


**From:** [Sheldon](#)   
**To:** [-- City Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** public comment for October 2 council meeting  
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October 2, 2023

Public comment on being an anti-racist partner and city

Dear Petaluma City Council members,

Petaluma City Schools has literally written into its mission statement and district goals an excellent educational experience that values the diversity of the families we serve, equity in the educational opportunities of all its students, and the full inclusion of all families in the benefits of our public services. These are not only morally sound values to have for public services, but they also align with the values of the vast majority of Petaluma's residents. But they don't come without concerted efforts to promote and defend them against a small minority of detractors.

Recently, public acts of overt racism have interrupted Sonoma County public meetings, and littered downtown Petaluma. These most recent acts have particularly targeted our Jewish community. But they are just the latest in recent years' string of bigoted public expressions targeting Black, Asian, and Latino communities.

Underlying all these is a streak of white supremacy and white nationalism that have been emboldened by national politics. Their claim for civil rights is a false equivalency that wraps a core belief in the suppression of non-white people.

We have seen such expressions in our own schools. The expressions are not prominent, but they are emboldened, and they do impact the learning environment of everyone. Also, they are *learned*, from the adults they see in their lives.

At our schools, we promote diversity as a strength of the community. Our students need to hear that same message outside of school. We ask our community leaders to be united and vocal in our opposition to prejudice against members of our community.

Sheldon Gen, Ph.D.  
Board of Education, Petaluma City Schools

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