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## **San Joaquin Valley Town Hall -- Equity and Inclusion Statement**

San Joaquin Valley Town Hall was founded 87 years ago by visionary women from the Central Valley. Their goal was community service. To that end, they created a non-partisan forum to bring fresh ideas to a fast-growing region. The non-profit organization they created in Fresno City, run by all volunteers, continues to be led mostly by women who each year organize and fund six lectures, community luncheons, scholarships, and free attendance for local high school students. Embedded in the Town Hall vision is a commitment to modeling diversity and an inclusive environment with equitable treatment for all, as indicated by the following statements:

To provide informed and authentic leadership for cultural equity and inclusion, San Joaquin Valley Town Hall strives to:

- Advocate for board-level conversations about how systemic inequities impact the organization's work, and how best to address shortcomings.
- Practice and encourage transparent communication in all interactions.
- Commit time and resources to expand diverse leadership within our volunteer board, committees, and other volunteer opportunities.
- Lead with respect and tolerance. All board members and volunteers are expected to embrace Town Hall's founding values, and to express them in all programs, board and committee meetings, and interactions with audience members.

San Joaquin Valley Town Hall is proud of its history and leadership, the wide range of speakers we sponsor, and our ongoing inclusion of young people and Valley schools at no charge. More can be done.

- Increase cultural competency throughout the organization by creating substantive learning opportunities and formal policies.
- Improve Town Hall's data base and program evaluation by which to monitor measurable progress toward the effectiveness of our diversity efforts. Once the content is curated it will be added to our website so others can access.
- Improve the organization's cultural leadership pipeline by supporting policies to foster emerging leadership that reflects Fresno City's remarkable diversity.
- Pool resources and expand offerings for underrepresented constituents by connecting with other cultural arts and local non-profit organizations committed to diversity and inclusion.
- Collaborate with community partners to present programs that resonate with diverse audiences.
- Provide free access for students from our various centers of learning and continue to recognize academic excellence by awarding scholarships at each Town Hall lecture.

Diversity and inclusion are founding values in Town Hall's history and mission. These commitments are vital to the well-being of volunteers and audiences and their communities. Progress can be difficult, the project never finished. It is the best way, we believe, to advance a vibrant democracy for the City of Fresno and the Central Valley.