

Tuesday, February 28, 2023

Sheriff Fletcher
Ramsey County Sheriff's Office
425 Grove Street
Saint Paul, MN 55101

Dear Sheriff Fletcher,

As leaders in Ramsey County who represent and lead our racially and ethnically diverse employees in our employee resource groups (ERGs), we condemn the racist actions, the inactions toward enabling the health and care of our residents in the Adult Detention Center, and lack of direct response and budget accountability of Ramsey County Sheriff Bob Fletcher in his Feb. 21, 2023 written response to the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners.

In that letter, only four commissioners were identified, named, acknowledged and listed. We have seven commissioners on the Ramsey County Board. The three board members not named are from the Black/African American, Asian and Latinx communities. Four white leaders named and three leaders from racial and ethnically diverse communities completely dismissed through a racist act of omitting them in a public document as publicly elected and important leaders representing residents in our county. This has been a pattern of behavior for Sheriff Fletcher and this explicit act of racism and trying to silence the voices of leaders that represent communities most impacted by the recent violence in community, is **unacceptable** and reflects the incompetent and harmful leadership of our Sheriff. This needs to be stopped now.

This is an intentional effort to create an us-versus-them environment that contributes to the inherent racism that is still so pervasive in law enforcement as demonstrated by Fletcher's office. It's an intentional act to get people to call him a racist. This is done so people pick sides. **It's a provocation to distract from the harmful behavior of not adequately caring for the people who reside in the Adult Detention Center, under the leadership of the Sheriff.** These tactics are rooted in white supremacy, harm everyone, especially people most impacted by the criminal justice system and it must be stopped.

Acts like this impact our residents and the racially and ethnically diverse people working with and on behalf of residents in Ramsey County. In 2020, after the murder of George Floyd, staff that identify as Black/African American came together to support one another after this inherent act of racism and violence directed toward Black people in Minnesota. As a result, our employee resource groups were launched. ERGs are voluntary, employee-led groups that are designed to promote inclusion and build a sense of belonging in our work community. ERGs align with our mission of "A county of excellence working with you to enhance our quality of life." ERGs are aligned with our vision of "A vibrant community where all are valued and thrive," and they align with our values of People, Integrity, Community, Leadership and Equity. Our collective purpose is to help employees build connections through common bonds with colleagues. When anyone of us steps outside of the mission, vision and values in a way that is racist, dismissive, disrespectful and offensive, it harms all of us.

Black Excellence is guided by the 21 Standards for a Healthy African Community. These standards, values and principles guide the socialization and education of African children, families and community. All standards apply to this situation, but it's important to focus on a few here:

- Greet every member of community with love and respect.
- Celebrate each other's success.
- Work through problems together.
- Hold each other accountable to what is right and good.
- When failure comes, be willing to receive support and accept responsibility.

In addition, psychological safety, connection, leadership, self-advocacy, relationship, personal responsibility, and building allyship through a shared vision and shared power among all groups at Ramsey County are traits that the Asian Descent Network ERG values in its vision and goals.

The Supported Employees Efforts Manifest Equity or SEEME ERG historically understands and knows the injustice that occurs when exclusion is masked regarding decision making powers/capabilities.

As leaders and staff in ERGS, we often present before the county board and county leadership. The actions, inactions, and how we model or do not model our core values of elected officials and leaders are observed and experienced by us individually and collectively. It impacts our work environment, our mental well-being and how we serve our residents. We appreciate the response that the collective board provided to Sheriff Fletcher in their letter dated Feb. 24, 2023. The continued horrific and racist behaviors of the Sheriff create harm for our staff and community. These words in the county board's response are important for all of us to see in print and allows us to feel supported, valued and invested in as we all work as public servants to invest in our community.

We call for the Sheriff to be held accountable for his racist tactics and actions that are an act of white supremacy that impact racially and ethnically diverse communities, specifically people that identify as Black/African and American Indian. He owes all of us an apology and an authentic commitment through tangible actions to repair the harm that he and his office have done to people. We need a leader who is willing to be the Sheriff for all of us and not just some of us. He has lost the trust of many people and cannot be capable of protecting and serving our entire Ramsey County community.

These words are the collective voice of sponsors that represent the employee resource groups of Black Excellence, Asian Descent Network, ¡Voces!, PRIDE and Supported Employees Efforts Manifest Equity.