



CITY OF  
**PALO  
ALTO**

## HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Thursday, August 13, 2020

7:00 PM

REGULAR MEETING

**\*\*\*\*BY VIRTUAL TELECONFERENCE ONLY\*\*\*\***

**Commissioners Present:** Smith, Lee, Regehr, Stinger

**Absent:** Commissioner Savage

**Council Liaison:** Kou, Tanaka [arrived after roll call]

**Staff:** Minka van der Zwaag, Mary Constantino

Chair Smith: Thank you. I would like to welcome everybody to the monthly meeting of the Human Relations Commission for the City of Palo Alto. Tonight we will... Tonight is a special night because we are continuing our process to meet the mandate given to us by City Council, to get the stories of those that are black and brown in our community and report the impact and the issues and challenges that they are facing in our area. I want to just get some of our standard business out of the way. Sorry, finding the agenda.

[Locating agenda.]

Chair Smith: All right. Let us start with roll call.

### **I. ROLL CALL**

Chair Smith: Thank you so much. As we're doing roll call, I just really want to take a few moments to thank Commissioner Lee for his time and service on this commission. He has been tireless on working on issues and it has been a real productive time for him. This will be his last meeting because of term limitations, but we are so grateful for the service he has given our city, so thank you, Commissioner Lee.

### **II. AGENDA CHANGES, REQUESTS, DELETIONS**

Chair Smith: At this time, do we have any agenda changes, requests or deletions to this? We have none. Thank you.

### **III. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

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Chair Smith: At this point we're going to open up for public oral communication. What I want to encourage is this: If you are an advocate or an ally of black and brown folks in the city, this would be your time to speak. We're going to really ask the stories to be of those that are black and brown members of our community in the actual time. If there are other issues that you want to bring up, we're going to ask that you also bring it up here, because in the time of bearing witness and hearing from people, we want to make sure that it is done in a very respectful way. We'll open up for public comment. Please raise your hand by using the raise hand button or, there's nobody on phone, but if they were using a phone it would be \*6. Are there any oral communications from the public? [None] All right. Thank you so much.

#### **IV. BUSINESS**

Chair Smith: We are now into the business of this meeting. Tonight, we are having a public forum. We put "hearing" by mistake, but this is a public forum, because there won't be any action taken. We're doing a public forum where we want to bear witness to the experiences of black and brown folks, black and brown members of our community. The reality is that this is going to be difficult. It's going to be traumatic, but we want to be respectful of the space. We want to give them space, and so we want to bear witness. One of the critical... Some people have asked us, what is the goal of this exercise? Where is the information going? How will it be used? Let me clear for everyone on this. We were given a mandate by the City Council to collect the lived experience and historic experience of black and brown members of our community. We're focusing on the challenges and traumas that are happening in the city, so we are working through that. Ways that we're collecting... Everything that is in this meeting is going to be on the public record. We also have several other ways, which I will get into, that the city media team will collect and then disseminate to this commission. Our job is to create a report for City Council. The format of the report has not been finalized yet because we're giving one month to different social media, video and written experiences, because not everybody is comfortable getting on a screen or speaking at a meeting, but we wanted to give space and time for people to respond. So, we've given people until September to respond. Based on what our responses are, we will determine what the report is. If people are providing amazing videos, we'll use those. If there's audio recordings, we'll use those. If there's written, we'll figure out and it'll be multimedia, but what we want to do is make sure it is impactful and effective for people. At this point I want to open this up, but I want to enter a few items in the public record tonight. There are two things that I want to enter that will, in some shape or form, be in our final report. On Juneteenth – June 19<sup>th</sup> – there was a protest in the city of Palo Alto, and we heard from seven different individuals, seven black individuals in the city, their lived experience. We are fortunate that the organizers have made a video of this, so we now have that video, and we will enter that into the public record. Also, myself and Commissioner Lee were approached by the community at the – and Commissioner Regehr and Commissioner Stronger also reached out, the whole Commission reached out – at the rash of incidences against Black Lives Matter or things that are pro black life in this community. To date, we have catalogued 13 different incidences, 13 different incidences, including the destruction of an art project that the students did. One of the things that is extremely and profoundly disturbing in our community is that we are allowed to express ourselves, and people often say we're a very liberal community, but this sounds like this is a person or persons that are doing racist acts in a concerted pattern. So, we have logged that. We

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also have a powerful, powerful book from Julie Lythcott-Haims, called, *Real American*. She is a Stanford Professor. She has a distinguished career. She is a *New York Times* bestseller, and she has two stories in this book that will be entered into the record, describing experiences of being black in Palo Alto. I had the opportunity to read one of them right before we came on. I was going to read it aloud, but it was so profoundly disturbing that I was like, I just didn't have the capacity to even pull it together to read it. It's a real experience. At this point, we're going to open up first with a video that was created by our community, just to lighten the load, by Tamara Gurbis. It's a great piece. We played it at our initial thing. After that I'm going to open up for comments on this item. Each person has five minutes. We want you to take your time. I'm asking that we want to reserve this space for black and brown individuals in the city of Palo Alto. We want to hear their lived experiences. There will be other times and places as the HRC that we will have space for allies and those that want to support them, but sometimes the greatest gift you can give to people is to bear witness, not comment, not say anything, but just bear witness and stand with them, and allow people to tell their story without any editorializing or additional stuff. Our goal right now is to make sure that we are bearing witness to the honest stories of those in our city. Staff, if we can play the video, and then can you please start raising your hand, please start raising your hand, please start raising your hand if you would like to make a comment as public. Before I go there, Commissioner Regehr, do you have...?

Commissioner Regehr: I was just curious about, so we're witnessing it. Who is taking record of what people are saying tonight? So that when we do our report. Who is interpreting what they're saying? Are we just going to...?

Chair Smith: We're not interpreting anything. All of our recorded meetings are professionally transcribed, so peoples' words will be exactly as they said it.

Commissioner Regehr: That's why, I just wanted to make sure that everybody knows that it'll be... And can public read that, too, so that they know their words were really...?

Chair Smith: Yes. All our minutes are professionally transcribed, are professionally transcribed, so what people say is what will be on the screen.

Commissioner Regehr: Okay, I just wanted to make sure that the public knew that what they said will be not edited.

Chair Smith: Thank you. Yes. There will be no editorial to this. I don't know how, why we would... I would not want to be chairing a commission that would editorialize peoples' experiences. That is poor form. So, can we...? Before I go any further, I would like to, once again, thank the City staff. We have the City Manager and City Director, who have been with us hand-in-hand in this process. They don't have to be at every meeting, but they've shown real interest in this, so we're grateful for their continued interest. We also want to thank our City Council Member and Liaison, Councilman Kou, who has been present for all our meetings, so we're grateful for her continued service in this matter. Staff, if we can play the video, and we can go from there.

[Playing video]

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Chair Smith: Okay, we have one person from the community that has their hand up. If you would like to speak tonight, I need you to raise your hand. How do we do that again, staff? Can you give the public direction on this?

Ms. van der Zwaag: It's \*9.

Chair Smith: It's \*9, or if they're using a computer?

Ms. van der Zwaag: They raise their hand under the "chat" function. I think folks have got it. We'll start with folks, and then as folks are able to work on that –

Chair Smith: Okay, so each person has five minutes. We're grateful for each person that is going to be courageous tonight. Staff, I'll leave the mechanism and traffic direction to you.

Ms. van der Zwaag: Sure. Thank you, Chair. The first speaker is Alexander Brooks, to be followed by Ruth Gray. Mr. Brooks, go ahead, please.

Mr. Brooks: Thank you for making this possible tonight. Just some background on me, I come from an Afro-Caribbean family that moved into Palo Alto, actually, after I was born in the early 90's. I would just like to discuss how, growing up, especially as I got older, it became clearer and clearer that the community that I was part of was, throughout my experience, was the hegemony of largely white and Asian Palo Altans. It was a space where I very much felt like the space was built for white and Asian Palo Altans, and black and Latinx Palo Altans were left much more so to kind of the margin. I'll try to just provide, with my minutes, a few stories chronologically. I can begin with in the education system, the disproportionate rates of landing black and Latinx youths into special ed courses that I believe our school district was investigated by both the state and federal governments for something that I personally experienced as somebody who was landed to special ed courses unnecessarily, from my perspective, because the teachers and schools didn't quite know how to teach us, because that's not who the schools and the spaces were designed for. But then similarly because I had a friend whose younger brother was landed to special ed because they didn't understand that he just needed glasses, for example. So that's where that started off. Then, first, second grade, third grade, you start to see black children, Latinx children, being disciplined more, being held back because, again, the system isn't designed for them, and it very much felt like we were often seen as disruptions or distractions from what was really going on, which was the education and the teaching of the children whom the community was...where the community power was. As I grew up and I learned, particularly how that experience is an outgrowth of the long history of racism and segregation in Palo Alto and East Palo Alto, and a direct outgrowth of the housing discrimination that has created the enormous racial disparities in Palo Alto, and obviously directly led to a disparity in current resources and housing values and educational access and access to jobs and food. It became clearer and clearer how starkly different your experience would be, not just being in Palo Alto as a black or Latinx person, but especially my experience was very different from a Latinx person, or especially from a black person from East Palo Alto, and the further you got from the white privilege, and also quite frequently the ways that the schools were designed to expect Asian success as well, the further you got away from that, the less you were expected to succeed, and the less you were supported by the district. That was the culture that I felt throughout Palo Alto,

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very much, as I said before. I always felt controlled and designed by and for traditional visions of whiteness and Asianness, although I would certainly acknowledge there is an enormous amount of discrimination that is faced by Asian people as well. Going through the school system, racist jokes were the norm. Every single day there would be a racist joke. There would be microaggressions. That was the structure. I went to Paly, I went to Jordan and Duveneck. In Paly in particular, you could see the different student groups would be, literally you could see the racial segregation according to where people would spend time. The school district expected white and Asian students to be able graduate and go to UCS and CSU, so graduation rates were, the graduation requirements were low enough that black and Latinx students would be able to meet them, but not be able to meet the higher requirements to go to UCS and CSUS. So, that's something that student activism had to change, because it didn't feel that that was something that the larger community was interested in. The last experience I'll share is one experience when I was walking around the area of Edgewood near East Palo Alto. I was walking with some friends, leaving a party, and the police officers showed up, immediately spotlighted us and threatened to put me in the hospital for no reason. That was what the cop said, "I'll put you in the hospital," and he ended up detaining two people, both people of color. That's just one, just five minutes of racially disparate experiences I've had in Palo Alto that I would like to be addressed. Thank you.

Chair Smith: Thank you so much.

Ms. van der Zwaag: Thank you so much for sharing your story, your experiences. The next hand that we see raised is Ruth Gray. Ms. Gray, you have five minutes. Go ahead, please.

Ms. Gray: Okay, thank you so much. I really appreciate this opportunity to speak to the Human Resources Commission. I grew up in, I was born in Palo Alto, and grew up here and went to all the schools and had a variety of personal experiences. Some were definitely successes, but also there were some issues and problems, and I had to kind of think for my voice to be heard, so to speak and to make sure that I at least got some things taken care of, as did my parents. In grammar school there was a lot of, I'll say harassment and bullying by the kids. I had to deal with being isolated and excluded most of the time. In my adult life, I have definitely reconnected with some people that were at school, and it's been a good connection. I think maturing has helped. So, that's a good thing. That's a good thing, and there is hope. I can talk a lot about my experiences, but I did want to comment on the video that was just shown. In the video are two of my relatives. The first one is "Pop" Seaman Harris, over by the trolley car. He had a boot black business at that time. He came to Palo Alto in 1887, and he worked on Stanford University while it was being built. He was working on construction, and then later, after the university was built, he had his own business, a transfer business, and he would haul the Stanford students' luggage back and forth to the train station. So, when they came, he took them to dorm, and when they were leaving, he took them to the train station. He was my great great grandfather and died in 1933, I believe. He was born a slave in North Carolina and was able to make his way out here. He's got quite a story, and he was quite a remarkable individual. The second person that's shown in the video, Ms. Gurbis is my uncle, Francis L. Hinson, or Fran. He had Fran's Smoke Shop on the corner of Lytton and Cowper. He did that right after he came out of World War II and had it for several, for many, many years there and is very well known in the town. A lot of people have very wonderful memories about him, so I'm very grateful that those two individuals are in the film. There are a number of other people in my family that did contribute. My family members

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have related some of the hardships they experienced while living in Palo Alto. We had a home on one of the main streets, a very busy street, and frequently, as cars became more popular, if you were outside working on your lawn, somebody might drive by and call you the N-word, and then they'd drive off and they're laughing, and it's a big joke. So, there was quite a bit of overt, covert and blatant problems and racism in Palo Alto that they experienced, and there are many more stories. I'm coming near to the end of my time. I should say that I did go through all of the Palo Alto schools, Lytton Elementary when it was still there, Jordan Junior High School, Palo Alto High School, and then went into Stanford. I had to study and compete with the lawyers and the doctors' kids. So, I'm grateful that I was blessed with that ability to do that. Thank you.

Ms. van der Zwaag: Thank you so much for sharing, Ms. Gray.

Chair Smith: I want to encourage the public at this time. One of the critical things, in order for us to do, to create an accurate report as possible, we need people to share their comments. I want to go over a couple of ways you can share comments besides being live, but I want to give you a chance to raise your hand. You can simply use the "chat" function to raise your hand if you'd like to make a comment. Can we put the slides on the screen, Mary?

Ms. Constantino: Are you talking about the PowerPoint?

Chair Smith: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Constantino: Okay.

Chair Smith: We understand that one of the challenges of sharing stories is that they bring up trauma, and it is significantly hard to speak about them in public. What we want to be able to do is provide people with the opportunity to share in ways that are innocuous and easy without being in a public forum. You can do a post on any of the social media platforms, and simply tag it Palo Alto Speaks. You can send an email to us, and it will be to [raceandequity@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:raceandequity@cityofpaloalto.org). You can use an online forum, which is [cityofpaloalto.org/PaloAltoSpeaks](http://cityofpaloalto.org/PaloAltoSpeaks), or you can participate in the public forum tonight. Here is the important part. When you go to the City page, you can have registered or anonymous submissions. If somebody doesn't want their name or anything to be entered but they want their story to be logged, we do have the ability to do anonymous submissions. You can add photos, videos or documents to your story. We want to make the story as impactful as possible. Here go some options of where you can do this: Facebook, Twitter, Website, Nextdoor, Instagram, Medium. We want to give you as many connection points. We will be continuing this until the beginning of September, so we wanted to give it a total of a month. We clearly understand that sharing one's story in a public forum is very difficult, but we want to get the best, we want to get all the information we can to make this report be a clear indication of what we're doing. Yes, staff?

Ms. van der Zwaag: Chair, so if anybody, if this is going by too fast for them on the slides, if they just want to email me at [hrc@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:hrc@cityofpaloalto.org), I will mail a packet of information of how they can do this and how they can submit it. It's also on the City's website, but if they feel it's a little easier just to get ahold of me, I'd be happy to pass on the information.

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Chair Smith: I'm going to open it up one more time. If you'd like to make any comments, please raise your hand.

Commissioner Lee: Chair, there was a comment in the chat room window.

Chair Smith: I'll give an answer in a second. Staff, can you call on the person and then I'll open that question up to the Commission. I'll open up for chat questions of the Commission.

Ms. van der Zwaag: In my effort not to be disruptive during the meeting – So, we have one speaker who has raised their hand. Lestina, you have five minutes. Go ahead, please.

Lestina Trainor: I'm new to town. I moved here last August from the East Coast. I'm originally a New Yorker who has been for the last 20 years or so in Connecticut. I was really excited to move out to Palo Alto because my mom lives here, and I'm a 50-year-old black woman. My mom is white. My dad passed away. He's black. My mom is a West Coast person. She was born and raised in Berkley, California, and also went to college in Berkley. Then, my dad was from Birmingham, Alabama, and a very active Civil Rights activist. Anyway, I grew up in New York in the suburbs, Scarsdale, New York. Now, it's a little bit more mixed, but at the time I was growing up in the 70s and 80s in school, it was all white. So, that's how I was raised, and very much have spent most of my life in very white spaces. I went on to Boston College, which was predominantly white. I went on to Fordham Law School in New York City, which was a little bit mixed, but predominantly white. I lived in Greenwich, Connecticut, where I had my three kids, very white. I later moved to a little more rural space, Redding, Connecticut – very, very white. So, I had no trepidations about moving to Palo Alto, understanding the racial makeup. I wasn't expecting to find a lot of integration, and in fact, it makes my mom laugh that I feel like, for me, coming from the places that I've lived, Palo Alto feels very mixed, diverse, in a way, because there are at least Asians and dark-skinned people, whereas, in Connecticut that's really sort of more rare. All that to say...And I also grew up visiting my grandparents in Palo Alto, so I'd been here to visit, but as a child. You know, short visits didn't make a huge impression on me racially. Being biracial and also having been raised how I was raised, I understand full well my "privilege" in white spaces where I'm not nearly as intimidating or hard to get to know, or whatever is threatening to white people as say, a dark-skinned black male would be, or anything in between. So, all of that being said, I got an emailed when I moved here, inviting me to join Nextdoor, the app that I guess you can communicate with neighbors. I never posted anything. I'm not even on Facebook, so that wasn't like a huge attraction for me to start, like, conversing. Frankly, I was sort of seeing people as a little bit intense. But when I did finally see something, it was a local ABC News article online, and it said specifically that in Palo Alto, you'd be 13 times more likely, as a black person, to be arrested than a white person. So, I literally cut and pasted that and put it into Nextdoor. What transpired after that was essentially an online race war, practically. I was so blown away by the defensiveness and the hostility and the picking apart of that information that I literally didn't create myself – it was from ABC News – and from the get-go, people were just picking apart that statistic. People were putting in long statistical analyses and also interpreting my responses as just calling them racist, when I was not doing that at all. I was suggesting that even if the statistics were off – which, I wasn't vouching for, because I didn't create them – I was just trying to put that out there and maybe have some feedback on what people thought about that, or whatever. This was, obviously, right after, in the wake of

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George Floyd. I have to say, it terrified me. After trying to stand up for myself... I will say, a few people in the community did also sort of try to say, like, "Hey, she's not calling you racist," or whatever, I just deleted my account and said, "Holy cow." I wasn't prepared for who's surrounding me in Palo Alto, and it was pretty eye-opening and disturbing. And then, of course, reading about reaction to the Black Lives Matter mural and things like that, I'm second-guessing Palo Alto a little bit at this point.

Chair Smith: Thank you so much. Wow. Since we don't have many hands, I want to open it up. We have somebody, an Asian voice, that would like to speak, and we are prepared to listen, and it might be corroborative to the record, so I'm going to ask the person that asked a question to speak.

Ms. van der Zwaag: I'm waiting for the raised hand, Chair.

Chair Smith: Yes, I know. I think they don't want to say their name until... – Yes, hand is raised now.

Ms. van der Zwaag: Right. Tamara, you have five minutes. Go ahead, please.

Tamara: Okay, yes, thank you. I was raised in Palo Alto, and I've lived here most of my childhood, and then I left for college and then came back later as an older adult, after I finished school. I'm really just so thankful that you are having this process. I just want to thank you for that, because I think that race is something that we have hidden from, and racism is something we've hidden from in Palo Alto for the entire time I've been here. I know that as an Asian resident, there are a lot of privileges that I have that people of darker skin don't. Being part of, friends with, members of the community and things like that, I got to see how my experience was different than theirs, but we also still experience racism as Asian residents here. I don't want it to be a comparison. But, growing up in school here, it's really segregated. I mean, really, the white kids are friends with white kids and black kids are friends with black kids. All the cliques are very racially divided, and very often – You know, my grandparents lived here and that's why I'm here, because I'm third generation Palo Altan, and you see that the Asian communities often internalize, we felt like we had to compete for attention or resources, so we end up being anti-black ourselves, in a lot of ways. So, I feel like we have to, as a community, embrace blackness just as much as we embrace equity and really get past the idea of being color-blind, because we end up as Asians often internalizing the white supremacy and internalizing the anti-blackness ourselves. A lot of it just feels like it's competition, because if we're getting pushed down, who else can we push down? I'll leave it at that but thank you so much for the time.

Ms. van der Zwaag: Thank you, Tamara.

Chair Smith: So, one of the things that I want to do with tonight, I understand that sharing stories are traumatic, but I think the stories we've heard in the past, the stories we've entered in the record, and the stories that we've heard tonight, and maybe peoples' unwillingness to speak – sometimes silence is a greater indicator than actually speaking. At this point, I think we've done what we needed to do in this space. We do have other ways for people to connect. Commissioner Lee, you have a question.

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Commissioner Lee: I wanted to make a comment before we end the meeting.

Chair Smith: You can make the comment, sir. Please go.

Commissioner Lee: Okay. So, I want to thank Alexander, Ruth, Lestina and Tamara, and everyone who has shared their stories with us, either during this meeting, during past meetings, or just one-on-one over the years. Our job as a Commission as set out in our Municipal Code is to act whenever we find that any person or any groups doesn't benefit fully from the opportunities or resources of this community, or when anyone is treated unfairly or differently. I think all of us on the Commission hear stories every day about how this is still, unfortunately, very much the case here in Palo Alto, even in 2020. A big part of our job as a Commission is certainly to listen, and we've been doing a lot of that recently, and the Commission has done a pretty good job of that for a while. So, as we reflect on these stories and all of the stories that we've heard of the lived experiences of people of color and other under-served members of our community, I hope we reflect on the huge issues that we still must address as one community. As I prepare to leave this Commission, I want to implore this Commission to never forget that one of our most important jobs and one of our most important tools as a Commission is laid out in our Municipal Code. It empowers us as a Commission to recommend local legislation and action to our Council. For the past three years we've done a bit more of that, and I'm very proud of that work, when it comes to things like gender equality, the most recent teen vaping action that the Council took, that happened, in part, because of our role as an advisory commission. So, whether it's that, or immigration, protecting our LGBTQ community, I'd like to see this Commission do more of that in terms of recommending action and change to our Council. When folks share with us these stories, these issues become personal for me. They are not abstract or theoretical, and they aren't just issues for thoughtful study. These are experiences of real people in our community if you are living them day-to-day. So, while we as individuals and as a city may have the privilege to slow walk change, not everyone has that privilege, so I would really encourage this Commission and that the City, that we share a sense of urgency to act to address these issues, because our inaction, or our delayed action, is impacting people in our community. In closing, as we reflect on these stories, let's not forget our voice and our power as a Commission, independent of what our Council ultimately chooses to do or not do, we as a Commission have a voice and a power to advise and to effectuate actual change without community. I hope this Commission will continue to do that great work in the years ahead. I thank you so much for your friendship and for working with all of us over the past three years to be that change. Thank you, Chair.

Chair Smith: Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner Lee. It sounds like you're ready for higher office. We're grateful for your service. At this point – and I think one of the best things we can do is leave space to reflect. I want to, again, thank Alexander, Ruth and Ms. Trainor, all three who have heard their stories privately before, for sharing. We're going to write a great report, and we're going to do that well.

## **V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- 1. June 30, 2020 Draft Special HRC Meeting Minutes**
- 2. July 9, 2020 Draft Regular HRC Meeting Minutes**

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### 3. July 22, 2020 Draft Special HRC Meeting Minutes

Chair Smith: What I would like to do at this point is move to Minutes and Commissioner reports, and then go from there. All Commissioners, we sent out a packet with three different minutes for you to review. Have you reviewed the minutes? Yes. Can I get a motion to accept the minutes?

#### **MOTION**

Commissioner Lee: I move to approve the minutes.

Chair Smith: Can I get a second on the motion?

Commissioner Stinger: I'll second.

#### **MOTION PASSES: 4-0.**

### **V. REPORTS FROM OFFICIALS**

#### 1. Commissioner Reports

Chair Smith: Do we have any active Commissioner reports outside of the two major projects we've taken on this summer? Commissioner Regehr?

Commissioner Regehr: I just had a question regarding...I've just been hearing, because I've heard a lot of stories prior to this, and people are wondering why did the City ask us to do this – and it's one of my questions, too – and what is the City going to do once they hear the stories? Because people are saying, "We've been telling..." You know, it's not like Palo Alto has been... We've heard these stories, many of us, and that's one of the reasons why we became a Commissioner. I think if we put down somewhere, where we're going... Not that we're just going to give it to the City Council, but what is the plan once we hear these stories? People feel like that they've shared these stories before. What is the City and what are we going to do with these stories, besides just printing them out and letting people read them?

Chair Smith: That is a valid question. I believe Commissioner Lee answered that question very well. Our intention, very much like the Eight Can't Wait, where we had solid and clear recommendations and passive action or commission. I can't control the City. I'm not staff. I'm not City Council, but our Commission was to come back with recommendations to the City on specific legislative or other things that we can do. We are going to go on the record with a strong stance, very similar to what we've been doing the entire summer, from when we recommended Eight Can't Wait in a very strong letter to the Council, to the report that I'm extremely proud of that I think we did a great job looking at police reform, looking at the first step, to looking at the lived experience and talking about what happens there. We're going to do our part. I know Commissioner Regehr, Commissioner Savage, Commissioner Stinger, and the work that Commissioner Lee has put in, we're going to come up with a report with solid recommendations.

Commissioner Regehr: Is it possible that we could put that on our page, like all the ways that people can communicate and what we are going to do with it, instead of just saying report it to the City. I'd like that on our page, to say what we're going to be doing with this.

Chair Smith: We did receive your email on this, and I did engage staff and the Marketing department from the City to put that on the page. Thank you for bringing that up. I think you bring up a very big gap. I'm going to editorialize a little bit. There is a high level of distrust in black and brown communities that the City, the police, or the Council will do anything. What I have heard, as a pastor of this black church and with the black community, is that anything that is valuable, important or critical to us dies by a thousand cuts, gets marginalized and then pushed to the side. When we state we are heard and then we hear 50 other priorities on top of it, by stating those priorities, you say my hurt is not critical. So, as a Commission, we're going to hear the hurt and we're going to make recommendations. I would advise the City and the Council that you need to listen to these voices, because they are deeply hurt. They've been saying it for 50 years. I can tell you, on the phone, we had somebody in their 70s, in their 50s and in their 20s, share a similar experience with the City tonight. This is not a temporary issue. This is the reality of our city, and we need to address it. So –

Commissioner Regehr: I guess my question, Kaloma – I'm sorry, Commissioner –

Chair Smith: You can call me Kaloma. I'm all right with that.

Commissioner Regehr: I agree. I think that our Human Relations page should be run by us, and I think that we should be able to put... It shouldn't be edited, what gets put on it, and I think we should put what our actions are going to be and what our viewpoints are. It should not be through the media, through City Council. It is our Human Relations Commission.

Chair Smith: I agree that... Let's talk about the mechanics of it offline, but I do agree that we should –

Commissioner Regehr: Okay. I just wanted to make that point, that –

Chair Smith: And it's on the record.

Commissioner Regehr: People willing to sharing their stories, to know that it's –

Chair Smith: And just to be clear, it's not edited. The City communication team, they're just a mechanical arm. They know WordPress; I don't, so they can put it up, but we're going to get it done. Any other Commissioner reports? You know, one of the things, I will say, is I'm looking at the comments – and thank you, ladies, for sharing Okay, so I'm looking at it, and I'm going to leave this anonymous, but I will say this, black people and people of color have told the powers that be about the problems and the needs in our community. Nothing happens until there is a racial crisis. We're here because of George Floyd. The same commentator says, "more than 50 years." I know the person personally. They've lived here all their life. It is more than 50 years. Another person said in the comments, "Yes, it is so painful to share personal stories of trauma. I can understand the public reluctance to speak up on Zoom." Commission, we're going to have to

be strong on this and come up with real recommendations in September. It's going to be some hard lifting for us, but I trust the people on this Commission to come back. At this time, we have our City Manager on the call with us. Do you want to say anything, City Manager?

City Manager Ed Shikada: Really, nothing substantive to add, other than to thank the Commission for putting this together. As has been referenced, this is part of a longer conversation that involves the City Council, the City organization and the community. I would just note, for the Commission's awareness, that your recommendations on the Eight Can't Wait will be going to the City Council on August 24<sup>th</sup>, so that has now been scheduled, and we'll look forward to discussion.

Chair Smith: Yes.

## **2. Council Liaison Report**

Chair Smith: And then we have our Liaison. Do we have anything to say on this matter? Okay, thank you. Have I missed any administrative pieces, staff?

Ms. van der Zwaag: I don't believe so, Chair.

Chair Smith: Okay. Because, you know, I always miss something. All right. I want to thank everybody for tonight. As I said in my comments, this is just the beginning of work. I want to thank Julie Lythcott-Haims for bringing the book, *New York Times* bestseller, sharing her experience in Palo Alto, incredibly valuable. Thank you, Council Member Tanaka for joining in. We want to thank the others that are sharing their stories from the protest. That will also be part of the record. So, thank you everyone. Have a good evening, and we will see you in September.

Ms. van der Zwaag: Chair Smith, Council Member Kou's hand is raised.

Chair Smith: Yes, Council Member Kou?

Council Member Kou: I just wanted to also let the Commission know that on August 20<sup>th</sup>, next week, at 8:30 a.m. is the City Schools Liaison Committee meeting. Some of the speakers had spoken about influences at school. So, I think that that would be also, I think, important to kind of have perhaps you, Chair, to do an introduction of what the HRC is doing.

Chair Smith: Okay.

Council Member Kou: Just to include the schools into this endeavor.

Chair Smith: Well, thank you so much. Thank you so much. The schools are a significant part of our city, so thank you so much. Are there any other items or pieces of business that we need to address? Well, we have set a record –

Commissioner Regehr: Oh, sorry.

Chair Smith: I thought we were going to get out in under an hour.

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Commissioner Regehr: I don't know whose hands were raised.

Chair Smith: Commissioner Regehr?

Ms. Regehr: I was just... This is regarding the Commission report. During COVID we were working a group on the parking, the safe parking, and it seems to be at a standstill, and I don't know how we can, as... Lydia is on their commission, I mean, on that group. Because more and more people are coming and coming back to work and living. I just want to put that back on... I don't know how we can start work on that and pushing the City to...?

Ms. van der Zwaag: Commissioner Regehr, the staff is continuing to work on that and be in dialogue with the County of Santa Clara. They have not re-engaged the community committee that was in dialog with them at the beginning, but the work and the dialogue with the County of Santa Clara continues.

Mr. Shikada: Actually, I could add a little more specificity to that. In fact, we have a community meeting that will be coming up that is focused on a couple of pieces. One is noted, work with the faith community. Another is on a specific site to be put together with the County of Santa Clara, so we've got both a community meeting as well as a date being scheduled with the City Council for a discussion and next steps on that effort. So, it is not stalled. It's definitely moving forward, and we'll have more specifics in the coming weeks.

Chair Smith: Thank you so much. I know we are looking, as an agenda item on our next meeting, to really talk about the upcoming eviction crisis and housing crisis, housing fragility in this economy. I think that will be a significant part of what we need to address also as the HRC. All right, any other items?

Mr. Shikada: Actually, Mr. Chair, I'm sorry. I do have one other announcement, and I'm trying to get the specifics here before I lose the moment. Since we're talking about upcoming events, on August 27<sup>th</sup> there will be a virtual author event being hosted by our Library department with Richard Rothstein, the author of *The Color of Law*.

Chair Smith: Can you tell people what... I can tell people what *The Color of Law* is.

Mr. Shikada: Please, if you could elaborate on that.

Chair Smith: *The Color of Law* is a seminal work on redlining in America. It really describes the impact and how it shapes communities. I would encourage everybody to go and a, read the book, because it is illuminating, because things that we take for granted, such as construction, road design, everything is really talked about in that, and how people are marginalized by neighborhood. I think particularly for those that have challenges around housing and don't realize how some of our current policies are almost hearkening back to redlining, it is a valuable piece of work. Did I cover it?

Mr. Shikada: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Chair Smith: Thank you. All right, do we have anything else?

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Ms. van der Zwaag: The Vice Chair would like to say something, Chair.

Chair Smith: Thank you. Vice Chair?

Vice Chair Stinger: I just wanted to say that, under Commissioner Reports, our work plan for this included a focused history of racism in Palo Alto, and I have been working with the archivist at Stanford and the historians, in Palo Alto at the History Museum, and I wanted to give a shout out to how helpful they've been. One of the lessons that I've gotten so far from looking at the history is that we have an early history of being progressive and making positive change. I think that is reflected in the video, *Stand Up*. But we have so much work to do, and the diligence that's required to stay on top of the issue and the concerns in this community are giving us pause, and we have an obligation to make some strong recommendations going forward.

Chair Smith: Thank you for your diligence on that. I want to thank everyone that has taken time out of their day to watch and be part of this process. We should not grow weary in well doing. The issues in our community are going to be here long after if we do not continue with the process, so thank you, everyone, for being part of this. I always have to ask the liaison, Council Member Tanaka, do you have anything to say?

Council Member Tanaka: I apologize for running late. Actually, Mary sent me the calendar invite for seven o'clock instead of six o'clock, so, sorry about that.

Chair Smith: All right. Sorry. Thank you, everyone. Have a good evening, and we will be dialoging and talking in a month. Thank you so much.

## **VI. TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR NEXT REGULAR MEETING:**

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**