

RESOLUTION NO. NS-29,

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SANTA CRUZ
DENOUNCING HATE CRIMES AND BIGOTRY TARGETING ASIAN AMERICANS AND
PACIFIC ISLANDERS

WHEREAS, The Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council and Chinese for Affirmative Action launched a hate incident-reporting internet website, titled “Stop AAPI Hate,” at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in March of 2020, which documented over 3,800 hate incidents against Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPI) in 2020 and over 700 of these incidents occurred in the Bay Area of California; and

WHEREAS, On January 30, 2021, 84-year-old Vicha Ratanapakdee, a nearly-blind and gentle elderly Thai man, died from injuries resulting from an attack while he was walking in the City of San Francisco, in what is deemed as a hate crime; and

WHEREAS, On February 3, 2021, a 64 year old grandmother was assaulted and robbed of her purse, which included more than \$1,000 cash, in broad daylight in the parking lot of the Dai Thanh Supermarket in downtown San Jose; and

WHEREAS, On March 16, 2021, 8 people (6 Asian women) were gunned down by a white man in Atlanta, Georgia;

WHEREAS, 10.3% of Santa Cruz’s population are Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and xenophobic attacks targeting Asian American elders around the Bay Area increased again just before Lunar New Year; and

WHEREAS, These reports depict a disturbing reality, especially for Asian women, who experienced violence nearly 2.5 times more than their male counterparts. However, the numbers do not tell the full story: they don’t include many of the unreported and increasingly normalized incidents of violence; and

WHEREAS, Racism and anti-AAPI sentiments has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and perpetuated by language used by former President Trump, who characterizes this global pandemic as the “Chinese virus” and “kung flu”; and

WHEREAS, Anti-Asian hate has been fueled by US foreign policy of domination and violence through decades of militarism and imperialism, such as in Philippines, Okinawa, Japan, Guam, Vietnam, Laos, and Korea. This kind of global American aggression towards Asian countries and the dehumanization of Asians since the 1800s has justified these wars and led to continued negative and damaging stereotypes presently, in the United States; and

WHEREAS, This culture has led to the exoticism of Asian and Asian American women, where they are perceived as alternatively submissive, sexually available, as property (mail-order bride), and/or dangerous; and

WHEREAS, Racism toward AAPIs has always existed since AAPIs began immigrating to the United States, such as the 19th-century scapegoating of AAPIs, also known as the “Yellow Peril,” as well as the 21st-century scapegoating of AAPIs for the COVID-19 pandemic. These examples are painful, but they are also part of a larger, and often dismissed, history of violence. In addition to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the assaults against Filipino farmworkers in the 1930s by white mobs, and the Japanese internment camps of the 1940s, there is a longstanding history of racialized colonial wars that have shaped AAPI communities’ histories before AAPIs even arrived to the United States; and

WHEREAS, Santa Cruz has a long history of organized anti-Asian racism, including serving as a nexus of the anti-Chinese movement in California in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and subjecting local Chinese Americans to racist attacks, discriminatory legislation, exploitative labor practices, unsafe working conditions, residential and economic segregation, forced removal and forced relocation; and

WHEREAS, the history of the Chinese American community in Santa Cruz has been systematically erased and largely removed from memory, as seen in the subsequent construction and destruction of four separate Chinatowns dating back to 1860: Pacific Avenue Chinatown (1860-1872), destroyed by gentrification; Front Street Chinatown (1872-1894), destroyed by fire; so-called Blackburn’s Chinatown (1894-1905), destroyed when railroad baron Frederick A. Hihn dislocated its residents; and so-called Birkenseer’s Chinatown (1905-1955), destroyed by flood; and

WHEREAS, anti-Chinese racism was championed and amplified by many of Santa Cruz’s most prominent white citizens and “founding fathers,” including Elihu Anthony, head of the Anti-Chinese Association, who, while calling for the removal and banning of all Chinese laundries in Santa Cruz, wrote in 1880 that “Chinese cheap labor is a curse to our land, a menace to our liberties and the institutions of our country and should be restricted and forever abolished,” and Duncan McPherson, editor of the Santa Cruz *Sentinel*, who, in 1879, during his long history of virulent anti-Chinese racism, described Chinese Americans in racist and dehumanizing terms;” and

WHEREAS, on November 17, 1879, 32 Chinese American railway workers died violently in a massive explosion atop a mountain outside Santa Cruz in an incident known as the Summit Tunnel Explosion, their bodies later laid in an unmarked mass grave, and

WHEREAS, in March 1880, the Santa Cruz Anti-Chinese Association demanded that the Santa Cruz City Council remove all Chinese laundries from within the city limits, and

WHEREAS, in January 1886, the Santa Cruz Anti-Chinese Association passed a unanimous resolution designed to expel and exclude all Chinese Americans from the city limits of Santa Cruz, declaring that “crowds of these Chinese, filthy in their habits, immoral in their relations, having no regard to their own nor to the public health, living in such a manner as is calculated to breed disease, taking no precautions against fire, furnishing a resort for the low and vile, who consort with them for the purpose of gambling and smoking opium, is a nuisance, and is injurious and dangerous to public health and public safety, and prejudicial to the well-being and comfort of the community, and depreciates the value of property in the neighborhood of said

Chinatown, and declaring that “it shall be unlawful for any Chinese to reside or remain within the corporate limits of the City of Santa Cruz,” and subsequently presented their resolution to the city council of Santa Cruz; and

WHEREAS, on February 27, 1886, the Anti-Chinese Association staged a racist, county-wide torchlight parade down Pacific Avenue involving hundreds of white marchers carrying banners and shouting, “The Chinese must go!”; and

WHEREAS, The counter movements by Asian Americans condemning violence against AAPIs is not new but also part of a larger history of resistance against white supremacy and colonization. This includes mass organizing and activism starting in the 1960s, such as fighting for Asian American studies, against evictions from the International Hotel in San Francisco, improving conditions in San Francisco’s Chinatown, the redress campaign for reparations to the Japanese and Japanese Americans interned during WWI in the 1970’s, and the murder of Vincent Chin in 1982, where the AAPI community and allies organized mass demonstrations and a civil case to protest the lenient convictions of the two killers; and

WHEREAS, Inter-racial solidarity, in which the Black community has consistently shown, dating back to Frederick Douglass’s opposition to restrictions on Chinese immigration in 1867 (and also in 1882), Black support for the Filipino community during the Philippine-American War (1899-1913); Black opposition to the Vietnam War (1955-75) through an anti-war and pro-refugee lens; Asian American women activists’ (i.e. Grace Lee Boggs and Yuri Kochiyama) work in abolition and Black liberation; and the Third World Liberation Front (UC Berkeley 1968-1969) which united Latinx/Chicanx, Indigenous, Black and AAPI communities in the fight for Ethnic Studies; and

WHEREAS, The model minority myth continues to divide communities of color, hinder solidarity, feed into racism and systems of oppression, and contribute to the false notion that the AAPI community does not experience racial oppression nor is impacted by white supremacy, which ignores the AAPI community’s experience with xenophobia, islamophobia, anti-Arab racism, and anti-South Asian violence, especially post 9/11. The model minority myth also creates the stereotype that the AAPI community is a monolithic group, a stereotype that invisibilizes the economic, academic and social struggles of our diverse communities (i.e. Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, Southeast Asians, South Asians, Arab-Americans, mixed-race Asians/Hapas, undocumented Asians, Hmong-Americans , etc.); and

WHEREAS, the rise of anti-AAPI racism and violence that occurs every day also serves as a reminder of the dire need for inclusive and critical Ethnic Studies for K-12 as well as in college, because if we do not develop anti-racist consciousness with and for our youth, white supremacy ideology will persist; and

WHEREAS, the City of Santa Cruz stands with the AAPI community and wishes to affirm its commitment to the safety and wellbeing of Asian American employees and community members; and

WHEREAS, the city of Santa Cruz commits to work with the local AAPI community by co-creating a community centered working group to elevate the strengths, highlight the cultural and artistic contributions to our city, and address the impact of racism and violence against AAPI's locally and nationally; and

WHEREAS, The recent rise of violence against Asian Americans is part of a larger history of violence against communities of color, as well as immigrants, and we must work together to create community centered solutions that stop the violence in all communities, an example would be to include AAPI voices in the county's Racial Justice Equity Task Force; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City of Santa Cruz calls on all residents and leaders to join in condemning racist attacks against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in all forms, and renews our commitment to speak out against such attacks. The City also acknowledges the AAPI's community's concern of increased policing. In the context of police brutality and racial justice movements around the country, the APPI community believes that the solution is not in increased policing, but in developing community-centered solutions for all of our communities to live without harm and in cooperation with each other; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Santa Cruz denounces hate crimes, hateful rhetoric, and hateful acts against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and works to ensure that AAPI community members and visitors feel safe and welcome, both during this COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 27th day of April, 2021, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

DISQUALIFIED:

APPROVED: _____
Donna Meyers, Mayor

ATTEST: _____
Bonnie Bush, City Clerk Administrator