

Dear Phil, Merrily, Jeff, Mike and Renae,

September 28, 2020

I would like to explain my outrage and response regarding the recent email thread surrounding the Racial Equity/Social Justice working group.

In our last meeting multiple members of our group spoke to their distrust, unease and fear of police presence in schools and in our community. They were very clear that as BIPOC students and members of our community they also experienced a lack of response to their concerns from school personnel and the town leadership. They took huge risks and shared some of their lived experiences, including:

- Black students opting to ride the school bus to CVU rather than drive because they fear the Hinesburg police.
- Our police chief is anti-BLM. He has stated in a select board meeting that he does not feel the town should adopt any statement that publicly supports Black Lives Matter.
- Students and parents are uncomfortable with police presence at HCS and CVU.

Following the meeting when these policing concerns were communicated, a member of this selectboard shared an article espousing the employment of School Resource Officers (SRO) and indoctrinating youth to the concept of policing to our group folder. When a member of the committee voiced their concerns to the group what resulted was a dismissal of that member's concerns by the person who posted the article and comments from town leadership that there are good opinions on both sides (sounds like the response following Charlottesville, VA).

The responses above, from town leadership, invalidate the **lived experiences** shared by the members of our community and committee. In fact, sharing and defending this racist article furthers the divide that we have been charged with addressing to make our community welcoming to people from diverse social, racial and ethnic groups. It is important to note that while people may be trying to help, very real harm can be caused by well-meaning, privileged individuals.

I struggle everyday with my white, male privilege and how I can change my thinking and actions to make the BIPOC communities in Hinesburg, CVU, and beyond feel valued and respected. I embrace my uncomfortableness and I make mistakes in my learning and growth. I will not standby or stand down. I will stand up. I will not tolerate the unwillingness of leaders in Hinesburg to address the issues of the BIPOC and marginalized communities in order to remain in their comfort zone. If my standing up makes you uncomfortable, too bad. Marginalized people and the BIPOC community have been **uncomfortable** for 400 years in this country and it's long overdue that white, privileged people **experience discomfort** as well.

I will not standby while the lived experiences of our BIPOC community are ignored by our town leaders. At a time when towns across the country are looking at appropriate policing levels and budgets, our out of touch town leadership has added an unneeded officer at a huge expense. The addition of police staffing in Hinesburg is further evidence that this governing body is insensitive to the **uncomfortable environment** within the BIPOC community created by the increased police presence in Hinesburg. I cannot continue to represent a town that attempts to diminish the voices of the marginalized and promotes increased policing over policy reform.

I respectfully tender my resignation from the Hinesburg Selectboard.

Regards,

Jeffrey Tobrocke