

An Open Letter to the Paso Robles Community

October 21, 2026

To the residents of Paso Robles and the greater San Luis Obispo County community:

The San Luis Obispo County Branch of the NAACP writes to denounce the offensive and insensitive Halloween decorations displayed at a Paso Robles residence. Whatever the intent, imagery that evokes racial terror, dehumanization, or the historic violence inflicted upon Black people is not harmless seasonal décor. It carries a painful meaning rooted in lived history, and its public display causes real harm.

Halloween does not excuse displays that trivialize suffering or turn the symbols of hatred and violence into entertainment. Such imagery can make neighbors feel targeted, unwelcome, and unsafe. It also sends a damaging message to children and visitors about whose pain is worthy of respect.

We call on the resident or residents to remove the display immediately, acknowledge its harmful impact, and offer a sincere public apology to those affected. We also urge neighbors, community organizations, educators, businesses, and local leaders to speak clearly against racist and dehumanizing imagery whenever it appears.

Our response must be grounded in accountability, education, and the shared responsibility to build a community where every person is treated with dignity. We welcome constructive dialogue about the history and impact of this imagery, but dialogue must begin with the display's removal and an honest recognition of the harm it has caused.

Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo County are home to people of many backgrounds. Our public values should reflect respect, belonging, and care for one another. We ask every resident to reject displays that demean our neighbors and to join us in creating a community in which celebration never comes at the expense of another person's humanity.

Sincerely,

San Luis Obispo County Branch, NAACP

Barry Stokes, President

barrystokes.naacpslo@gmail.com