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April 2021

Recharging Our Commitment to Racial Equity



Dear Friends,

Yet again, we find ourselves in difficult, heavy times. Many of us, myself included, have experienced an emotional rollercoaster in response to recent police killings of people of color. The verdict of the Derek Chauvin trial, the video footage of the killing of Adam Toledo, and the killing of Daunte Wright, to name a few, weigh heavy on my mind.

The effects of these tragedies reverberate in our lives, our work, and our relationships. And for many families, especially families of color, these events are far too relatable.

George Floyd's death at the hand of a police officer was horrific and heartbreaking. For too many Black Americans, Mr. Floyd's murder was another illustration of how little our nation values Black lives. It also reinforced why Black Americans often do not trust the police. Mr. Floyd's death and the deaths of other Black people are a wakeup call that our country cannot continue to ignore.

The verdict of the Derek Chauvin trial feels like accountability, and, my hope is that we can create a just world — a world in which George Floyd would still be alive. The verdict must be recognized as one step in the right direction, with many more steps to follow. The outcome of this trial is a recognition of fault and wrongdoing. It is proof that we can hold people who are sworn to protect us accountable for their actions. It is hope for change and safety.

Our country, our state, and our community have experienced deep, tragic loss, grief, and pain over the last year. As a nation and as an organization, we must face our history so that we may heal from it, repair it, and move forward together. It is essential that we recognize the progress by our Port and so many public partners working to dismantle systemic racism, but we cannot become complacent. We still have far to go. Together, we must recharge our commitment to racial equity.

We all, regardless of race, deserve to feel safe, respected, and free of discrimination. We all deserve fair treatment and access to opportunities so that we can reach our fullest potential. The Port envisions an organization and community in which race is no longer an indicator and predictor of outcomes. Please join us in fulfilling this vision.

In Unity,



Bookda Gheisar
Senior Director, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Centering Equity and Taking Action

Port Policing Assessment

During the Port Commission meeting on April 27, Delmas Whittaker and Bookda Gheisar jointly presented a progress report on the [Port's Policing Assessment](#), which included initial insights on how to make the Port's Police Department more accountable and equitable. View the [presentation](#) (.pdf) and [watch the recording](#) for more information. The final recommendations of the assessment will be presented by July 31, 2021.



Environmental Justice

This year, the [Washington State Legislature advanced economic and environmental equity](#), passing a low carbon fuel standard, the HEAL Act, tourism promotion funding, and giving the Port authority to provide airline catering workers with fair, livable pay. Additionally, our legislators made Washington the fifth state in the country to recognize [Juneteenth as a state holiday](#).

Port-wide EDI Assessment

Earlier this week, OEDI opened a survey to all Port employees asking for feedback and insight into the Port’s current racial equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts. This survey is part of a larger Port-wide assessment that will take a closer look at our organization to get perspective on where racial equity is present in our work and where we can do better. This work is part of a Port Commission [motion to promote racial equity and end structural racism](#) in the Port’s workplace and operations. The findings of the complete assessment will be presented during a Commission meeting in October.



PortGen Accelerator

The Port’s first-ever [PortGen Accelerator](#) — a program designed to support the growth and innovation of women- and minority-owned small businesses — is currently [accepting applications until May 15](#). Businesses accepted into this inaugural cohort will access mentorship and programming from the Seattle entrepreneurship community and increase their contracting opportunities from the Port.

Tribute to the Duwamish River

[A new mural in the South Park community](#) pays tribute to the Duwamish River and represents the past, present, and future of the community. This past winter, the Port sponsored a series of educational workshops with the Duwamish Valley Youth Corps, and Port staff, local historians, and Native American community leaders participated in panel discussions and workshops to help inspire the vision for creating this public art piece.



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