

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PLAN

GOAL 1.3 LISTENING SESSIONS



Summary of Listening Session at July 2, 2020 Rally and March for Social Justice

On July 2, 2020, Community Engagement staff attended the Rally for Social Justice, hosted by the NAACP Santa Rosa/Sonoma County Chapter, held in Courthouse Square. During the rally, the NAACP provided time for attendees to voice their stories and to answer the following question: what does it mean to you to feel safe in your community? The following are themes that came up throughout the session.

Themes:

- **Racism**
 - “Racism is real in this country.”
 - “America was built on greed, bloodshed, lies, and racism.”
 - Unconscious bias in positions of power – it’s draining
 - “Dismantle that which is not moving the community forward.”
 - Stop the dehumanization of Black people
 - There is systemic practice of mishandling of Black people
 - Not to be pondered, a resolution. Everyone can make a decision now to respect Black people
 - The system that was built to set up Black people for failure
 - “People of color are not viruses. I am not a virus.”
 - Government needs to give money back to the communities who built this country

- **Safety**
 - Kids under 18 are not safe from the police
 - “We are tired of our kids getting messed with by the police.”
 - Want youth, 18 and younger, to be kids. Allow for mistakes to happen without lifelong consequences
 - Need to have trusted police in the community to speak with and not be met with retribution
 - “In order to feel safe, I am supported physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.”
 - “It’s not safe for brothers and young black women to go out.”
 - Police seem to create fear - “I advise people of color to watch your children, protect them.”

- **Law Enforcement**
 - When police officers and Sheriffs’ deputies know of colleagues who shouldn’t be there, we want assurance of those individuals calling out their colleagues who shouldn’t be there.

- Hoping there will not be conflict with the Mayor and him being a retired police officer.
- “I have to explain to my son to not wear certain clothing because police will target him for what he wears.”
- Police mock those who try to state their rights, calling them “Google Lawyers”
- One woman told a story about her son, saying the police held her son without parental consent and made him state that he was a gang member and also identify his friends as gang members just to allow him to leave police custody.
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- **Justice System**
 - District Attorney has been condescending to victims’ families
 - Need to fix the court system
- **Equity for people of color**
 - The community needs finances to assist with mental, behavioral, and educational needs
 - To address community issues, we need to build better programs and systems
- **Schools and Education**
 - History in the educational system needs to change, needs to include all of the history
 - Fix the educational and judicial system, it must be confronted
 - Black history is American history.
 - Stop hiding black history in the history books – confront the problem truthfully and honestly.
 - Teach the beautiful culture to children
 - Black lives matter in education too
 - “I am a survivor of Santa Rosa City Schools and the City of Santa Rosa. Growing up as a black man in Santa Rosa is traumatic as (expletive). I do not want to raise children here.”
 - Was labeled a gang member by a local high school because he liked to draw on his binder and sagged his pants – he went on to Merritt College where he became a student ambassador.
 - School system is failing our children
 - Racial bullying is not being addressed in schools – some kids are suffering from severe stress and mental health issues due to racial bullying in schools.
 - One person mentioned that her child was so traumatized by the bullying experience in her school that she developed a tic. There still has been no resolution from the school

Suggestions for Change:

- Stop community hate and politics and work together

- Asks for white allies to speak up and support
- Council and SRPD need to listen
- Keep questioning everything around you and seek answers; do not settle for less
- It is the time for truth and balance