May 17, 2024

Chair Nai Hsueh, District 5
Vice Chair Richard Santos, District 3
Santa Clara Valley Water District
5750 Almaden Expressway
San Jose, CA 95118-3686

Throughout history, there have been attempts to “other” one group or another for a variety of reasons; most of these reasons being based on half truths at best. Nearly all of these otherings have negatively impacted minority groups and the draconian changes ValleyWater is considering are no different.

As ValleyWater is well aware, Blacks and Native Americans make up a disproportionate number of the unhoused population compared to U.S. Census data of the 81 identified unhoused people who have died in Santa Clara County in 2024, the majority have been Latino and more than 10% have been Black. Additionally, nearly 10% of these deaths have been Asian, a number that’s been increasing each year.

Last year, of the roughly 240 people unhoused people who died, if I remember correctly, more than half were over 50. That year, like years before, this year, and years into the future, there are scores of elderly people who find their social security can’t cover the rent and the net of social services is full of holes, so they find themselves on the street.

Data scientists had predicted a “Silver Tsunami, when the Baby Boomers started to retire, and some municipalities planned ahead for it while others did not. Santa Clara County is drowning in a sea of mostly Brown and Black retirees, who are now dying outside.

These older folks seek out the creek areas for their very survival, the cooler areas give them respite during the heat known to kill people of their age. When they call shelter hotlines, they most often are offered a top bunk at the most dangerous shelter.

This decision by ValleyWater will most certainly have deleterious effects on these most vulnerable people. Sweeps are very difficult mentally and physically for older people and can you imagine being a senior citizen and going to jail for the first time in your life for trying not to die during a hot summer week outside?

I urge you not to go ahead with this plan.that will further the ongoing othering of our unhoused brothers and sisters who are primarily Black and Brown, and too often seniors over 50. This will have a direct result on the amount of unhoused deaths and I cannot imagine that is something
you want hanging over your heads.

In Unity and Justice,

Rev. Jethroe Moore II
President, NAACP San Jose/Silicon Valley Branch