

**From:** Michele Lew

**Sent:** Friday, May 29, 2020 3:09 PM

**To:** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>; District 10 <District10@sanjoseca.gov>; District1 <district1@sanjoseca.gov>; District2 <District2@sanjoseca.gov>; District3 <district3@sanjoseca.gov>; District4 <District4@sanjoseca.gov>; District5 <District5@sanjoseca.gov>; District 6 <district6@sanjoseca.gov>; District7 <District7@sanjoseca.gov>; District8 <district8@sanjoseca.gov>; District9 <district9@sanjoseca.gov>; The Office of Mayor Sam Liccardo <TheOfficeofMayorSamLiccardo@sanjoseca.gov>

**Cc:** Wes Mukoyama

**Subject:** Item 3.1 on 6/2/2020 Council Agenda

May 29, 2020

Honorable Sam Liccardo and Members of the City Council  
City of San José  
200 E. Santa Clara Street  
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Use Race Equity Lens to Address Historical Disparities and Systemic Racism in the City's COVID-19 Response and Rebuilding

Dear Mayor Liccardo and City Council Members:

We are writing to convey appreciation for many aspects of the City's leadership and rapid response during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are also urging you to use this critical juncture to embrace a race equity lens in the upcoming decisions related to COVID-19 response and rebuilding.

Just as you heard in the two equity study sessions prior to the pandemic about how historical and systemic racism has left communities of color more vulnerable and profoundly under-resourced, we are now seeing even more starkly how those disparities have contributed to the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis right here in San Jose. This bleak reality only reinforces why we need to take the lessons we learned together to design and implement public policies that address the root causes of the racial disparities we see today.

Now, more than ever, the scale of devastation calls on us to act differently. Now is the time when we need the City to proactively use a race equity lens to build a more equitable San Jose. Now is the time to invest meaningfully in an infrastructure to provide this analysis to make the hard decisions – the hard decisions to fundamentally design policies and reallocate resources in transformational ways. Failing to invest sufficiently in the City's response and rebuilding efforts because of budget shortfalls and reductions will only widen these disparities and further traumatize communities of color.

As we move into further planning for COVID-19 response and rebuilding, we ask the City to:

- Amplify the work of the Office of Immigrant Affairs and establish institution-wide infrastructure that drives the use of race data to evaluate, develop, and fund responsive policies and budgetary decisions;
- Prioritize cultural and linguistic diversity at all levels as you consider personnel reductions;
- Demonstrate your commitment to San Jose diverse community-based organizations who have been on the ground before and during the pandemic, and who will carry on services after the pandemic ends - but only with sustained partnership with the City.
- Release reliable data, disaggregated by race, regarding City-measured impacts of COVID-19 on City residents and programs;
- Use race data to develop policies and allocate resources that tackle racial disparities and their root causes at system levels; and
- Center the voices and experiences of individuals of color most adversely impacted by the pandemic in the response and rebuilding process.

COVID-19 is having disproportionate impacts on San Jose residents of color. The Mercury News reported that East San José is the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in the South Bay, with more than a third of the county's first 100 deaths

occurring in the four poorest ZIP codes – 95116, 95127, 95122, 94148. In those neighborhoods and countywide, Latinos and African Americans have been hardest hit. (Mercury News, “Death Does Discriminate,” 5/10/20.)

The Santa Clara County Public Health Department data show deaths of Latinos and African Americans are happening at alarmingly disproportionate rates. Of 139 deaths, 32% were Latino even though Latinos make up only 25% of the general population, and three times as many African Americans have died compared to the general population. Latinos represent 40% of the total number of cases reported. (Santa Clara County Public Health Department COVID-19 Dashboard, 5/23/2020.)

Communities of color have been subjected to centuries of racist policies that have led to inequitable access to adequate health care, education, housing, economic opportunity and more. People of color are more likely to hold the essential services jobs that we all are heavily relying on during this crisis. They are cleaning our buildings, getting food on our tables, and taking care of our loved ones who are vulnerable and ill. And, yet, these are the very jobs we typically undervalue with inadequate compensation and lack of healthcare access. Moreover, communities of color often live in crowded living arrangements as a result of severe income inequality and persistent lack of affordable housing.

We appreciate the actions you and other elected officials have taken thus far to provide shelter for people who are homeless, halt evictions, expand financial relief for small businesses and unemployed individuals, and scale up food distribution. Some of your responses to the pandemic reveal what is possible when we realize that our fates are all tied together. We can do more. We must. As we move ahead, we look forward to working together to ensure that our post-coronavirus San Jose is a more equitable San Jose.

Sincerely,

Dolores Alvarado, CEO  
Community Health Partnership

Tamara Alvarado, Community Advocate

Milan R. Balinton, Executive Director  
African American Community Service Agency

Shiloh Ballard, President & Executive Director  
Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition

Alison Brunner, CEO  
Law Foundation of Silicon Valley

Carmela Castellano-Garcia, President  
Castellano Family Foundation

Leslye Corsiglia, Executive Director  
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Megan Fluke, Executive Director  
Green Foothills

Verónica Goei, Executive Director  
Grail Family Services

Poncho Guevara, Executive Director  
Sacred Heart Community Service

Sparky Harlan, CEO  
Bill Wilson Center

Kyra Kazantzis, CEO  
Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits

Richard Konda, Executive Director  
Asian Law Alliance

Gregory Kepferle, CEO  
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County

Sarita Kohli, President & CEO  
Asian Americans for Community Involvement

Michele Lew, CEO  
The Health Trust

Jennifer Loving, CEO  
Destination: Home

Derecka Mehrens, Executive Director  
Working Partnerships USA

David K. Mineta, President & CEO  
Momentum for Mental Health

Wes Mukoyama  
Community Advocate

Tom Myers, Executive Director  
Community Services Agency

Lucila Ortiz, Organizing Director  
Californians for Justice

Jessica Paz-Cedillos, Executive Director  
School of Arts and Culture  
Mexican Heritage Plaza

Esther Peralez-Dieckmann, Executive Director  
Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence

Saul Ramos and Zelica Rodriguez-Dreams, Deputy Directors  
SOMOS Mayfair

Edwin Tan, Ph.D.  
Silicon Valley Asian Pacific Islander Justice Coalition

Sonya Tetnowski, CEO  
Indian Health Center of Santa Clara Valley

E. Christopher Wilder, CEO  
Valley Medical Center Foundation

Michele Lew  
Chief Executive Officer