

Letter Calling for the Resignations of Leadership of SVO, SVO PAC, CAR, and CAA

As leaders of community-based organizations, many of which are members of the Silicon Valley Organization (SVO), we are appalled at the blatant racist fear-mongering tactics of SVO and SVO Political Action Committee (PAC), the California Association of Realtors (CAR) and the California Apartment Association (CAA). Specifically, the SVO webpage (since removed due to our protests) depicting Black youth on a street surrounded by clouds of tear gas entitled “D-6 Do You Really Want to Sign on to This?” and the mailer that implies that a San Jose City Council candidate would eliminate single-family neighborhoods are right out of the playbook of real estate agents who have engaged in racist fear-mongering that created segregated neighborhoods throughout the past century.

The hit piece employs abhorrent tactics like showing large gray-scale residential “towers” next to cheerily-colored single-family homes—bringing to bear all the false and racist stereotypes about rental housing and more affordable housing as well as the individuals and families who live there. These kinds of racist tactics were highlighted in *The Color of Law* by Richard Rothstein (ironically, a book recently [recommended](#) by Matt Mahood, CEO of SVO, as well as by the [National Association of Realtors](#)).

While as nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations we do not take stances related to any particular candidate or political party, we can and do take a strong stance against racist actions and speak out when we see them. The mailer is false, misleading, and a racist action. The webpage goes deeper and reveals a disturbing pattern of racist tropes, e.g., darkening of an opposition candidate’s face in a previous race.

The involvement of SVO and its closely held SVO PAC, as well as close allies CAR and CAA, in these tactics implies that the membership of each of these organizations is supportive of them. As community-based and philanthropic organizations, as well as members of SVO, our staff and volunteers work hard every day to improve the lives of all of our residents, especially those who are affected most by systemic racism and poverty. We will no longer sit politely and allow the racist tropes, messages and policies of these organizations to continue.

We demand that SVO, CAR, and CAA retract the assertions and implications made in the mailer, apologize to your memberships, to the maligned candidate, and to the voters who are being misled. We likewise call on other SVO, CAR, and CAA members to denounce the mailer.

Finally, the inclusion of a blatantly racist webpage on the SVO website is shameful, inflammatory, and completely disrespectful to human dignity and to our diverse community. This is not the first or even the second offense from these organizations. This is not simply the fault of an unsupervised contractor. This can’t be fixed by diversity training. This is a failure of executive leadership. A simple apology is insufficient. The executive staff and board leadership of SVO, SVO PAC, CAR, and CAA must resign immediately, and each of these organizations publicly cease encouraging or enabling this pattern of racist actions.

We encourage additional nonprofit and business members of these organizations to sign on to our open letter. If we want to create a community that is anti-racist, we must start now. The day of reckoning is here.

Sincerely,

Dolores Alvarado, CEO, Community Health Partnership
Teresa Alvarado, Chief of Local Impact, SPUR
Rev. Dana Bainbridge, Co-founder, Recovery Café
Shiloh Ballard, Executive Director, Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition
Kathy Cordova, Executive Director, Recovery Café
Leslye Corsiglia, CEO, SV@Home
Gina Dalma, Executive Vice-President, Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Mary Ann Dewan, Ph.D., County Superintendent of Schools,
Santa Clara County Office of Education
Amie Fishman, Executive Director, Non Profit Housing Association of Northern California
Matt Franklin, President and CEO, MidPen Housing
Ron Gonzales CEO, Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley
Darcie Green, Executive Director, Latinas Contra Cancer
Poncho Guevara, Executive Director, Sacred Heart Community Service
Sparky Harlan, CEO, Bill Wilson Center
Bruce Ives, CEO, LifeMoves
Janice Jensen, CEO, Habitat for Humanity East Bay/Silicon Valley
Chad Johnston, Executive Director, CreaTV
Kyra Kazantzis, CEO, Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits
Gregory R. Kepferle, CEO, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County and President,
Charities Housing Development Corporation
Dennis King, Executive Director, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Scott Kniess, Executive Director, San Jose Downtown Association
Elisa Koff-Ginsborg, Executive Director, Behavioral Health Contractors Association
Michael Lane, SPUR San Jose Director
Michele Lew, CEO, The Health Trust
Jen Loving, CEO, Destination: Home
David K. Mineta, President and CEO, Momentum for Health
Pat Mitchell, Executive Director, Parisi House on the Hill
Rev. Ray Montgomery, Executive Director, PACT
Rev. Jethroe Moore, President, NAACP
Lana Nguyen, Mekong Community Center
Pete Settelmayer, Executive Director, City Year
Nicole Taylor, President & CEO, Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Andrea Urton, CEO, Home First SCC
Kevin Zwick, CEO, United Way Bay Area