

Anti-racism letters in the Benicia Herald

Sunday, April 18, 2021, by Ralph Dennis

Two Peas in a Pod – Stand Up Benicia to Racism and Right-wing Extremism



This past weekend on Southampton Road and in the area of Raley’s Supermarket, three white people in a vehicle harassed and threatened three younger black kids, using the N-word and other discriminatory language. One of the three whites involved pulled a gun on the children (later described by the police as a “soft, air gun”) and was later subsequently arrested at his home and arrested on several crimes.

In February, we learned through an investigation by Open Vallejo of concerns about the presence of white supremacy and right-wing extremism in the Solano County Sheriff’s Office. Sheriff Tom Ferrara has responded twice to these concerns, stating that none of his employees are members of right-wing extremist groups and that he has policies and procedures in place to ensure none are hired.

Racial discrimination and white supremacy/right-wing extremism are all peas in the same pod. Placing the color of one’s skin above any others, or supporting policies and actions that would subvert or overthrow legitimately-elected governments, are each aimed at elevating one group of people above all others. Both are morally wrong.

I’m encouraged that the Benicia Police’s response led to an arrest in the hate crime incident. Concerns remain, though, about how Benicia Police reported the incident to City officials as well as the Police Department’s discussion with the parents of the young black victims involved. Threats and promises of “whitelash” directed at people of color are rampant on social media. There are also conflicting accounts of how Raley’s employees responded when asked for help by the black children as they ran from the incident and into the Raley’s store.

Sheriff Ferrara has said he now recognizes “the need to proactively address all political ideologies with a renewed level of social responsibility and accountability.” That is encouraging, perhaps, but insufficient. The FBI report the Sheriff alludes to, which he says shows that none of his employees belong to right-wing extremist groups, remains invisible to the public as the Sheriff refuses to share it. The Sheriff’s Office should be more transparent about the FBI report and what its own internal investigations uncovered since the Open Vallejo report first appeared.

Racial oppression and white supremacy – two peas in a pod.

If you see something, if you hear something, SAY SOMETHING. Be an ally with those who fight racism and right-wing extremism. Don't blame me, or Benicia Black Lives Matter, or City Hall when it listens to the community and hires an Equity and Diversity Manger. Look in the mirror – are you an ally in fighting racism and white supremacy in Benicia and Solano County, or are you part of the problem?

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