

TOWN OF LEVERETT Massachusetts 01054

PUBLIC STATEMENT FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD RACISM AWARENESS IN A SMALL, RURAL MUNICIPALITY

Police brutality is a fact of life in the United States and elsewhere around the world. The brutal death on May 25, 2020, of George Floyd at the hands of police officers in Minneapolis, MN, underscores the continuing reality of the problem.

Black people have been a special target of police brutality for the entire history of America, beginning with slavery, extending beyond the Civil War into legal segregation, and continuing even after the overturning of segregation doctrine ("separate but equal"). Black lives have literally been "looted"—plundered for economic value and treated as disposable otherwise.

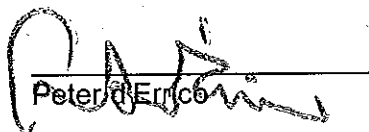
Police brutality is a structural problem, not a single event created by a single individual on a single occasion. It is part and parcel of the long historical use of police to enforce economic and political systems based on wealth extraction and domination by a privileged category of Whites.

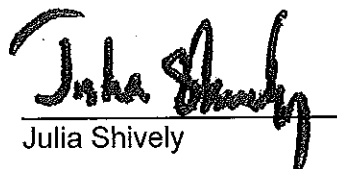
World awareness is now sharply focused on racism as an integral element of economic and political inequality and on police brutality as part of the increasing use of military forces and material in response to social protests.

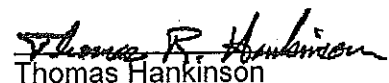
Leverett has a role to play in promoting discussion and analysis of racism. To our knowledge, we have had no instances of police brutality in Leverett and have enjoyed a positive and collaborative working relationship with our police department. Our police department has also made a commitment to the larger goals of social justice (Please refer also to a statement from Chief Scott Minckler, Leverett Police Department at <https://www.facebook.com/LeverettMApolice/>). However, we are aware of the fact that racism manifests in many ways. We encourage public and personal discussion and study of the roots of police violence and of contemporary manifestations of police violence and racism. We also encourage discussion of the factors of life in Leverett that underlie the apparent absence of police brutality.

Toward these ends, the Select Board will create a Social Justice Committee, comprised of a racially diverse group of Leverett residents, who will work together to explore and recommend action steps that can be taken by the police department, school and town government.

Leverett Selectboard:


Peter D. Errico


Julia Shively


Thomas Hankinson

16 June 2020