



VILLAGE OF SCARSDALE

Mayoral Community Update

June 11, 2020

Dear Scarsdale Community,

On May 25, George Floyd, a 46 year-old black man, was tragically killed by a white police officer in Minneapolis. This killing, along with the series of senseless murders of black people by white police officers nationwide is unconscionable. It is also unconscionable that racism continues to plague our nation. While we are in the midst of a national crisis of conscience, as well as a pandemic, we should pause to bear witness to this moment in history. We are undoubtedly at a crossroads that hopefully will lead to systemic change and force us to alter what we as a society value and hold dear. We see the next generation rising up to say “enough” and “we must do better.” We must take their lead and strive to once and for all rid ourselves of racism and senseless violence.

Four Scarsdale High School graduates from the class of 2016 organized a vigil for George Floyd this past Sunday evening in Chase Park. The vigil was attended by hundreds of our friends and neighbors, as well as the Mayor of Mount Vernon and a number of her constituents. All but two of the speakers were black. This is not what we are accustomed to in Scarsdale - and that is exactly the point. We consider ourselves a community that highly values justice, both social justice and legal justice. We prize fairness and equity, and we staunchly denounce racism in all of its forms. While our aspirations are in the right place, it became clear to me on Sunday that we have work to do.

Among the most powerful and courageous speakers were five young black women who are current or former students in Scarsdale schools. They each recounted stories of growing up in Scarsdale. Stories of microaggressions, underlying racism, and a lack of black teachers to serve as role models and to teach other teachers how to treat topics of black history with sensitivity and understanding. I was deeply moved by the stories of these young women and I am ashamed that these acts continue to occur today in 2020 in Scarsdale. I spoke with the five young women after the vigil. I told them that I heard them and that I am deeply sorry that these things happened to them here in our community. This is not the Village we know, or at least the one we pride ourselves in being a part of.

This vigil was a wake-up call for me and for many others who attended the event. I would like to take this opportunity to announce that I am forming a group comprised of residents and representatives from the School District, local clergy, Board of Trustees, Village staff, and others. The mission of this group will be to challenge us, to challenge our way of doing things, our way of thinking, and our approach to one another. What we heard on Sunday evening was not the Scarsdale we want to be. Frankly, it is not the community I thought that we were. We are better than this, much better than this; and, we cannot get to that better place soon enough.

Change is difficult, but it is clearly important for us to take a hard look in the mirror and start to make necessary changes. Change is also required beyond our Village borders. One of the most effective ways that we may have our voices heard is to exercise our right to vote - one of the most important rights we have as citizens of the United States.

We have an important primary election on June 23 and anyone wishing to vote may do so by absentee ballot. One may contact the County Board of Elections to obtain an absentee ballot application. Because of the pandemic, all registered voters in good standing who request an absentee ballot will be issued a ballot. There is also a Village election on September 15.

Please vote – vote *every time* that you have the opportunity to have your voice heard in the management of our village, county, state, or nation.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MS', is positioned above the printed name.

Marc Samwick
Mayor