

Dear Mayor Bruce Harrell,  
Seattle City Councilmembers,  
Seattle Fire Department (SFD) Chief Harrold Scoggins,  
SFD Director of Administration Helen Fitzpatrick,  
SFD Assistant Chief Tim Munnis,  
SFD Assistant Chief Bryan Hastings  
SFD Assistant Chief Willie Barrington  
SFD Director of Human Resources Sarah Lee,  
SFD Director Chris Santos,  
SFD Director of Public Affairs Kim Schmanke,

It has come to the attention of the City of Seattle's 500+ Employee RSJ Network that a noose was found in Fire Station 24 on Friday, February 18, 2022. This is the second known such incident in recent years, with another noose found in the Fall of 2020 in Fire Station 17. Both Fire Stations 17 and 24 have Black officers and leadership within the organization; the threat for Black employees to "know your place" has deep historical roots in America, tracing back to slavery, the Klan, Jim Crow, and persists today. This targeted attack was committed in an attempt at making our Black colleagues fear for their safety, security, and life. As we are sure you agree, this behavior is beyond unacceptable and is a violation of the City workplace values of equity, inclusion, and accountability and falls under the definition of [City workplace malicious harassment](#).

A noose showing up in a City of Seattle workplace is not only a threat to physical safety (the most basic of human rights), but also a threat of death. [Hate crimes](#) have no place in City workplaces. These recurring actions are a clear symptom of workplace culture toxicity and institutional racism. It signals the persistently unsafe (physical and emotional) workplace Black employees face coming to work each day at the City. How many other instances of hate crimes, threats to personal safety, and threats of death have occurred at City worksites? We commend the Seattle Fire Department's network of Black firefighters and their RSJ Change Team for building a strong and safe network of colleagues who feel safe in their resolve to elevate this issue to leadership.

The RSJ Network of 500+ employees now stands with our Black colleagues in the Fire Department and asks for your clear leadership to ensure accountability to all employees who face this kind of explicit institutional racism. We ask for this first step in addressing the ongoing systematic and structural racism the City perpetuates. We ask that you respond to the RSJ Network (via this letter) and personally to the Black male, female, and non-binary firefighters at the City to start a collaborative relationship aimed at addressing this issue and to work towards ending City workplace hate crimes and acts of racism.

Here are actions you can take that would show your commitment to a workplace that does not condone such violent threats:

1. Provide regular updates (every 2 weeks) to the Seattle Black Fire Fighters Association and the City's RSJ Network (via this email) on the progress of the investigation into this hate crime and steps ahead.
2. Terminate the employment (with the cause documented in their employment file) of those responsible for this specific incident as well as similar incidents. Additionally, make clear to all

employees at the City that the policy for hate crimes, racism, and threats to City co-workers is grounds for immediate termination of employment.

3. Engage with City Unions and work collectively to revoke union membership for any employee(s) responsible for perpetuating hate crimes and threats of racial or physical violence against another employee.
4. Acknowledge to employees the pervasive culture of racism that exists within the Seattle Fire Department, and many other departments across the City. Explicitly name this history in messaging to SFD and other large departments, that it is not acceptable, and what the response to racism and threats to human life are for City employees.
5. Prioritize and resource a culture of trauma-informed care for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color employees at the City. This can be kicked off with resourcing a restorative justice process in SFD, as asked for by the Seattle Black Firefighters. The following resources could be helpful as a place to start but the restorative justice process should center resources asked for by those most impacted, the Seattle Black Firefighters:
  - [BEAM: Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective](#)
  - [Therapy Fund Foundation](#)
  - [Ashley McGirt-Adair](#)
6. Promote and resource transformational, anti-racist, healing culture-shift practices throughout the City. The foundation of this decades-long work already exists. The City's Race and Social Justice Initiative Strategy Team in the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and Workforce Equity Planning and Advisory Committee (WEPAC) are resources to help define a path forward and support implementation.

Your swift action in response to the hate crimes committed in the Seattle Fire Departments would reflect decisive anti-racist leadership—a first from a mayoral administration. Failure to act protects those who uphold white supremacy culture and sends a message that we will not value our employees most harmed by systemic racism, especially our Black employees. The Mayor needs to make an actionable statement that hate crimes will not be tolerated in City of Seattle workplaces.

Our Black Firefighters put their lives on the line daily to protect all residents and visitors in the City of Seattle. They deserve swift action from the Mayor's Office to right this wrong.

Sincerely,

The City's RSJ Network including:

- Workforce Equity Planning and Advisory Committee (WEPAC)
- RSJI Division, Seattle Office for Civil Rights
- ARTS Office Affinity Groups
- Caucus groups:
  - Citywide AAPI for Racial Justice Caucus
  - Human Services Department's LatinX Caucus
  - Human Services Department's White Caucus
- Change Teams from the following departments:
  - Finance and Administrative Services Change Team (FAS)
  - Office of Labor Standards (OLS)

- Office of Sustainability & Environment (OSE)
- Seattle Animal Shelter Equity Team (ASSET)
- Seattle City Light, Change Team
- Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)
- Coalition of Affinity Groups Against Racial Harassment
- Data Analytics and Racial Equity (DARE) Group
- Seattle Animal Shelter ASSET Team
- Seattle Silence Breakers

Additional signatories may be added upon the online publication of this letter. To add your group's signature, [complete this form](#).