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February 2022

## Happy Black History Month



Dear Friends,

At the beginning of February, my friend and colleague **Dawn Hunter, Acting Aviation Chief Operating Officer; President of the Port’s Chapter of Blacks in Government (BIG)**, and I sent a joint message to all Port staff in recognition and celebration of Black History Month. This month, I’d like to share an excerpt from the letter.

Throughout every stage of our country’s short life, Black Americans have led the struggle for equity and justice. From the abolition of slavery to voting rights to civil rights to LGBTQ rights, Black communities have fought for generations to strengthen our nation and perfect our democracy. February is undoubtedly a recognition of the immeasurable sacrifice and contributions of Black Americans, while recognizing that we all benefit from the eradication of social injustice.



On February 8, for the first time in the Port’s history, the Port Commission issued a [proclamation recognizing February as Black History Month](#) — a beautiful acknowledgment of Black Americans. Commenting on the significance of the proclamation, **Commissioner Hamdi Mohamed said**, *“As the first Black woman elected to this Commission, I suppose I am a tiny bit of Black history myself. However, the reason I ran for office and got elected to this position has less to do with Black history and more to do with Black futures.”*

In this spirit, this February, we — **Dawn Hunter and Bookda Gheisar** — as leaders of BIG and OEDI, respectively, encourage and challenge us all to make

time and space for Black voices and stories, both past and present. We challenge us all to confront our history, even when it's hurtful and shameful. We encourage us all to reframe how Black Americans are viewed and seen in our country, because when our country truly values Black lives, we will create a culture that values all lives. We challenge us all, in big ways and small, to center Black Americans in the narrative of our nation, and to not think of February as the only time to uplift Black leaders and accomplishments, but to think of the stories of Black Americans and our country as inseparable.

Finally, we challenge us all to come together to fight against racism and to transform our systems so that those communities who are too often marginalized and left behind — Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color — are accessing the opportunities and support they need to succeed. For transformation to truly occur, Black people cannot end racism on their own. We — people of all races, genders, sexual orientations, religions, and identities — must work together, because our success and wellbeing are all connected.

In the words of Amanda Gorman, "*We are battered but bolder; worn but wiser. I'm not telling you to not be tired or afraid. If anything, the very fact that we're weary means we are, by definition, changed; we are brave enough to listen to, and learn from, our fear. This time will be different because this time we'll be different. We already are.*"

Happy Black History Month,



**Bookda Gheisar**

Senior Director, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

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## Centering Equity and Taking Action

**Port completes Equity Assessment, sets recommendations, and begins implementation**



In 2021, we completed an Equity Assessment of the entire organization, looking at many aspects of our work from building an anti-racist culture internally to hiring and more diverse and committed to equity workforce to equitable community engagement. The assessment identified inequities within our work and structure, and put forward a set of 53 robust, comprehensive recommendations for creating a more equitable, anti-racist Port. Learn more:

- [Full Equity Assessment report](#)
- [Executive Summary](#)
- [Appendices](#)

We've already begun implementing many of these recommendations, including changing interviewing and hiring processes to be more inclusive and create more diverse candidate pools; requiring all staff (including supervisors and leaders) to have an equity goal as part of their annual performance evaluations; and, requiring all departments to set annual department-specific equity goals that we will track and report on annually.

Throughout the year, we will continue to update you on this work and our progress implementing these recommendations.

## Equitable recovery investments

The Port of Seattle Commission expanded its investments in critical equitable recovery programs [by approving \\$3.9 million in funding](#) for youth jobs and local economic development.

The Commission approved \$2.1 million to fund the Youth Career Launch Program, an evolution of the Port's Opportunity Youth Initiative, for three years.





The Commission authorized \$1.86 million for the Economic Development Partnership program, which supports two-year economic development projects jointly funded by the Port and King County cities. The Commission also authorized the Executive Director to use underutilized grant program funding from 2021 to support regional small business recovery initiatives. [Learn more](#) →

## Supporting Afghan Refugees

While mid-February marked the end of the federal government’s deadline to transition Afghan refugees to state resettlement services, the work is just beginning for hundreds of families that recently arrived in our area. On February 16, the Port of Seattle, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, and South Sound business leaders provided an [update on the successful efforts of local agencies](#).



The help comes from Afghan refugee resettlement agencies, community-based organizations, and private businesses that led to temporary housing, donated food and household items, and early connections to job opportunities

The Port is also holding a **job fair on March 29 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the DoubleTree by Hilton Seattle Airport**. There is no charge to attend, and participants will get a chance to meet with 25 employers. Also, if you can’t attend in person, there’s a [virtual option](#) being held at the same time. Afghan refugees and all job seekers are welcome!

## 2021 Work and Accomplishments

Last year was a busy one! The Port made great strides in advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion for both our workforce and the communities we serve. Please check out our 2021 Accomplishments:



- [In-depth Version](#)
- [Executive Summary](#)

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