

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 9/9/2020

Staff Report No. 20-350

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Michael A. Hursh, General Manager
SUBJECT: Resolution in Support of the Black Lives Matter Movement

ACTION ITEM

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider the adoption of Resolution No. 20-041 in support of the Black Lives Matter racial and social justice movement.

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Strong Public and Policymaker Support
Initiative - Service Quality

Recent protests across the world have brought increased attention to the ongoing issues of police brutality, systemic and institutional racism and injustice. As the world is actively reflecting on the detrimental and adverse impacts that racism has had on the lives of African Americans, adoption of this resolution will affirm the District's commitment and support of the current movement for racial justice and equality in America which affects a large part of its ridership, constituency and staff.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no budgetary or fiscal impact associated with the adoption of this resolution.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

The majority of African Americans have been in this country for countless generations. For 400 years, African Americans have contributed overwhelmingly to the birth, building and amassing of this country's vast wealth and its economic prosperity and success. However, African Americans have not benefitted in the same way that many Americans have. The country's immense wealth hasn't been spread equally to all Americans. Complete freedom, economic security, prosperity, equality and justice have not been fully achieved by the majority of African Americans in this country in comparison other Americans. African Americans have built this country and have a right to benefit and experience all that this country has to offer; yet, many African Americans rank overwhelmingly at the bottom of every quality of life indicator: employment, education, healthcare, home ownership and housing.

The Black Lives Matter Movement is the Civil Rights Movement of today and still addresses many of the same issues African Americans faced in the 1950's and 1960's. The movement encompasses the fight for America's

moral and ethical conscious. This struggle started at America's inception and for centuries has manifested itself in various movements that help, step by step, as Dr. King said, *bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice*. Ambassador Matthew Rycroft also noted that "how a society treats its most vulnerable is always the measure of its humanity." We still have a long way to go in this country and the Black Lives Matter movement is moving us toward the right path.

While it goes without saying, "All Lives Matter," the reason for articulating that "Black Lives Matter" is that African Americans are made wholly vulnerable because of strategic, systemic and institutional systems that keep them at the bottom rungs of society, greatly affecting their abilities, in mass, to achieve the American dream in any substantial way. Blacks are abused by law enforcement at far greater rates than any other group in this country, and is why the movement was founded. Racially targeted violence towards blacks by other citizens, the targeted policing and brutality of blacks at the hands of some of America's law enforcement agencies, and the disparate criminal sentencing of blacks for similar or less crimes has led to the mass incarceration of black males and more increasingly black women in this country.

Institutional and structural racism and strategic barriers have led to dramatic disparities in the lives of countless African Americans. This has not happened in a vacuum; it is strategic, systemic, and institutional and has been woven into the fabric of the existence of America since its foundation.

Examples of Institutional and Structural Racism

Education

Continued institutional racial segregation in American schools have led to wide achievement gaps for African Americans. The wealthiest 10 percent of U.S. school districts spend nearly 10 times more than the poorest 10 percent, which overwhelmingly serve black students. The majority of highly educated new teachers are hired largely by wealthier schools which serve overwhelming numbers of white children. In contrast, new teachers hired without teaching certificates or having minimal standards (25 percent of all new teachers) are usually assigned to teach the most disadvantaged students in low-income minority neighborhoods and schools.

Employment

In 2015, black men made 22% less, and black women made 34.2% less than the average hourly wage of white men with the same education level, experience, and residing in the same region. Black women earned 11.7 % less than their female white counterparts. In the fourth quarter of 2018, African American workers had the highest unemployment rates nationally at 6.5 %, followed by Hispanics at 4.5 %, Asians at 3.2 % and white workers at 3.1%.

Housing

Redlining has led to the lack of access to quality homes in quality neighborhoods which has been detrimental to Blacks in multiple ways. Historically, homeownership has been one of the primary pathways to building wealth for Americans, especially poor and middleclass households. Denying blacks this pathway has blocked many blacks from the ability to rise out of poverty, pay for their children's education and has had much more dire consequences for African Americans who then have to find alternative ways of survival, leading to inevitable and prolonged contact with law enforcement and ultimately high incarceration rates.

In the fourth quarter of 2018, the black homeownership rate was 43.6%, while the Hispanic homeownership rate was 46.9%. In comparison, the white homeownership rate was 73.6%. African Americans overwhelmingly bear the brunt of the homeless crisis as well.

Health

In 2017, 10.6% of African Americans were uninsured compared with 5.9% of non-Hispanic whites. 89.4% of African Americans had health care coverage in 2017, compared with 93.7% of white Americans. Lack of access to quality healthcare for African Americans who overwhelmingly rely on government funded Medicare and Medicaid as opposed to private healthcare, leads to disparate health care and outcomes. According to Wikipedia, the life expectancy rate for blacks in America is 75 years while the overall life expectancy rate is 78.7, with Asians at 86.3, Latinos at 81.9, whites at 78.6 and Native Americans at 77.4.

Criminal Justice, Police Brutality and Mass Incarceration

Over one's life, 1 in every 1,000 black men can expect to be killed by police. About 1,000 civilians are killed each year by law-enforcement officers in the United States. Many studies show that Black people who are fatally shot by police are twice as likely as white people to be unarmed. In 2020, a report gathered on 1.8 million police stops by the eight largest law enforcement agencies in California found that blacks were stopped at a rate 2.5 times higher than that of whites. The report also found that black people were being stopped not for actually breaking a law, but were being stopped more than likely for "reasonable suspicion" and were three times more likely than any other group to be searched, even though searches of white people more than likely turned up contraband.

It is time that we as a society lift up our most vulnerable and stand up for an America that is for all people. The Black Lives Matter Movement is about America's humanity and the struggle for our conscience as a nation. The continued injustices and institutional and structural racism that have caused so much detriment to the lives of African Americans has to be disbanded. When there are gains in the lives of African Americans, all Americans achieve a better quality of life and access to opportunities. Whatever is good for African Americans is good for all Americans and all Americans benefit when blacks do better. More than that it is the right and moral thing to do. This is why Black Lives Matter. Societies flourish when all citizens, including the most vulnerable, are taken care of, included and share in the wealth of the country.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

This is an opportunity for the District to reaffirm its support of the African Americans that work very hard to keep AC Transit going and its riders and constituents who are the lifeblood and backbone of AC Transit. Support of the most vulnerable in society or in one's workplace lead to a well-functioning organization.

There are no known disadvantages.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

There are no practical alternatives to the course of action recommended in this report.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

None

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution No. 20-041

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