

Contra Costa County Declares Racism a Public Health Emergency

Supervisors also formed a new county office of racial equity

By [Jodi Hernandez](#) • Published November 10, 2020 • Updated on November 10, 2020 at 8:12 pm

Contra Costa County is taking new steps to combat systemic racism.

The Board of Supervisors on Tuesday declared racism as a public health emergency in the county and formed a new office of racial equity.

"As a Black woman it is time for us to start making it clear where we stand," said Nakenya Allen, a mother in Martinez. "We all contribute to America."

Allen said she has had her share of troubles and frustrations as mother of color in Contra Costa County. She has had to fight tooth and nail to get the services she needs for her 3-year-old son, Landon, who has chronic health issues.

"If they're white and looking at another white parent in need, they're more apt to give them more because it's a reflection of themselves," Allen said. "And I feel when they are looking at women of color, they don't see a reflection of themselves."

With recent incidents of hate taking place throughout the county and communities of color being impacted the hardest by the coronavirus pandemic, supervisors took bold new steps on Tuesday to declare racism as a public health crisis.

Supervisors said it is clear something more must be done.

"We know all communities have inherent racism. Some exposed, some behind the scenes," Supervisor John Gioia said. "We want to make Contra Costa a more equitable place where we do our part to remove racism that exists in our community."

County supervisors also voted to form an office of racial equity and social justice to formulate a plan for change.

"I think it's about time," Allen said. "That resolution they passed makes me happy."

Allen said she has new hope for the county's communities of color and for her son.

"My hope for Landon is he can live proudly, walk with his head held high," she said.

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