

From: Christine Hughes <cklwrites@gmail.com>
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PR 2 Public Hearing Comments
Christine Longmore Hughes
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Good evening. I am glad to be here tonight to offer my comments on this historic moment.

I am the daughter/sister and wife of American Descendants of Slaves. I grew up here and have been here since the mid 70's. I am also the mother of 4 children born and raised in VT. I have 3 beautiful grandchildren who call VT home. I am also a member of New Alpha Missionary Baptist Church in Burlington that was founded in 1989 and is the only Black Baptist Church in the state. I spent 12 years serving people returning to the community from VT prisons who were looking for employment.

We live in a society made up of rules, laws ordinances formal and informal. When people violate laws there is a response. The "offender" can't use ignorance of the law as an excuse for breaking it. Similarly, ignorance to the Constitution that you swore an oath to is not acceptable.

For so many people that have participated in the information sessions and webinars that the VT Racial Justice has presented on this topic, it has been a teachable moment. Like so many things in American culture, politics and government the exception clause is hidden in plain sight.

You are public servants elected to serve the public. We are the public. While Black Americans only represent a small portion of the total population of the Brave Little State, we matter. We are here and more of us are coming here. We are giving birth to a new home grown generation of Vermonters. At the same time, most of our jails and prison populations are white. Most poor people are white. Most black people are poor.

If I say, welfare queen, super predator, or thug, what images come to mind? Why is that?

The Constitution of our state, other states in the country and the US Constitution were all created by White men. Fortunately, it was also designed with the room for adaptation to reflect the current needs of the public. It should never be looked at as a tool to preserve history. We have plenty of places like historical societies, libraries, etc for that purpose.

Many of us believe the constitution is a tool to insure that individual/human rights are preserved and protected. The truth is, since it's original form, it has been used and misused to create political and economic power for White men. It was done by design. It is the secret ingredient for the prison industrial complex.

For a world perspective, we, the United States are 5% of the world's total population but have more than 20% of the world's total prison population. The United Nations condemns the U.S. for this reason and called it a crime against humanity.

This country and this State systems have hurt more white people than black even though Black and Brown people have been at the center of the target of police and other systems that consistently oppress people who are not white.

PR 2 is an historic opportunity. Legislators, this is your opportunity to live up to the oath of office you swore to. Lets bring some real meaning to phrases like, Justice for all, equal protection under the law, the pursuit of life liberty and happiness in our Brave Little State. Please pass PR 2.

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Christine Hughes