

AGN NO. _____

MOTION BY CHAIR HILDA L. SOLIS AND
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The recent terrorist attack in San Bernardino is but the latest in a global series of acts of gun violence committed by religious and political extremists. These attacks have resulted in high levels of public anxiety, fear, and anger, as well as calls for increased security and vigilance. Unfortunately, in this volatile context, there have also been statements by high profile public figures and elected officials implicitly casting blame for this violence on people of the Muslim faith, thereby fueling Islamophobia and xenophobia.

Hate motivated acts targeting Muslims seem to be on the rise: a cabdriver shot in Pittsburgh; a pig's head thrown at a Philadelphia mosque; the beating of a shop owner in New York. Just last week, a state corrections employee in northern California threw hot coffee on a Muslim man praying in the park. On the same day, in nearby Buena Park, the place of worship for over 800 persons of the Sikh faith was vandalized with the graffiti "Islam" and "F*** ISIS." This vandalism reminds us of the hate violence Sikhs have endured since 9/11, including the horrific massacre at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin in Oak Creek on August 5, 2012, when six members were killed and four wounded by a white supremacist army veteran.

Ridley-Thomas _____

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History and research have demonstrated that climates of fear like the one that surrounds us now leave us vulnerable to demagoguery. This may trigger pre-existing prejudices against religious, racial-ethnic, or national origin minorities, which in turn can yield terrible consequences. Less than three months after the Pearl Harbor attacks, for example, the U.S. government ordered the imprisonment of over 110,000 U.S. citizens and residents of Japanese ancestry, based solely on their country of origin. And after the 9/11 attacks, hate crimes reached their highest level since the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations began collecting hate crime statistics in 1980. Victims of these crimes included Muslims and Middle Easterners, but also many Asians (South Asians which included Sikhs), as well as African Americans, Latinos, Jews and Native Americans.

Research demonstrates that bias-motivated behavior results not only from conscious bigotry, but also from unconscious prejudices or biases. “Implicit bias” causes all of us to act on stereotypes that reside in our subconscious, and which are enhanced in an atmosphere of insecurity and anxiety. These unconscious biases can be countered by specific actions, such as consciously examining the reasons for our decisions and promoting egalitarian values. In fact, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Department of Community and Senior Services, and the Human Relations Commission recently received a federal grant for reducing implicit bias and its powerful impacts by developing a communications protocol and guidelines, an online training, and a train-the-trainer curriculum, all due to be completed in September 2016.

This Board, which represents one of the most culturally diverse populations in the world, is committed to upholding the basic human rights of all people. Discrimination and hate crime violate well established county policies, such as the County Policy on Equity, as well as multiple state and federal laws. They constitute serious human rights violations under our constitution and international human rights treaties. In this time of fear and anxiety, we must act to increase our County’s capacity to resist demagoguery.

WE THEREFORE MOVE, THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Join with all communities in Los Angeles County in condemning the gun violence that took the lives of 14 and injured 22 in San Bernardino on December 2nd and expressing its sincerest condolences to the families and friends of the victims;
2. Recognize that the terrorists who committed these acts, motivated by violent religious and political extremism are to blame, and that no religion or race or ethnicity is responsible for these acts, and that fear-based stereotyping and scapegoating creates an atmosphere conducive to Islamophobia, xenophobia, discrimination, hate, and bigotry;

WE FURTHER MOVE THAT:

3. Direct the Chief Executive Officer to
 - a. Express our sympathies and support to the victims of Sikh Gurdwara in Buena Park and other bias-motivated acts;
 - b. Use social media to call upon all County residents to reject invitations to worsen the situation through stereotyping, scapegoating entire communities, religions, or ethnicities, and to remind residents to treat others the way we would want to be treated;
 - c. Encourage all County residents to learn more about communities and culture of the nearly 100,000 Muslims that live in Los Angeles County, and to recognize their vast contributions to our society; and to proactively learn about our own implicit biases in order to recognize and counteract our own conscious and unconscious biases in our treatment of those perceived as Muslims or of Middle-Eastern descent;
4. Request the District Attorney, Sheriff, and the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee, as well as the Human Relations Commission, to increase their outreach to the Muslim, Sikh, South Asian and other groups most often targeted for hate crime and to offer assistance in deterring and swiftly responding to threats and acts of hate violence; and to report back in 30 days with a description of their efforts and a summary of recent hate crimes in our County.