

February 28, 2025

Dear Council President Harris-Dawson and City Council Members,

I write to you as a concerned citizen regarding a surge of hate speech being delivered through public comments during public meetings. Most recently, I witnessed last week, Feb 21<sup>st</sup>, the Rules Committee meeting where racist comments were uplifted against the Council President.

Hate speech is violent. Attacking the identity of individuals on city council or of members of our communities, whether racial, ethnic, gender-based, tribal-based, etc. is a form of violence. Now more than ever, with the rising racist rhetoric embodied by our federal government, our city council needs to take proactive measures to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all within our city council chambers.

Community residents attending public meetings, whether online or in-person, deserve to enter this space and feel welcome to participate free from hate speech and racist attacks. For most, attending meetings or submitting public comments is already an intimidating and foreign process. Enduring racist attacks intensifies feelings of alienation and disempowerment. For these reasons, it is essential that city council identify solutions to address this issue to uphold respect, safety and a welcoming environment for all members of the public.

Thank you,

Alejandra Ponce de León