


*Communication from the Office of the Ethnic Services*

Date: June 2, 2020  
To: ACBH Managers and Supervisors  
CC: All ACBH Staff  
From: Javarré Wilson, MPH, Ethnic Services Manager   
**SUBJECT: COVID-19 Cultural & Linguistic Awareness Initiative**

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As I prepare this memo, my heart is heavy and I'm overwhelmed with pain and rage that cannot be fully expressed here. At times, I find it hard to interpret whether we're living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or the 1960s. Looking at the graphic images on television, I think back to one of the Civil Rights most authentic leaders who fought for Blacks to have the right to vote.

*We're tired of all the beatin', we're tired of takin' this. It's been a hundred years and we're still bein' beatin and shot at, crosses are still being burned because we want to vote. But I'm goin' to stay in Mississippi and if they shoot me down, I'll be buried here.*

Those were the energetic words of Fannie Lou Hamer in 1964, but she was most widely known for saying, "We are sick and tired of being sick and tired." And yet, here we are again sweating through the other ever-present virus of systemic racism and oppression.

Originally, this memo was to inform ACBH staff, managers, and Executive Team about the Office of Ethnic Services' COVID-19 Cultural & Linguistic Awareness Initiative. Since the release of the video showing George Floyd taking his final breath under the left knee of a Minneapolis police officer for 8 mins and 46 secs, the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have taken a back seat. While I am outraged by the death of yet another unarmed Black male in the United States of America, I would still like to share the COVID-19 Cultural & Linguistic Awareness Initiative with you.

The idea for this initiative started when my office witnessed and read about Asian Americans being attacked, victimized and accused of being the culprit for COVID-19. I was sickened by these attacks and felt mere words alone were insufficient and more needed to be done. As the pandemic progressed, other egregious revelations emerged—like the fact that Latinos are disproportionately contracting the virus and African Americans are disproportionately dying from the virus. The Office of Ethnic Services wanted to





present a multipronged approach to this pandemic. This includes underscoring how COVID-19 is bringing to bear the health disparities and inequities that have always existed among African American, Latinx and Indigenous communities in this country.

During this pandemic we are all hurting and trying our best to navigate the unfamiliar terrain. ***However, there are some among us who are disproportionately impacted.*** This initiative seeks to elevate consciousness about the virus while at the same time, countering the negative narrative that blame African Americans for dying of COVID-19, lifting up the humanity of the undocumented workers, dispelling the myths and eliminate the attacks heralded at Asian Americans. It is also critical we demand a more intentional documentation of cases among the Indigenous, Pacific Islanders, LGBTQQI2S, and all cultural and linguistic communities impacted by this pandemic.

**As stated earlier, the initiative is designed to counter all negative narratives about our cultural, racial and linguistic communities and continue to support the Department's effort to promote equity, inclusivity and honor the cultural diversity throughout Alameda County.**

The COVID-19 Cultural & Linguistic Awareness Initiative consist of Transit Shelter Posters and Junior Billboard Posters. **These posters and billboards are scheduled for installation on June 1, 2020, and will run from 4-6 weeks throughout communities in Oakland, Hayward, and Fremont.** Examples of those images are attached for you to review. My Office will also have some posters available for ACBH staff to post in their offices and share with contract providers and businesses in Alameda County.

If you want to know more about this campaign, please feel free to contact me or my office directly.  
Thank you.

