

Anti-racism letters in the Benicia Herald

Wednesday, May 12, 2021, by Mark Christian

Silence is Complicity

America is not—and has never been—a place where liberty and justice for all of its citizens has ever been more than an ideal. Perhaps more damningly, even this most basic of ideals is not shared by all. As individuals, we have a moral duty to step up and make things better. Moreover, we have a moral duty to demand more from our elected officials, and to demand that those who are unwilling to serve the public's interests step aside and make room for those with the moral courage to act.

It has come to light that certain members of Solano County Sheriff Tom Ferrara's staff have been distributing white supremacist, anti-government materials amongst themselves, and even with other public officials. This is deeply disturbing and represents, amongst other things, an unconscionable dereliction of duty on the sheriff and his staff's part. These allegations were serious enough that the Federal Bureau of Investigations was called upon to investigate them. Unfortunately, Ferrara's office has refused to release the FBI's report to the public, so we really have no idea what was found, or what we should fear is festering in his office, right under his nose.

Law enforcement officials are sworn to serve and protect us, but tolerating hateful ideologies does neither. So I ask readers: who is served by allowing our tax dollars to support those who would undermine and threaten the safety of residents of color in Solano County? And who is protected by elected officials who are content to allow white supremacist and anti-government propaganda to spread among their ranks?

It may seem hopeless to challenge the situation as it is outlined above: the system is large, and momentum is not always on our side. But the tides are changing, our collective voices are strong, and we can win back that forward momentum as early as today.

California Assembly Bill No. 1185 authorizes counties to establish a civilian sheriff oversight board that would have the power to investigate the presence of those sympathetic to white supremacist ideologies within the sheriff's office. It is well past time for Solano County's Board of Supervisors—those who were voted into power by us, the public, to represent us, that same public—to step up and do the right thing.



Board members Erin Hannigan, Mitch Mashburn, Jim Spering, John Vasquez: silence is complicity. And your silence has been deafening.

Mark Christian
Benicia