



April 27, 2021

TO: Organizers and Members,
City of San José Reimagining Public Safety Advisory Board
&
Members of the Public

FROM: [MEMBERS]	[SIGNING IN SUPPORT]
William Armaline, Ph.D. CJ Chair, NAACP of SJ/SV Director, SJSU HRI	Victor Garza Chair, La Raza Roundtable of CA
Rev. Jethroe Moore President, NAACP of SJ/SV	Camille Llanes-Fontanilla Executive Director, Somos Mayfair
Walter Wilson Black Kitchen Leadership Kitchen Cabinet Civil Rights Activist/Advocate	Raj Jayadev Director, SV DeBug
Yvonne Maxwell ED, Ujima Adult and Family Services Black Leadership Kitchen Cabinet	
Jahmal Williams Co-Chair, Black Leadership Kitchen Cabinet Director, Advocacy for Racial Justice, SJSU	
Scott Myers-Lipton, Ph.D. Member, NAACP of SJ/SV Prof. of Sociology, SJSU	
Micael "Mica" Estremera Board Member, SCC La Raza Lawyers Assoc.	

Subject: ***Exit from the Reimagining Public Safety Advisory Board***

Dear Board Members, Organizers, and Members of the Public:



It is our sincere disappointment that we cannot in good conscience continue to serve on the Reimagining Public Safety Advisory Board. While we remain absolutely dedicated to criminal justice reform in San José, we do not think the Board as currently designed is the best way for us or our organizations to spend valuable time and energy. The reasons for exit are threefold:

- 1) Three meetings into the Board's existence, ***Black and other members of the Advisory Board were forced to defend the existence of the problems that literally inspired the creation of the Advisory Board in the first place (!)***. This was both shocking and infuriating—during a debrief on the conviction of George Floyd's murderer no less—and a rather disappointing commentary on the readiness of some Board Members to take seriously any real efforts at reform. We will not subject ourselves or our members to this kind of treatment, nor will we suspend reality for the delicate sensibilities of those who perhaps are not prepared for this admittedly difficult work.
- 2) Three meetings into the Board's existence, ***there is still no clear purpose or function of the Advisory Board***. Further, only upon being pressed did organizers reveal that ***final 'advice,' resolutions, or proposed policy reforms produced by the Advisory Board would ultimately be at the discretion of SJPD administration and the City Manager***. To be abundantly clear, had this information been available from the start, none of us would have joined this Advisory Board. This is because we fundamentally disagree (as do many other organizations, professionals, policy makers, and scholars) with the notion of law enforcement agencies 'policing themselves.' This is the opposite of public accountability and transparency, and we cannot lend the names, reputations, and legitimacy of our organizations to such a model.

Many of us would consider contributing to an alternative model. At the very least, this model would operate autonomously with infrastructure support from the City, reporting directly to the City Council, Mayor, and general public through a fully transparent process (open to public), without any filtering or discretion from SJPD or other City administration. Further, this model would need to begin from a shared analysis of the problem(s) at hand, and clear understanding of the powers and goals of the body. Such a shared analysis needs to be unapologetically based in scholarship, and the mutually observable evidence of data, local reporting, and the qualitative narratives of system impacted communities—not on the whims of individual Members. This reflects our position, and the position of other relevant community organizations including but not limited to Silicon Valley DeBug.

- 3) In meeting with each other and our members/organizational leadership, we found significant agreement on the previous—rather manifest—observations. In other words,



we feel that ***we are no longer representing the interests of our membership in serving on the Board***—as that is the purpose of our participation, not to serve simply as individuals, or treat the Advisory Board as a place to address our personal grievances.

Again, it is a sincere disappointment to inform you all of this decision. Though harboring what has now proven to be legitimate doubt, *all of us approached this endeavor in good faith, allowing significant time for things to evolve in a positive direction.* Unfortunately the events of last week's meeting force our hands and require this public exit.

We thank you all for your time and hope this results in much needed changes in vision and strategy, as that is our only aim.

Sincerely on behalf of my esteemed colleagues,

William Armaline, Ph.D.
CJ Chair, NAACP of SJ/SV
Director, SJSU HRI