



### **Lucien Lombardo-**

I'm speaking to you because the words of one member of this legislature are trying to undo or at least make more difficult the work of making Cayuga County and Auburn a fair and more peaceful place. Mere words do that by reinforcing prejudice, historical stereotypes, and images, humiliating groups of people, attempting to prevent the empowerment of marginalized people appealing to a past that level was been ignoring the reality of their test and its manifestations in the present also pity gives the people. against one of them not supporting it but finally black and brown people's inherent human dignity such words as were written are Mr. Dennison and to the social tax the city of the world that we are in particularly dislike this representative after the social toxicity of the world we as adults in our community create for our children our kind of father in Cuba County seven years ago when I retired in only years in Virginia before I went to worked as a teacher in Auburn Correctional Facility in the late s and the early s in of all places in president I learned the importance of working hard to understand people in circumstances that were different for life how was he young winters in the small County Central New York and my students were primarily black and Hispanic and young middle-aged from New York Center cities or as we call the Vic done together if I were going to be an effective teacher I needed to understand the world from which my students came from to my learning was the importance of respecting the experience of the men I taught not calling the names that resorting to stereotypes not believing the stereotype is a medium understanding that complaint trying to find ways of empowering them in an institution in the world so often structured to disempower and humiliate them because of generation that distant from my perspective that's meant supporting not violating their human dignity this meant using to my privilege in power it helped empower them before I could teach and I regulated to them as people when that returns to Auburn after years I was amazed to attend the symposium on carrion company that the community couplers houses between because I founded the first protonating at the Auburn Public Theater I got involved with the sound right the first Harriet Tubman sense of justice and peace the southern if you'd been in Frank tree prejudice has provided programs for the permanent Museum I started our birding community to Cayuga County were proactively working to educate themselves to recognize the does support citizens.

### **Brian Muldrow -**

I didn't so I'll just tell you how those comments we made and it is this gentleman maybe statement what was alarming to me was he felt that the progress he had is on its own really Albarn was nationally recognized driven peaceful protest and didn't dawn on him that we could we're not there's probably other people protests that were happening as well and he ignored that he spewed the heat that makes us feel as if there's got to be more conversation with the right people and it also made me look at my legislative body and want to hold them accountable for his actions because your scientists is strong so if you're not you're not if you're not opposing his comment then basically I believe that you believe in those comments and all this work and all these chunks we've had them to see in the mirror in the police department Sheriff getting their time to try to learn we are legislating by make a comment and that's how I felt the other part of it maybe research who I was talking about like this gentleman I've researched him in this is if he's willing to say just being under a political forum he's willing to sit was he saying behind closed doors and I think many of you that know him personally know the man he is this is not like a this is not like somebody went broke its full you don't cook a lot of content but if you guys have been on it on this these boards in these committees and this legislating finding humor side by side over it if you know that and you're quiet you know actually more shame on you because not only would you lose my respect lots of way more.

### **Dia Carabajal -**

The problem with power is how to achieve its responsible use rather than its irresponsible and indulgent use of how to get men enough power to live for the public rather than live off the public these are the words of Robert Kennedy and they fit our moment it is not the question of whether or not legislature Denison's remarks were racist they work it is not a question of whether his letting letter was incendiary and hateful it was it is not a question of whether or not his penned thoughts were ignorant and misinformed they were it is a question of what actions are we going to take to address an irresponsible and indulgent man of power when an elected officer speaks to any issues they can never take off their city council hat or their Board of Education hat or their Assemblyman hat their words and actions will great power and authority and when they are a member of a legislative body they speak with the authority of that entire body when an elected official speaks or writes a letter to the editor without explicitly stating that it is their own opinion is assumed that they do speak for the entire legislative body it's a huge responsibility and one that should never be flaunted disrespected or abused are the hateful words that Mr. Dennison placed in our local newspaper the words of the entire body think about it because therein lies Mr. Denison's transgression the betrayal of the trust of this legislature and the people of Cayuga County that is where we need to encourage responsible use of authority and curb that faith that his deliberate words have conjured the County is the home and final resting place of Harriet Tubman her statue was placed in front of the Equal Rights Heritage Center to guide our way we are challenged to walk in her life every day it is an awesome responsibility and we may fall short but we cannot simply stand in front of her statue for a photo op we must ride your social dust justice in her memory we must try to stamp out the fire that's just systemic racism in our country and in our County we need to address and act in the moment of this letter I ask that all elected officials and the Cayuga County Legislature undergo diversity training I asked for the legislature to disavow legislator Denison's remarks and I asked for his resignation as he no longer holds the public trust not here not in Harriet's hometown.

### **Rhoda Overstreet-Wilson-**

I am a lifelong resident of Auburn thank you for your time to see me when someone shows you who they are believe them the first time my henchman Andy Dennison's editorial comments were racially tone-deaf and decisive in nature divisive in nature he chose to use his platform as a tuba county legislature to become a protagonist or the alt-right soundbites and debunk discriminatory statistical jargon because he could he was operating with intense white privilege he felt no fear or int when he so eloquently recited his non substantiated coast ladies race racist rhetoric and then went on to defend it with a second letter when it was obviously clear that the

citizens of Cayuga County found it to be offensive and demanded action ignorance elaborate ecology is the most ferocious enemy justice can have Jane follows Andrew Johnson has positioned himself through his words and deeds to be an enemy to social justice and that place is my family and all other black and brown people in Q economy in harm's way citizens please hear me this body here is here to advocate for you but you all need to know silence is a permission given any real change requires a deep understanding that what we all know to be normal we'll end this moment demands leadership that is resolved and have the courage to act when it is not popular but it is the right thing to do can you economy legislation what will be your leadership legacy thank you.

### **Nina Wickett-**

#### **Gives her time to next speaker Amanda Pelletier**

### **Amanda Pelletier -**

I am a homeschooling instructor and during my ninth year of teaching I'm also a coordinator at the Auburn Hunger task force soup kitchen where our vision statement is to seek to provide sustenance community and dignity to individuals and families suffering from food insecurity in and around the City of Oakland protecting human dignity should be a mission for all public servants it is the duty of each member of the Cayuga County legislature to ensure that you are protecting human dignity in all forms through utilizing your position and your bullets well I'm talking videos on his phone it is also your personal duty to protect your peers when another member of the legislature shows an inadequate sense of empathy for others who see basic human rights and root Denison's letter to the citizen with a callous and out-of-touch tirade against a black lives matter movement he used the phrase black on black violence with an intention to undermine the movement this is the non-term it does not exist violence against another individual is simply called the violence and it is dealt with accordingly by our justice system but Denison's use of this phrase is intended to turn people of color into a lump conglomerate a group of others to be feared hated and reprimanded although he claimed is not to be racist this is a racial tactic I hope that Andrew Denison would learn from the strong public reaction to his words and that he will choose to take responsibility for the mistake he has made I tell my students that everyone makes mistakes learning comes from making mistakes but it's how we react to our own mistakes that shows our character and our flexibility to learn two weeks ago my year old son Patrick read an article in the citizen to which a passionate response he drafted a letter to the editor which included some excellent points but in his emotional state and being he used the term stupid when referring him to a certain group restricting addresses nope well we ran over his first draft together we discussed the importance of clarifying onwards through expressive vocabulary and strong writing skills without resorting to name calling I wish Mr. Dennison had been present for the lesson. Mr. Dennison island drafts to the citizen was full of exclamation points structured as a non-professional ramp and repeatedly of protestors and supporters of the movement idiots Mr. Dennison is not years old and I expect more from our legislators and from my own students the immaturity insensitivity and unprofessionalism of this letter was all the imagery insensitivity was all the more Dennison is the county legislator representative of district that nine indicates an intended failure from all of us here today hiya failed in all voting residents of the City of Auburn have failed by electing an individual to the legislature the disasters an underdeveloped sense of social justice and respect for human dignity I'm calling for Mr. Dennison's resignation from a human County Legislature and I invite you to join me in doing the same his words and language have been unprofessional on becoming a reoffer many people came out today to discuss a new Johnson's words like food dress my next to my videos you are next the community is watching you in this moment everyone in the city saw how you conduct your campaign against when have you and your wife knocked on the our doors and refer to her as a pet oh yeah the light racism is sometimes hard to recognize in the moment but your work stuck in my mind and made me and many of my neighbors extremely uncomfortable a few brief words gave us a window into something we did not expect to see that color gala the name her name is Gwen Webber-McLeod as are from Andrew Dennison's mistake she's going to be sitting in her suit.

### **Melody Johnson -**

I came tonight to add my voice and there are certainly those here who are more knowledgeable than me who could probably speak more eloquently than I can they can speak from a place of greater roots in this city in this community and this county yet as a transplant from New York City a property owned and Auburn and a business woman in Cayuga County a tax pay socially active politically aware Newby to your time I find myself standing here and asking for you I see my mom and my god taught me that I'm to make good use of my time so I respectfully ask for each of yours both your ears your heart your authority your mindset I'd like to ask each of you to very simple questions and I'd like to offer two very simple answers in fact I'd like to quote Mr. Dennison's amazingly racist blatantly divisive and dishonorable letter to the citizen he asks how most of these idiots don't even know anything about the statute they're tearing down and should we try and erase the past or learn from it I also ask you where's our lesson officials and all of us are they going to just stand by and watch our County be destroyed he raised these questions and in the spirit of the shed blood of my enslaved ancestors and in the stolen breath of my murdered brothers and sisters this country I'd like to offer you these answers one you the ostrich body of the legislature of Cuba County have taken an oath and by definition it is your responsibility as an elected body that you're responsible for the public health and the public safety of those who whom have voted you in you are also to provide efficient and effective reliable resources to enhance the health and safety and the quality of lives in the county how do you do that when you are singing you've locked arms and sat in chambers with a blatant racist know that that's to begin so I say to you and I demand remove him from every position that get from the power to incite the vice intense emboldened hate and so if you racist them pull off you show up and vote right thank you you're welcome.

### **Eli Hernandez**

Good evening my name is Eli Hernandez I am the president of the NAACP. I could stand here today and talk to you about everything my brothers and sisters have come up and talk to you power ready or not I'm not going to call them a racist I'm not going to sing

misguided I'm not going to call Mr. Dennison loud never fun I'm not going to do that I must stand here right now and then I'm going to say to you where your colleagues are saying Republican Assemblyman Gary Finch first one to step up to the plate and say he should be signed we can do this without him number one number two New York State Senator Rachel Maine stands up and says we can do it without him he should be signed th district congressional candidate Dana Balter responds candidate for the New York State seven of if Scott come Eddie's tells him to be sign rowdy missile not only promises and tells us to for him to resign but says I am willing and ready to take over because I live in the same district but yet today was when I first got information from the Democratic caucus here denouncing his acts Mr. Lattimore I've seen you so many times at the freedom fund banquet for the NAACP you talk about beating our black homes being in the kitchen in the kitchen I expected you I expected you to stand up and say this is wrong if anyone in here I expected you still not too late the air cargo home candidate from the district Assembly District stepped up and responded to this Joe Driscoll Center cues fifth district councilor responded Joe Holland Joseph Hollin former commissioner of housing for governor Pataki responded today Jimmy GMT no city councilor Deborah McCormick's city councilor Germany New York State Senate candidate and now the Democratic caucus what is the rest of you the message that you have given our children is that you allowed any elected official to say what they want to say and do what they want to do is that when you're going to stand for you see I also uh no politician thank you I sit in this blue corner I get the politics I get what we need to do but when you have someone call black folks idiots call their own people that elected them names you can stop and I'll stop you sir then you have to take action because I take action I will take action SP my granddaddy's I expect you to take action that's who you are I sent you all I mean I said it's time for you to do two things stand up individually and stand up together as a legislature wrists away.

### **Joseph Leogrande**

I'm on the Human Rights Commission for the City of Auburn we hear complaints from many people all year long and we deal with that that the police businesses you may think gamma the complaints that we did to try to mediate and we do a lot of good work I was a school board member for six years so I'm not going to do to politics or anything related to the social makeup of this town to Korean children luckily they graduated from the high school and are now doing very well outside the area because they couldn't do anything in this town I want to thank you for inviting me here tonight Heidi each of each legislator swears an oath of office with the County Judge administering the middle I saw a picture of Mr. Dennison was hand up with Judge Benjamin Sue Dwyer he did the oath of office I received the copy of the oath of office for the queue the county clerk's office today he had to sign it you must have had to go signing both books on place too so he swore an oath and signed his name to it you know wall swap every one of the legislators here sworn to support the Constitution of the United States and also the New York State Constitution the US Constitution a New York Constitution is colorblind since the concept of race does not exist in either of them then it was the constitutional amendments for many more things and voting rights for everyone including blacks and women the <sup>th</sup> amendment also gave equal right to protection under the laws everybody a county Ethics Board of this committee in this county and this legislature should be new ethics violations of their own colleagues as in the New York state constitution a removal of sanctions of an elected official could be done by the governor of New York State who has that power I was told you can't censure him you can't ask them to resign but Andrew Dennison could certainly be removed by the governor I wrote to the governor four times now I'm still waiting for a response they asked him to guess Mr. Dennison to be kicked out I think there has been a legislature among our ranks the inter Dennison was violated the US and New York constitutions and ethics I ask that you meet either in public this legislative body or an executive session and discuss and decide what to do with this Mr. Dennison who is violated more than board ethics that you are elected to old thank you thank you.

### **David Tobin**

Thank you for this opportunity to speak. I am a former resident and tax payer of Cayuga County and I'm deeply troubled by the toxic nature of Mr. Dennison spews. While this legislative body doesn't directly represent me at present it reflects me particularly in the centuries-old always membership the spotlight is on you. What will you do this moment of historic reckoning taking place in so many communities across the United States provides an opportunity for the Cuban Communist later here in this chosen home and resting place of Harriet Tubman to stand tall and lead your action would speak volumes if you took strong taxes it would speak volumes you could lead in New York you can set an example in the country by formally denouncing Mr. Dennison's statement and the centuries of cultural and institutional racism that it springs from. I encourage you as a legislative body to help change the course of this nation's history which is happening not all around us to join the voices of millions of protesters around the world and to pass a resolution supporting black lives matter the statement would acknowledge the racist experience of black people in these United States which continues to this day such a statement would acknowledge the year history of oppression the blacks have endured on this continent from slavery to lynching's to church burnings to church slaughter just three years ago to economic and housing discrimination to extrajudicial killings to cultivated fear of whites and the overreaction of police at this historic juncture I hope you're better angels inspire you to take a bold stance for the good of Cuba County and these United States and pass a resolution stating the black lives matter.

### **William Berry**

At critical times usually not expected every community faces it watershed moment this dilemma is not predicted nor planned but undercurrent always defines and crystallizes what a community stands for what a community believes it what a community values and how it articulates a human dignity for all members for that community Cuba County and this elected a legislative body now have a watershed moment trust upon you through the form of one of your own members as we approach the conflicting thinking and what July 4<sup>th</sup> means particularly in time enough health and racial pandemics as elected officials you need to understand and analyze and fully embrace the contributions made by a race of people who look like me you need to understand and be knowledge about the historical legacy of people who look like me people who were systematically denied basic American right we are a people who will

for us to contribute to well fan privilege and protections of your ancestors you and your family's pursuit of life liberty, freedom, and happiness. Now the other member of this legislative body who has squandered in the base deliberating spirit of Jingting as well as the Saturday's Independence Da legislatures you can change that the round negativity and send a strong sniffle to all residents with this body will not tolerate condone or embrace your silence in action or less than possible condemnation from your colleague will also send a strong signal to this community especially people who love the actions of one of your members who are now mind and have you decide between ugly and derisive words by accommodating publicly stated is our cake racist ideas or image of duty to represent the best interest host aspirations of anyone who calls TV county college do not get caught up in this reputation of free speech hateful words whether spoken of put invited by any Cayuga County legislature as the explicit purpose to denigrate demoralize and demonize an entire segment of comedians residents based on their race that behavior cannot stand your car because not position this legislative body to take significant action and impose long-standing consequences as an elected official each of you are held to a higher standard your constituents perform due respect painting of the business just remember respect is not a one-way street conduct by your county that is undeniable painful can never be legitimized or accepted by any other elected official who is privileged to sit in a seat in this painting you colleague has embarrassed this body and now compels he to view they come to grips with how do you want to see this County progressed just know a public or private apology is no longer be nothing and now Asif I have been be rejected now you must determine how you want to walk to resolve your watershed moment I trust you will not abandon but it's best for your family your neighbors and embrace the expanding spirit of equally for all residents and the tenants of anti-racist behavior that is beginning to permeate every area of pubic county this watershed is the moment for your profile and courage and commitment it to the best interest of the entire community.

### **Deborah Berlotti**

I appreciate the opportunity to speak I sent him to read the letter that I sent to all the legislators on Sunday as a citizen of Puget County I wanted to express to each of you my agreement with the Auburn NAACP condemnation of legislature Denison's recent letter to the editor of the citizen and joining them in calling for his resignation as his fellow legislators I asked me to publicly condemn the racist and divisive views presented in the letter and do whatever is in your power as legislators to remove or censure legislator Dennison at a time in our community and our country are trying to come together across the racial divide when police and black lives matter activists are marching together including the earing pubic attic when there is a groundswell of support across racial lines to dismantle the systemic racism that has continued to oppress people of color for four hundred years at such a time as this legislator Denison chooses to promote a tradition he displays a complete lack of understanding of ongoing systemic racism and our country's long history of racism and his language and tone are not befitting of someone holding public office as community we are trying to move forward to heal division and to promote antiracism and diversity initiatives legislator Dennison seeks to thrust these efforts the very equity should be endorsing and supporting as an elected official by holding such racist and uninformed views and flaunting them publicly he is hurting rather than helping the people he is elected to serve for laws of the citizens and you have sworn to serve I ask you to please denounce legislator Denison's remarks and do what is in your power to rectify the damage he has done and I will just add I didn't have in my original letter that if Mississippi can remove the Confederate flag I think you can County should be able to remove a racist legislator.

### **Zack Ford**

I had to come tonight and demand Dennison's resignation because ironically enough the day before he published that racist letter I had on published a letter in the Auburn Citizen called an apology to Harriet Tubman's of hometown. As you may know I'm running for Mayor of Skaneateles next year. In the letter I had apologized for a lot of the racist, homophobic, and unconstitutional things that our officials there have been doing. I just wanted to stand with you all against racism and in the hopes that you'll return the favor and come out to Skaneateles. The mayor of Skaneateles tried to arrest me for speaking like this in a public meeting last year, so thank you for letting people speak and participate in government. I do demand this guy's resignation. Someone was gracious enough to say we make mistakes, but this letter was not a mistake. Brushing your teeth and sipping some orange juice is a mistake, but writing a racist letter during the biggest civil rights movement in the history of the world and doubling down on it is not a mistake, it is racism. You guys really need to speak up, I know you are, but make sure you guys do everything you can.

### **David Connelly**

I really want to talk to Mr. Dennison and I suppose I wish you were here and maybe you'll hear this. I think he and I have quite a bit in common. I was raised in a Republican family and just before I got to college I was a card-carrying member of the John Birch Society. There was certainly a racist tinge to my family. I was president of the young Republicans in my college my first couple years. I've had quite an experience going from there to where I am now. I think I'm probably older to you Mr. Dennison, but maybe not by much. I think I know something about where you are feeling and where you are coming from. I was the editor of the paper for about eight years and didn't think of myself as racist. I worked very hard, I thought, to try to be unbiased about this. At one point I was opening the citizen up to letters from racist, not because I've agreed with them, but because of free speech. Gwen Webber-McLeod and we were on a panel together and she told me that words hurt. The reason no one was responding to the racist letters was because they hurt too much. My idealism started to crumble. I begin to hear actually what people of color were experiencing and what they were experiencing was rage. Mr. Dennison, your letter is angry and I get that, but I don't understand why it's angry. I know that a person of color going up to Cato may have a concern. I have a friend about 20 years ago when cell phones were the size of a brick and he told me that he would not ever go out into any place into a rural area without his brick because he's a black man. I do not think, Mr. Dennison, you understand what rage is about. The experience of people of color every day is a different experience of you. I can go

day after day, month after month, and get the respect of people who treat me with human dignity every day. If you're not surprised by what is happening here and what's happening over the country you just don't understand rage.

### **Gwen Webber-McLeod**

Since 1793, African-Americans have contributed to the well-being and the richness of Cayuga County. The first African-American woman to come to the Cayuga County arrived here in 1793. Her name is Kate Freeman, we do not honor her, we do not talk about her, but if you learn her story you will learn that when she was released from her indentured servitude she became one of the finest citizens this community has ever known. She and her husband bought lots of property in this area and they became taxpaying citizen of Cayuga County. They created opportunity for generations of young black Americans right here in Cayuga County to make a difference. I'm standing here on her legacy today. I'm the President and CEO of Gwen Inc., a Cayuga County resident, a black taxpayer, own a corporation in this community, a former political candidate, wife, mother and a grandmother. As I reflect on this moment it is no accident that I'm standing here before you this evening to make these remarks. You see exactly one year ago about this time I was sitting right over there with then legislative candidate Tricia Kerr. We were observing a meeting, a formal meeting of the Cayuga County Legislature in a quest to better understand what our jobs would be like should we both be elected. The topic of that meeting as presented by what legislature Foley was whether or not the county should increase contact with minority organizations to improve diversity in the county workforce. As soon as Legislator Foley offered up that resolution I hear this and I quote, "African-Americans are a very small percentage of people in our county. Why should we invest our resources and giving those people jobs? If those people want the job they should come to us and get them. And by the way, why would we do this? Just to pat ourselves on the back to say we hired a bunch of unqualified minorities." These words fell out of the mouth with ease in front of me and in front of some of you from a County Legislator his name Andrew Dennison. To be honest I was so shocked I did not quite know what to do, so I sat and I observed. Immediately a number of other legislators, some who are in this room, cosigned that comment and there was an Atta boy attitude in the room. Until a few legislators who are also in this room spoke up and offered alternatives to his blatant racist comments. What struck me most was how comfortable a majority of the legislature was that evening. To be honest there is not much more to know about legislator Dennison. In fact I'm not here to say a word to him. His own words speak volumes to me and my family, so here's my observation of his own words and actions based on his own words, letters to the editor, and recorded statements in the media there is a track record of his opinion and based on the documentation legislator Dennison is a blatant racist. I'm equally of the opinion that everyone in political position in our county knows it. He seems to like being racist, he benefits from his racism, he leverages his racism to achieve political outcomes for this party. We know legislator Dennison is not going to change. He is consistent in this perspective. Just read his most recent article in the Citizen an article written by Robert Harding one of the most respected political reporters in New York State for further confirmation. He doubles down with his racist commentary. Given this I'm standing here tonight to press those around him to manage your racist colleague and we need to press you, we need to impress upon you, if you don't deal with him directly you are enabling his hate. This will be what I remember about him and this will be what I remember about you. I want to thank all of the politicians that Eli has listed who have come out publicly against his racism today. I want to thank retiring Assemblyman Gary Finch for coming out bold and decisively against a member of his own party. I know how risky that is for him. This was a brave and bold move by a politician who gets it. This is with what I need you to do. I expect you to do the right thing and to me you all must answer this fundamental question. How will we deal with a colleague and his internal and external supporters who use tax dollars, my black tax dollars, to enact hate on black citizens of Cayuga County? What you do or don't do about his racism will be the hallmark of your legacy of leadership in Cayuga County, point-blank period. Do the right thing, my grandsons are counting on you. What you do next really matters. Call for the resignation of legislator Dennison to resign, there are no accidents.

### **Anne Napper**

I was not born or raised in Cayuga County. I have only been living in the area a little over three years. My career brought me to this county and to this community. As a member of this community I sometimes feel like an outsider looking in. However, I've met some and befriended some people in the area that have embraced me within this community. In reading the letter from Dennison there's one sentence that struck me which was the first sentence. If you hear a sentence that starts with the words I am not racist but, it is nearly always followed by some affirmation which is quite bigoted prejudice or racist. It is hurtful to us African-Americans living in the community. It's easy to site the obvious racism, such as using race based slurs or threats, but there is a more subtle insidious form of racist stereotyping. The statement was derogatory, hostile and it delivers negative racial messages. Three things that stood out was the use of the word idiots, assuming we do not care about the violence that plagues our community, and stating none of us were here two hundred-three hundred years ago is being dismissive to who we are as black individuals. We want you to understand our experiences. We want you to take the time in the effort to see the world as we do. We want to be seen as a whole person and not stereotyped. We want you to know how being a black American can be both a source of pride and pain. Reading those words again were hurtful, it lacked sensitivity, and it just speaks to his ignorance. Because the majority of that statement was on based on opinion and falsehood. There was zero facts in that statement and being a voice of a black American in Cayuga County will ask for his resignation.

### **Ronald Chebiniak**

This may be something you do not want to hear, but everyone is entitled to their opinion. I have known Andrew Dennison for the better part of 30 years. During his past four years as a member of the Cayuga County Legislature he has always brought a fresh perspective to the legislature with his insight, integrity, and conservative view. He is always questioning the way things are done, always looking out for the cost, and how it will effect taxpayers in the end. Cayuga County residents would be hard-pressed to find a more dedicated, committed, and concerned legislator than Andrew Dennison. In the past four years I have read many articles and by Andrew Dennison, over 20 to be exact. Dennison's articles are meant to provide thought and discussion as his letter on protest did. I

personally know Andrew Dennison is not a hateful person, definitely not prejudice, or racist. Are we going to throw Andrew to the wolves over one misunderstood letter out of 22?

### **Carmela Barbagallo-**

I was going to say that I agreed with all the prior speakers until the last speaker. Mr. Dennison's words offended me so very much. The most offensive of his barely coherent thoughts was a statement that racism is a two-way street. At a time when our nation and community are hurting so much by the effects and outcomes of systemic racism Mr. Dennison has chosen to further divide his constituents and fuel the fire, so to speak. He claims that he is not a racist. I would say at the very least he does not possess the ability to understand issues faced by black and other minority residents and his correspondence with me this week via email proves that he has no interest in learning about these issue. I also forwarded that email to the legislators here and added some comments. If you're in a position of leadership in this county or in a company and haven't come to terms with your own intrinsic bias and taken time to learn about what's going on in our nation when it comes to systemic racism you are asleep at the wheel. I am a foster mother in this community and a mother to an African-American boy. I feel that there are so many individuals living here that needs true leadership. They need someone that's thoughtful, caring, understanding, and frankly not a bigot. Someone to tackle community issues, not someone to write rambling letters that include hate speech or ranting that people are idiots. If Mr. Dennison didn't intend those remarks for the residents of Cayuga County then why did he share these thoughts with our local newspaper? He kind of alluded to that and his letter to me that he didn't intend it for the locals. I would think that this would be absolutely unacceptable to some of you sitting here in this room tonight and that it would be considered conduct unbecoming of a Cayuga County leader and representative. Throughout the last few months I've had conversations with friends and family and discovered that we are all very much in a different place in navigating racial relations and have different viewpoints on the lack of equality faced by many Americans. The overall state of affairs has been very disheartening to me. That being said Mr. Dennison is in a role of leadership, he should be much more evolved. As I said to him directly via email he does not represent my ideals. This type of hate speech fuels an already existing racism boiling underneath the surface. As we've seen in our nation as race racist feel emboldened they take glides. We have children and a adults to protect in our county, not only shall we be fighting for them to feel safe and protected where they live and pay taxes. We should be committing to help their lives flourish. Cayuga County leadership should take a look at the lack of diversity in public offices here and then invest in diversifying Cayuga County. I hereby commit my time on a volunteer basis to do so. I hope to see each of you commit to evaluating your own understanding of the needs of all of Cayuga County residents and making time in your schedule to create change and opportunity. We brag about this being history's hometown and cherish the accomplishments of Harriet Tubman and I think that it is time to create advances in our community. You hear the calling here tonight. I ask each of you how you can help. Will you start by denouncing the words and actions of Mr. Dennison? Lastly, if the topic racism, social justice, and equality are intimidating to you and if you don't know where to start to help out and create change know that there are many residents here to guide you. I hope that you've attended a recent peaceful protest or the meeting that occurred downtown this past Saturday. If you think the majority of your constituents are white and aren't concerned with these issues I challenge you to think again. Your involvement in these movements can actually encourage Cayuga County residents to become more involved. What a great thing that would be, don't you think?

### **Karen Foos -**

I am a teacher for the Auburn district and a parent of two biracial children. My daughter spoke this weekend about the experiences she has had growing up in Auburn. It's hurtful that at this time in our nation that our children are still having to suffer from the effects of racism and nothing that she has done except for being born into this town. My feeling was when I was reading Mr. Dennison's letter is that he is so much like so many of the people that I know, friends of mine who I've had the had to have these difficult conversations with. And the words that he was speaking shows that he's uneducated and uninformed about race issues in our community and our nation. I was disgusted by the things that he said as a leader of our community, no leader of our community should be speaking in such a divisive tone. What I had said in my letter to the legislators this week is all of our elected officials should serve and respect all of the citizens that they represent, they should stand on the side of justice to do the work to bring systemic change when our nation is in a time of political and racial divisiveness. We should have representatives to represent our community to show that we are trying to bring unity not divisive. Legislature Denison chose to promote hate and disunity by a few of his statements, "black lives matter only when a black person is killed by a white cop" and by stating that "racism is a two-way street" and mentioning black on black crime. It shows to me that he is not taking the time to learn about the race issues in America and in our community. Most importantly we are serving our community and he needs to be looking at our community on what he could do to bring unity. Sadly, Mr. Dennison's views he is not alone in them. There was a lot of people in the community that feel this way. I have conversations with my friends on a daily basis who say they don't want to talk about race anymore. And I say it's not an option to stop anymore, so this is city officials, nurses, teachers that are my friends that I am telling you cannot stop the conversation. This is the time when the conversations need to start. Mr. Dennison needs to be listening. I'm not going to call him a racist. I'm going to say he's uneducated and in the issues of race. I ask all of you as leaders of our community to take a stand against racism. Mr. Dennison does not understand the black lives matter movement and I will reiterate what some of the other people have said is that these silence of many of you is speaking volumes to us who believe that black lives do matter and we would like to see systemic change starting in our community.

### **Tricia Kerr- statement**

I have had numerous calls and messages from friends, families, colleagues, and strangers who are now my friends who have reached out to express sadness and outrage surrounding legislator Dennison's editorial and follow-up commentary. I share their concerns, continued failure by legislator Dennison to acknowledge the impact of his words regardless of his right to speak them or to show any

care for the pain and anger they have caused across our community is unacceptable. It is possible to support law enforcement without devaluating the black lives matter movement, these are not mutually exclusive. Legislator Dennison's words are reprehensible and have damaged progress made by the Cayuga County Sheriff's Office, Civil Service Commission, and Human Resources to build bridges and develop meaningful relationships with people of color in Cayuga County. They are counterproductive to the county's overall growth and prosperity. We need a strong Chair of Judicial and Public Safety that understands the issues and the amazing and exciting social justice movement that's coming through our community and across our country. I call on you Chairwoman Aileen McNabb-Coleman to remove Legislator Dennison from his position of Chair of Judicial and Public Safety.

**Keith Batman – statement (Attached)**

I appreciate all the words for people that have come out to speak today and those that remain be it to be heard, so thank you all for coming. Thank you for all the emails we've gotten, the phone calls, the texts, it is why we are in office to listen. George Floyd gave his life and a movements has been reinvigorated. Perhaps Mr. Dennison actions can reaffirm our commitment to social justice in our community and as Dr. Berry said our watershed moment, so with that I want to read a statement (attached).

**Paul Pinckney – statement**

Our minority caucus of the Cayuga County Legislature do not condone the language or message made my Andrew Dennison in his letter to the editor. In a time where our caucus, Cayuga County Legislature as a whole, and all Cayuga County public servants have been working hard to bring people together this sort of action sets our community back significantly. Although every American is afforded the right to freedom of speech, it is also the right of the community to demand better from our elected officials as our caucus does of our colleagues. We encourage Mr. Dennison and every elected official to do better and work hard to build the trust with our community.

**10 minutes recess**

**Motion by Nightengale to go into executive session at 7:47PM, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Foley, all in favor.**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION: re Employment history of a particular person**

**Motion by Pinckney to adjourn at 9:45PM, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Foley, all in favor.**

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 30, 2020

We, the undersigned members of the Cayuga County Legislature, do not and will not condone racism or bigotry of any kind. Legislator Andrew Dennison's recent comments are destructive to the county, while being both unprofessional and reprehensible. We must acknowledge the pain and outrage caused by his recent letter to the editor of the Auburn Citizen. His words have further marginalize people of color and do not reflect the peaceful and powerful movement underway in our county to drive social change.

Our citizens rightfully hold elected officials to a higher standard as our words and actions not only reflect our own views but have the potential to influence public policy and laws. This power comes with great responsibility and must be used sensibly and for the benefit of all citizens we represent. To that end, we are working with local civil rights leaders on a series of measures to effect long-term institutional change in Cayuga County government as we work toward a culture of greater diversity and inclusion.

In his letter to the editor, Legislator Dennison asked us and other elected officials to take a stand and we are. We choose to stand for inclusion, for communication, for unifying our community in our fight against hate and racism. And in doing so, we cannot stand for Mr. Dennison's words. While we cannot remove an elected official from office (this is the law not local policy) we call upon our Chair Aileen McNabb-Coleman to remove Mr. Dennison from his position as Chair of the Judicial and Public Safety Committee. We also call on Mr. Dennison to reflect on the impact of his continuing service on the Cayuga County Legislature and how that service no longer serves the common welfare of our County.

With this statement and action, we reaffirm our commitment as Legislators to working toward meaningful change for people of color in Cayuga County.

Keith Batman, District 7  
Elane Daly, District 11  
Ryan Foley, District 15  
Tricia Kerr, District 12  
Aileen McNabb-Coleman, District 6  
Heidi Nightengale, District 10  
Ben Vitale, District 3