

**Mystic Valley Area
NAACP**

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Executive Committee:

Atty. Neil Osborne,
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Rev. Dr. David Kilpatrick,
Vice-President
Anna Ekpenyong,
Treasurer
Dotty Walker Gomez,
Secretary

Jeff Cowen
Pearl Morrison
Carolyn Shepherd
Joseph Jones
Rev. Florence King
Zane Crute
Edna Gavin
Theresa Howell

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July 26, 2016

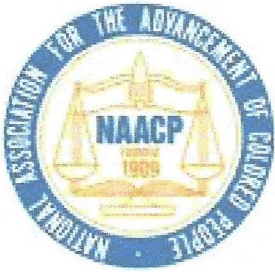
Michael McGrath, President
Somerville Police Employee's Assoc.
220 Washington Street
Somerville, MA 02143

RE: **Mystic Valley NAACP Response Police Association Letter Mayor Curtatone
of July 19, 2016**

As police officers you understand there is a community of people who adore love and appreciate your contributions. Count our membership as part of a community that appreciates your service. However, you also understand there is another segment of the population that will always dislike what you represent and another that underappreciates the risk you face each day. All of this is no surprise to you as police officers working in our community. Those who dislike or distrust authority, have a problem with your position as enforcer of the law. The segment who love, adore and appreciate you directly understand the heroic work you regularly perform when you accepted a badge and a gun and took an oath to protect the citizens of this county as a police officer.

The Mystic Valley Area NAACP felt it important to address your open letter to the Mayor of Somerville requesting he take down a Black Lives Matter banner and replace it with an All Lives Matter banner. In light of any perceived or actual recent tension between Police generally and communities of color we thought it productive to speak direct to you on this issue. First, we want to make clear that the NAACP and the local Mystic Valley Area branch is not the Black Lives Matter organization "BLM". The NAACP, a civil rights organization is 107 years old because people of conscious, both black and white, worked together at great personal and professional risk to carve out of this nation a place of equal opportunity and justice for all without regard to race. The Mystic Valley branch, formally the Medford Branch, has remained an active partner in working on civil rights issues locally for 40 years. The NAACP in all of its years of civil rights advocacy has never advocated violence as a means for achieving our goals of creating an equitable society. This advocacy position obviously includes acts of deadly violence directed toward police officers.

We do support the cause of BLM and its mission to bring awareness and then elimination of the problem of unarmed black men being shot and dying at the hands of a white police officers. There may be various characteristic changes in the people to be protected from just unarmed black men but generally the theme is removing conscious or unconscious race bias in the performance of law enforcement officers will lead to fewer blacks dying by actions of police.



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While we can appreciate a rational disagreement with NAACP positions and policy we are however compelled to respond publicly to misunderstanding, mischaracterization and misinformation about the nature and intent of the BLM movement. The view or position that "all lives matter" does not become invalidated by a position that "black lives matter." Demanding All Lives Matter replace and supplant a Black Lives Matter banner is most troubling because it uses the general "all" to avoid the specific "black" problem amplified by BLM. BLM movement is demanding the country recognize the existence of a specific problem that blacks who are unarmed are being killed too often by white police officers. BLM does not hate police nor does it hate or have no regard for other non-black lives. They are, and we support the position there is a problem and this problem must be faced if it is to be resolved and a nation shows that all lives do truly matter. A call and demand for All Lives Matter wrongly attempts to present a position that no problem exists. We appreciate and applaud Somerville Mayor Curtatone for placing the banner on Somerville City Hall last August and his continued commitment after your open letter requesting its removal and replaced with an All Live Matter slogan.

We know what the BLM is about because we asked and they came to speak with us locally. We invite members of the Somerville Police Employee's Association to come and speak with us, also. It is through a process of open and direct dialogue that we can work to achieve a more just and peaceful society. We are hopeful this letter is received, as it is intended, to create more open dialogue not less on the important issues of race and public safety, in this country and locally.

Neil Osborne
Neil Osborne, Pres

C. E. Shepherd

David M. Kilpatrick
Vice President

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