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Frett-Gregory, Other Senators Call for Immediate Removal of Mark Kragel From WAPA

Race Relations / **Published On June 23, 2020 03:55 PM /**

Staff Consortium **June 23, 2020**

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Protesters on St. Croix call for the immediate termination of Mark Kragel By. VI CONSORTIUM

Calls for the removal of WAPA Deputy Legal Counsel, Mark Kragel, is growing louder with each passing moment he remains at the authority, with the latest voices being a number of senators, including Senator Donna Frett-Gregory who called for Mr. Kragel's immediate termination. Senators Janelle Sarauw and Allison DeGazon are calling for the same outcome.

The authority's CEO, Lawrence Kupfer, issued a statement following Kragel's remarks, but many believe the statement fell short and did little to address the blatant racism displayed by Kragel. Ms. Frett-Gregory is one of them, according to the senator's office. She believes that not only

should Kragel be fired, but that WAPA's weak response to the incident is a clear reflection of the authority's poor leadership, she said.

"Kragel's employment with WAPA must be terminated immediately," Ms. Frett- Gregory expressed. "We absolutely cannot allow someone with racist views to continue to hold a position of this much influence and power in our community".

"More so, I was deeply disappointed with the CEO's response to the blatant racism, but not at all surprised," she stated. "This is the very same display of weak, nonchalant leadership that my colleagues and I have been dealing with since taking office last year. These are the people leading the territory's utility system right into the ground."

Ms. Frett-Gregory added, "If we don't address this overtly racist behavior, we'll be sending the wrong message to our community, who are in fact, majority Black," said Sen. Frett-Gregory. "Not only should WAPA fire Kragel, but management should conduct an investigation to ensure that none of Kragel's decisions as the Authority's attorney were racially biased or motivated in anyway.

"This is not only about Kragel. This is about people like him having incredible amounts of influence in our community, and our ability to recognize it, and ensure that we do not tolerate it—ever."

Senator Sarauw said, "This is not the time for patience but for action against racism. The slavery question may have been settled, but the impact is not. We struggle with the effect of colonialism in our government, politics, education, and society. It affects our economics."

Ms. Sarauw said that on the heels of celebrating 172 years of Emancipation, Virgin Islands residents are reminded that the territory was built on the backs of slaves who toiled the land, burned plantations, protested for fair labor conditions, petitioned Denmark for equality, petitioned congress for US citizenship and governed until 1970 by colonial naval and appointed governors. "Indeed, profits from slavery provided a reservoir of capital that allowed America and Denmark to grow into a world power. We have toiled and worked too hard for black lives to not matter to Attorney Mark Kragel," stated Ms. Sarauw.

"How can we repay those bent backs and calloused hands for their slave labor, and satisfy the descendants that all the chattel years have value? We repay that moral debt by taking a position. A position of intolerance to racism. I am calling on WAPA CEO Kupfer to relieve Attorney Kragel of his duties immediately," she said.

Senator DeGazon said, "As an Afro-Caribbean woman myself, I was appalled to read such distasteful and offensive commentary from the Deputy General Counsel of our locally owned Water and Power Authority. I believe the persons working for such institution should reflect the values and best interests of the community it serves, in this case, the people of the Virgin Islands.

"I call the authority of WAPA to action and stand behind the cry of our community to have Mr. Mark Kragel's connection to the institution terminated. I remind the authority and our community of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s sentiments, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly". Hence, the statements made by Mr. Kragel are unacceptable and should be treated as such."

