



Councilmember Ben Bartlett  
City of Berkeley, District 3

CONSENT CALENDAR  
May 16, 2017

To: Honorable Members of the City Council

From: Honorable Ben Bartlett

Subject: Month of Inclusion – Resolution to proclaim May 2017 as a Month of Inclusion in recognition of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the harm caused by racially discriminatory immigration measures, and to honor the contributions of all immigrants and refugees who have enriched our communities.

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt the Month of Inclusion Resolution.

BACKGROUND

In May 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Chester A. Arthur. This was the nation's first law to prohibit immigration on the basis of ethnicity. The law was the culmination of decades of anti-immigrant rhetoric and violence targeted at Chinese immigrants.

Chinese immigrants arrived in the United States in the mid-1800s fleeing political instability and war. From their arrival during the Gold Rush, the Chinese experienced discrimination and overt racism. During the economic downturn of 1870s, Chinese immigrants made easy targets as scapegoats.

Politicians rose to prominence through stirring up nativist sentiment. Chinese immigrants were characterized as unassimilable heathens, flooding the American labor market to undercut native-born workers. Chinese laborers were blamed for lowering wages, taking away jobs, and draining the economy.

In the 1870s and 1880s, the anti-Chinese sentiment escalated into violence, culminating into race riots with mobs storming Chinese communities. In 1871, there was a mass lynching of 19 Chinese people in Los Angeles' Chinatown. In 1885, the Rock Springs Massacre occurred, during which a mob of armed white men opened fire on defenseless Chinese miners, killing 28, wounding 15, and burning all 79 Chinese homes.

Although it has been 135 years since the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Act still has deep resonance. President Trump's Muslim travel ban similarly scapegoats ethnic groups for economic conditions using anti-immigrant sentiment and nationalism disguised as populism to vilify immigrant populations.

President Trump blames undocumented immigrants for reducing wages, taking jobs, increasing crime, in spite of evidence to the contrary. In fact, immigration has a positive long-term impact on the economy and immigrants commit fewer crimes per capita than people born in the United States. President Trump has ordered increased border enforcement to stop and deport all unauthorized immigrants. President Trump has authorized a dramatic increase in immigrations raids, even arresting undocumented immigrants without criminal records.

President Trump's divisive policies and rhetoric has led to a surge of hate crimes against ethnic and religious minorities. Mosques have been vandalized. Jewish community centers have been threatened with bombing. Muslims and South Asians have been harassed, attacked, and killed.

In recognition of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and the anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act, we would like to honor May 2017 as a Month of Inclusion. We would like to recognize the harm caused by racially discriminatory immigration measures and honor the contributions of all immigrants and refugees who have enriched our communities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No impact.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No negative impact.

CONTACT PERSON:

Councilmember Ben Bartlett, 510-981-7130

Attachments:

1. Resolution

Month of Inclusion Resolution

WHEREAS, in May 1882, President Chester Arthur signed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was the nation's first law to prohibit immigration solely on the basis of ethnicity;

WHEREAS, the Chinese Exclusion Act was based on racial hostility against Chinese, who were characterized as "unassimilable, vile heathens" and were blamed for lowering wages, taking away jobs, draining the economy, and endangering the American way of life;

WHEREAS, the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was renewed in 1892, 1902 and made permanent in 1904 prevented Chinese laborers from entering the U.S. and denied Chinese a pathway to citizenship for more than 60 years;

WHEREAS, subsequent legislation such as the 1892 Geary Act, which required all Chinese to register for and carry on their persons Certificates of Residence or risk imprisonment and deportation set a precedent for future discriminatory registries of immigrants and descendants of immigrants;

WHEREAS, the U.S. Senate in 2011 and the U.S. House of Representatives in 2012 unanimously condemned the Chinese Exclusion Laws and "affirmed Congress' commitment to preserve the civil rights and constitutional protections for all people;"

WHEREAS, there is a direct link of racial animus and religious intolerance between the Chinese Exclusion Act and President Trump's Executive Orders which attempts to ban the issuance of travel visas for citizens of certain majority-Muslim countries based on unestablished security risks and the implication that all Muslims are terrorists;

WHEREAS, President Trump called for a "Muslim Ban," and called Mexicans "bad hombres" and "rapists" in his campaign speeches;

WHEREAS, Trump's Executive Order of January 24, 2017 calls for the construction of a new border wall, and the hiring of additional Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to deport undocumented immigrants;

WHEREAS, Trump's orders have included sweeps through immigrant, including Chinese, communities, just as those allowed in the aftermath of the Chinese Exclusion Act;

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley passed a Resolution that denounces Trump's Executive Orders to build a wall, denies contracts to any company has any affiliation to the building of the wall, and affirms Berkeley as a city of inclusion;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Berkeley proclaims May 2017 to be a Month of Inclusion in recognition of the harm caused by racially discriminatory immigration measures and to honor the contributions of all immigrants and refugees who have enriched our communities;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Berkeley further reaffirms it is open and welcoming to immigrants and refugees who are integral to the life of our communities.

