



June 19, 2025

Dear Community:

In such a tenuous political climate—locally, statewide, and nationally—we are deeply disturbed by the recent allegations of racist and disparaging language used by San José City Council members. These revelations, reportedly stemming from a private text thread, are both disappointing and troubling. As community members and leaders within the Black community of San José—we demand that this matter be handled with care, transparency, and a sincere commitment to justice.

We believe firmly in accountability—but we also believe accountability must be grounded in fact, not assumption or political opportunism. We recognize and appreciate the record of allyship shown by Councilmembers Ortiz and Candelas toward Black and other marginalized communities during their tenure. However, such history does not exempt any leader from accountability. At the same time, we cannot ignore that some of the loudest calls for punishment have come from individuals and institutions with no demonstrated concern for equity—some of whom have actively contributed to policies that harm the Black community.

Let us be clear: while we strongly defend the privacy and First Amendment rights of all individuals, elected officials must be held to a higher standard—particularly when their words or actions touch upon city business or public issues. Even the perception of racial bias by public officials damages trust and threatens the health of our local democracy. For that reason, we reiterate our **call for full transparency** from our elected officials and a clear accounting of who was involved in the release of this information, including the names of the individuals and any role played by law enforcement. We recognize that in certain situations materials subject to police investigations may be legitimately shielded from public view. However, in this situation it appears that evidence of the allegations was sent to investigators by former councilmember Torres—not because it was requested or directly relevant to a criminal case—but perhaps to circumvent public scrutiny.

We categorically reject any exploitation of our pain as a tool in political maneuvering. Our communities will not be used as pawns in broader city politics. We will define what accountability and atonement look like in partnership with elected leaders who are sincerely interested in listening, learning, and building trust. We are committed to a collaborative process that centers those most impacted. As such, while we do not yet have sufficient information to

make a definitive call on next steps for those involved, we expect ongoing transparency and respectful engagement moving forward.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further, please reach out directly.

Sincerely,

Sean Allen

President, NAACP San José/Silicon Valley

Tomara Hall

President, Afro-UPRIS

Jahmal Williams

Co-Chair, Black Leadership Kitchen Cabinet