



Maurice Ramirez

## Call to Stamp Out Prejudice

**Dennis Ewanosky**

Teenage organizers gathered in front of the bandstand at Chochenyo Park last Wednesday. These teens organized a candlelight vigil to allow people from all across Alameda to work to stamp out prejudice against the Asian American Pacific Islander

(AAPI) community. Pictured from left to right are Randall Rubio, Vincent and Vinny Camarillo, Kyle Reed, Raquel Williams and Sophia Coffin.

"This is our future, and we are in good hands," read a post on Facebook that accompanied this photograph. "Join our community

to both hear from our AAPI friends and neighbors and also to stand together, united against hate, violence and bigotry," Councilman John Knox White wrote in his invitation to the vigil.

Read the article below written by another teen contributing to the movement.

## Students Spark Outrage with Anti-Semitic Posts

**Glenann Bautista**

On April 1, multiple images of hate speech were circulated around the popular social media app, Instagram. Several Alameda High School (AHS) students are under fire due to the leaked photos, originally private messages, that contained anti-Semitic, racial, and xenophobic hate speech.

By Saturday, April 2, Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) had released an official statement on the incident.

"We learned today that some (AHS) students have posted racist and anti-Semitic words and images on social media," the statement read. "This is unacceptable behavior for members of our community, and we adamantly denounce it.

"Hateful language and behavior has no place in AUSD. We want our schools to be inclusive, respectful, and safe places for all of our students to learn, and we will continue to work with our site administrators to create those spaces."

AHS is investigating the issue. Hundreds of AUSD students, ranging from middle school to high school, voiced their opinions on the ordeal in online posts.

By Sunday, April 4 a post by Jon Jones (@justj0nes), a sophomore at NEA, had circulated throughout the entire Alameda community — amassing more than a thousand likes and hundreds of shares/ reposts.

"I feel as if social media has played the biggest part in bringing attention to these people and their actions the most," said Jones.

"Most everyone is familiar with the layout of Instagram and the power to reshare others posts, and I feel like without that feature my message would have never been recognized and then shared by so many people. The 'fire' of social media spreads way faster than say mouth to mouth, whether that be positive or negative."

Jones drafted a template email to send to AHS Principal Robert Ithurburn demanding that AUSD take action for the safety of minority groups in Alameda.

"I believe the first step of holding these people accountable is making sure that their schools are notified of their acts, not through spreading rumors but notified with real evidence, which we have in this case," said Jones.

"Along with being shamed for their acts, I also believe that these individuals should serve some form of community service to help people of color and or the people they have offended, therefore forcing them to deal with the harsh realities the people they oppressed face every day simply because of their skin color."

On Monday, April 3, Ithurburn released a statement about the inci-

dent through an email sent to only AHS students. Additionally, the students being held accountable have also released statements of apologies.

Many students spoke up about the fight for accountability and repercussions. In addition, students shared their disappointment in AUSD about the perpetrators not facing any consequences.

"Students have every right to be angry, scared, and concerned," said AHS senior Joy Diamond. "It is beyond devastating and unacceptable that the administration failed to adequately acknowledge any of the pain and fear inflicted and the trauma surfacing ... beyond disappointing."

Glenann Bautista is an Encinal High School journalist.

## Grocery Worker Hazard Pay before City Council

**Sun Staff Reports**

The Grocery Worker Hazard Pay ordinance was one of several agenda items on the April 6 City Council meeting consent calendar.

There were 10 items on the consent calendar. The entire consent calendar can be approved by one motion. However, council can remove an item from the consent calendar. If so, the item will be discussed and voted on as an individual item. Members of the public had the opportunity to discuss the ordinance.

The ordinance would increase specific grocery store workers' hourly wage by five dollars until Alameda County is under the minimal (yellow) risk level — the lowest of the four tiers — during the COVID-19 pandemic. The extra pay is deemed "hazard pay" because "workers have continued to work despite the danger of being exposed to and infected by

the coronavirus," according to the draft ordinance. Similar ordinances have already been approved in Berkeley, San Leandro, Emeryville and Oakland.

The council introduced the ordinance as an urgency ordinance at its March 16 meeting. It failed because urgency ordinances need a 4-1 approval vote to pass and the ordinance was voted, 3-2, in favor with councilmembers Tony Daysog and Trish Spencer opposing. The councilmembers voted, 3-2, to place it on the consent calendar.

The pay increase will only affect workers at large grocery store franchises that employ 500 or more employees nationwide and its store is more than 15,000 square feet in size. These stores include Nob Hill, Safeway and Lucky's. The ordinance will go into effect 30 days after its final passage.

The vote occurred after the Alameda Sun went to press.

## Navy Will Investigate Contamination at Point

**Richard Bangert**

When an airplane is coming in for a belly landing or has an engine on fire, the only way to prevent the entire plane from becoming engulfed in flames is by dousing the runway or the plane with fire-suppression foam.

Navy firefighters were trained in the use of this foam near the airplane runways at Alameda Point.

Over the past two decades, there has been one bad news story after another about the foam's toxic ingredients contaminating drinking water.

These same toxic ingredients are also found in common consumer products. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that as many as 95 percent of the population have traces of these cancer-causing, endocrine-system-disrupting chemicals in their bodies.

That's partly because consumer products with the same chemical compounds, such as water-repellant outdoor wear, carpets, food packaging, and even cosmetics, are still on the market.

Some household brand names that pioneered the marketing of products with the harmful chemicals, like Scotchgard and Teflon, have been reformulated and claim to be safe. Environmental advocacy groups like Earthjustice are not convinced.

As the science about the human health effects has become more compelling and public awareness so great, the military is now embarking on a cleanup program at active and former military bases, including Alameda Point.

In March, the Navy released a draft work plan to investigate soil and groundwater at the former firefighter training area at Alameda Point to determine the extent of the contamination and whether the chemicals are being released into the Oakland Estuary via tidal action.

The training area is located within a larger 14-acre cleanup area dubbed Site 14, which has already undergone groundwater cleanup of chlorinated solvents once stored there.

The toxic ingredients in the foam are part of a larger group of chemicals called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. The acronym for this group is PFAS, pronounced pee-fahs.

The chemical formulation is simple, with only carbon and fluorine. The impact on public health and the environment, however, is anything but simple.

The virtually indestructible chemicals have found wide-ranging industrial and consumer applications, and they are often referred to as "forever" chemicals because they do not break down naturally.

"This strong bond [between carbon and fluorine] makes PFAS chemicals heat resistant," states the Environmental Working Group (EWG), a nonprofit environmental science advocacy organization.

"They can also form a film on the surface of petroleum, making them particularly effective at suppressing and extinguishing high-heat petroleum-based fires. In the early 1960s, the Navy worked with 3M to develop firefighting foams containing a

combination of PFAS chemicals."

PFAS cleanup was not dealt with until now because it was not mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Superfund cleanup rules. The EPA classifies PFAS chemicals as only "pollutants," but not as "hazardous." A classification of "hazardous" would have required cleanup long ago.

For military base cleanup, the Department of Defense (DoD) had to create its own regulations.

"Currently, there are no universally accepted ecological screening levels for PFAS; however, there is extensive and increasing literature on biological uptake, bioaccumulation, and ecological toxicity of PFAS," states the Navy's workplan.

"At this time, EPA has not published ecological screening levels for PFAS, but DoD funded studies have resulted in recent publications containing ecological screening levels for soil, sediment and surface water that will be included."

As far back as 1975, scientists at 3M, which manufactured PFAS chemicals, were informed that PFAS builds up in the human body. In 1978, 3M decided not to report the health risks of PFAS, according to EWG. Yet studies of PFAS health effects continued within the military branches and various agencies.

By 2016, cleanup mandates were coming from the Pentagon. As a preliminary measure, at Alameda Point the Navy sampled six groundwater wells next to the firefighters' concrete training pad where fires were started and then extinguished.

The levels of PFAS chemicals in the well samples were not only elevated, they were off the chart. Recently adopted state Water Board drinking water standards, for example, set a limit of 40 parts per trillion. Some water samples at the Firefighter Training Area had more than 35,000 parts per trillion.

The 2021 work plan will expand the testing by boring into the soil down to groundwater level at 20 locations throughout Site 14 and adjacent land. With the new soil and groundwater data, the Navy will be able to delineate the true extent of the contamination and make recommendations for remediation.

The problem with PFAS chemicals: there is currently no known method of neutralizing the compounds in the same ways that petroleum and solvent compounds can be broken down to harmless substances while still in the soil and groundwater.

Drinking water pumped from an aquifer can be filtered through charcoal to remove PFAS.

But for contaminated soil and shallow groundwater, it may turn out that the only way to protect people and wildlife is to excavate and remove the contaminated areas.

The Navy plans to begin its testing of soil and groundwater in September, with a cleanup plan to follow. Most of the cleanup area is planned for a shoreline regional park.

Contributing writer Richard Bangert post stories and photos about Alameda Point issues on his blog *Alameda Point Environmental Report: alamedapointenviro.com*.

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Jackson Quinn

## Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers on City Council Agenda

**Dennis Ewanosky**

At its Tuesday evening meeting, the City Council considered Councilwoman Trish Spencer's referral that would direct city staff to draft an ordinance banning the use of gas-powered leaf blowers like the one pictured at the left.

In her referral, Spencer points out that a number of cities, including Los

Angeles, have already banned these gas-powered noisemakers. Los Angeles banned the blowers in 1998, citing the nuisance and health-related problems attributed to this type of equipment."

The Council was scheduled to take Spencer's referral under consideration after the Alameda Sun went to press.

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