

November 13, 2019

Framingham School Committee Statement

I became aware today that a new campaign pushing Framingham to participate in a United Against Hate week with a resolution and subsequent ongoing activities was launched. When I read in the Source blog the way in which this is being launched and reflected on my own observations over the past two years here in Framingham I feel its important we reflect on our actions, ordinances and city-wide actions that contribute negatively to this discussion. And when I say this, I say it from the perspective of being white, that most people being asked to vote on these measures are white and the individual promoting this community event is expressing white outrage at these events demanding action.

If we're going to be radically honest and make a meaningful difference we need to act differently. The group voting, enacting and enforcing policy needs to stop and reflect on what they contribute to these issues that brings us to the point we're now so outraged about its impact being seen through recent indents while not holding each other accountable for contributions. As an example of hypocrisy... at a recent Nobscot Police Community meeting a community member raised concerns of people in "hoodies" and asked if he should call the police. That's a problem. I own multiple hoodies, I doubt he's talking about calling the police if I walk by in a hoodie with my dog at night. Why are we not talking about this behavior and holding each accountable for clear bias?

The language and content I have observed used regularly by well meaning community members who would never agree to be associated with racial bias are numerous:

1. racist political cartoons
2. Policing as top neighborhood formal agendas set by conflicted parties
3. Neighborhood "blight"
4. Broken Window's Policing
5. Noise Ordinances which will lead to racial profiling and fining communities of color

Where was the critical reporting of significant external GOP PAC money funding a republican candidate for city council while the current GOP is funding and

promoting hateful rhetoric at a national level? Where is the out-cry demanding that those funds be returned if that individual is to remain credible on the city council? Where is the outrage that that city council-elect member has chosen to remain associated with a political party promoting the problems we're now so outraged with in our community? You can't have it both ways. You can't blog the news and then hype the agenda behind the scenes to increase “hits/shares, conversion rates & advertising revenue”

I would suggest we start with some meaningful introspection of our White Fragility and how we're interacting in our community. What are we doing to hold each other accountable? Are we seriously saying no one knew about racist behavior and actions by the Framingham football coaches until recently? What are we doing to stand-by our neighbors who's children are encountering this behavior at school? Are we truly holding individuals who engage in acts/statements of racism to proper account?

The most recent head-shaking incident I observed just last week by the spouse of someone who sits on this very board. Physically invading a woman's space, laying hands on her, following her around to argue their perspective because their opinion mattered more and they were incapable of listening to her experience in a thoughtful manner. I will not point out who that is, you know what/who/where I am talking about, but please bring this book home and share it with your spouse as part of a shared commitment to begin holding each other accountable.

This board can vote in symbolic fashion to adopt this resolution which appears to originate from a good place to begin the conversation, but it should only do so with the awareness that it is no substitute for the actions and inactions each of you will make in the coming weeks and with every vote on policy and funding. I would also issue a cautionary statement. In the book I have brought this evening by one of the leading sociologists on this topic a key observation that we should all take to heart since we love to tout our “progressiveness” and our community diversity:

DiAngelo believes from her significant research and self-reflection that white liberals deserve the harshest criticism for refusing to acknowledge their own participation in racist systems. “White Progressives cause the most daily damage to people of color”. They fail to see their complicity, but take a self-serving approach to ongoing anti-racism efforts: “To the degree that white progressives think we have arrived, we will put our energy into making sure that others see us as having arrived.” Woke white women is now a thing.

It's time to promote our diverse voices and be an ally in enacting meaningful change, not just hype it on social media, promote it on our blogs and social circles. Reflect, support and listen to how we elevate change.

I am donating Diangelo's book to every member of the school committee as part of my donation to re framing the same old outrage to allow for self-reflection as we continue this community conversation. In the event it's too lengthy I have also brought the short New Yorker Article reviewing her work on this topic. Maybe the committee should vote to also fund outside experts to support the work being done today by our current community leaders on this topic. If my comments bother you, please stop and reflect on why.

Thank you for incorporating this perspective and understanding of how public policy contributes to the place we're at today.

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