

Lisa Wolfe

From: Lionel Largaespada
Sent: Wednesday, December 1, 2021 3:31 PM
To: Erik Upson
Subject: BBLM statement
Attachments: STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH BENICIA BLACK LIVES MATTER.pdf

FYI, in case you weren't aware BBLM put out another statement regarding the subcommittee recommendations for CURE.

Lionel Largaespada
Councilmember
City of Benicia
[REDACTED]
250 E L Street
Benicia, CA 94510
llargaespada@ci.benicia.ca.us

STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH BENICIA BLACK LIVES MATTER

November 29, 2021

Contact:

BBLM Leadership Representative

Ms. Rozalind Sinnamon-Johnson

Phone: (707) 334-3060

Email: beniciablacklivesmatter@gmail.com

STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH BENICIA BLACK LIVES MATTER

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, stand in solidarity with Benicia Black Lives Matter ("BBLM") in condemning the Benicia City Council's recent actions regarding the so-called Committee United for Racial Equity ("CURE"). First, we condemn City Council's targeted restructuring of Resolution 20-103, which removed an essential provision that enshrined two BBLM members' placements within CURE; second, we condemn the City Council's selection-subcommittee's decision, put forward by Council Members Tom Campbell and Trevor Macenski, to not advance two BBLM candidates, Brandon Greene and Kashanna Patton-Lee, to CURE. A summary of events to date follows the signatures of this statement.

These actions collectively represent Benicia City Council and its subcommittee's concerted efforts to erase BBLM's work and leadership in CURE's formation and water down—or perhaps even block—CURE's impact before its work has started. More disturbingly, the exclusion of Brandon Greene in particular, accompanied by troubling comments made on the record by Council Member Campbell, indicate that the actions taken toward Brandon were targeted and personal in nature, and not based on Brandon's efforts to date—including his guidance as co-author of Resolution 20-103—nor based on his obvious eligibility to sit on CURE as Director of ACLU Northern California's racial justice and economics program, among many other qualifications.

Similarly, the decision to block Kashanna appears to be a calculated choice by the subcommittee to erase her work in Benicia as a strong advocate for and leader in racial justice work, demonstrated by the many successful events that she has led or co-led to advance education and community building, such as BBLM's inaugural Juneteenth celebration or the very recent Ruby Bridges March.

Instead, Benicia City Council Members appear to have chosen a future for CURE that may ultimately defeat its purpose. Rather than advancing those like Brandon and Kashanna, who have openly dedicated themselves to substantive, necessary change, and the hard work that will support it, City Council have chosen a model of “business as usual,” in which seats were assigned to those who may appear “safe”—those who are friends with or have openly stated that they are comfortable with the status quo in Benicia. This assessment does not apply to all of those who were selected for advancement, but it is clear that the subcommittee is not interested in the considerable effort, reflection, and self-examination required to make City government and Benicia in general truly equitable. Has the City of Benicia returned to its original position that Benicia is not in need of an equity study and that it is questionable whether Benicia even has a racism problem?

As individuals and organizations who visibly and vocally have championed racial justice in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, we the undersigned have determined that Benicia City Council’s actions appear steeped in its acceptance of white supremacy culture, wherein the Council—comprised almost entirely of white men—and the CURE appointments subcommittee—comprised exclusively of white men—took personal, unprofessional shots at a well-qualified Black professional and community advocate in order to maintain their power and privilege and to block any change that would threaten it.

Benicia City Council and Council Member Campbell and Macenski’s actions cannot be allowed to stand without scrutiny and condemnation. They are the antithesis of the change loudly called for by Black advocates and organizers nationwide. This is an issue of both good governance and community trust, something that the Benicia City Council seems to be lacking.

As such we not only sign on in support of the substance of the public comment submitted by BBLM at the Council meetings where these actions were taken, but also as democratic and community organizations dedicated to walking in our values and demanding better from our representatives.

f3onlinemarketing@gmail.com (not shared) Switch account

SIGN THE LETTER

Organization

Individual name(s)

Comments

SUMMARY OF EVENTS TO DATE

The standing City Council subcommittee called the Committee United for Racial Equity ("CURE"), so named by Benicia Black Lives Matter ("BBLM") in collaboration with current City Manager Erik Upson, is an embodiment of Resolution 20-103 that was adopted at the August 25, 2020 City Council meeting. The resolution, as well as the formation of BBLM, were borne out of the anger, grief, and exhaustion felt nationwide after the viral murder of George Floyd. His tragic and avoidable death, one of many instances of police against Black and Brown communities that tapped into the voyeuristic interest of an American populace that had numerous times before and sadly numerous times after ignored the cries of Black and Brown communities, was said to be the beginning of a racial reckoning in America.

In Benicia, this energy was harnessed into youth-led demonstrations and organizing, all of which culminated in the founding and expansion of BBLM as well as the consideration of a resolution to address systemic inequity in Benicia—namely, Resolution 20-103. The content of this resolution was based almost entirely on recommendations emailed by BBLM co-founder Brandon Greene to then Mayor Elizabeth Patterson in response to the changes Brandon and our Black and Brown communities wished to see in Benicia. Through a series of meetings with the former City Manager and Erik Upson, who was Police Chief at the time, along with additional members of BBLM, the emailed proposal was formalized into the resolution and submitted for consideration and approval to the City Council. Though a year has now passed since that time, the memory of the August 2020 meeting is still vivid in the minds of BBLM members. At that meeting, not only was the necessity of such a position such as the one Dr. Maliika Chambers now holds subject to intense and painful scrutiny, but the resolution was also almost not passed due to a disagreement over the comparatively trivial amount of money that position would require the City to pay. Indeed, rather than make the position permanent, the position was made temporary. This was done under the auspices that Benicia was not in need of an equity study and that it was questionable whether Benicia even has a racism problem.

One year later, after patiently waiting for the work of CURE to begin, and after being promised that two of its members would have a place on the subcommittee that would not exist without them, BBLM members had to sit and watch as the Council—against public outcry—voted to reconstitute the membership of CURE, making all of the seats at large. BBLM members who had for a year been in constant contact with Dr. Chambers, whose position was established by BBLM's own efforts, about when the work would start were told that they would have to apply and interview for the subcommittee. Three members applied: 1) Brandon Greene, Director of the Racial Justice and Economics Program for the Northern Californian arm of the ACLU; 2) Amira Barger, Public Health and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion consultant; and 3) Kashanna Harmon-Lee, experienced medical professional and educational/health advocate. Of the three BBLM members who applied, only Amira was advanced.

The City Council subcommittee's preferences to the mayor for other candidates despite the obvious qualifications of the BBLM applicants were made without adherence to and no respect for the work of those who are responsible for the proposed mission and mandate of CURE—in particular, the work of Brandon Greene. Instead, the subcommittee's choice to advance other candidates appears to be a concerted action on behalf of City Council to erase the work of BBLM and to dilute the work of the CURE subcommittee before that work has even begun, an action in line with the current reporting about the lack of fidelity to the value of actual change, supposedly promised by the cries of allyship at the inception of this country's so-called racial

reckoning. Indeed, just one year after making a series of grand promises to its Black and Brown communities, Benicia is now a hub of the inevitable backlash that accompanies any attempts to take bold steps to address racial inequity. With no voyeuristic element in the form of public attention to buoy its progress, Benicia's leadership has begun to retreat from its promises, even as it asks us to trust its intentions.

BBLM now asks the question - has the City of Benicia returned to its original position that Benicia is not in need of an equity study and that it is questionable whether Benicia has a racism problem?

"Why does this pattern keep repeating? Why does it seem like with every pivotal moment, like when thousands were taking to the street to protest police brutality, we eventually end up with some version of the status quo? Perhaps it's the final result of the inherent friction between two competing ideas that are embedded in the American experience: That racial inequality is pervasive in our society—and the illusion that it's actually a problem of the past."

The positive contributions BBLM has made to Benicia are numerous and substantive, with impacts felt both within our local community and beyond. Since its inception, BBLM has been involved in organizing everything from poetry readings, youth-focused dance classes, community-wide education events in collaboration with local programs, to backpack and food giveaways, to the inaugural Juneteenth flag-raising and annual community celebration—the last being another provision of the resolution that was passed. Future planned events include a warm coat drive and food giveaway for our community's most vulnerable residents, an educational forum led by Indigenous community leader Mary Ann Buggs, an educational event that will introduce the history and nature of the Kwanzaa celebration, a march to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and more. Despite veiled suggestions otherwise, BBLM has shown over and over again that it stands in solidarity with the Benicia community, and is here to stay.

For two eminently qualified BBLM members—whose many years of professional, community, and lived experience in imagining and implementing real change are truly substantial—to be overlooked in the subcommittee's selection process is an affront to the effort BBLM has put into the drafting, passage, and realization of Resolution 20-103 along with its co-authors. BBLM strongly objects to the perceived efforts of the subcommittee to dilute and mismanage the CURE subcommittee before it has even had a chance to start working, and seeks active, meaningful dialogue with City Council, its staff, and the community in general to address these real and substantial concerns.

###

About

Benicia Black Lives Matter is a grassroots community group organized to address anti-Black racism in the city of Benicia. There is a lack of Black representation across City leadership, departments, and voluntary boards. The lack of Black representation tells a story of our complacency as a community and more so, the impact on our Black Benicians lived experience. The good news is, we can rebuild the City of Benicia into a better Benicia, one commitment and one change at a time – and we have a strategy to do so. Our Strategy: Actively Commit to Change. The City of Benicia must commit to a specific vision of what a better, more inclusive and equitable future looks like. For additional information see beniciablacklivesmatter.com.

Submit

Clear form

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google. [Report Abuse](#) - [Terms of Service](#) - [Privacy Policy](#)



Forms

Lisa Wolfe

From: Erik Upson
Sent: Wednesday, December 1, 2021 3:44 PM
To: Maliika Chambers; Mario Giuliani; Sarah Terherst; Ben Stock
Subject: FW: BBLM statement
Attachments: STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH BENICIA BLACK LIVES MATTER.pdf

FYI

From: Lionel Largaespada <LLargaespada@ci.benicia.ca.us>
Sent: Wednesday, December 1, 2021 3:31 PM
To: Erik Upson <EUpson@ci.benicia.ca.us>
Subject: BBLM statement

FYI, in case you weren't aware BBLM put out another statement regarding the subcommittee recommendations for CURE.

Lionel Largaespada
Councilmember
City of Benicia

[REDACTED]
250 E L Street
Benicia, CA 94510
llargaespada@ci.benicia.ca.us

STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH BENICIA BLACK LIVES MATTER

November 29, 2021

Contact:

BBLM Leadership Representative

Ms. Rozalind Sinnamon-Johnson

Phone: (707) 334-3060

Email: beniciablacklivesmatter@gmail.com

STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH BENICIA BLACK LIVES MATTER

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, stand in solidarity with Benicia Black Lives Matter ("BBLM") in condemning the Benicia City Council's recent actions regarding the so-called Committee United for Racial Equity ("CURE"). First, we condemn City Council's targeted restructuring of Resolution 20-103, which removed an essential provision that enshrined two BBLM members' placements within CURE; second, we condemn the City Council's selection-subcommittee's decision, put forward by Council Members Tom Campbell and Trevor Macenski, to not advance two BBLM candidates, Brandon Greene and Kashanna Patton-Lee, to CURE. A summary of events to date follows the signatures of this statement.

These actions collectively represent Benicia City Council and its subcommittee's concerted efforts to erase BBLM's work and leadership in CURE's formation and water down—or perhaps even block—CURE's impact before its work has started. More disturbingly, the exclusion of Brandon Greene in particular, accompanied by troubling comments made on the record by Council Member Campbell, indicate that the actions taken toward Brandon were targeted and personal in nature, and not based on Brandon's efforts to date—including his guidance as co-author of Resolution 20-103—nor based on his obvious eligibility to sit on CURE as Director of ACLU Northern California's racial justice and economics program, among many other qualifications.

Similarly, the decision to block Kashanna appears to be a calculated choice by the subcommittee to erase her work in Benicia as a strong advocate for and leader in racial justice work, demonstrated by the many successful events that she has led or co-led to advance education and community building, such as BBLM's inaugural Juneteenth celebration or the very recent Ruby Bridges March.

Instead, Benicia City Council Members appear to have chosen a future for CURE that may ultimately defeat its purpose. Rather than advancing those like Brandon and Kashanna, who have openly dedicated themselves to substantive, necessary change, and the hard work that will support it, City Council have chosen a model of “business as usual,” in which seats were assigned to those who may appear “safe”—those who are friends with or have openly stated that they are comfortable with the status quo in Benicia. This assessment does not apply to all of those who were selected for advancement, but it is clear that the subcommittee is not interested in the considerable effort, reflection, and self-examination required to make City government and Benicia in general truly equitable. Has the City of Benicia returned to its original position that Benicia is not in need of an equity study and that it is questionable whether Benicia even has a racism problem?

As individuals and organizations who visibly and vocally have championed racial justice in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, we the undersigned have determined that Benicia City Council’s actions appear steeped in its acceptance of white supremacy culture, wherein the Council—comprised almost entirely of white men—and the CURE appointments subcommittee—comprised exclusively of white men—took personal, unprofessional shots at a well-qualified Black professional and community advocate in order to maintain their power and privilege and to block any change that would threaten it.

Benicia City Council and Council Member Campbell and Macenski’s actions cannot be allowed to stand without scrutiny and condemnation. They are the antithesis of the change loudly called for by Black advocates and organizers nationwide. This is an issue of both good governance and community trust, something that the Benicia City Council seems to be lacking.

As such we not only sign on in support of the substance of the public comment submitted by BBLM at the Council meetings where these actions were taken, but also as democratic and community organizations dedicated to walking in our values and demanding better from our representatives.

f3onlinemarketing@gmail.com (not shared) Switch account

SIGN THE LETTER

Organization

Individual name(s)

Comments

SUMMARY OF EVENTS TO DATE

The standing City Council subcommittee called the Committee United for Racial Equity ("CURE"), so named by Benicia Black Lives Matter ("BBLM") in collaboration with current City Manager Erik Upson, is an embodiment of Resolution 20-103 that was adopted at the August 25, 2020 City Council meeting. The resolution, as well as the formation of BBLM, were borne out of the anger, grief, and exhaustion felt nationwide after the viral murder of George Floyd. His tragic and avoidable death, one of many instances of police against Black and Brown communities that tapped into the voyeuristic interest of an American populace that had numerous times before and sadly numerous times after ignored the cries of Black and Brown communities, was said to be the beginning of a racial reckoning in America.

In Benicia, this energy was harnessed into youth-led demonstrations and organizing, all of which culminated in the founding and expansion of BBLM as well as the consideration of a resolution to address systemic inequity in Benicia—namely, Resolution 20-103. The content of this resolution was based almost entirely on recommendations emailed by BBLM co-founder Brandon Greene to then Mayor Elizabeth Patterson in response to the changes Brandon and our Black and Brown communities wished to see in Benicia. Through a series of meetings with the former City Manager and Erik Upson, who was Police Chief at the time, along with additional members of BBLM, the emailed proposal was formalized into the resolution and submitted for consideration and approval to the City Council. Though a year has now passed since that time, the memory of the August 2020 meeting is still vivid in the minds of BBLM members. At that meeting, not only was the necessity of such a position such as the one Dr. Maliika Chambers now holds subject to intense and painful scrutiny, but the resolution was also almost not passed due to a disagreement over the comparatively trivial amount of money that position would require the City to pay. Indeed, rather than make the position permanent, the position was made temporary. This was done under the auspices that Benicia was not in need of an equity study and that it was questionable whether Benicia even has a racism problem.

One year later, after patiently waiting for the work of CURE to begin, and after being promised that two of its members would have a place on the subcommittee that would not exist without them, BBLM members had to sit and watch as the Council—against public outcry—voted to reconstitute the membership of CURE, making all of the seats at large. BBLM members who had for a year been in constant contact with Dr. Chambers, whose position was established by BBLM's own efforts, about when the work would start were told that they would have to apply and interview for the subcommittee. Three members applied: 1) Brandon Greene, Director of the Racial Justice and Economics Program for the Northern Californian arm of the ACLU; 2) Amira Barger, Public Health and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion consultant; and 3) Kashanna Harmon-Lee, experienced medical professional and educational/health advocate. Of the three BBLM members who applied, only Amira was advanced.

The City Council subcommittee's preferences to the mayor for other candidates despite the obvious qualifications of the BBLM applicants were made without adherence to and no respect for the work of those who are responsible for the proposed mission and mandate of CURE—in particular, the work of Brandon Greene. Instead, the subcommittee's choice to advance other candidates appears to be a concerted action on behalf of City Council to erase the work of BBLM and to dilute the work of the CURE subcommittee before that work has even begun, an action in line with the current reporting about the lack of fidelity to the value of actual change, supposedly promised by the cries of allyship at the inception of this country's so-called racial

STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH BENICIA BLACK LIVES MATTER

reckoning. Indeed, just one year after making a series of grand promises to its Black and Brown communities, Benicia is now a hub of the inevitable backlash that accompanies any attempts to take bold steps to address racial inequity. With no voyeuristic element in the form of public attention to buoy its progress, Benicia's leadership has begun to retreat from its promises, even as it asks us to trust its intentions.

BBLM now asks the question - has the City of Benicia returned to its original position that Benicia is not in need of an equity study and that it is questionable whether Benicia has a racism problem?

"Why does this pattern keep repeating? Why does it seem like with every pivotal moment, like when thousands were taking to the street to protest police brutality, we eventually end up with some version of the status quo? Perhaps it's the final result of the inherent friction between two competing ideas that are embedded in the American experience: That racial inequality is pervasive in our society—and the illusion that it's actually a problem of the past."

The positive contributions BBLM has made to Benicia are numerous and substantive, with impacts felt both within our local community and beyond. Since its inception, BBLM has been involved in organizing everything from poetry readings, youth-focused dance classes, community-wide education events in collaboration with local programs, to backpack and food giveaways, to the inaugural Juneteenth flag-raising and annual community celebration—the last being another provision of the resolution that was passed. Future planned events include a warm coat drive and food giveaway for our community's most vulnerable residents, an educational forum led by Indigenous community leader Mary Ann Buggs, an educational event that will introduce the history and nature of the Kwanzaa celebration, a march to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and more. Despite veiled suggestions otherwise, BBLM has shown over and over again that it stands in solidarity with the Benicia community, and is here to stay.

For two eminently qualified BBLM members—whose many years of professional, community, and lived experience in imagining and implementing real change are truly substantial—to be overlooked in the subcommittee's selection process is an affront to the effort BBLM has put into the drafting, passage, and realization of Resolution 20-103 along with its co-authors. BBLM strongly objects to the perceived efforts of the subcommittee to dilute and mismanage the CURE subcommittee before it has even had a chance to start working, and seeks active, meaningful dialogue with City Council, its staff, and the community in general to address these real and substantial concerns.

###

About

Benicia Black Lives Matter is a grassroots community group organized to address anti-Black racism in the city of Benicia. There is a lack of Black representation across City leadership, departments, and voluntary boards. The lack of Black representation tells a story of our complacency as a community and more so, the impact on our Black Benicians lived experience. The good news is, we can rebuild the City of Benicia into a better Benicia, one commitment and one change at a time – and we have a strategy to do so. Our Strategy: Actively Commit to Change. The City of Benicia must commit to a specific vision of what a better, more inclusive and equitable future looks like. For additional information see beniciablacklivesmatter.com.

Submit

Clear form

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google. [Report Abuse](#) - [Terms of Service](#) - [Privacy Policy](#)



Forms