



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION

Edwin M. Lee, Mayor
Naomi Kelly, City Administrator

October 6, 2016

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Haregu Gaime, Vice Chair
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Adrienne Pon
Office of Civic Engagement &
Immigrant Affairs

STOP ANTI-IMMIGRANT BIGOTRY AND RACISM

As each wave of new immigrants from Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East have sought refuge and opportunity in this country, they have been welcomed or vilified. Despite this painfully racist history, our nation is the result of the perseverance, commitment and labor of immigrants, who built the infrastructure, businesses, transportation, roads, and structures that make America the great diverse country it is today.

But anti-immigrant rhetoric and bigotry have hit a new low in 2016, especially as we are about to elect a new President of these United States. This week, FOX News featured a below-the-belt, offensive segment by Jesse Watters portraying immigrants in Chinatown as ignorant outsiders while playing on racist stereotypes, including music, that are not at all truthful or reflective of any of the vast and diverse cultures that are part of the Asian Pacific Islander American community.

Racism is not funny. Media stereotyping and shaming of immigrants or Americans for whom English is not a first language are unacceptable and embarrassing. Asking individuals who clearly do not speak English as a first language confusing questions, and in some cases not even waiting for a response to label them too ignorant to know, is not "gentle humor" but bigoted and deeply painful to a community that has been targeted and excluded for over a hundred years. This was damaging to all Americans and not reflective of the America that we stand for.

The San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission supports and commends Mayor Ed Lee for his stand against bigotry and racism. The majority of immigrants in San Francisco are citizens, some naturalized; many were born here and others are from families who have been here for many generations. Regardless if they are first generation or eighth generation, they are part of our City and part of America. And they can exercise their right to vote this November for inclusive, compassionate and competent leadership that embraces all people.

We must stand up for the ideals that make this country great—it is our humanity, our embracing of people from different shores and walks of life, and our diversity that make America a strong and great nation.

Handwritten signature of Celine Kennelly in blue ink.

Celine Kennelly, Chair

Handwritten signature of Haregu Gaime in blue ink.

Haregu Gaime, Vice Chair

San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission

The Immigrant Rights Commission is an appointed 15-member body that informs and advises the Mayor, Board of Supervisors and city officials on the wellbeing and integration of immigrants in San Francisco. Members of the Commission must be citizens of the United States. For more information on the IRC, contact the Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs at civic.engagement@sfgov.org.