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January 2021

Let's Bend the Arc Together



Dear Friends:

Happy New Year!

January has been an historic start to 2021.

Not only did we experience and witness a failed insurrection of the federal government, but weeks later, we celebrated the historical win of the first woman and woman of color to serve in the role of vice president, Kamala Harris. The significance of this should not be dismissed. Representation

matters, and both the explicit and unconscious messages that we receive as a result of representation shape our relationships, culture, and policies.

As Vice President Harris said in her victory speech,

"While I may be the first woman in this office, I will not be the last, because every little girl watching tonight sees that this is a country of possibilities."

Hours after the inauguration, the new Administration immediately got to work. President Biden signed 17 executive orders, including actions to rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement, rescind the "Travel Ban/Muslim Ban," and institute a federal mask mandate. All three of these actions are incredibly important for the health, safety, and well-being of our nation, and they have special significant for the Port of Seattle. In response, Commission President Fred Felleman and Executive Director Steve Metruck [released a statement in support](#).

Additionally, the President signed an order entitled "[Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#)." This action recognizes the systemic disparities in our country's laws, policies, and institutions — especially for Black, Indigenous, and people of color — and it lays out steps to identify and holistically address those inequities.

The executive order is very similar to the [Racial Bias and Equity Motion](#) adopted by the Port of Seattle Commission on October 13, 2020 to promote equity and end structural racism in the Port's workplace and operations. The motion directs

the Port to align policies and procedures into comprehensive policy for advancing racial equity. A comprehensive report and policy recommendations will be presented to the Commission in October 2021, and this will illustrate the Port's commitment to act, learn, and progress as an organization that values and centers equity, diversity, inclusion, accountability, and transparency. This work will also codify equity into the fabric of the organization so that it lives on past the current staff and Commission.

Even though January was filled with significance and celebration, we must not become complacent and stagnant. There is much work ahead. The events of past years, especially 2020, have prompted unprecedented levels of turmoil and unpredictability. The COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis have created stress and struggle for all communities, especially communities of color and historically marginalized communities. Additionally, the pandemic has laid bare the ongoing racial inequities that we have experienced (and never directly faced) for generations.

As Amanda Gorman so eloquently recited during the inauguration in her poem *The Hill We Climb*,

"Somehow, we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken, but simply unfinished. We, the successors of a country and a time when a skinny Black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president, only to find herself reciting for one."

The election of President Biden and Vice President Harris will not alone fix our nation's problems. One or two people cannot solely change the nation. We must all work together to create the change we seek. Together we can advance racial equity, generating lasting transformative change that expands economic development and quality of life for all.

I value all our differences — our different experiences, viewpoints, beliefs, and identities. I truly think it makes us stronger and better equipped to find creative, just solutions to complex, systemic problems. Through our differences, we can find unity. I am optimistic for what we can accomplish together in the coming months and year. I hope we can work together.

In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

Let's bend the arc together.

In Unity,



Bookda Gheisar

Senior Director, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Centering Equity and Taking Action

OEDI's First Impact Report

During the past 18 months, the Port took significant steps to advance racial equity and become an anti-racist organization.

- OEDI compiled a list of our key accomplishments – a [complete list](#) and an [executive summary](#) – since the start of our office.
- And, building on this work, we developed our [2021 Strategic Plan](#), guiding our approach to advance racial equity internally and externally.

Creating the Beloved Community: A Tribute to Dr. King

Delmas Whittaker, Senior Manager, Fishing and Commercial Vessels and president of the Blacks in Government chapter at the Port of Seattle commemorated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. [Blog link](#)

A Farm Holds Seeds of Hope for Homeless Native Americans

In December 2020, we reported on the first grant cycle of the South King County Fund. The Chief Seattle Club's project, one of the ten projects receiving funding, was featured in the Seattle Times. [Article link](#)

Maritime High School

The Port partnered in the development of a new regional high school administered by Highline Public Schools that will open in September 2021.

- [Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition](#) will partner as a community engagement liaison and the [Northwest Maritime Center](#) will provide guidance related to maritime education and fundraising support.
- The curricula will center on the environment, marine science, and maritime careers, including maritime construction, vessel operations, and other careers working on or near the water.
- Prospective students have until **January 31 at 11:00 p.m.** to apply online. [Application link](#)

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