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September 2020

## Accountability to Our Communities



Dear Friends,

Structural racism has existed in our country since its founding. Throughout our country's history, laws, policies, and practices have created unfair, unearned advantages for white people at the expense of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). In the Seattle region, this also holds true. Policies such as redlining have reinforced structural racism.

The Port of Seattle recognizes that we are no exception to this. We have a responsibility to actively repair the harm done to historically oppressed communities and use our resources and organizational power to be accountable to those communities. To be successful, this work will take resources, time, perseverance, and community-wide collaboration. Thankfully, we are not starting

from scratch. We have been working hard to create a culture where we center equity, diversity, and inclusion — a culture where EDI is a daily practice. Here are a few examples of this work.

### Policing and Civil Rights Task Force

The tragic killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Manuel Ellis, Rayshard Brooks, and Ahmaud Arbery are only some of the most recent in a long history of unjust killings of Black Americans at the hands of police, reflecting a deeply disturbing pattern of systemic racism in our country that continues to severely impact our cities, communities and essential institutions. Black Lives Matter and the nation are calling for an end to racial injustice, police brutality, killings, and dehumanizing of Black Americans. The Port is responding to this seminal moment and our institutional responsibility by looking at our own police department. This past month, we launched an [agency-wide task force on Policing and Civil Rights](#) to lead a comprehensive assessment of the Port of Seattle Police Department. I am co-chairing this task force with my brilliant colleague Delmas Whittaker (Senior Manager of Fishing Vessel Services and President of the Port's chapter of Blacks in Government), and the [members of the task force](#) include a mix of Port leadership, Port staff, and external stakeholders. The task force will deliver recommendations to the Commission for reforming our police department in three phases, starting in February and continuing through July 2021.

### Opportunity Youth Initiative

While workers in nearly every sector of Washington's economy have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, workers between 18 to 24 years of age have been hit the hardest. Workers with a high school degree or equivalent education, between the ages of 18 and 24, living in south Seattle and the south King County area, and workers of color have the highest number of unemployment claims per capita. In response,

we have partnered with four local non-profits — Seattle Goodwill, Seattle Parks Foundation, Partner in Employment (PIE), and Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle — to [provide jobs, training, and apprenticeships for nearly 200 youth](#), predominately youth of color and low-income youth. This program will continue through the Fall and are providing youth with skills they need to secure trade jobs in Port-related industries.



## South King County Fund

The Port established the [South King County Fund](#) to develop equity-based partnerships and provide resources and support in historically underserved near-airport communities. The fund will award \$10 million between 2019 and 2023 to organizations serving communities most deeply impacted by the current economic crisis for projects connected to Port-related industries, including aviation, maritime, construction trades, and green career industries. The 2020 grant cycle will award \$1.5 million, and the funding application period ends on [Wednesday, September 30, 2020](#) at noon. [Read more](#) about how we will use a combination of data and funding guidelines to make grant decisions.

As I have said before, we are in this for the long haul. Our work to become more equitable and anti-racist will not be perfect. We will make mistakes, but we are committed to learning, growing, and improving. Thank you for your continued commitment and support.

With Gratitude,

**Bookda Gheisar**  
Senior Director, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

## Centering Equity and Taking Action

- **September 15 — October 15** is [National Hispanic Heritage Month](#), celebrating the histories, cultures, and contributions of American residents of Hispanic or Latin-American ancestry. The Port’s Latinos Unidos (Employee Resource Group) is [hosting a series of virtual events](#) throughout the month for employees and their families to celebrate, learn, and share. Additionally, Latinos Unidos compiled a list of [Latinx-owned businesses to support](#), [new recipes and dishes to try at home](#), [films and documentaries about Latinx-heritage](#), and [more](#) (scroll to the bottom of the page).
- For the last month, Commissioner Sam Cho has been working on a **Racial Bias and Equity Motion** with the Port’s Employee Resource Groups, Development and Diversity Council, and leadership. The motion calls for a comprehensive review of programs, policy, and culture to identify sources of bias and discrimination, and then, ultimately, a plan to address the identified areas. The motion will be reviewed during the Commission’s public meeting on October 13. [Please tune in](#) and consider [providing comment](#).
- The Port teamed up with **SeaTac organizations and schools** to donate and distribute over [25,000 masks for school-aged children in the SeaTac area](#).
- **Amadou Ly**, Pathfinder at SEA Airport, shares stories about his [friendship with the late Congressman and civil rights leader John Lewis](#).

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