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August 28, 2020

Celebrating Victories and Milestones



During this time of great uncertainty, loss, and pain, as we struggle to address simultaneous public health, racial justice, and economic crises, we must not lose hope and become discouraged. We must remember to celebrate our achievements and victories. Let's take a moment to be inspired and reenergized, so that we can continue to work toward a more equitable, just future — a future where we prioritize the outcomes and well-being of all people.

Youth Opportunity Initiative

In June, the Port Commission designated [\\$1.5 million to fund four local non-profits](#) who are providing summer employment and training opportunities for 220 youth — predominately youth of color and low-income youth — who have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Programs are well underway, and cohorts of youth are gaining experience and training in areas such as maritime and environmental sustainability, construction and manufacturing, and habitat restoration.



Additionally, on August 7, the Urban League graduated their first cohort of youth who completed a hands-on construction readiness training program. After completing the program, the participants were offered the opportunity to enroll in the [Priority Hire Program](#), which provides continued support to enhance their learned skillset for employment within the trades industry. Congratulations, graduates!

Promotions of Outstanding Black Employees

As part of the Port's journey to become a more [equitable, anti-racist organization](#), we recognize that our internal practices of employee development and promotion have disproportionately left women and people of color behind. While we have more to do to transform our culture and practices, I want to celebrate and acknowledge the recent promotions of two outstanding Black employees — Jermaine Murray and Dawn Hunter.

Jermaine Murray, Director of Port Construction Services

Jermaine has been at the Port for nine years as a Construction Inspector in the Construction Management Department. Jermaine also brings with him 25 years of military and diverse work experience, including nine years with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway.

Thinking about his promotion, Jermaine shared,

"My mother recently passed away. She always encouraged me to work hard, keep faith, have courage, never allow anyone to define me as a person, never stop believing in myself, and to be judged on my character and not the color of my skin."



Dawn Hunter, Director of Aviation Commercial Management

Hired at the Port in 2017 as the Senior Manager of Airport Dining and Retail at SEA, [Dawn was recently promoted to the Director of Aviation Commercial Management.](#)

Under Dawn's leadership and vision, more women- and minority-owned businesses operate at the airport than ever before. Dawn is the fourth Black woman in Port history to serve in a director-level position, preceded by Joyce Kirangi (former Director of Internal Audit), Yvonne Tate (former Director of Human Resources), and Desiree Leigh (former Director of Aviation Concessions).

"My commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion is not just a part of my job, it is woven into the fiber of my being. Assuring that all communities have fair access to do business with the Port of Seattle is a mission I intend to champion. I am humbled and grateful to be among the ranks of strong women of color who have pioneered before me. I look forward to the day when historic moments like this become the norm for people of color in Seattle."



Both Jermaine and Dawn are transformational leaders who play an active role in advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion at the Port. With their leadership and commitment, we will continue to work toward a vision to develop a Port that mirrors — throughout its breadth of operations and services and within its leadership hierarchy — the diversity of our community.

Anti-racist Caucusing

Finally, I want to uplift the challenging and critical work of a diverse group of Port employees. From June 5 through August 7, OEDI engaged nearly 350 employees in a seven-part caucusing series, and an amazing cadre of 27 employees facilitated those caucuses. [Caucusing](#) is a common anti-racist tool, and a key component of the [Port's EDI strategic plan](#), as we build a shared understanding of the complexities of racism and our ability to address them effectively. During this series, we created space for employees to process recent violence against Black Americans, developed a shared understanding of common anti-racist terms and frameworks, normalized conversations about race and racism, and strategized with our colleagues about how we create an equitable, anti-racist organization. This work was difficult, uncomfortable, and emotional, and it speaks volumes to the commitment and energy for transformational change.

We all have a responsibility to actively repair the harm done to historically oppressed communities, and to do so, we must work collectively to improve opportunities and outcomes for all, while simultaneously addressing the unique needs of different communities. This work requires commitment and perseverance. We are in it for the long haul.


In Solidarity,



Bookda Gheisar

Senior Director, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Centering Equity and Taking Action

- The 2020 grant cycle of the South King County Fund will award \$1.5 million to projects serving near-airport communities most deeply impacted by the current economic crisis. [Learn more and apply](#) for funding through September 30.
- [Last chance to rename your parks!](#) The Duwamish River is one of the most industrialized rivers, but it is the site of transformative community activism and public sector leadership. To recognize the stewardship of the community in restoring the Duwamish River, the Port and Seattle Parks Foundation is renaming six Port-owned parks and shoreline access sites along the Duwamish River to reflect their cultural, environmental, and community significance. [Submit your ideas](#) for new parks names by midnight on August 31.
- [Commissioner Ryan Calkins shares why we all need to take 10 minutes](#) to complete the 2020 census and be counted — for our families, our neighbors, and our community. Filling out the census today can determine our community's representation and funding for hospitals, education, social services, public transportation, infrastructure projects, and emergency response. Visit Census2020.gov or call (844) 330-2020  by September 30th.
- Commissioner Sam Cho is working on a Racial Bias and Equity Motion with the Port's Employee Resource Groups, Development and Diversity Council, and leadership. The motion calls for a comprehensive review of programs, policy, and culture to identify sources of bias and discrimination, and then, ultimately, a plan to address the identified areas. The motion will be reviewed during the Commission's public meeting on September 22. Please [tune in](#) and consider [providing comment](#).

Port of Seattle Commission

Stephanie Bowman | Ryan Calkins | Sam Cho | Fred Felleman | Peter Steinbrueck

Executive Director: Stephen P. Metruck

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