The Leon L. Williams San Diego County Human Relations Commission’s mission is to promote positive human relations, respect, and integrity of every individual regardless of gender, religion, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, or citizenship status.

As our region and nation commemorate the life of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. this week, the Commission reflects on the visit by Dr. King on May 29, 1964 to two San Diego schools. As we recognize the progress on desegregation and educational equality since the days of the civil rights movement, we are also concerned by the persistent racism that is still displayed in school campuses across our region and the erosive and inequitable effects of housing discrimination and educational inequality from half a century ago that are still producing uneven outcomes. Moreover, students of color and other marginalized individuals still struggle to learn and develop in environments without hate.

Most recently at the start of the new year, anti-Black and homophobic graffiti was found at San Dieguito Academy in Encinitas, part of a string of similar incidents in the San Dieguito Union High School District. Throughout 2021, racialized taunts were displayed at sports matches from Coronado High School to San Clemente High School. Antisemitic symbols were also found graffitied at Torrey Pines High School, Bonita Vista High and Bonita Vista Middle, and San Diego State University. A University of San Diego student was also target of a homophobic and transphobic hate crime.

As with past hate incidents in schools, we offer our continued commitment to work together to support individuals who have been targets and victims of racism and xenophobia, and specifically partner with schools, districts and higher education institutions to foster a hate-free environment for academic and athletic achievement, identity and moral formation and community building.

We commend leaders and officials who are instituting stronger and more effective accountability against those who propagate hate and perpetuate harm against marginalized individuals. We also recognize the long-term cultural shifts that are necessary for our region to truly thrive in harmony. As Dr. King said to students in San Diego in 1964: “Behavior can be regulated. The law can’t force you to love me but it can restrain you from lynching me. The law can change our habits, and then our hearts will change.”
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Human Relations Commission

Going forward, it is critical for us to collaborate proactively, not only in the aftermath of incidents. Over the course of this year, the Commission commits to co-creating a community-wide approach to root out hate and build inclusive schools. We plan to share educational and restorative resources, host town halls led by our youth commissioners and youth committee, and partner more closely with students, educators, and parents across the county.

Joining in unison with the San Diego Anti-Hate Crimes Coalition, we implore the greater San Diego community to unite and stand against the spate of hate crimes and hate incidents in our region and across the country.

The Commission is ready to partner with schools and communities across our region to work towards the realization of Dr. King’s vision of a beloved community.

Sincerely,

ELLEN NASH, Chair
The Leon L. Williams San Diego County Human Relations Commission