



TOWN OF FAIRFAX

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Dear Fairfax Community,

I've been sitting with my large sheet of white poster board and my paints, ruminating over what I want to paint on my sign to hold in the Parkade, and stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement. I've been holding signs made by other people, one by a white Drake High School student stating "We demand justice" one by a black Drake High School student stating: "Being black is not a crime". All around me the shouts, "Silence equals violence"

What should my sign say?

I watched the movie "**Detroit**" last night. During the 1967 race riots Government Officials denounced violent acts against black people - "We condemn these acts of violence", "We are appalled by these atrocities, but there is cause for hope", "Change takes time".

Look back over 6 decades since the Detroit riots, and consider the incidents of injustice in violence against communities of color and ask: Do we have cause for hope? What has changed? Statements from many of those of us in elected positions today are verbatim to those made in 1967.

When something is systemic, when there is a pandemic, no body is excused from the table. We are experiencing the largest collision of calamities that many of us have witnessed in our lifetimes. For Covid 19, we rightly pour fiscal resources into vaccines and any means to protect our communities and ourselves, because we have been told that we are all equally vulnerable to infection. We power forward to wipe out the Covid 19 pandemic as no one is guaranteed immunity. Where is our response to chronic racism and discrimination? Do we feel immune?

As a white woman and Mayor of a predominantly white town, I am a product of White Privilege. No matter what I do, I have been given a head start over my counterparts of color. I was awarded arbitrary power at birth.

Hoping and waiting for change is grossly insufficient. We must earn the right to hope. Each of us must realize that just like Covid, we are not immune. In fact, without deep introspection, knowledge and honesty about the roots of our power structures and institutionalized racism, society will never change. White privilege is an invisible veil which many of us are only now becoming aware of. Hence, no Covid style emergency response to racism, no paradigm shift.

In the recent edition of the Tam High School News, Mikyla Willams writes of white fragility: "You need to replace sympathy with rapport. People of color don't need pity. What you can do is become aware of the subtle racism that happens on a daily basis and work on helping other white people to do the same."

I hope we will use this time of pandemic and the tragic killing of George Floyd to communicate with

one another. It is still vital that we remind each other to show respect by physically distancing and wearing masks, while at the same time, we must lift the veil of white privilege to know that it will take each of us to make the change that is needed.

The world has dramatically changed for all of us since I became the Mayor last December. I want to express my gratitude to our dedicated staff who have worked long nights and weekends to keep Fairfax going. It has been all hands on deck since March and each day brings new demands. They have my utmost respect.

The Town of Fairfax's Police Department has the most diverse force in the County. Chief Chris Morin has served our community for 20 years and has earned our support and trust. The Chief and I have spent the past several days in close communication. We have collaborated completely throughout one of the most devastating incidents of racial violence at the hands of Law Enforcement Officers. I am grateful for his partnership.

Renee Goddard
Mayor of Fairfax