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March 2022

Celebrating Women's History Month



Dear Friends,

In March 2021, Port employees from Blacks in Government and Women's Initiative Network (two of the Port's employee resource groups) collaborated to organize a panel event about intersectionality and the experiences of women of color at the Port of Seattle.

The event was attended by more than 100 employees, and the impact of the event was immediate, as the panel, comprised of predominately women of color, drew attention to the inequities and disparities that they have faced throughout their careers.

In the weeks that followed the event, the Port's Executive Director Steve Metruck met with the panel, then commissioned an assessment to identify the top barriers to women of color at the Port. The Port hired a consultant to conduct the assessment through one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and surveys of both current and former Port employees who identify as women of color.

Now, approximately a year after it started, the report's recommendations and solutions for addressing those barriers are here. This past Wednesday we shared the results with our employees, and soon, we will post more information on our website for you to review. In the meantime, here are the high-level findings.

1. Women of Color, in comparison to other employees, experience many barriers to being successful at the Port, like being excluded from the "good ole boys' network," discrimination based on race, and biases and discrimination of middle managers.
2. Women of color report being paid at lower rates than colleagues with less experience, and they fall victim to the biases and unfair evaluations of their manager (thus not receiving deserved pay increases).
3. Many women of color are encouraged by the Port's equity work and efforts to create an inclusive work culture. And many women of color report that

the Port needs to continue to do more, make changes, and truly walk the talk.

We recognize there are things we must change to make our organization a more inclusive and equitable workplace, especially for women of color. Internally, the Port has conducted several comprehensive projects in the past year, including the [Equity Assessment](#), and many of the same findings are present throughout. We are aligning the recommendations from each of these projects so that we are coordinated, efficient, and creating meaningful, lasting change.

I'm also grateful to be a part of an organization that is growing and changing. Change, while inevitable, is not always easy. Yet, the Port has been working hard to confront difficult issues within our organization and society, and we have been leaning into change. We are identifying hard truths and recognizing the need to improve, grow, and create a truly anti-racist, equitable Port.

It is fitting that at the end of Women's History Month — a time to celebrate women of the past to empower women of the future — that we, as an organization, tackle the results of this assessment. I look forward to reporting back and sharing more with you in the coming months ahead.

In Unity,



Bookda Gheisar
Senior Director, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Centering Equity and Taking Action



Commissioners Adopt Proclamation Recognizing Women’s History Month

Port of Seattle Commissioners adopted a proclamation recognizing the value of Women’s History Month in celebrating the vital role women and girls play in American culture, history, and society. Introduced by Commissioners Hamdi Mohamed and Toshiko Hasegawa, the first women of color elected to the Port Commission, the proclamation also recognizes the hardship, exclusion, and discrimination women have overcome as they strive for equity and equality.

Watch the recording of the reading of the proclamation.

Helping Afghan Refugees Find Jobs



On March 29, the Port, in partnership with many local companies and community-based organizations, held in-person and virtual job fairs to connect Afghan refugees to local businesses and employers. These events were a part of the Port’s ongoing efforts to support the immigration and resettlement of Afghan refugees; as part of this effort, we created a series of video testimonials featuring Port and SEA Airport employees who are also refugees.

SEA Cares Bring a Compassionate Response to Airport Safety



Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA) is experiencing an increase of

unhoused persons seeking shelter, and we recognize the complexities of this regional challenge to support people in crisis. [An assessment](#) by the Port of Seattle’s Task Force on Port Policing and Civil Rights recommended that the Port examine opportunities for moving away from a traditional police response on homelessness as a key strategy for reducing external disparities around the use of force.

In response, the Port is implementing [SEA Cares](#) — a pilot program that created a Crisis Coordinator role within the Port of Seattle Police Department (POSPD) for the next three years. The Crisis Coordinator is trained in responding to those needing specialized assistance as well as deeply engaged with regional organizations to provide direct assistance to people in distress. Check out a recent story from [King 5](#).

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