



BAR
P.O. Box 649
Belmont, MA 02478

belmontagainstracism@gmail.com

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Response to the murder of Henry Tapia

We have written the following in response to the death in a road rage incident in Belmont of a father of three, Henry Tapia, on Tuesday. He was 35 years old. In addition to charges of assault with a deadly weapon (a vehicle), the accused has also been charged with a hate crime. This is what racism can lead to: 3 children without a father, a grieving partner and family, and a hopeful future stripped away.

A Hateful Murder in Belmont

Our national mortal sin of racial murder has come to our community, a day after we celebrated the life and legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr, and day before the inauguration of the first Black woman to the second highest office in the land. We weep, we moan and we shout why, why, why.

Belmont Against Racism mourns the loss of Henry Tapia and how that loss will be a loss and trauma suffered by his family and friends forever. We offer our deepest condolences to his girlfriend and children and our support to them as they grasp the enormity of this event. It will change their lives forever.

However, it should also change all of our lives. We at Belmont Against Racism must concede that we have failed. We have tried to create a more welcoming community and respond to racist acts and events over the years and we have reached some. Yet, our national climate of hate, division and the toxic return of white supremacy has created a petri dish of hate, oppression and murder that has become a challenge more vicious than we have seen in decades. It is past time for white Americans to confront the fact that we live in and tolerate a culture and system which is racially unjust. It is time to stop pretending that it can't happen here, because now it has happened here. A man's life has been taken. We can't just look the other way and get on with life as it has been.

And so, we have seen a rage filled assault by truck on the streets of our town. Our first acts must be those of compassion and care for the victims. What do we do next? Belmont Against Racism will be asking ourselves this question. America must continue to ask these questions of itself as must every state and community. After our collective shock and mourning, we must once again return to the work of confronting the racism that has been too easily avoided in our lives and community. It is still true that if we are not part of the solution, we are part of the problem.