



CITY OF WATERLOO, IOWA

WATERLOO COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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TO: Honorable Mayor Hart and City Council
FROM: Waterloo Commission on Human Rights
RE: Removal of Griffin Symbol from Police Cars, Uniforms and Paraphernalia
DATE: August 20, 2020

The Griffin symbol needs to be retired. Commonly associated with strength in war, this archaic symbol is at odds with community policing at its best, *which is not to be an occupying force, but rather to serve as guardians of the common good.*

And this statement should not be interpreted as an attack on the city of Waterloo or our outstanding members of law enforcement. We have no interest in debating the intention behind the symbol's creation; instead, we would like to address the impact this symbolism has had - *and continues to have* - on many of our community residents in Waterloo.

First, the Griffin is a mythological creature with the head and majestic wings of an eagle and back paws and tail of a lion. The creature on the current badge has been modified from the historically accepted character. The wings are not of an eagle and it clearly does not have the paws of a lion as it has talons, like a dragon, but not just any dragon. Waterloo's "Griffin" is eerily similar to a symbol of hatred and racial animus. Thus, the Griffin symbol for many is representative of feelings and mindsets that were opposed to inclusion and integration and harmonious community.

Secondly, this symbol and its symbolism were introduced and implemented during the Civil Rights Era (1964) when monuments of confederate generals were commissioned to honor them, even though the Confederates lost the war. This symbol emerged during a period of social and political unrest that many have either forgotten or never learned about. Riots and civil unrest erupted in Waterloo. African American residents were subjected to intimidation, racial taunts, violence, and ostracism in business and society behind this symbol and all of its meanings.

This is not a new discussion. Every generation since 1964 has had the same concern. This symbol evokes feelings of fear and distrust of law enforcement. Due to this kind of unsavory history tied to this symbol combined with the wayward and impetuous actions of some of Waterloo's officers and/or leadership, millions of dollars in damages have been paid out to African American residents in the last decade alone.

The Waterloo Commission on Human Rights formally requests that the Waterloo City Council and Waterloo Police Department retire the current police symbol and replace the symbol with one more representative of the values of community, diversity and inclusion.

Respectfully,

Waterloo Commission on Human Rights