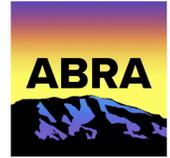


Communication from Public

Name: Against Bigotry, Responding with Action
Date Submitted: 03/27/2022 08:17 AM
Council File No: 21-0702-S1
Comments for Public Posting: ABRA supports the motion to approve use of funds designated for a Racial Equity Baseline Study to instead conduct a Racial Equity Audit. (Please see full letter attached.)

**Against Bigotry,
Responding with Action**



March 27, 2022

RE: Position Letter in **FAVOR** of Council File 21-0702-S1

ABRA supports the motion to approve use of funds designated for a Racial Equity Baseline Study to instead conduct a Racial Equity Audit.

ABRA was born in 2020, in the wake of the George Floyd murder. We arose, initially, as a counterprotest to pro-Trump, Blue Lives Matter “rallies” being held in our community. Those events, held on the north side of Foothill Blvd near Lowell brought Proud Boys, III%ers, and San Fernando Valley Peckerwoods to our neighborhood; we did not want those extremist groups to be the *only* representation of who we are. Thus, we began to counterprotest **for** Black Lives Matter, **for** trans rights, and **for** “freedom and justice for ALL.” For this, we have been repeatedly labeled “terrorists” and “racists” by the local white hegemony. We are careful **not** to say we were called this by all of our white neighbors, only the white hegemony that does not wish to give up power and seeks to silence dissent.

After the summer of 2020, members of ABRA tried repeatedly to introduce anti-racist measures to our local Neighborhood Council. We tried to propose an equity and inclusion committee and an equity & inclusion resolution modeled on what neighboring cities had passed. All of these efforts were met with hostility and a swift shut-down. When we suggested that the neighborhood council submit a Community Impact Statement in support of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, we were shut down again. We knocked on doors and collected signatures to *force* the board to agendaize our items. They did (after long delays) and then voted them down. The only items they ever approved were those in which our language was entirely replaced by the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners’ statement on Civility and Positive Human Relations.

When members of ABRA sought to join NC committees, they were excluded from the Community Improvement & Government Affairs Committee and the Bylaws Committee. When a member of ABRA applied for a group stakeholder seat, she was accused of being racist against white people and interrogated as to whether she is “a trained Marxist like Black Lives Matter.” These accusations came **from sitting board members**, who (unsurprisingly) voted against having a member of our group join the board. Two group stakeholder seats remain empty simply because the STNC does not want representation from a group that is Against Bigotry, Responding with Action. This is in spite of ABRA’s efforts to mount our community’s first Juneteenth event, a local Pride event, and a beautiful Indigenous People’s Day.

All of this context is just to say the following: A racial equity audit of our City's programs, policies, practices, departments, enforcement and oversight agencies, etc. is **long** overdue. We are volunteer stakeholders who have battled this level of opposition in just one area, and throughout we have tried to employ City services to help us. We have filed grievances with DONE. We have been in touch with our Neighborhood Empowerment Advocates. We have sent e-mails with evidence to BONC. We even met with GM Beltran, who was very sympathetic but truthful about how her hands are tied by existing policy and procedure. A Racial Equity Audit promises to uncover the breadth and depth of this type of racial inequity on a much broader scale. ABRA welcomes that.

We recognize that facing our failings as a city is uncomfortable. It is an uncomfortable paradox to know that our City is both incredibly racially diverse, and also incredibly racially segregated due to the legacy of redlining. It is uncomfortable to face that a temporary internment camp for the Japanese existed less than five miles from North Valley City Hall, and the Nazi Bund used to meet in one of our local parks. It's uncomfortable to talk about the KKK cross that still stands atop a hill in Shadow Hills. It will be equally uncomfortable to face the outcomes of the proposed Racial Equity Audit. Nevertheless, we must.

If our goal is to create a City where people of all races and backgrounds can thrive, identifying exactly where we are falling short is **essential**. Only then can we begin the difficult work of formulating and implementing the Strategic Plan alluded to in this motion. We know that LA County has already begun some of this work through the Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative. ABRA wholeheartedly supports LA City's efforts to engage in similar processes. We hope each and every councilmember will vote to support this motion. Every person of color living in Los Angeles stands to benefit from what you find and what you choose to do next.