policies and practices. This team reflects EHSD's open invitation for you to engage in discussions, initiatives and actions in which we can identify our implicit biases, have difficult conversations, and forge a new path.

Paramount to this process is our ability to continue building trust with each other and with our customers. We are grateful that you each take to heart EHSD's core value of honoring individual differences, and treating everyone – customers and coworkers - with dignity and respect. Together we can model the change we want to see in ourselves and in our County.