



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR &
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Raul Peralez
Councilmember Maya Esparza
Councilmember Sylvia Arenas

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: May 21, 2021

Approved by:

Date: 05/21/21

SUBJECT: Strategies to Combat Hate Crimes and Violence Against Asian-American / Pacific Islanders

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the staff report and direct the City Manager to:

1. Return to the Public Safety, Finance, and Strategic Services (PSFSS) committee in six months with a report on the status and outcomes of the recommended strategies. Subsequently, report back to PSFSS annually.
2. Conduct a solidarity, art-based campaign either led by the City or by a third-party that promotes the concept of “Stop AAPI Hate”, similar to the Black Lives Matter Banner Project.¹
3. Annually do focused outreach to AAPI concentrated Business Districts such as Lion Plaza and Japantown and offer SJPD’s Crime Prevention education and services to any interested business owners.
4. Evaluate the City’s communications to ensure that all multilingual communications targeting AAPI communities are culturally competent and assess what hurdles city departments may encounter in regards to translation services including for written material.
5. Prioritize implementation of the local government provisions within the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act as part of the 2021 Legislative Priorities and prioritize efforts to compete for federal and state grants that result from the legislation.

DISCUSSION

Since the start of the pandemic, the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Community has lived in a climate of fear, experiencing a distressing rise in racist attacks. Nationally,

¹ <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/65206/637377517231530000>

data have shown an increase in reporting of anti-Asian hate incidents. The Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center shared that hate crime reports spiked from 3,795 to 6,603 just in March 2021 alone. We are continuing to witness countless attacks on the AAPI community, most specifically towards the elderly throughout the Bay Area.

We thank the Office of Racial Equity for this timely report and would like to maintain this momentum by returning in six months to PSFSS to report back on the status of the strategies presented. Attacks continue to happen to the AAPI community almost daily, this midway check in would offer the transparency to the public that the City is following through and will allow staff to reassess if all 11 strategies can be fully carried out or if staff needs to recalibrate if necessary.

The additional recommendations will also ensure that the AAPI community feels seen, protected and heard. We must acknowledge that the AAPI community has been historically subjected to racial injustices and social inequities, creating an attitude of distrust towards public authority. Research has shown that this community is most likely to underreport hate incidents² because of this distrust. Therefore, it is more critical now that we are thoughtful about how we as a City communicate to our AAPI community, especially those who are monolingual, if we are to work towards building that trust. A more concerted effort would encourage the AAPI community, especially the elderly to feel more comfortable in engaging with the City and more importantly, create a feeling of inclusiveness that will empower them, if ever the time comes, to speak up and make reports on incidents like a hate crime.

Hate crimes towards the AAPI community is an issue both locally and nationally. On Thursday, May 20, 2021 President Biden signed the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act³, introduced by Rep. Grace Meng, and Senator Mazie Hirono, which designates an officer or employee of the Department of Justice to facilitate expedited review and report of hate crimes. The bill also establishes grants for state and local governments to implement the National Incident-Based Reporting System and to conduct law enforcement activities or crime reduction programs to prevent, address, or respond to hate crimes. It is critical that the Office of Intergovernmental Relations prioritizes this effort to move swiftly to implement the local government provisions and advocate for federal and state grants set out in the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act. This prioritization is also in alignment with the 2021 Legislative Program⁴ approved by Council on November 17, 2020 to support legislation that would address ongoing safety concerns and help prevent acts of violence motivated by hate, including data collecting and reporting.

In closing, we would like to thank the community-based organizations for their partnership in co-hosting the listening sessions and for tirelessly working to ensure that the voices and needs of our AAPI community here in San José is uplifted. This report is the beginning of the City cementing concrete actions in standing with our AAPI community against racism and xenophobia in all its forms. We have long celebrated the diversity of San José, and will continue to celebrate it being a City that welcomes all.

² <https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/aapi-data-2021-discrimination/>

³ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/937/actions>

⁴ <https://bit.ly/3f6WHF6>

BROWN ACT

The signers of this memorandum have not had, and will not have, any private conversation with any other member of the City Council, or that member's staff concerning any action discussed in the memorandum, and that each signer's staff members have not had, and have been instructed not to have, any such conversation with any other member of the City Council or that member's staff.