

Council Business Meeting

October 18, 2022

Agenda Item	SERJAC Report to the City Council Statement of regarding racially motivated death threats to Nataki Garrett artistic director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival	
From	Ann Seltzer	Staff Liaison to Social Equity and Racial Justice Advisory Committee (SERJAC)
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SUMMARY

The Social Equity and Racial Justice Advisory Committee presents the attached statement regarding the racially motivated death threats directed at OSF Artistic Director Nataki Garrett. An oral update on the activities of SERJAC will be presented by co-chair Precious Yamaguchi and then the attached statement will be read by co-chair Emily Simon.

ACTIONS, OPTIONS & POTENTIAL MOTIONS

None

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

This is an informational report. No council action is needed at this time.

FISCAL IMPACTS

None.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

The Social Equity and Racial Justice Commission (now advisory committee) was created by the City Council in June 2021 and codified by Ordinance 3197 found in the Ashland Municipal Code 2.20.

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

SERJAC presented its first report to the City Council in February 2022. The Council requested a second report be presented later in the year. At its October 6 meeting SERJAC voted to write a statement in response to the death threats received by the OSF Artistic Director. Mayor Akins requested the statement be read at the October 18, City council meeting.

REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS

SERJAC Statement

Ashland City Council Meeting, October 18, 2022

The following is the statement from SERJC regarding the racially motivated death threats to Nataki Garrett artistic director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival

The Social Equity and Racial Justice Committee of the City of Ashland (SERJ) joins with the Medford Mail Tribune, Mayor Julie Akins, SOU, the dramatist's guild and multiple other individuals and organizations to condemn the abhorrent racist death threats suffered by Nataki Garrett. The threats to Ms. Garrett did not happen in a vacuum. Nor is she the only victim. A black female OSF actor was targeted with specific racist threats in 2017, causing her to fear walking in the railroad district, and requiring OSF to institute car shuttles to get their black employees home safely after performances. Stops by police officers of black and Hispanic OSF employees have been far too common.

We hope that this statement will be shared widely on both social and traditional media as our community's history of racism needs to be confronted and exposed. Without this confrontation and exposure, the work that this community and city council have been doing to root out our racist past and embrace an anti-racist culture will fall far short. Ms. Garrett's victimization is felt by every person of color in this valley. It must also be felt by every one of us, regardless of the color of our skin, our gender, our sexual orientation, our ethnicity, our religion and/or our age. We should all be reacting with outrage, sadness, and anger. This commission stands behind Ms. Garrett and all people of color in strong and willful defiance against malevolent words of hate that express the worst intentions that certain member(s) of our society foist upon others.

Too often, our community will voice anti-racism and equity support, but do little more than that. It's easy enough to march in a parade, wear a t-shirt or applaud at a protest, but it takes courage and effort to take action. We applaud those who are doing work and educating yourselves. We encourage you to learn about American history, educate your children about systemic racism and bias, and advocate for greater diversity of leadership in businesses and schools. Listen to Black women. Listen to people of color. Talk to your racist friends and relatives. If they don't listen, then move on and talk to others.

This commission calls upon the Ashland community at large to continue promoting awareness of racism through education and dialogue being mindful and conscious of how we impact others and ultimately ourselves in the process. Racism is not a problem that impacts only people of color. It impacts all of us. Making this community a welcoming place for everyone benefits everyone. It's good for our community, our economy, and our schools.

Each of you represent and lead our community. We ask that as a city council you not only strongly and vocally support OSF and its excellent artistic director by speaking out against the hateful comments. We are asking that you take affirmative action against racism by allocating sufficient financial resources so that Diversity, Equity and Inclusion can become a reality (and not just buzz words) within the City of Ashland.

Respectfully,

Emily Simon and Precious Yamaguchi,
Co-chairs Social Equity and Racial Justice Committee