

Comments on Resolution 19-13 – Religious Tolerance

Thank you, President Heredia, and thank you Superintendent Evans for bringing this resolution forward.

Unfortunately, over the past few years there have been a series of senseless and tragic acts of violence against people of faith in the United States and across the globe. These senseless acts have unfairly cut short the lives of many people who simply wanted to peacefully practice their faith and become closer to their Creator.

These acts of violence and bullying have caused many to live in fear of practicing their faith without retribution. This is always troubling, especially in a country whose first amendment affirms freedom of religion.

I'm sad to report I don't believe these are isolated incidents. As a matter of fact, a recent report by the FBI shows there has been a nearly 23% increase in religion-based crimes and a 37% spike in anti-Jewish hate crimes. This saddens me deeply.

When I was a child, church seemed like the safest place to be. And, you didn't hear the type of divisive rhetoric you hear today regarding people of faith. In South Central Los Angeles, even the fiercest gangs wouldn't conduct street business near or around a church. As a matter of fact, gang members would be the first to open the church doors for you.

And you would definitely never see a church building tagged with graffiti. Churches, synagogues, mosques and temples were places you could go to when you needed a moment of quiet reflection, a hot meal, a hand up, or if you just needed someone to talk to. Those were the good old days.

Today, politicians use carefully crafted statements to mock prayer and label any longstanding or sincerely held religious belief as "hatred." For all the tolerance that is preached today, it seems we're losing patience for those who peacefully practice their faith.

History is rife with tragic examples of what can happen when we don't make space for people with religious beliefs. And, as a Board, it is important to reaffirm our commitment to the community and our own Board Bylaws, that even if we disagree with their beliefs or lack thereof, we will never adopt misleading and reductionist rhetoric that stereotypes or disparages others.

And with that, I motion to approve resolution 19-13.