

## Letter to the Editor, Danvers Herald

The Danvers Committee for Diversity has now been renamed the **Danvers Committee for Human Right and Inclusion**.

The Danvers Committee for Diversity was established in 1997 by the Danvers Board of Selectmen “to combat anti-Semitism and discrimination in all forms” and to “promote awareness and acceptance of diverse lifestyles.” This thinking reflected the notions of gender and sexual orientation that were prevalent at the time and which are now so outdated.

Our collective awareness of the struggles of individuals marginalized due to their race, sexual orientation, ability, age or ethnicity has grown to include the racism and homophobia underlying discrimination and marginalization. With that has come an evolution of the committee. Once a Committee to which acts of discrimination, anti-Semitic or racist graffiti in our town were reported and responded to, the Committee now also works to prevent such acts by actively seeking to ensure a climate of respect for the inherent dignity and worth of every individual and the right of every person to feel free, safe, respected and included in their community. Tolerance and acceptance aren’t enough.

Our reflections and deliberations over the past year resulted the following Name Change and revised Mission Statement for the Committee. The Board of Selectmen at the March 20, 2018 meeting approved this change unanimously.

The **Danvers Committee for Human Rights and Inclusion** works to ensure the fundamental right of all residents of our town to feel safe, respected and included in community life. We embrace the inherent worth and dignity of every person. The Committee works to combat racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia and all discrimination and prejudice.

Through communication and collaboration with our town leadership, police department, school administration and community organizations, we strive to move beyond acceptance to encourage awareness of bias, sensitivity, respect, welcome and inclusion among our local institutions.

We stand with and support any group or individual who is labeled negatively or targeted due to their skin color, religious affiliation or lack thereof, gender, gender identification, age, sexual orientation or identification, disability, country of origin or economic circumstance.

The Committee approaches its work with the understanding that Danvers is part of a larger community. We acknowledge the history of oppression, slavery and genocide in our world, and we promote awareness of the values that unite us in Danvers and in the larger human community.

I would like to acknowledge and express my sincere gratitude to the Board of Selectmen for their support and for approving this new name and mission statement, as it’s more reflective of what we do in town, especially to the chairman David Mills (Board of Selectman Liaison). I would also like to thank our police liaison Lt. Ashley Sanborn, our interfaith partner July Lombard, and our School Committee liaison Jeff Kay. Thanks to all the members of the **Danvers Committee for Human Right and Inclusion** (Paul Pawlak, Sally Kerans, David McKenna, Charles Desmond, Cathy-Sullivan Bradley, Donna Hopkins, Bob Gamer, Jose Sanchez-Salazar, and Robin Healy) for their dedication and for all that they do to help our town be the best town it can be. Thanks to our Town Staff liaison, Assistant Director of Planning and Human Services, Susan Fletcher. Dutrochet Djoko  
Chairman of the Danvers Committee for Human Right and Inclusion