

**Mount Prospect Community Conversation**  
*Racial Justice, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*  
*A Message from the Mayor*

On Tuesday evening, July 28, 2020, the Mount Prospect Community Engagement Committee facilitated an important step in the process to address racial justice, equality, diversity and inclusion in Mount Prospect. Thank you to the village Community Engagement Committee, village board and staff, residents and business people of Mount Prospect for your willingness to participate.

I was pleased to participate and set a framework for the discussion that would allow us to focus our experiences, fears, hopes, concerns and resources in a manageable and constructive way, by keeping in mind three basic predicates for progress:

1. That we participate with the intent to learn from each other.
2. That we begin to trust each other.
3. That we pledge to continue the effort.

We are guided by our village strategic plan, which articulates a mission to be the best of suburban communities: thriving, proud, diverse and connected, having a rich heritage, strong values, and a timeless yet contemporary atmosphere. We do this by embracing our core values to respect; listen; be ethical, positive and optimistic; maintain a commitment to service; and sound analysis, decision making and consensus.

We can be most constructive if we conduct a Mount Prospect-centric dialogue. Let's not fall into the trap of conflating too many issues from headlines across the country, and risk obscuring our local truths and potential for local partnerships. Let's get to know each other better as neighbors, by listening to each other, and respecting our lived experiences, personal narratives and collective mission and core values. We must help each other to break through our individual comfort barriers to trust.

Trust is so critical to productive action. My hope is that we can each overcome any visceral or preconceived reactions to race-based issues and solutions. A focus on neighbor to neighbor dialogue and inquiry can go a long way to vanquishing the fears.

I truly welcome the opportunity to get to know a wider circle of residents in the village. We want to build a pipeline for civic involvement and leadership in furtherance of our vision and goals. For a long time we have prided ourselves on our diversity, with more than 30% of our residents foreign born. Yet, overall, whether foreign or US born, less than 3% of Mount Prospect residents are black. Has our diversity discussion and mindset been limited by white privilege? Our residents of color are telling us that we all have to work harder to normalize racial diversity in Mount Prospect, condemn racist behavior and convince all Mount Prospect neighbors that black lives truly matter here. I am committed to do so. This task does not just rest on village government, although we have an

important role to play, but on every single one of our residents and businesses. Thank you to those who have come forward to share their experiences and pain, and to be productive solution-seekers.

The recent death of civil rights legend and US Representative John R. Lewis brought forth some wise advice from his dear friend, House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn (D-SC).

- *America is great because its people are good. If the people of America ever cease to be good, America will cease to be great. John personified the goodness of this country, and I do believe that that's what the fight is all about now. Restoring America's goodness.*
- *Don't allow headlines to get in the way of headway.*
- *The sit-in movement of the 60's got taken away by Burn Baby Burn. Don't let Black Lives Matter get hijacked by sloganeering.*

I implore us as residents and leaders in MP to actively learn and to seek greater understanding of our diverse cultures and experiences in our community and nation, to allow us to be better versions of ourselves. The discussions must take place in many contexts and venues. Civic entities, churches, schools, neighborhoods, business groups and families – we all need to be actively involved. Let's keep the community conversation going and strive to realize our commitment to Racial Justice, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.