

The Kingston Interfaith Council

United in Service to Justice, Mercy and Love

December 8, 2017

Sheriff Paul Van Blarcum
380 Boulevard
Kingston, NY 12401

CC: Attorney General Eric Schneiderman
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Sheriff Van Blarcum,

As leaders of faith communities in Ulster County, are writing to express our sorrow and anger over the Facebook post by Ulster County Corrections Sargent Polacco which compared those receiving public assistance to dogs, and included language that was racist, sexist, and contemptuous of poor people.

We represent diverse religious communities. All of our faith traditions teach the inherent worth and dignity of every human person, and all of them stand against dehumanization of any person or group. We are therefore united in our deep concern that a corrections officer, a person in a position of public trust, who has significant power over others, would express such dehumanizing sentiments. We believe that it is not in the public interest for someone who is so contemptuous of people of color, poor people, and women to continue to serve in such a role of public trust.

We understand that your office has begun an investigation into this incident and possible disciplinary consequences. We would be interested in knowing the results of that investigation, as well as any other steps your office is taking to address issues of racism, sexism, and contempt for the poor among your officers. We would like to invite you to come speak to us at our next meeting on January 25, 2018, from 8:30-10:00 am. If you are open to meeting with us but cannot be at that meeting, we would be happy to be in touch to find another time. (Please be in touch with Rev. Erica Baron at ebaron@uuma.org for scheduling details.)

Sincerely,

Rev. Frank J. Alagna, Ph.D., Holy Cross/Santa Cruz Church
Rev. Dr. Faye Banks Taylor, St. Mark's Chapel AME Church
Rev. Erica Baron, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Catskills
Rev. James Childs, Pastor, Pointe of Praise Family Life Center
Rev. Dr. G. Modele Clarke, New Progressive Baptist Church
Rev. Dr. William H. Hill, Chaplain
Rev. Renee House, Old Dutch Church
Rev. Justin Johnson, ELCA
Syed Khalid Khan, Muslim Association of Ulster County
The Rev. Michelle Meech, St. John's Episcopal Church
Erick Mercado, Vida Real Church
Jeremy T. Mills, Assistant Pastor, Clinton Avenue United Methodist Church
Rev. Dr. Robert Milsom, St. James United Methodist Church of Kingston
Rev. Alison Quin, Christ the King Episcopal Church, Stone Ridge
Rabbi Yael Romer, DD, Congregation Emanuel of the Hudson Valley
Jordan Scruggs, St. James Methodist Church
Rev. Filomena Servellon, Holy Cross/Santa Cruz Episcopal Church
Rev. Kevin Slusher, Reformed Church of Port Ewen
Rev. Kendra VanHouten, Fair Street Reformed Church