

I'm Rachel Rosekind, speaking today as a library commissioner, vice chair of the countywide library foundation, and a social justice educator and activist for 30 years.

Robust resourcing and empowerment of underserved communities and reparations for historic and ongoing racism are at the heart of the equity-based work we need to do in this county.

As Supervisor Gioia noted yesterday, our county's relative lower poverty rate and higher median income masks trenchant and severe disparities that yield the same dire outcomes and disproportionalities we've been talking about for decades. We don't need more studies or exposés of racist, criminal police departments to tell us what we already know: that instead of ending poverty and rooting out racism, we've criminalized poor people, under-resourced communities of color, and have massive health, wealth, justice, educational, housing, and opportunity inequities and disparities.

So what do we need? We need: free legal help for those facing deportation, eviction, conviction, and other forms of displacement that break relationships and the individuals within them. We need guaranteed income and rental assistance for our most vulnerable residents. We need an African American wellness hub that centers culturally-responsive healthcare and healing. Maybe that would have saved the life of my 17-year-old neighbor who was shot and killed by another youth two days in broad daylight in front of his home.

We need equitably resourced county libraries. Because public libraries ARE community infrastructure: roads to education, civic engagement, and economic mobility, and bridges to belonging, cultural understanding, and resource parity.

So **thank you** for championing equity by recommending \$10M to help build a new library in Bay Point. Back to those masked disparities—turns out, they're actually pretty plain to see. Bay Point's population is fairly close to that of Lafayette's, yet their Library is 35,000 square feet and open 56 hours and Bay Point's is 4,000 and open 34.5. Unincorporated Kensington, at only 5,000 residents, has a bigger library than Bay Point adjacent to a beautiful park and open 40 hours. The prevailing fact is that Bay Point lacks the municipal and library support group base of other branches and exemplifies the disparities that the county librarian identified. County funding is thus critical to achieve greater equity *and* I want to uplift Supervisor Burgis's point about our need to focus on the gaps and disparities in District 3.

There are, broadly, two groups of people who are not here today to provide comment. One: those who face barriers to access and opportunity due to literacy, language, disability, technology, work, caretaking, or because they are detained, incarcerated, or located somewhere a hearing about matters that directly impact their lives is not viewable let alone possible to comment on. And two: those whose interests are *already* being served. As you make decisions, please think about the first group, those without access or opportunity, and the concerns that community have uplifted over the past two days. Audre Lorde said "Your silence will not protect you." It will not protect others either. Those others are our beloved community. Please listen.