

To: The Honorable Watertown Town Manager, Michael Driscoll  
The Superintendent of Watertown Public Schools, Dr. Dede Gladston

CC: The Honorable Watertown Town Council  
The Honorable Watertown School Committee

CC: Principal Donna Martin, Watertown Middle School,

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, "The time is always right to do what is right". A prominent, and historical quote that has resonated in our town, especially in these current times.

It has come to this group's attention that a video was shown in a classroom titled, "The Racist Origins of Police – Decoded Season 8", a 7 minute and 16 second video of inaccuracy, and appalling content. "Modern policing just took a DNA test, turns out it's 99 – 100% racist" the beginning of this video, and also the first thing 30 students at Watertown Middle School heard to start their day.

This video was shown by Watertown Middle School Spanish teacher, and "accomplished Kingian trainer", Ruth Henry. Kingian training, a training which, according to their website, "organizes and conducts community initiatives based on Restorative Justice Circles, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's principles of nonviolence" and "works to partner with local organizations, [such as the Watertown Police Department], to foster greater community participation".

With the information above, we find the contents of the video glaring, misinformed, and all to be shown by Ruth Henry, truly alarming. Henry who, in the very essence of her training, is supposed to be fostering greater community participation, is only creating a further divide between the Watertown Police Department, and their community, specifically our youth. Personally, myself, and my co-workers have spent over twenty years building, and fostering lifelong relationships with our community's youth, whether it be our School Resource Officers, Cops and Kids recreation events, Girls and Goals Program, active participation with the Boys and Girls Club, and Kingian Nonviolence training, just to name a few.

We as parents have made the decision to tell our children to disengage, or not debate the issues surrounding police, knowing the toll it has and continues to have on our children. For Ruth Henry to show this video in her "Morning Meeting", is not only inappropriate, but it continues to isolate our children, some of whom were present to view what Henry truly thinks of their parents. In 2016 when Henry introduced WMS to the Kingian training, Henry is quoted saying she is, "immensely proud that the local police department is also participating with the schools in the program" furthering her statement, "I think it's a great example and an incredible model". This is the very same police department that she is now slamming in 2021, who have proven time, and time again that we remain committed to our community, its safety, and most importantly, its people, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion.

We have been silent for too long. "The time is always right to do what is right", and we think that the Watertown School System, and Ruth Henry need to do what is right, and take accountability for this misinformation. Ruth Henry, you promised to build bridges of cooperation to further strengthen Watertown, as a welcoming place for all; and rather, you have isolated our children, made them question the integrity of their parents, and fostered a school environment that has created more harm than healing. With the world the way it is, our children, not just children of police, but all children, are struggling to understand, and to cope in times of great uncertainty. It is the responsibility of adults, like you Ruth Henry, to promote healing, understanding, fair and equal treatment for all, and you have failed to do so.

The purpose of an educator is to be a person who nurtures children, providing them a safe, comfortable, and healthy environment to both learn and grow. We would like to know that if this video was shown as something viable to their learning, and growing, why wasn't it shown to the entire WMS community? When Ruth Henry knew this video was not well received by some students, she claimed this video was just an educational tool that went awry. Why then, did Ruth fail to notify the principal about the incident, and rather tried to hide it? When these parents persisted, why were only these 30 student's parents notified, when in normal course, the entire WMS community is notified? WMS just took a DNA test, turns out it's 99-100% non-transparent, and wants to sweep this information under the rug.

Respectfully,

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John

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Ken W. Rooney

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Ac. H. H. H. H.

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