

I was made aware of an incident that occurred, but I do not know who the individuals were who boarded the bus and used such awful language. I did reach out to Amanda. During that phone call I expressed my deep sadness for what the young women had experienced. I also asked that they please not take this one experience as representing the entire Town.

The use of racial slurs is never acceptable, and everyone knows this. I asked that the women come back to Philipstown and that I and others could attempt to make amends by doing something that shows our best selves. We have so many individuals and organizations that would gladly extend a warm welcome. I introduced the idea of a hike or a visit to a local farm to share not only the beauty of our area but the beauty that lives in our residents. I would welcome a discussion of what they felt and how we can do better here in Philipstown. So, in short, yes, that is why I made the plea at the last Town meeting.

We live in an incredible area and take for granted all the privileges that we enjoy. This clouds how we see the world and skews reality. The privilege that we take for granted is not the experience for so many people, especially people of color. Having grown up here and lived much of my adult life in Philipstown, I have often wondered why our community is not more representative of the country in terms of racial diversity. I have lived in other areas but still, I suffer from inherent bias and am aware of this. I have always known that something was not right within myself and within this community.

When I was young, we would shop in Peekskill, Beacon and Newburgh and it struck me that those communities were much more diverse. I speak only for myself, but I did not have enough experience with people of other cultures and backgrounds and therefore felt unprepared to understand the world when I went off to college. That lack of understanding stays with me and weighs on me to this very day.

Discussions of race and privilege are not easy, but that discomfort can no longer be used as an excuse for not engaging in them. The very discomfort we feel can only be alleviated through the recognition that injustice exists all over this country and throughout the world. Taking the easy way out and continuing in our blissful ignorance is a tacit approval of the way things are. If the televised killing of George Floyd is not enough to make us aware that there are serious problems, then I do not know what will. We need to acknowledge the horrors that Mr. Floyd and so many black and brown people have endured and work to make a better society.

I realize that people have busy lives and that by and large it is not intentional that we ignore problems; especially a problem as big as racism. Raising families and getting to work during a global pandemic feels like enough and I understand that people are overwhelmed. This being the current state of affairs, recognizing and acknowledging the issues of race in America is a first step that all of us can take.

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