

This is NOT a dream. Hate, Racism, Islamophobia, and Bigotry still live with us! A clear hate crime was committed in La Crosse. Hate Has No Business Here!!

Today I learned that a racial slur “Sand Nigger” was found on the company building of a Muslim business owner in La Crosse. Today’s date is February 8th, 2019 and we still find hateful words, thoughts and action permeating our La Crosse community and country. Two years before Dr. King’s “I have a dream speech”, on June 1961 he said “America is essentially a dream. It is a dream of a land where men of all races, of all nationalities, and of all creed can live together as brothers”. He went on and quoted the declaration of Independence “the substance of the dream can be found in these profound words, we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal”.

February is Black History month, a month that is meant to recognize the contributions and role of blacks in U.S History, but instead in La Crosse, Wisconsin we spend time talking about this horrible incident. As an American Muslim of Nigerian descent, who considers La Crosse home, I am appalled, angry, and sad.

Good people of La Crosse, please let’s not make excuses or have a debate of whether this is a hate crime. Ignorance is also not an excuse. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), hate crime is defined as "a criminal offense committed against a person, property, or society that is motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity/national origin." The perpetrator(s) spray painted “Sand Nigger” which is a racial slur against Blacks, African Americans, Muslims, and Muslims of Middle Eastern or North African descent.

Action is needed, and I called on the good people of La Crosse Police, Mayor, La Crosse community leaders, and the people of La Crosse to resolve this wrong.

Dr. King said “It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me, but it can keep him from lynching me and I think that is pretty important, also” Malcolm X also said that “You’re not to be so blind with patriotism that you can’t face reality. Wrong is wrong, no matter who does it or says it.”

This was wrong just like many of the ills we see in society, politics and leadership today. The vast majority of the people of La Crosse are good and decent people, but action is needed. Leadership is needed. Our children’s future depends on it. We want ALL of us and our children (Black, White, Hmong, Irish, Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and others) to live in a society where their homes and businesses are not spray painted with racist or degrading slurs.

I am a member of the [La Crosse Interfaith Shoulder to Shoulder Network \(LISSN\)](#), a La Crosse based organization established in February 2016 to empower people of all faiths (Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists) to work together to end anti- Muslim sentiment and hatred of any

kind by increasing understanding and strengthening the voice of tolerance, freedom and peace. We want our society to resist xenophobia and are combating Islamophobia in the Coulee Region.

Everyone has a part to play. Choose to have these difficult conversations in your household and with your children. Choose to have these conversations in your workplace and religious institutions. Choose to have these conversations in your schools. Choose to talk to people that look different than you do or worship differently than you do. Choose to speak up to immoral leaders wherever you find them. Choose to break bread and eat with people you do not know. Choose to be allies to groups like Shoulder to Shoulder or other groups that represent underrepresented populations. Choose to take peaceful yet effective action that stamps out Hate. **We need to send a clear message. NOT IN LA CROSSE. Hate Has NO Business Here. All are Welcome.**

Download and put up signs that say "Hate Has No Business Here"

Sincerely,

Wale Elegbede