[Apologizing to Chinese Immigrants and Their Descendants]

Resolution apologizing on behalf of the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco to Chinese immigrants and their descendants for systemic and structural discrimination, targeted acts of violence, and atrocities; and committing to the rectification and redress of past policies and misdeeds.

WHEREAS, The shameful history of structural and systematic racism and discrimination against Chinese immigrants and the Chinese American community by the City and County of San Francisco reaches back over 150 years and touched every aspect of life including employment, housing, education, and culture; and

WHEREAS, In 1860, California's Education Code explicitly prohibited Asian students from attending public schools with white students; and

WHEREAS, San Francisco Unified School District closed the segregated Chinese School in 1870, and for the next fifteen years there were no public schools for Chinese students who remained barred from attending the public schools reserved solely for white students; and

WHEREAS, In 1885 the California Supreme Court decision in Tape v. Hurley ruled that Chinese students have a right to attend public schools, in response, SFUSD reopened the segregated Chinese School to avoid integration; and

WHEREAS, As Japanese and Korean immigration to San Francisco increased in 1906, SFUSD responded by assigning all Asian students to the segregated Chinese School; and

WHEREAS, Section 3 of the 1870 Consolidation Act passed by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors barred anyone of Chinese descent from being employed in any State, County, Municipal, or other public work, except as punishment for crime; and
WHEREAS, Section 27 of the 1870 General Orders ordinance passed by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors prohibited the usage of Gongs, a traditional East Asian percussion instrument, in any performance under the premise of it producing an “unusual noise disturbing the peace;” and

WHEREAS, Section 47 of the 1870 Sidewalk Ordinance prohibited the usage of Yeo Ho Poles, which were the traditional and main method of transportation of goods within the Chinese community; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Supervisors passed more than a dozen “Laundry Ordinances” from 1873-1883 imposing a maximum hour rule so that different laundry owners could not share one laundry space, zoning rules to push laundries from white neighborhoods to the outskirts of town or to toxic industrial areas, taxes on laundries with horse-drawn vehicles, prohibiting drying racks on roofs, and banning the use of a mouth tube to squirt starch on clothes, which was a common practice by Chinese laundries; and

WHEREAS, In 1880, where 89% of San Francisco’s laundry workers and two-thirds of laundries were comprised and owned by those of Chinese descent, and 95% of the 320 laundries in the city at the time operated within a wooden building, the Board of Supervisors made it illegal to operate any laundry in a wooden building without a permit through Ordinance No. 1569; and

WHEREAS, After the passage of Ordinance No. 1569, only one permit was granted of the two hundred applications from Chinese owners, while only one out of approximately eighty non-Chinese applicants was denied a permit; and

WHEREAS, In 1886 the Supreme Court ruled Ordinance No. 1569 unconstitutional in Yick Wo v. Hopkins; and

WHEREAS, The 1876 Pigtail Ordinance mandated Chinese prisoners have their traditional queues cut immediately after arriving at the county jail and three years later in 1879

Supervisors Haney; Walton, Safai, Mar, Stefani, Mandelman
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
the Pigtail Ordinance was declared unconstitutional in by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in
Ho Ah Kow v. Matthew Nunan; and

WHEREAS, The infamous three-day 1877 San Francisco Riot targeted the Chinese
American community and resulted in four deaths and more than $100,000 worth of property
damage, equivalent to $2,430,000 in 2020, wherein twenty Chinese-owned laundries were
destroyed with many more being damaged and/or looted; and

WHEREAS, The 1890 Bingham Ordinance mandated Chinese people, including
Chinese American citizens not live or work in San Francisco except in "a portion set apart for
the location of all the Chinese;,” and

WHEREAS, The area provided for Chinese Settlement was unsanitary and on the
outer fringes of the city, devoid of any services and the Bingham Ordinance was eventually
declared unconstitutional in 1900 by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in re: Lee Sing et al; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted and passed Ordinance No.
85 which gave the Board of Health broad powers to quarantine, and as a result, the Board of
Health racially profiled those of Chinese descent, restricting their basic civil liberties unless
inoculated for the Bubonic Plague, and these actions were eventually declared
unconstitutional in 1890 by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in Wong Wai v. Williamson and
Jew Ho v. Williamson; and

WHEREAS, After the 1906 earthquake, a committee was formed of influential city
leaders, motivated openly by racism, that sought to move all remaining Chinese residents
outside of the County the area around Hunter's Point; and

WHEREAS, Chinese Americans have persistently fought back against discriminatory
laws, structural cruelty, and systemic racism with every political, economic, and legal tool
available to them including civil disobedience; and
WHEREAS, The Chinese American community has, through their resistance, won and
earned huge organizing, political, and legal victories in advancing civil rights, that all
Americans continue to benefit from; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Chinese family and regional associations played a
pivotal and decisive role in relentlessly fighting anti-Chinese laws, especially in the courts, and
winning numerous victories; and

WHEREAS, Chinatown in San Francisco is the oldest Chinatown in North America, and
the largest Chinese enclave outside of Asia, and is home to a proud legacy of culture,
solidarity, resistance, and strength for the Chinese community everywhere, and should be
uplifted, protected, and celebrated; and

WHEREAS, The Chinatown community organized in 1987 to pass the Chinatown plan,
which saved Chinatown from downtown driven development, and was best symbolized by the
ten year I-Hotel struggle, which was led by both Filipino and Chinese residents and leaders;
and

WHEREAS, The recent rise in anti-Asian violence and racial discrimination
demonstrates that xenophobia remains deeply rooted in our society and should be understood
and contextualized within our history; and

WHEREAS, During the ongoing pandemic, Chinese residents have been shamefully
targeted and scapegoated, in similar ways as they have throughout history; and

WHEREAS, During the most recent surge in anti-Asian and Pacific Islander hate, as of
July 9, 2021, Stop AAPI Hate has documented 762 reported incidents of hate crimes in San
Francisco wherein some of the highest number of incidents were reported as consisting of
63% Chinese, 10.2% Korean, 9.3% Filipino, and 6.7% Vietnamese thus a threat to the safety
and wellbeing of the Chinese community is a threat to the safety and wellbeing of the whole
Asian Pacific Islander community; and
WHEREAS, Asian-Americans are still often considered perpetual foreigners; and
WHEREAS, All ethnic Asian Pacific Islander communities were once regarded by the public collectively as “Chinese” or “Mongol”, these atrocities were also committed against the early immigrant ancestors of all Asian Pacific Islander communities; and
WHEREAS, The legacy of historic discrimination against the Chinese community continues today, in housing, education, employment, and business ownership; and
WHEREAS, The story of Chinese immigrants and the dehumanizing atrocities committed against them in the 19th and early 20th century should not be purged from or minimized in the telling of San Francisco’s history; and
WHEREAS, The City of San Francisco must acknowledge and take responsibility for the legacy of discrimination against early Chinese immigrants as part of our collective consciousness that helps contribute to the current surge in anti-Asian and Pacific Islander hate; and
WHEREAS, The experience of Chinese immigrants can be used to build solidarity with immigrant communities, and similar discrimination and racism was experienced and is still experienced by many other communities; and
WHEREAS, In 2009, under the leadership of Supervisors Chiu, Chu, and Yee, the Board of Supervisors expressed grave regrets and remorse for the history of racist policies towards the Chinese community; and
WHEREAS, In 2018, under the leadership of Supervisor Yee, the Board of Supervisors recognized the importance of the 75th anniversary of the repeal of the Chinese Exclusionary Act in remembering our history and not repeating the mistakes of the past; and
WHEREAS, A genuine apology for the role of the City in this history and legacy is an important and necessary step in the process of healing, reconciliation and redress; and

Supervisors Haney; Walton, Safai, Mar, Stefani, Mandelman
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WHEREAS, Other major cities, including Antioch, San Jose, and Los Angeles have recently issued apologies for their histories of discrimination and violence towards the Chinese community and Chinese immigrants; and

WHEREAS, An apology for grievous injustices cannot erase the past, but admission of the historic wrongdoings committed can aid us in solving the critical problems of discrimination and racism facing San Francisco and the broader United States today; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors apologizes to all Chinese immigrants and their descendants who came to San Francisco and were the victims of systemic and institutional racism, xenophobia, and discrimination; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors acknowledges acts of fundamental injustice, terror, cruelty, and brutality committed against the Chinese community; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors recognizes the contributions and resilience of the Chinese community and their commitment to fostering reconciliation and friendship, and to protecting civil rights for all; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors resolves to rectify the lingering consequences of the discriminatory policies of the City of San Francisco, and to use this Resolution as a teaching moment for the public to move forward towards justice for all; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors commits to programs, policies, and investments that can educate the public about this brutal history of discrimination and their ongoing consequences, as well as provide for redress and restoration.
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January 26, 2022 Budget and Finance Committee - RECOMMENDED

February 01, 2022 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED

Ayes: 11 - Chan, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

File No. 211240

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 2/1/2022 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

London N. Breed
Mayor

Date Approved: 2/11/22