

June 30, 2020

ATTN: Collen Nicol, Riverside City Clerk  
City of Riverside  
3900 Main St.  
Riverside, CA 92522

Dear Mayor and City Council,

I write to you today on behalf of Neighbors Better Together<sup>1</sup> (NBT), an association of representatives from many of Riverside's community groups, dedicated to creating networked conversations between residents and their local government with the goal of promoting fact-based decision-making on government policies affecting community issues that impact our shared vision for Riverside.

Our group approved without dissent on June 28th, 2020, to send this letter to you expressing our concerns over Item 14 on today's City Council agenda: a resolution by Councilmember Plascencia of Ward 5 asking that the City Council assert that racism is a public health crisis affecting the entire City of Riverside.

NBT does not wish to debate the merits of the resolution, but again the process by which it was brought directly before the City Council for a vote with limited opportunity for public input nor any vetting or official support to our knowledge from either of the two long-established City bodies whose primary purpose is to offer thoughtful consideration and gain community buy-in on such issues: the Mayor's Multicultural Forum and our Human Relations Commission. We emphasized similar process concerns in our letter to the City on February 18, 2020, in which the same Councilmember end-ran the spirit of our City's Sunshine Ordinances to promote subjects of significant controversy this past Winter.

The topic of race is not new to Riverside, and hallmark events such as the death of George Floyd and subsequent protests have often preceded significant change within our culture and practices. For example, after robust presentations, discussions, and inquiries involving multidisciplinary experts our Human Relations Commission (HRC) was established in 1966, towards the tail end of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, to (amongst several other charges: see attached) encourage equitable opportunities in health, housing, education, and employment, while also educating all members of the community on basic human rights

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<sup>1</sup> Disclaimer: NBT is an independent group consisting of members from local, community-minded organizations. Opinions expressed by NBT do not necessarily reflect the views or goals of those organizations.



and responsibilities towards the reduction and eventual elimination of prejudice among people based on race.

More recently, the Mayor's Multicultural Forum was established in 1999, shortly after the tragic death of Tyisha Miller, to provide advice to City officials on issues relating to diversity and Riverside's multicultural community. After several months of work by this Forum, and subsequent adoption by the HRC, the City Council in 2001 passed our Inclusive Community Statement. One of the fundamental premises of this impressive document (see attached) is that "all Riversiders should be bound by a common set of principles based upon fairness of treatment, recognition of rights, acceptance of responsibilities, commitment to equality, and dedication to expanding opportunities for all."

Both these bodies have worked tirelessly over the decades since their creation to effectuate gains towards their altruistic missions. Their goals are still unfortunately a work-in-progress. We have much to do.

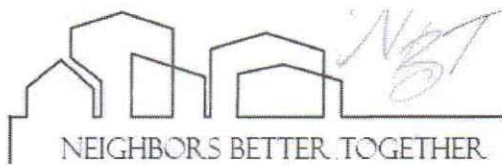
That said, NBT holds to the adage, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." The common factor in both instances mentioned above that led to enduring advancement towards racial equity in Riverside was a non-reactionary approach to a serious societal ill. Progress made in Riverside over the past 50+ years, if indeed not longer, has involved tough and complex dialogues on the subject, which leads to a better understanding, which leads to targeted efforts, which leads to substantive reform. Commitment was made during these times to hear from extensive segments of the populace before reaching conclusions and recommendations, such as those mentioned in Councilmember Plascencia's perhaps, hastily-drafted resolution<sup>2</sup>.

And so we request that before rushing to pass something that purports to strive towards achieving more inclusivity within our City, that the Council actually seek inclusivity in developing this policy from the broader community. NBT asks that you hit the pause button today, leverage the various expertise within our legislative and advisory bodies to vigorously vet this proposal, while actively soliciting ideas from individuals and groups external to the process. We believe the Council will find that a better - fairer and lasting, and without unintended consequences - outcome for all can be expected if it trusts the process.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you collaboratively in the future towards making Riverside the true gem of the Inland Empire.

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<sup>2</sup> We note the resolution contains no findings.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jason Hunter', is written over a solid horizontal line.

Jason Hunter

NBT Chairman

Jehunter51@msn.com

Cc: Mayor William "Rusty" Bailey  
Councilmember Erin Edwards  
Councilmember Andy Melendrez  
Councilmember Ronaldo Fierro  
Councilmember Chuck Conder  
Councilmember Gabriela Plascencia  
Councilmember Jim Perry  
Councilmember Steve Hemenway

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ORDINANCE NO. 3389

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA,  
CREATING A COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION.

WHEREAS, the dignity and worth of man are the founding principles of constitutional government in the United States; and,

WHEREAS, such principles are the foundation of community relations; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that the responsibility of both the individual and the community be to encourage the following:

1. Equal justice before the law.
2. Equal socio-economic and political opportunity.
3. Protection of the dignity and integrity of every individual.
4. Responsible citizenship.
5. Responsible consideration in redress of grievances.
6. Equitable opportunities in health, housing, education and employment.
7. Respect and support for law enforcement.
8. The education of all members of the community relating to basic human rights and responsibilities.
9. The reduction and eventual elimination of prejudice among people based on race, religion, or national origin; and

WHEREAS, in order to encourage the above and to prevent such practices which limit or deprive any member of the community regardless of race of his constitutional guarantees, the City Council of the City of Riverside ordains as follows:

SECTION 1: Pursuant to Sections 700-705 of the City Charter, there is hereby created a Community Relations Commission consisting of fifteen members selected by the City Council.

SECTION 2: The Commission shall consist of fifteen members appointed in accordance with the City Charter. So far as is reasonably possible, the Commission members shall include representation from the following fields: education, medicine, health and welfare, law, real estate, industry, business, finance, law enforcement and labor. The remaining members may be appointed from other fields of endeavor. Not less than

1 six (6) members shall be from the Negro and Mexican-American  
2 groups, with equal representation from each group.

3 SECTION 3: The powers, duties and functions of the  
4 Community Relations Commission shall be limited to the follow-  
5 ing:


- 6 (a) To advise the City Council on all problems of local  
7 intergroup relations.  
8 (b) To study the problems of prejudice and discrimi-  
9 nation in the community and the causes thereof.  
10 (c) To work with other agencies, public and private,  
11 in developing programs to eliminate racial prej-  
12 udice and discrimination.  
13 (d) To sponsor and encourage educational activities  
14 which tend to promote inter-racial, inter-faith  
15 and inter-ethnic harmony, progress and integration.  
16 (e) To foster mutual understanding and respect among  
17 all racial, religious and nationality groups.  
18 (f) To prepare and submit an annual report to the City  
19 Council concerning human relations by the end of  
20 the fiscal year.


21 SECTION 4: The City Clerk shall certify to the adoption  
22 of this ordinance and cause it to be published once in The Press.

23 This ordinance shall become effective on the  
24 30th day after the date of its adoption.

25 ADOPTED by the City Council and signed by the Mayor and  
26 attested by the City Clerk this 12th day of July, 1966.

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29 Attest:

  
Mayor of the City of Riverside

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32 City Clerk of the City of Riverside

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I, Virginia J. Strohecker, City Clerk of the City of  
Riverside, California, do hereby certify that the foregoing  
ordinance was duly and regularly introduced at a meeting of  
the City Council on the 5th day of July, 1966,  
and that thereafter the said ordinance was duly and regularly  
adopted at a meeting of the City Council on the 12th day of  
July, 1966, by the following vote, to wit:

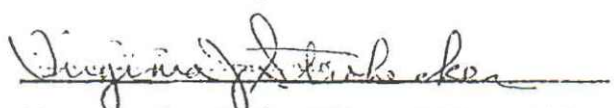
Ayes: Councilmen Backstrand, Sotelo, Coil, Bergin, Munson,  
Renck and Betz.

Noes: None.

Absent: None.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and  
affixed the official seal of the City of Riverside, California,  
this 12th day of July, 1966.

(SEAL)

  
City Clerk of the City of Riverside



People Serving  
People

# CITY OF RIVERSIDE

## CITY COUNCIL MEMORANDUM



**HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

**DATE:** September 18, 2001

**ITEM NO:** 39

**SUBJECT:** Statement on Building a More Inclusive Community

### **BACKGROUND:**

Nineteen months ago, Mayor Loveridge formed a Mayor's Multicultural Forum. Comprised of community leaders of numerous ethnic backgrounds, the Forum is a place for discussion about diversity and multiculturalism. Forum members provide advice to City officials on issues relating to diversity and Riverside's multicultural community. In particular, the Mayor has looked to the Forum for counsel on how to address cultural differences as economic, educational and civic strengths rather than as potential problems.

At its inaugural meeting, the Forum heard a presentation from Jerome Hunter, President of San Diego City College, who initiated a multicultural dialogue series. It has met six times since then and has been fortunate to have Professor Carlos Cortes serve as facilitator for all meetings. To date the Mayor's Multicultural Forum has prepared a multicultural inventory of Riverside that can serve as a benchmark for measuring the City's progress in becoming a more inclusive multicultural community. It has provided networking opportunities for its members, served as an informal community think tank, and enabled members to engage in tough and complex dialogue on diversity related topics.

Most recently, the Mayor's Multicultural Forum drafted a statement on "Building a More Inclusive Community". This statement was developed over the course of three meetings under the guidance of Professor Cortes, who synthesized members' ideas into a cohesive, strong statement of inclusion and understanding. The statement is an important declaration of the kind of multicultural community Riverside seeks to become. To quote from the introductory section of the statement: "Such an inclusive community would be based on two fundamental premises. First, all Riversiders should be and should see themselves as respected, contributing members of the community. Second, all Riversiders should be bound by a common set of principles based on fairness of treatment, recognition of rights, acceptance of responsibilities, commitment to equality, and dedication to expanding opportunities for all."

At its July 19, 2001 meeting, the City of Riverside's Human Relations Commission reviewed and unanimously adopted the "Building a More Inclusive Community" statement. The Human Relations Commission, the Mayor's Multicultural Forum, and the Mayor urge the City Council and the community at large adopt this important statement of who we as a community are and hope to become.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

N/A

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Not adopt the "Building a More Inclusive Community Statement".

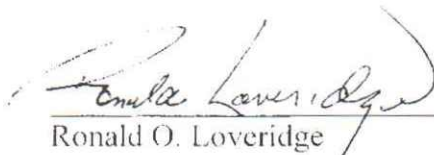
**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

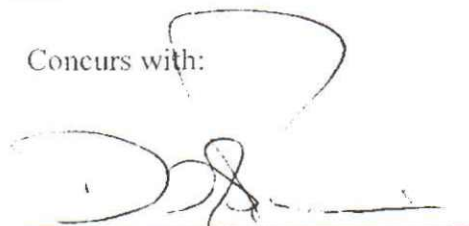
That the City Council:

- 1) Adopt the attached statement, "Building A More Inclusive Community".
- 2) Send the statement to civic, ethnic, and religious groups, businesses, schools and universities for adoption. After adoption, the statement should be returned to the Mayor's Office to be recognized on a citywide adoption list that will be posted on the Seventh Floor.

Prepared by:

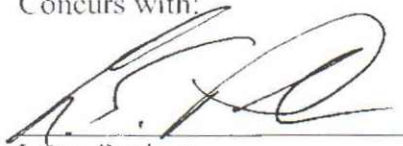
Concurs with:

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ronald O. Loveridge  
 Mayor

  
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 David St. Pierre  
 Chair, Human Relations Commission

Concurs with:

Concurs with:

  
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 Larry Paulsen  
 Interim City Manager

  
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 Javier Rosales  
 Community Relations Administrator

Copy  
City Clerk  
Legal



## BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY

This document consists of a set of principles which, if committed to and acted upon by members of the Riverside community, will help us become a truly inclusive twenty-first-century city. Such an inclusive community would be based on two fundamental premises. First, all Riversiders should be and should see themselves as respected, contributing members of the community. Second, all Riversiders should be bound by a common set of principles based on fairness of treatment, recognition of rights, acceptance of responsibilities, commitment to equality, and dedication to expanding opportunities for all.

A city of considerable racial, ethnic, religious, and other types of diversity, Riverside has etched a complex history. That history has included both significant efforts to achieve greater justice, equality, and understanding, as well as unfortunate periods and events that have demonstrated the need for increased commitment, ideas, and action to work toward these goals.

As we move into the demographically-challenging, globally-shrinking twenty-first century, Riversiders face opportunities and challenges related to diversity: race and religion, gender and ethnicity, language and sexual orientation, diverse abilities and disabilities. Intersecting with such dimensions of diversity are other critical underlying factors such as economic and educational disparities. Therefore, it is increasingly imperative that Riversiders -- as individuals, as groups, and as

institutions -- assume the responsibility of facing the challenges and seizing the opportunities created by diversity.

While recognizing that this will be a long, ongoing, and evolving process, as Riversiders we believe that the following principles provide a basis for building that more inclusive community.

### Individual Responsibility

INCREASING DIVERSITY MEANS THAT ALL OF US, AS INDIVIDUALS, NEED TO LEARN CONTINUOUSLY ABOUT OUR DIFFERENCES WHILE ALSO SEEKING COMMON GROUND BASED ON OUR SIMILARITIES, OUR LINKED GOALS, AND OUR COMMITMENT TO THE BEST IN BASIC HUMAN AND AMERICAN VALUES.

(1) Such learning will necessarily be life-long because of such factors as the continuous arrival of newcomers, both individuals and groups.

(2) This learning will require ongoing dialogue, in which we should strive for openness and honesty, both in our everyday lives and in formal settings.

(3) Honest, open, and successful dialogue requires that each of us be willing to listen to, attempt to understand, and give consideration to voices, perceptions, and interpretations that may challenge, even conflict with, some of our personal beliefs.

(4) As we listen to and learn from others, we need to show sincere respect for them as individuals and as groups, even if we disagree deeply with the ideas that they express and beliefs that they espouse, so that differences of belief, opinion, and interpretation do not result in divisiveness.

(5) We also need to recognize that some learning may involve unlearning certain personal beliefs and perceptions of others.

(6) Finally, as individuals each of us should be willing to move beyond words to action, walking the walk of inclusiveness, not merely talking the talk.

#### Group Responsibility

LIKE ANY LARGE CITY, RIVERSIDE IS BOTH A COMMUNITY AND THE HOME TO MANY SMALLER COMMUNITIES, SUCH AS EXTENDED FAMILIES, NEIGHBORHOODS, SCHOOLS, RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS, ETHNIC ORGANIZATIONS, YOUTH GROUPS, AND DIVERSE AFFINITY ASSOCIATIONS. A KEY TO RIVERSIDE'S FUTURE WILL BE OUR ABILITY TO DEVELOP A BALANCE BETWEEN UNITY (A COLLECTIVE SENSE OF COMMUNITY) AND DIVERSITY (THE INEVITABILITY OF SMALLER COMMUNITIES).

(1) In their best sense, groups serve constructive purposes in the lives of their members.

(2) While it is natural for groups to aggregate, this sometimes escalates into de facto self-segregation.

(3) To avoid such self-segregation, members of all groups need to make efforts to build intergroup as well as interpersonal bridges that strengthen social cohesion, reduce misunderstanding, foster intergroup learning, and forge bonds across group lines.

(4) To achieve such goals people need to be willing to venture out of their group comfort zones and experience the cultures of others.

(5) In crossing lines it is vital to recognize that all groups have their special values, concerns, beliefs, emotional

attachments, collective experiences, communication styles, and senses of identity.

(6) Such experiences and interactions can provide us with opportunities, as groups as well as individually, to share differences, discover commonalities, and draw strength from each other.

(7) Whatever our group attachments, we all need to realize that a more inclusive community necessitates the building of intergroup partnerships and the development of common goals.

(8) For such a community-building process to succeed, all groups must have the opportunity to give voice to their hopes, concerns, perceptions, experiences, values, and beliefs...in short, enjoy the right to be heard as well as accept the responsibility to listen.

#### Institutional Responsibility

RIVERSIDE INSTITUTIONS, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, SHOULD BE ROLE MODELS OF INCLUSIVENESS BY DEMONSTRATING A COMMITMENT TO FAIRNESS, EQUALITY, RESPECT, AND UNDERSTANDING.

(1) Institutions should create environments that foster better interpersonal and intergroup relations, respect, and understanding.

(2) In addition, institutions should provide formal opportunities to learn about diversity.

(3) Such opportunities may be of various types, such as making diversity an important curricular theme in K-12 schools, colleges, and universities and instituting diversity training or

providing other diversity learning initiatives within government agencies, private businesses, non-profit organizations, religious institutions, youth associations, local media, and other entities.

(4) While institutions cannot legislate people's hearts and minds, the adoption and enforcement of selective rules, protocols, and procedures can help foster fairness, equality, respect, and understanding.

#### The Challenge of Change

ALL RIVERSIDERS NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT CHANGE IS INEVITABLE AND THAT WE CAN INFLUENCE ITS DIRECTIONS WHILE ALSO MAKING CONSTRUCTIVE ADAPTATIONS.

(1) To make a diverse, inclusive community work, such adaptations must be mutual, with all of us doing our parts to try to adapt constructively to changing conditions and new issues.

(2) To expect others to make all of the adaptations while we remain adamant in our own positions is a recipe for polarization and divisiveness.

(3) We need to recognize that some of these mutual adaptations may be challenging, even painful, maybe involving a sense of loss, but adaptations are necessary if we are to become a community of full inclusiveness and understanding.

(4) It is also inevitable that there will be disagreements over the meaning and implementation of such basic ideas as acceptance, respect, justice, and equality.

(5) Therefore we must dedicate ourselves to the long-range, ongoing process of honestly sharing ideas, seeking to understand alternate perspectives, and differing without dividing.

\* \* \* \* \*

With these principles in mind, we as Riversiders -- accepting our responsibilities as individuals, as members of groups, and as participants in institutions -- hereby commit ourselves to the goal of building a more inclusive community.

Mayor's Multicultural Forum

June 8, 2001