

Dear Beloved Community,

It is difficult to know the best way to start a public apology. I step forward because we are at a crucial point in our local history, and we are globally facing many truths about white supremacy. Pacific Grove (PG), like many other places in America, is grappling with how to address and dismantle systemic racism along with other forms of oppression that are unsustainable.

I grew up in Pacific Grove from marching in the Butterfly Parade as a Monarch butterfly to having the opportunity to serve my community as a member of the Feast of Lanterns Royal Court, eventually becoming being Queen Topaz. As an adult, I also served on the board of directors and as President, Vice President and Treasurer of the Feasts of Lanterns. My family has served the city of PG and on Board of Directors for the Feast of Lanterns for 35 years. During my time with the Feast, I have grown tremendously because of the event and in ways that I never imagined. I am deeply grateful for the overall experience.

I have come to realize, though, that the Feast of Lanterns organization, the PG tradition that I have loved so deeply, has too long been causing harm to the Chinese American Community—in fact, for well over 100 years! The AAPI community of the Monterey Peninsula has been instrumental to the success of this area and our Monterey Bay Region's international fishing industry. However, when we explore local history, we find little information about the contributions of the BIPOC community. This needs to change. "The last hometown" is centered in a white narrative.

In walking a path of restorative justice, I learned about Quock Mui from Gerry Low Sabado, the fifth generation descendent of Quock Mui, the first Chinese American woman born on the Monterey Peninsula. Quock Mui spoke five languages by the time she was nine years old. She was nicknamed "Spanish Mary" and was pivotal to trade in our region. Gerry taught me about the fishing villages on the peninsula and how the one located in PG was burned down and looted by local white folks in Pacific Grove. She helped me to understand how it felt as a Chinese American to watch the Feast of Lanterns pageant and fireworks. Gerry and I spent many hours talking and exploring ideas for "Change with Kindness." In honor of her memory, I choose to publicly apologize.

I want to use my white privilege and all the power that comes with it to advocate for real change in our beloved community. I apologize for the harm I have caused as an unconscious white woman, filled with white fragility and my own perfectionism. Every time I put on a Chinese, Japanese, or Korean costume to celebrate the Feast, I was harming the AAPI community, because I did not understand the impact of cultural appropriation and how it supports racial stereotypes. I wanted to be royalty, to serve my community and to feel special. Although I did learn some valuable lessons regarding service to community, I regret the way in which I unconsciously propped up racism, sexism, gender bias, and classism.

The challenge of pursuing real change that makes our world just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive means that we must get real and face the reality of systemic racism, oppression, and global white supremacy. If we as the community stop centering a white narrative, we can really move towards systems that are sustainable and allow

for our societies and world to heal and thrive.

My public apology is also a call to action for the Community of Butterfly Town USA and the leadership of the City of Pacific Grove (Mayor Peake, City Council, City manager, Fire Department, Police Departments and Chamber of Commerce) to publicly apologize and denounce racism and oppression in all forms. Then, we must make a commitment to change laws and practices within PG to support a truly inclusive society. By dismantling the Feast of Lanterns, by not permitting it and divesting from/or giving any financial support, we can instead ensure that events in our beloved community that truly celebrate real contributions, real history, and the healing and reconciliation that is deserved. These are goals that the city of Pacific Grove should strive for. May we use the Feast as a teaching moment and engaged the community to talk about the truth in our history, to heal the racism of the past and create a new event together that celebrates our real history would be a dream come true.

May our community rise to this occasion and walk down a new path of healing and wholeness--to. To real change with kindness.

Kaye Coleman

In loving memory of Gerry Low-Sabado