

From: [Bourgerie, Zoe J](#)
To: [Council Comment](#)
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Today's vote on Interim Chief Johnston
Date: Thursday, May 26, 2022 9:13:42 AM

From: LIZ <fightingswan@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 7:39 AM
To: Koski, Emily <emily.koski@minneapolismn.gov>; Hill, Melissa <melissa.hill@minneapolismn.gov>; Horowitz, Corinne <corinne.horowitz@minneapolismn.gov>; Jenkins, Andrea <andrea.jenkins@minneapolismn.gov>; Sirdar, Deebaa <Deebaa.Sirdar@minneapolismn.gov>; Bourgerie, Zoe J <zoe.bourgerie@minneapolismn.gov>; Johnson, Andrew <Andrew.Johnson@minneapolismn.gov>; Nelson, Kate R. (she/her) <Kate.Nelson@minneapolismn.gov>; Kesti, Dylan <dylan.kesti@minneapolismn.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Today's vote on Interim Chief Johnston

Good morning President Jenkins and Members Koski and Johnson -

I am a Ward 13 resident and a city employee.

I am urging you to vote against confirming Interim Chief Johnston today. What we have heard from current and former CCO employees in the letter and through Tuesday's testimony about the culture in their office, coupled with Interim Chief Johnston's failure to engage with them and tackle these issues, means she is not right for the job. She may be experienced, she is undoubtedly a lovely and pleasant person - but she did not rise up to meet the genuine needs of her office and the city.

Every time I attend a work training or event I am bowled over by the talent and passion of city employees and feel conflicted between feeling proud to be among them and also part of a workplace that has allowed a pattern and practice of racism to fester within departments like MPD but also, as has been made very clear by my courageous colleagues, the city coordinators office.

Just because Interim Chief Johnston has been in the job for some months does not make her right. Just because she is there and it is easy to keep her there does not make it right.

Confirming her will likely result in talented and passionate employees leaving the city, and we all suffer if that happens. Vote no on her confirmation. The Mayor can undertake the robust search he promised, and the candidates can speak to their vision for truly improving the culture in the department. Perhaps she will be among them, with a new history of engaging with staff and doing the work to improve the culture. But confirming her when she has let these very serious issues go untended is to approve that choice, and Minneapolis cannot afford it.

Sincerely
Liz Mulholland
Fulton Resident

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links or attachments.

From: [Bourgerie, Zoe J](#)
To: [Council Comment](#)
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Vote no to Heather Johnston's confirmation, signed a 95 year-old Black grandmother
Date: Thursday, May 26, 2022 9:13:37 AM

From: Marshie Allen <allenmarshie@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 7:29 AM
To: Jenkins, Andrea <andrea.jenkins@minneapolismn.gov>
Cc: Sirdar, Deebaa <Deebaa.Sirdar@minneapolismn.gov>; Bourgerie, Zoe J <zoe.bourgerie@minneapolismn.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Vote no to Heather Johnston's confirmation, signed a 95 year-old Black grandmother

Dear Council President Jenkins,

I am one of your proud constituents near Field School and I am writing to you in support of the City employees organizing for a safer, less toxic, and less racist work culture. Gina Obiri is my granddaughter and one of your employees asking for your help to make sure she and other Black staff can have a safe place to work.

Ms. Jenkins, I'm a 95 year-old Black woman from Birmingham, Alabama, so you know I've seen some mess between Black folks and white folks. I grew up watching mama clean white folks houses and I swore I would never do that. I also knew that I would hit someone upside the head if they talked to me crazy. Gina never did inherit that piece of me, she's much slower to anger. However, I raised Gina since she was a year old to be respectful, have integrity, and stand up for what's right. Watching her do that with her colleagues lets me know that Interim City Coordinator Heather Johnston must be a horrible person to work for who inflicts harm on Black folks and dismisses it. Gina's fight certainly looks different than mine, and my guess would be yours, too, though that's how oppression evolves.

I hope you are as proud of her, and the others who are risking their jobs and wellbeing, as I am. The employees who reached out to you did so at their own personal risk in order to ensure that:

- 1.
- 2.
3. Their offices address a pattern of racist harm to Black folks that Ms. Johnston failed to stop and directly contributed to herself.
- 4.
- 5.

- 6.
- 7.
8. They and their coworkers have a COVID-safe work environment.
- 9.

I am asking that you not confirm Interim City Coordinator Heather Johnston to the role of CCO or any other leadership position in the City, for the reasons Gina and others have already detailed. There should be a transparent and comprehensive recruitment process for the City's highest unelected position, as the staff demands outline.

Furthermore, I am asking that you move forward on their other demands - while Heather's confirmation is the most time-sensitive, it is only one of many essential concerns that have been raised.

Council President Jenkins, I was proud to vote for you because I know you are a warrior for our people. I saw it in you as you ran fearlessly for your seat. I saw it in you when you declared racism as the rightful public health emergency that it is. Please use your vote to break the status quo and not put another white person in power who proves that she is not on the side of Black folks. Who has harmed my grandbaby and her colleagues so much that she comes to me in tears.

As you implement a new government structure and respond to the MDHR report, Civil Unrest After-Action Review, and Furlough Director's Charge, you can maintain a system of white supremacy, or you can break it. Take the opportunity being offered to continue the fight that our ancestors, and folks like myself, started long ago.

With appreciation and love,

Mrs. Marshie Allen
Ward 8 resident since 1950

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Hello Chair Palmisano, members of the committee. My name is Amy Livingston, she/her pronouns, and I am a former City of Minneapolis employee and a city resident. I am here to speak in solidarity with the City staff and ask you to not approve Interim Coordinator Heather Johnston as the permanent coordinator. They have bravely spoken out to address the foundational issues that create this toxic environment. It should not have to be their role to be the ones to speak out. Their demands started out as single requests, brought to a new leader, a plea for a fresh start. Those were ignored, obscured, delayed, and papered over by Heather Johnston and Mayor Frey. When you cannot trust your leaders to speak for you, then you must speak yourself. When you cannot trust your leaders to speak for you, then they don't deserve the power and authority to speak.

I worked at the City for 3 years. In this time, I saw countless incidents of blatant racism and microaggressions that left me screaming into a pillow every evening. This racism cannot be fixed by "all of us" as press statements suggest, due to the people perpetuating it. It is used and encouraged by leaders in middle management across all departments. When management is the problem, you need the top leader to take them to task. Ms. Johnston and Mr. Frey have not made this a priority in the City, and BIPOC employees suffered.

I once sat in a meeting with a Public Works manager who, upon seeing some middle eastern names of colleagues, just settled on calling them "Aladdin Abu-bu" and "Day-o" for the rest of the meeting. Other participants just chuckled along. That manager still works here. The BIPOC employee does not.

I talked with a few BIPOC coworkers when the racist Christmas tree was up in the lobby of the 4th precinct police station. It was decorated with packs of Newport cigarettes and Popeye's Chicken packaging. Before it broke in the news, that black coworker talked to his white supervisor, asked if he could switch assignments with a white coworker so he didn't have to fix computers there because of the tree. The supervisor's action? He told him to just "close his eyes" when he had to walk past it. That manager still works here. The BIPOC employee does not.

I saw a manager complain about the creation of "safe spaces" after George Floyd's murder, stating during an all-staff meeting that "there ought to be a safe space for people who are sick of having to watch their words all the time, and walk on eggshells." Several BIPOC employees were on that team. That manager still works here. The BIPOC employees do not.

I am a white, cisgender heterosexual woman who grew up in the northwest suburbs, aka Michelle Bachmann territory. I have plenty of blinders I am doing lifelong work to remove. But if I could see this much racism from this many leaders during my short tenure, imagine what our BIPOC employees go through every day. This problem is deep-rooted, and not something that can be fixed without sponsorship, support, and enthusiastic drive from the highest level. City employees are literally pleading for that support. Council must demand a national search for a City Administrator who will treat racism as the institutional crisis it is, not as a lower priority. Our city will crumble if leaders keep ignoring these foundational problems.