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Virgin Islanders Create Petition to Remove WAPA Deputy Legal Counsel After Derogatory Black Lives Matter Remark; WAPA Responds

Race Relations / **Published On June 20, 2020 09:15 PM /**

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Screenshot of Change.org petition to remove Mark Kragel from WAPA as legal Counsel

Virgin Islanders have banded together and are demanding the removal of Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority Deputy Legal Counsel, Mark Kragel, after [a post](#) Mr. Kragel is believed to have made on Facebook, where he is said to have used derogatory words to describe the Black Lives Matter movement, whose strength and popularity has grown immensely following the death of George Floyd on May 25.

Virgin Islander Dimitri James first brought the comment to the public's view after deeming it unbecoming of someone who represents the territory's only power authority. The U.S. Virgin

Islands is a predominantly black territory, with said race making up 76 percent of the population, followed by Hispanics or Latinos with 17.4 percent, and whites with 15.6 percent, according to [World Population Review](#), which tracks population and demographics of countries around the world.

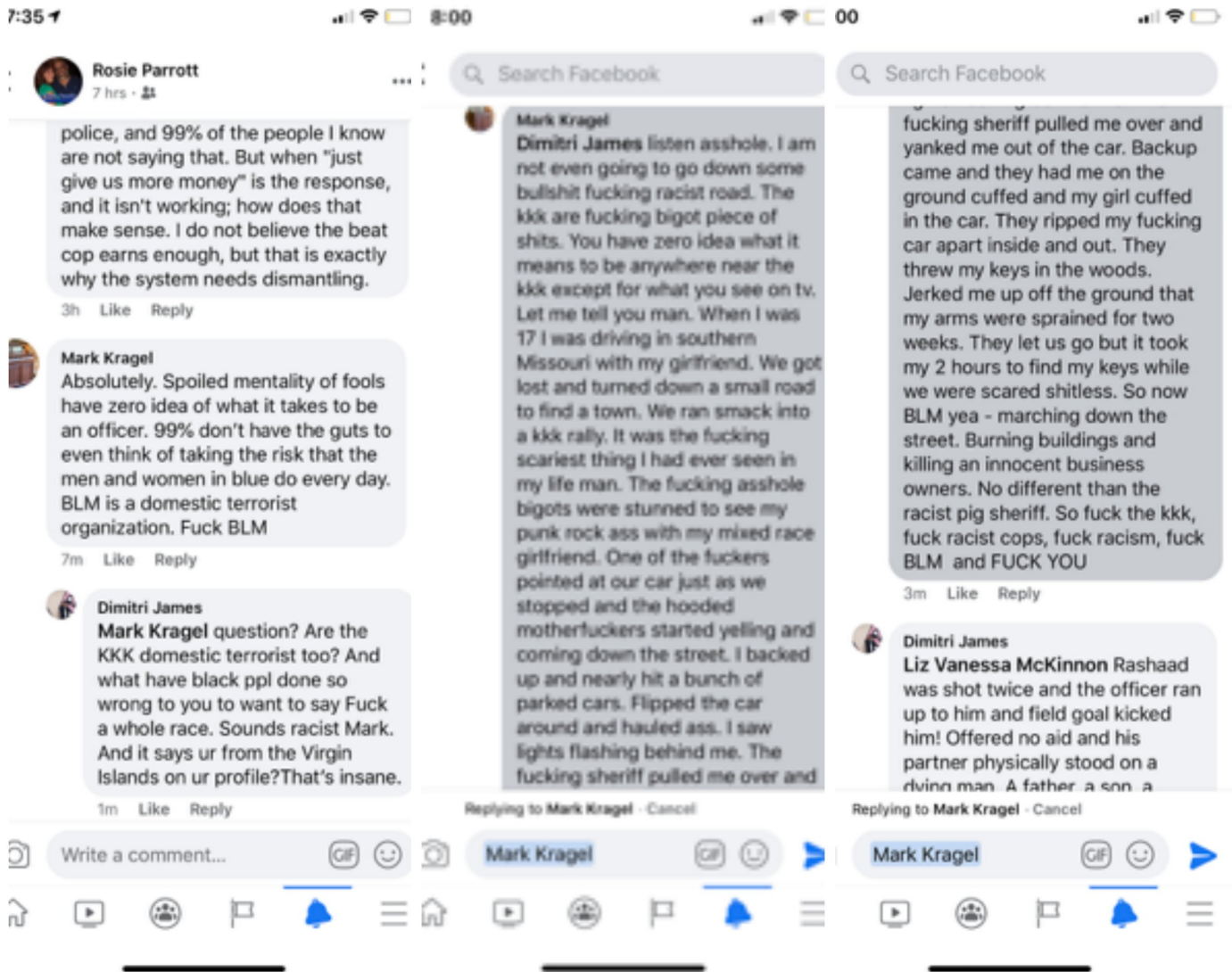
A message left to Mr. Kragel, who is white, had not received a response at time of writing. WAPA responded Saturday evening, stating that the comments of Mr. Kragel do not reflect the authority's position.

"Expressions by WAPA employees on privately-owned social media accounts and other public forums do not reflect those of the Authority's Governing Board, its senior leadership team or management. Management and senior leadership employees are never encouraged to express unpopular, politically incorrect, and or inflammatory statements," WAPA said. "WAPA encourages and expects that all employees will conduct themselves in a manner aligned with the reasonable expectations of our diverse and culturally sensitive Virgin Islands community."

Governor Albert Bryan had not responded to a request for comment at time of writing.

The comment Mr. Kragel is said to have made, according to Mr. James – who provided proof of the conversation and a response from Mr. Kragel — referred to Black Lives Matter as a "domestic terrorist organization" and went on to use an expletive against BLM.

"Absolutely. Spoiled mentality of fools have zero idea of what it takes to be an officer. 99% don't have the guts to even think of taking the risk that the men and women in blue do everyday. BLM is a domestic terrorist organization. F*ck BLM," Mr. Kragel, the WAPA deputy legal counsel, is said to have posted. The comment was deleted, but not before screenshots were taken and shared widely online, especially on Facebook.



Asked by the Consortium whether he saw the comment for himself, as compared to having someone share a screenshot with him, Mr. James said he was part of the thread when Mr. Kragel made the comment. "I actually replied to him. It's a true statement that I saw on Facebook and many others that were friends with the person who is his friend," Mr. James said, referring to the post under which Mr. Kragel made the comment. The post has since been deleted.

"With you representing people of color; making choices for people of color, and this is the way you think about them, you could see why we can't make it in the everyday things we're trying to achieve," Mr. James said. "He shouldn't be at WAPA because it shows the agenda and where their mindset is at."

The comment has been shared around the territory through social media, and some individuals have done research on Mr. Kragel, even [pulling up his Virgin Islands Bar page](#).

A petition created on [Change.org](#), which first sought 500 signatures calling for Mr. Kragel's removal from WAPA, shot passed the goal and was 876 at time of writing, aiming for a new target of 1,000.

"I am tired of racist terrorist moving to our territory. There is no place for bigots like Mark in [our] island home and definitely not in a position that balances justice for people of the VI," [wrote](#)

[Lisa Stevens](#) from St. Croix.

"Anyone that can't understand why Black Lives Matter and can make such disparaging comments about Black Lives needs to NOT be employed at any company that affects Black Lives," wrote Monica Harrigan.

Diamond Ritter, also from St. Croix, [wrote](#), "Count your days, Mark!"

Brittany Dawson, who started the petition, wrote, "We are a community of strong, beautiful, and intelligent people; this kind of racism and inappropriate behavior SHOULD NOT be tolerated."

She added, "Mark Kragel, a woodworker in the US Virgin Islands and practicing attorney associated with WAPA, wrote a response on Facebook regarding his opinions on the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement. He showed support for those in uniform, then ended his message by stating, "BLM is a domestic terrorist organization. F*ck BLM."

"As an island that consists primarily of black and brown people, this level of disregard for life and injustice makes him ill equipped to work in any capacity here. He has shown misconduct that is not fitting of someone who should earn funding, in our communities - or any for that matter."