

I am a proud member of Arlington Fights Racism, a group that has been fighting systemic racism in our town since a racist police officer was allowed to retain his job after publishing hate filled and racist articles in a state wide publication. I would like to read you our mission statement.

We are a committed group of Arlington residents striving to promote a more compassionate, inclusive, engaged and welcoming town by collaborating and networking with others to increase diversity, dismantle racism, bias and inequity, and to create a richer, more culturally representative community and town government.

We have been working hard to define ourselves and make our voices heard for over a year and a half. In that time we have been criticized, insulted, ignored, sidelined and during the recent campaign maligned by many of our town leaders. I'd like to read our mission again.

Now please tell us what in this statement has been so distasteful to our leaders and their followers? I have yet to understand why so many people would oppose the inclusion of marginalized voices in our town government. What about our mission statement is so threatening? Perhaps sharing power with marginalized people is hard. Whatever it is I hope we can all move on and do the work, our own personal work of overcoming our egos and biases to ensure that every voice in Arlington is valued, encouraged and heard even when those voices might be hard to hear, even when those voices may not follow our personal interpretation of civility.

We were promised by Mr. Chapdelaine that he would include AFR in the planning of any town wide events related to anti racism. We have not been consulted about any of the recent events planned and held by the town to address racism. I can't in my heart understand why unless it is a conscious decision to exclude us. I hope that is not the case but either way we were not included in the planning. We are the ones who raised this issue and who have worked tirelessly to bring our own systemic racism into the light and with the opposition of most of the town establishment. Surely town leaders can now show a little humility, and have the integrity to act without malice and give AFR the respect it has earned. We have not wavered in our attempts to reach out, but so far this has been a one way street. We will continue our work with you or without you and continue to wait patiently for you to include us.