

?We don't want to be invisible? ? ABC rallies Aurora in solidarity following Buffalo shooting



People often say they don't see colour, but that doesn't cut it, according to Latoya Reid.

Ms. Reid, a York Region District School Board trustee candidate for Newmarket in this fall's Municipal Election, says that can lead to racialized communities feeling ?invisible? and that's the last thing that is needed in moving forward.

?We don't want to be invisible,? she said. ?We want you to see our colour and recognize that our colour makes us just as equal as any other colour.?

This was the message she delivered to dozens of residents on Thursday night as they gathered at Town Hall in solidarity with the victims and everyone impacted by the mass shooting at a grocery store in Buffalo, NY, on May 14, which left 10 dead ? all members of the city's Black community.

The local vigil was organized by the Aurora Black Community to not only stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the community just over the border, but underscore to local leaders we're not immune to such incidents happening here.

?Our leaders should be shaken and angry when they see any kind of injustice anywhere, any issue, any kind,? said Aurora Black Community (ABC) President Phiona Durrant, who said many leaders were ?silent? following the shooting.

Speaking ahead of the vigil, Ms. Durrant added: ?We want to advocate and raise our voices for humanity. There have been over seven shootings and stabbings in Aurora (recently) and it has never been shared by any of our Councillors or leaders. We cannot pretend we're okay here because it is just not okay. [We just want] to stand together and say this is wrong no matter which land it is happening in.?

Ms. Reid contends that in addition to the war in Ukraine, there are wars ongoing in Sudan and Somalia, as well as conflicts throughout Latin America which have not merited as much attention from leaders.

?That shows the message of us being insignificant and subhuman and when something like that can happen just about an hour-and-a-half away from Ontario, and any person could have been a victim of that ? not just any person, but any Black person because that person (the shooter) was very intentional in his pursuits,? said Ms. Reid. ?He apologized to a White man for being shot and went on and plundered Black people. That sends a very direct message and that is something everyone should be outraged against. Everyone should be outraged.

?We're happy for support [for Ukrainians] but there has to be more tangible support when it comes to the Black community or any

racialized community. How are they (leaders) showing support in regards to that??

Ms. Durrant posed the same question and said just a few days prior to last Thursday's event, she met with a Councillor to press the need for more funding towards Black History events and programs beyond the month of February.

?There is no financial backing for the work that is needed for diversity, equity and inclusion, particularly this ongoing education and awareness,? said Ms. Durrant. ?It requires work. Black history is for everybody. When I spend an hour-and-a-half with another Councillor trying to explain to her the funding that is required for Black history, diversity and equity can't be the same as whether or not you make a decision to sponsor a hockey team. When your son, your husband, or your grandparents have been shot because they're Black, that's no longer the same as you not sponsoring a hockey mom who came and asked the Town for money to do the work. If you (use that comparison) it tells me how much work is needed.?

Thursday's vigil was attended by Councillors John Gallo, Rachel Gilliland and Sandra Humfries, incumbent Progressive Conservative candidate Michael Parsa, and representatives from the office of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leah Taylor Roy.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter