



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 11, 2021

Media Contact:

Saleh Waziruddin

Cell: 289 990 7683

thenrara@gmail.com

MEDIA RELEASE: Mayor Asks Niagara Regional Police About Referring Investigation to RCMP As Over 100 Rally in Support of Fort Erie Black Woman Under Anonymous Threats

FORT ERIE, ON – Over 100 people rallied in support of Natalee Cole, a Black resident of Fort Erie, who has been receiving anonymous threatening letters complaining about her music which escalated to a terrorist threat, “your neighbours and I will burn your house down with you inside.” Fort Erie Mayor Wayne Redekop, among those attending in support, has asked the Niagara Regional Police (NRP) about referring the investigation to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The threats are being investigated by the NRP as serious under incident# 21-78814. Ms. Cole's family is one of only two Black households in the neighborhood. The rally was organized on July 31, 2021 by the Niagara Region Anti-Racism Association (NRARA) which is supporting Ms. Cole.

Ms. Cole and her daughter moved to Fort Erie two years ago and are one of only two Black households in the neighborhood. Other neighbors play music at a comparable volume but only Ms. Cole has received threatening letters. She has received several anonymous letters as have Fort Erie City Hall and the Niagara Regional Police, who saw no cause to take action against Ms. Cole over the volume of music.

Ms. Cole explained about the significance of the support she received at the rally “Today was a day of reflection for ourselves and the community that some people still have hang-ups about race. But today as a community we were able to have those sensitive conversations and for that I am glad. It is downright wrong when a total stranger is threatening you because of who you are but the community stepped up for me and showed this person that I am not alone.”

Fort Erie Mayor Wayne Redekop expressed his support at the rally and has asked the Niagara Regional Police to consider referring the case to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The Mayor explained “It was heartening to see so many individuals from diverse backgrounds rally to the support of Natalee and her daughter. There is no place in our community or our society for intolerance, racism, discrimination, or violence or threats of violence. Fort Erie is striving to be a welcoming, caring, and loving community, one that embraces diversity and stands for inclusion for all. I appreciate the light that has been shone on the bad behaviour that gave rise to the rally and NRARA’s part in providing an opportunity for so many to rally for a better society.”

MPP Wayne Gates was among those rallying in support and added "As heartbreaking as it was to know that people in our community still face this kind of intolerance, it was uplifting to see that more of our community came out to say that what happened wasn't okay. I stood shoulder to shoulder with neighbours who said that these notes don't represent our Town, that everyone is welcome here and loved. It pains all of us to know this hate still exists in our community but now is the time to connect

with all of those who stand against it and root it out of our communities so that everyone knows they're welcome and loved, no matter their background."

Vicki-Lynn Smith, a fifth generation Freedom Seeker and executive member of NRARA, explained "My Grandmother helped a Black family facing discrimination in the 50's and today here I sit 70 years or so later having to help someone else fight the same fight. She wrote a poem about how we will 'fight fight fight' till everyone is seen the same no matter what colour of skin they have. She is rolling over in her grave I am sure because the fight isn't over after all this time".

The Niagara Region Anti-Racism Association was founded in the summer of 2018 and campaigns on police reforms, municipal anti-racism committees, employment equity, organizes speaker series and workshops, and supports individuals under racist attacks.

Note to media: interviews with Natalee Cole can be arranged via media contact in header.