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**Subject: Incident at Montrose School Last Week**

**Date:**April 23, 2019 at 12:02:48 PM EDT

**To:**[citycouncil@bexley.org](mailto:citycouncil@bexley.org)

**Cc:**[tmarkham@bexley.org](mailto:tmarkham@bexley.org), [bkessler@bexley.org](mailto:bkessler@bexley.org)

Dear Mayor Kessler and Bexley City Councilmembers,

    My son, Ephraim Epstein, attends the morning preschool program at Montrose Elementary.  One of his classmates is Yusuf.  I know the majority of Ephraim's classmates well by sight, including Yusuf's parents.  Typically his mother drops him off and his father picks him up.

    I was at the Remington Avenue entrance of Montrose last Tuesday shortly after eleven o'clock, chatting with several other mothers while we waited for the teachers to bring out our children.  We saw several squad cars converge on the school, then we saw a number of policemen surround and begin questioning Yusuf's father, Bryant.  I, and the other mothers present all tried to get the attention of one of the officers in order to tell them that we knew Bryant, that we knew that he was a parent like us, waiting to pick up his kid, as we were, and as he does everyday.

    After several minutes of being ignored, an officer finally gave us his attention, brusquely ordering all of us to "take a step back."  I took what I genuinely thought was a large step back and the officer repeated his order, finally telling us all to sit on one of the ledges leading to the Remington exit of the school.  We all sat as ordered and remained where we were even after our children came out, until we were satisfied that Bryant was free to take his son Yusuf home as well.

    This is the first time in my life that I have ever been placed in a situation of this nature.  I have been following all of the subsequent releases of information closely.  I make no allegations of malfeasance.  I do believe that Montrose Elementary has a responsibility to ensure the safety of our children.  I also believe that our police officers have a duty to respond to calls for help and I commend them for rushing to any location based on vague calls for help with limited information on what they might expect to find when they arrive.  I do believe in the good intentions of everyone involved.

    But there is a very famous, very old, and very true adage about the road to hell being paved with good intentions.  Because I know many other parents who have driven by the school yard fence to watch their children play and yell hello.  But they are white, so no one ever saw them as a threat.  The 911 call released to the public mentions nothing about the race of the driver.  But as soon as the police arrived they zeroed in on the only black man in the vicinity.  I and the other parents who witnessed Bryant's interrogation were all deeply upset on his behalf and greatly embarrassed that a Montrose parent should be subjected to this kind of serious misunderstanding.

    The road to hell is paved with good intentions and I include myself in this.  I, along with all of the other mothers present had only the best of intentions in trying to let the police officers know that Bryant was a Montrose parent who had every business to be hanging out at Montrose's Remington entrance.  That he was waiting to pick us his child, just as we all do every day.

    After the fact, I can (to a certain extent) see things from the point of view of the police officers.  I imagine that they would probably say that our actions went against police procedure for the situation.  But I still object strongly to myself and my fellow parents being characterized as "rowdy bystanders."  I very much wish that, while three or four officers were occupied with questioning Bryant, that one of them could have taken two minutes to talk to us and hear what we had to say.

    I think that all parties acted in good faith and with good intentions.  But, for all of our good intentions, the resulting situation was not good.  Somehow, collectively, no one did anything wrong, but the situation as a whole does not equal the sum of its parts.  It is my understanding that Bryant received an apology from the Montrose Elementary school administration.  I believe that he also deserves an apology from the city of Bexley and/or the police department.  Because whether or not we like to admit it to ourselves, if he had been a white man driving by the playground and calling to his kid, I do not believe that this situation would ever have arisen in the first place.

Thank you to your attention to this matter. I'd be happy to discuss this further if needed. I would have preferred to make a public statement on this matter but am unable to attend tonight's meeting.

Sincerely Yours,

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