

April 17, 2019

City of San Jose
Mayor and City Council
200 E. Santa Clara
San Jose, CA

Dear Mayor and City Council,

The recent Planning Commission appointment has raised many concerns amongst those of us striving for diversity, inclusion, equity and liberation, what we call DIEL. As leaders in the nonprofit community, we have come together to write this letter in the hopes that it can help guide the City to ensure that the systems of white supremacy and patriarchy are dismantled.

For context, we are a group of nonprofit CEOs who came together to figure out how to better center equity in ourselves, our nonprofits, the nonprofit sector, and the broader world. Under the auspices of the American Leadership Forum, we meet monthly to discuss equity issues that come up in our organizations, how to fix them, and how to take what we learn out into the sector.

It is important to note that the City is doing great work to address some of our most challenging issues. Staff and leadership are committed to making San Jose a wonderful place for all who live here through gang prevention programs, affordable housing solutions, the recent decision on an equity fund as well as its participation in GARE, Government Alliance and Race and Equity. The City has much to be proud of. And like all of us, the City has a lot of work to do when it comes to redressing the harms that continue to be perpetrated on low-income residents and communities of color.

That said, our group was appalled at the decision to create a majority white commission that is also majority D6 residents. The decision demonstrated several unpleasant realities. At best, it showed an ignorance on the part of 6 councilmembers of the importance of race and equity, especially at this point in time. At worst it showed how those in power continue to hoard power to the detriment of communities most harmed by a system that advantages those who are white, male and wealthy. Tuesday showed that the System is alive and well. It showed how the System is manifested in a progressive environment by well-intentioned people.

But this letter is not intended to argue and prove that the decision was horrible. It was. This letter is intended to invite the Council to view us as a resource on how to build a more equitable City.

We were born into a system that advantages white people and the wealthy. While none of us created that system, many of us benefit from it. To ignore that fact, to be willfully ignorant of it, and make the kinds of decisions that continue to deny certain segments of the community access to power is to be complicit. The good news is, we get to fix it and we can!

There are many ways that the City could avoid what happened with the Planning Commission vote, like commission reform and creating a leadership pipeline in certain areas of the City and we are pleased to

see a Council memo on the topic. Instead of commenting on specific proposals, we want to encourage you all to reach out to us for ideas, to listen to what we've learned. We are positive it will help.

That said, there is one concrete recommendation that we want to leave you with, a very high level recommendation intended to be an important starting point. That recommendation is to decide as a City to center equity in city policy-making and day-to-day business.

To center equity, we want to leave each of you with a personal invitation. We invite you to commit to be in conversation with one of us on a regular basis about these issues, to commit to reading, learning, discussing and engaging in the deep self-education needed to avoid complicity. We believe that once you all have gone through the kind of year's long learning that we've experienced, your hearts and minds will be changed and the business of the City, to build community for all, not just some, will be easier to achieve. It will still be work but it must start with all of you, us, being better.

Thank you for your dedication to this great City and for the time and emotional energy you spend as a city leader. We welcome the opportunity to help.

Sincerely,



Camille Llanes-Fontanilla
SOMOS Mayfair



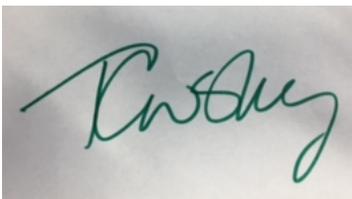
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