

October 3, 2020

Livermore,

Every year Livermore hosts a tree sweater festival. Knitters display creativity, skill, and their love for Livermore with beautiful sweaters that brighten the trees downtown. This year, one of the participants knitted a sweater that celebrated Black Lives Matter and Livermore's LGBTQ community. It was an act of love and inclusion that took over 30 hours to knit. Just 48 hours after it had been placed on a tree near Lizzy Fountain, the fabric artist took her child to see it. It was gone. No other tree sweater had been removed.

How does a mother explain to her child that her act of love had been removed by an anonymous act of hate? How do we, as a city, respond to this act?

I would like this story to be an isolated incident. It is not. As one of the council members on the Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee, I have heard stories from people who live and work in Livermore that belie our image of being a welcoming city. I've heard stories by people who were questioned when walking down the street on which they live. Stories of being questioned when buying "too much" in a store. Stories of raised eyebrows when a person of color is in a position of authority. These stories are not new: some are told by people recounting childhood experiences in Livermore. I have my own story: in 2016, the Hanukah menorah in Bankhead Plaza was defaced in a particularly hateful way. In the following months, I heard Muslim, Latina, and Black students recounting stories of hateful words and actions directed at them.

Any attack on those who seem different or vulnerable diminishes all of us. Until all of us are welcome and included, none of us will be truly free of fear. Through including different voices, we are all strengthened as we share food and traditions, when we have conversation and exchange ideas.

Snipping a few pieces of yarn will not silence the voices of love. As a council member, I know we are better than this and I condemn this act. As an individual, I believe in the power of rejecting hate and embracing all of our community members.

What can I do? If I were a knitter, I would knit a sweater for a tree in my yard. I'm not. But I can take the picture of the tree sweater and post it on social media. I can make a sign from the picture and place it outside my house. What can you do?

Sincerely,



Trish Munro
Council Member
City of Livermore

