

## Black Lives Matter

Good Evening. My name is Julie Morris. I live in Kasson Township and I am running for Leelanau County Commissioner in District 7, Kasson and Solon Townships.

I have struggled for the last week about how to respond to the racism displayed by elected officials on the Leelanau County Commission and the County Road Commission. I am appalled by the comments made by the four Commissioners. I could define racism, social justice and equity and write a dissertation about each of them but I suspect my words would fall on deaf ears.

I am going to take a different tack tonight. I am going to borrow one of Michelle Obama's themes in her speech to the Democratic National Convention. I am going to speak about empathy. Empathy is being able to see something from another's point of view.

I taught for 25 years in two urban school districts, the Kansas City Missouri Public Schools and the Milwaukee Public Schools. My students were primarily people of color. I have watched and grieved as my students, their families and our shared community endured systemic racism. I have watched as my friends and colleagues were stopped by police officers for driving or walking while Black. I have a student whose father was killed while in police custody. It has been ten years since her dad died. I can still see her dad at our school waiting to pick up her little brother from school. She grieves to this day and I grieve for her. I wish that I could fix her sorrow but I cannot.

What I can do is speak up as a person who is well aware of her own white privilege. If you do not know that racism is rampant in our country, then you have not been paying attention. I cannot and will not let elected officials in our county spew racism without speaking up.

Leelanau County is a community. Our community members include among others, Black, Hispanic and Native American members. I think our community is as appalled at these Commissioner's comments as I am. The racism of some Commissioners does not represent how the majority of us feel. I, for one, would like to have a more racially and ethnically diverse community in Leelanau County.

I have two suggestions for our Commissioners:

First, I suggest that you invite Northern Michigan E3 to speak before this board. Secondly, I suggest that Commissioners attend "Understanding Racial Justice: a five-week introductory training program for white folks living in Northern Michigan". This training is offered by Title Track. They have a new cohort starting Sunday, September 20. I registered this morning.

I am eager to do the work of learning and growing as a community.

Thank you for listening.