

# Disagreeing Does Not Mean You're the Enemy

To the Editor:

The lead article in last week's paper, entitled "Two Rogers Grads Rally for Change," would have made an excellent letter to the editor. As a news article, however, it left much to be desired.

For one thing, it is filled with unsubstantiated statements about local police, like "the policing of certain black neighborhoods, like Park Holm, has grown worse in recent years;" "it's almost like the cops purposely mess with them;" "some of the men who shared stories of police brutality ... may face retribution;" and when a Rogers senior's body was found washed up and the cause of death was never resolved, "Police here kind of dismissed it."

These are very serious charges. If they are true, then yes, those responsible should be disciplined. But if they are just the loose speculation of two women bearing grievances, then those women who made the charges, and the *Newport This Week* staff that published them as a news article, apparently without fact-checking, owe the local police an apology.

A second article that bothered me is certainly not the fault of *Newport This Week*. According to a report on page 2, at a recent Newport City Council meeting tempers flared and charges were hurled back and forth among the council members and some members of the public. The issue was over the adoption of a resolution commending the Newport County NAACP and strongly condemning violence, hate speech and racial slurs.

If I read the article correctly, apparently all members of the council were in favor of that. But there was also a recommended action attached to the resolution: "implicit bias training shall be provided to all employees of the City of Newport and to the City Council." Not all of the councilors were in favor of that, for various reasons.

In less emotional times, the unpersuaded members of the council might have proposed amendments to the resolution, which would have been voted up or down, and then the final version – amended or unamended – would have been voted upon. But that's not what happened.

A School Committee member, Stephanie Winslow, is quoted as saying she was "embarrassed and appalled," "shaking with anger," and glad that Councilors [Kathryn] Leonard, [Jeanne-Marie] Napolitano, and [Justin] McLaughlin, who "haven't got a clue," will be "gone soon." Resident Amy Machado was "appalled by what she heard" and shouted at McLaughlin, "You are a failed leader."

As an interested citizen with some experience in local government, I would like to vouch for Justin McLaughlin, who has given so much for the city and is anything but a failed leader. I believe I voted for all the current members of the council and School Committee, and thought they were doing a great job.

But please remember: those who disagree with you are not the enemy. Maybe what we really need in these contentious days, more than anything else, at every level of government, is a good dose of humility.

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