



TOWN OF WAYLAND

41 COCHITUATE ROAD
WAYLAND, MASSACHUSETTS 01778

TOWN BUILDING
41 COCHITUATE ROAD
TEL. (508) 358-7701
www.wayland.ma.us

December 30, 2022

To Members of the Select Board and the Wayland Community:

We stand in solidarity and condemn the anti-Black racist graffiti

The Human Rights, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee (HRDEIC) expresses disgust with the graffiti hate crime, targeting Wayland Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Omar X. Easy, found near the high school entrance on Wednesday, December 21, 2022. The very public location of the graffiti violates Black community members' rights to be free from discrimination and fear, and exposes young people to hate. We stand in solidarity with Dr. Easy, and with all Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) in Wayland, whose sense of safety has been violated. We join the Select Board, School Committee and other town entities in forcefully condemning this racist act.

The racist term used carries a history of violence and dehumanization

The person(s) who sprayed the graffiti wrote "Omar =" followed by the N-word. The N-word is intended to terrorize.¹ It is one of the most harmful epithets in the English language, evoking the dehumanizing history of enslaving Black people. Representations and stereotypes about Black people which were created to justify and perpetuate slavery are directly linked to the institutionalized racism, aggression, and violence against Black people today.²

Virginia Benzan, Director of Racial Justice Advocacy for the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, notes:

"The N-word is used to dehumanize people. The dehumanization of Black men too often leads to them being viewed as more menacing, aggressive and fearsome. The N-word not only says that you're inferior and not welcomed but that you're unsafe."

School superintendents representing Norfolk, Middlesex and Suffolk counties issued a joint statement declaring:

"This was not a reaction to a school district policy or decision...Rather, as a district leader of color, this was an attack on who he is."

Holding the perpetrator accountable does not diminish our responsibility

Those who participated in the hate crime will be held accountable. But we must not stop there. It is incumbent on everyone in Wayland to learn about and discuss the history of anti-Black racism in America and its legacy in our time, our town, and in our own lives. Anti-Black racism is a term that refers to the devaluation, dehumanization, and marginalization of Black people. Despite progress that has been made since the 1960s, racial inequities persist in wealth, home ownership, employment, education, incarceration rates, incidences of police brutality and homicide, domestic abuse, access to healthcare, access to healthy food and more – including in the MetroWest area.³

The racist incident is a reminder that although outward signs of personal racial animus may seem less visible in Wayland than in the past, racism persists, and must be understood in its many forms: internalized, inter-personal, institutional and ideological.⁴ Although racism may often be communicated through more subtle means, such as comments, looks, body language, avoidance, and microaggressions, it is immediately understood by Black, Indigenous and People of Color and contributes to psychological harm and trauma. To create solutions that educate, reduce harm, support racial justice and engender racial equity, we as a community must begin to deeply understand racism’s dynamics and impacts.

We pledge

We, the members of the Wayland Human Rights, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, pledge to support the Select Board and the entire community in advancing Wayland’s journey toward becoming “an inclusive community that has, as one of its core values, the freedom from discrimination, disrespect, bigotry, other forms of microaggressions, macroaggressions, hatred and oppression.” ([HRDEIC Charter](#))

To this end, we ask that the following urgent actions be adopted by the end of 2023:

Actions already recommended:

1. **Initiate a town-wide equity audit.** The HRDEIC recently voted unanimously to recommend that the Town conduct a town-wide equity audit. The purpose is to help the Town achieve its [goal of being an “anti-racist and ethnically unbiased community”](#) by evaluating policies, practices, systems, and competencies in place to support this goal. We recommend that sufficient resources be allocated in the FY24 budget to ensure that the audit is comprehensive and produces actionable results.
2. **Establish a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) position for the Town.** We unanimously voted to recommend that the Town fund a town-wide DEI position in the FY24 budget. We anticipate that a town-wide equity audit will provide a roadmap for the work of this individual. Such a town-wide position would complement the Wayland Public Schools position of Director of Diversity, Equity and Belonging. We recommend that the person hired be designated an ex officio member of the HRDEIC, Select Board, and/or School Committee. In the meantime, we suggest the Town hire a DEI consultant to facilitate the

Town's progress. We encourage the Town to be guided by the MA Municipal Coalition's [2022 DEI Guide](#).

3. **Diversify staff, boards and committees.** We recommend exploring ways to attract and retain Black, Indigenous and People of Color as employees and on committees and boards, including young people where appropriate. We recommend using exit interviews and stay interviews of Black, Indigenous and People of Color to inform future practices. We recommend sharing information between the Town and Schools about what is and is not working to attract, employ and retain Black, Indigenous and People of Color.
4. **Launch the Incident Reporting Line.** The HRDEIC will continue to work with the Select Board and Town Manager to launch the Town Incident Reporting Line for people to report experiences of discrimination or mistreatment in Wayland.

Additional actions:

5. **Designate a Civil Rights Officer** within the Police Department and implement the [Recommendations of the Governor's Task Force on Hate Crimes, Nov 19, 2018](#). By designating and training a Civil Rights Officer, the Town will create a point person for addressing hate crimes and incidents, and ensure that hate crime and incident data are collected, analyzed, and transparently reported.
6. **Mandate the creation of a response plan**, including the assignment of roles and responsibilities for responding to hate crimes, hate incidents, and incidents of bias.
7. **Provide mandatory training and make ongoing coaching available.** We recommend providing regular diversity, equity and belonging, cultural competency and implicit bias training to all those in positions of authority or with evaluative roles and to members of all Town boards and committees. In addition, we recommend making ongoing coaching around these issues available.
8. **Bring in expertise.** We recommend that the Town identify and hire as needed consultants qualified to:
 - a. Advance learning among non-Black people about how anti-Black racism works, how anti-Black racism is relevant to all of us, and how each of us can address racism through self-reflection and action;
 - b. Build the capacity in Town to strengthen cross-racial communication and relationships, repair harm, and respond to conflicts involving race; and
 - c. Offer trainings, facilitate discussions on bias and hate crimes, identify resources, and suggest best practices. Several of us have already met with the Department of Justice's CRS (Community Relations Service), which offers these services for free.
9. **Appoint town representatives as non-voting members of the HRDEIC.** We recommend appointing to the HRDEIC a Police Department representative and one or two Wayland Public Schools representatives (e.g., Director of Diversity, Equity and Belonging and a member of the Boston Parent Council) to bring their perspectives on issues facing the community directly to the HRDEIC and to enhance collaboration.

We also refer you to our November 19, 2022 [letter](#) - presented orally to the Select Board on [November 21, 2022](#), starting at time stamp 1:34:16 - which proposed a set of questions intended to inspire reflection and innovative thinking about how all parts of the Wayland community can work together toward the goal of creating a community of belonging.

We invite BIPOC community members to the table

We invite BIPOC community members to join the HRDEIC as Committee members, or work with us as members of the public, to shape HRDEIC recommendations for fostering a more equitable and anti-racist community. Let us remember that racism is about power and domination, therefore to address racism, community members of color must be part of the solution.

Respectfully,
The Wayland Human Rights, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee



Learning resources

1. The N-Word

- View: [The History and Etymology of the N-Word](#) (3-minute video)
- Read: [4 Reasons White People Can't Say the N-Word \(No Matter What Black Folks Are Doing\)](#)
- View: [The N-Word Double Standard](#) (5-minute video)

2. History of anti-Black racism and violence

- Read: [The Case for Reparations](#), Ta-Nehisi Coates
- View: [Birth of a White Nation](#), Jaqueline Battalora (36-minute video)
- Read: [Racial Violence in the United States Since 1526](#)

3. Racial inequities

- View: [The Unequal Opportunity Race](#) (4-minute video)
- Read: [Racial Inequality in the United States](#)
- Read: [MetroWest: A Region with Prosperity and Inequity](#) (full report [here](#))

4. Understanding the dynamics and impacts of racism

- View: [The Four I's of Oppression](#) (3-minute video) or Read: [The Four I's of Oppression](#)
- Read: [Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#) or View [Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#) (6-minute video)