134 St. Lawrence Street
Victoria
V8V 1X8

Committee
of the Whole
OCT 15 2020
Late Item# J.(

October 11, 2020

Charlayne Thornton Joe
Councillor Victoria City Council
City Hall
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Councillor

It is my understanding that the ACAB message is still in the street art protest in Bastion Square. This saddens me to know that the mural has been hijacked by a message of hate.

I agree that racism in all its ugly forms must be confronted and stopped, but I do not believe that hate can be conquered by more hate. ACAB is yet one more form of negative, divisive and hateful stereotyping even when supposedly justified as artistic freedom of expression.

Please, have these letters removed and then let's have a dialogue.

Sincerely,

Mavis DeGirolamo
Chair, Global Village Store
Board Member, New Horizons
Past President, Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria
Past Chair, James Bay Community Project

Chabad
Vancouver
Island

October 14, 2020

To whom it may concern,

A Victoria City Councillor asked me to share my views about the removal of the ACAB acronym included in the Bastion Square mural that was funded by the City of Victoria.

I have to start by saying that it is mind-boggling that there is even a discussion about the existence of a hate message in a publicly-sponsored art project, on a public square. The debate itself is appalling and points to a moral decline in our society.

Since I was asked, I'd like to share a few thoughts for your consideration:

- The notion that bigotry and racism can be fought through hatred against any group of people - is not only immoral and wrong, but is also not bringing us any closer to peace or justice.
- I cannot think of any worse expression of ingratitude to the men and women of the local police force who work day and night to ensure the safety of our homes and communities, often risking their lives so that we can sleep peacefully. They deserve our appreciation and not our insults.
- I personally know many members of VicPD. They are incredible women and men of integrity who serve our city honorably. As a member of a minority group myself, I have never encountered unfairness in their interaction with any citizen of the city. I have no doubt that if it were ever found that there was unethical or racist behaviour on the part of VicPD, it would be addressed immediately, without any compromise.
- Lastly, what message are we sending to our youth by degrading our law-enforcement officers? Is this going to help them grow into better, law-abiding citizens?

It is my opinion that the presence of this insulting message on a city-sponsored project, in a city square, is a despicable offence against our great city.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Meir Kaplan

Address: 2955 Glasgow Street Victoria, BC, V8T 4H1
[redacted]

Amanda Ferguson

From: Charlayne Thornton-Joe (Councillor)
Sent: October 15, 2020 9:23 AM
To: Chris Coates
Subject: Mural #4

Charlayne

Thanks for reaching out to me about this issue and asking my thoughts. It is a delicate subject and discussion, to be sure. Without full knowledge of the context or other details related to the mural, I acknowledge that my perspective tries to pull off a delicate "tight rope walk". This is my personal view and not representing the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria where I am the Community Development Coordinator.

However, having said that, my view is that the acronym ACAB is not appropriate nor should it have been included in this particular mural.

I say this for a couple of reasons:

a. The mural is a City of Victoria public art initiative with costs were covered by public funds from the city. The funds were issued with the understanding they would be used in a manner that reflects the city's art in public spaces guidelines – i.e. promote the spirit of understanding and to provide a space to have young artists of colour express their support for the BLM and BIPOC movements. The unexpected inclusion of the ACAB acronym did not adhere or advance those guidelines.
b. If this were NOT a publicly funded work of art, and was instead a work of art displayed on private property or exhibit, then I could defend allowing the ACAB acronym as part of an artists' right to express freely his or her views and experiences regarding police.

I note that the African Heritage Association of Vancouver Island said in a recent media release that "it cannot condone the appearance in the mural of the acronym ACAB, which is commonly held to mean "All Cops Are Bastards" or "All Cops Are Bad... While we stand behind the 'More Justice, More Peace' sentiment we do not condone the offensive ACAB acronym," it said in a statement.

This incident is an opportunity to continue valuable conversations with our BIPOC communities and the BLM movement regarding how our police departments are structured, and how we can eliminate bias and racism while at the same time fostering positive and meaningful community-police relationships.

Steven Baileys

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SIKH YOUTH OF VICTORIA

SIKH YOUTH OF VICT... · 2020-09-23

With the current rhetoric concerning the police, we support the activism surrounding 'No Justice, No Peace', but reject offensive acronyms such as ACAB, which we feel take away from the core issue of police reform.

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

جمعية مسلمي بريتش كلمبيا

The B.C. Muslim Association

VICTORIA BRANCH

Charlayne Thornton-Joe
City Hall
1 Centennial Square
V8W 1P6
October 14th, 2020

Dear Madam Mayor Helps and Council Members

As the Imam of Masjid Al Iman in Victoria, I want to share my concern with aspects of the Art Mural in Bastion Square and reaffirm my support to addressing racism and police brutality in Victoria.

Islam is committed to justice and peace, these values are important to our community and we fully supprt efforts to transform our city into a more equitable, just and safe space. We recognise that many residents, including members of the Muslim community experience ongoing violence from the police including harrassemnt, profiling and brutality, based on religion, race or other identities, across Canada. This is a problem that we need to acknowledge and collectively work to address. We also acknowledge the continuous effort by local police and the positive engagement that is happening throughout our many communities.

In light of this, I would urge the City to consider engaging with the artists who created the ACAB part of the mural in Bastion Square. As a racialised migrant and community leader, I believe that allowing the acronym to remain is detrimental to the overall cause of anti-racism. It allows the opinion of one artist to overshadow the collective and transformative work done by many activists and artists under the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Our attention, resources and efforts need to focus on anti racism; transforming our public institutions, including the police, and public spaces, to be safe for Indidenous and Black people and people of colour. Instead by allowing the acronym to remain, a small piece of this work is dominating the public discourse, causing division within our communities, and derailing efforts at building a more just and inclusive city.

2218 Quadra Street • Victoria • British Columbia • V8T 4C6 • CANADA

[redacted]

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

جمعية مسلمي بريتش كلمبيا

The B.C. Muslim Association

Victoria Branch

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the hard work of those dedicated police officers, men and women, who serve our communities. We, the Muslim community, have seen first hand, the dedication of Chief Constable Del Manak amongst many, many others who strive to do their best daily. This, I strongly believe should not go unnoticed.

At the same time I would like to encourage the City to create a platform for the artists and the public to engage fulsomely on anti-racism and police brutality. The sentiments behind the acronym need to be heard, and I hope that the City provides resources for this to occur, our Masjid remains ready to work with you as needed.

Sincerely
Imam Ismail Mohamed Nur

2218 Quadra Street • Victoria • British Columbia • V8T 4C6 • CANADA

[redacted]

Amanda Ferguson

From: Charlayne Thornton-Joe (Councillor)
Sent: October 15, 2020 10:49 AM
To: Chris Coates
Subject: Fwd: Mural

Chief Manak,

I am sorry to hear about the Bastion Street painting with the acronym referring to all police as bastards. This is horrible and embarrassing, and it is unfortunate that it is still there. I don't know how you or your team work in these conditions.

Please know that you have my support. Through this time of unrest I hope you have support for your emotional, mental and spiritual health because it has been an ongoing assault on all police in North America, which is ironic to paint all police with the same brush - the very thing BLM doesn't want done to blacks, and Indigenous to Indigenous ....

Sincerely,

Fran Hunt-Jinnouchi