

Re: Macomb, Illinois Police Chief Curt Barker

The Racial Justice Coalition of the Democratic Women of McDonough County is in Macomb, IL, the home of Western Illinois University. WIU boasts the largest undergraduate law enforcement program in the nation.

Why, then, do the Mayor and white city leaders refuse to acknowledge the many complaints about the chief of police?

Document prepared by: Leadership Team of the Racial Justice Coalition

For more info, contact:

Heather McMeekan, DWMC President

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Fact: Chief Barker used a FAKE Nelson Mandela quote for months (until we posted about it online) in his signature line after being criticized for racist police practices.

The false quote: "Fools multiply when wise men are silent."

- Mandela never said this, and most likely would've been speaking in context of Apartheid South Africa.

This is an example of cultural appropriation, NOT appreciation. When done by a white male police chief accused by multiple white and Black community members, students, alumni of racist tweets, comments, microaggressions, misconduct, intimidation against those trying to submit complaints, this is especially offensive to those of us concerned about racism and bias in policing.

Is this the email signature line he sends to his LEJA students at WIU? If so, do those future law enforcement professionals know it's a false quote?

Chief Barker repeatedly failed to lead his officers to acting in good faith and with compassion for our members and those attending our protests. We were repeatedly subjected to hostile behavior from several individuals despite having called the police.

Curt W. Barker
Chief of Police
Macomb Police Department
120 S. McArthur St.
Macomb, IL 61455
Office (309) 833-4505
E-mail cbarker@macombpolice.com

"Fools multiply when wise men are silent" Nelson Mandela

"Do everything you can to get the incident on video and audio so we can defend your actions."

From: Curt Barker
Sent: Tuesday, August 18, 2020 6:01 PM
To: MPDEveryone@macombpolice.com
Subject: Protests and pop up events

Everyone,

I am reminding everyone that we need to provide extra patrol for the events in Chandler Park so that we don't have an incident that makes national news. If you have an incident reported to you in Chandler Park that rises to the level where you can issue a city ordinance citation or make a state arrest then do so. Mayor Inman wanted me to stress to you that he has our back and that it is critical we do everything we can to keep the peace. Do everything you can to get the incident on video and audio so we can defend your actions. I believe and are willing to work with us. McMeekan will twist everything said and turn a positive situation into a negative. So document everything and gather all evidence. If you have questions or concerns come see me.

Thanks,

Curt W. Barker

We hope those reading will notice his language used against the people he is “sworn to serve and protect” and who he purports to “want to treat like family” on his webpage. Is this the level of service

Fact: Chief Barker repeatedly sent emails using the municipal email system to his entire department denigrating Heather McMeekan, who, on behalf of our org, [called for him to be investigated and step down or be removed](#) - for (among other things) retaliating on Black folx for trying to file complaints against him and/or his officers. They are willing to testify and several have signed witnessed affidavits.

Should a police officer - a leader in the community, sworn to serve and protect, be permitted to use the email system to defame a community leader who has called for him to be investigated? Is this retaliation? Is it obstruction with intent to thwart a proper investigation? What is positive about a Police Chief who degrades and libels a group of women and their event participants over the municipal email system?

“McMeekan will twist everything said and turn a positive situation into a negative.”

Given that Chief Barker sent this to his entire department about a person who called for him to be investigated and step down or be removed, this is beyond unacceptable. It may be retaliation and/or denigration to cause his officers to be negatively biased against any complaints.

That this is being said about a woman is blatantly misogynistic, and an example of “positivity culture.” We are not required to speak positively about public servants to be entitled to the same level of public service...or are we?

“It is believed that a certain group is trying to entice individuals so that they can point fingers and blame.”

This is libelous against our org and our protestors (along with Ms. McMeekan).

Our protests were to:

1) Show LOVE to our Black, Hispanic, Latin, Native American, and Asian community members suffering daily psychological trauma with our degrading cultural environment and

From: Curt Barker
Sent: Wednesday, August 05, 2020 10:13 AM
To: Jeff Hamer; Chris Butcher; Jim Rowland; Todd Tedrow; Ken Neavear; Lindsey May (lmay@macombpolice.com)
Cc: David Burnham (dburnham@macombpolice.com)
Subject: Protests

Supervisors,

The protesters are not completing special event permits and therefore we don't know when they will be in Chandler Park. There has been a slight escalation of events recently with counter protesters. It is believed that a certain group is trying to entice individuals so that they can point fingers and blame. In order to prevent this and be able to say we offered our services it has been recommended that when we see a group pop up a supervisor makes contact with the organizer. So if you see a group pop up stop identify the lead organizer and have dispatch create an incident for citizen contact that you met with them. Let them know if they have any issues to contact us **immediately**. If you have any questions let me know. The BLM group has been having an event every Wednesday, so expect one today. Groups are: Heather McMeekan- Democratic Women of McDonough County/Racial Justice Coalition, - BLM, - Grassroots Movement, and Social Justice Coalition. I am not aware of any counter protest groups. Ensure that your OIC's have been briefed.

Thanks,

Curt W. Barker
Chief of Police
Macomb Police Department
120 S. McArthur St.
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Office (309) 833-4505
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“Fools multiply when wise men are silent” Nelson Mandela

public discourse nationwide.

2) *Teach young people* how to confront hatred with active, passionate, NON-violent resistance to HATE.

3) *DE-ESCALATE the level of fear and anger projected by racist white people* on the #BlackLivesMatter human rights stance by practicing long-term cognitive exposure. By keeping this topic in the environmental culture of a community, through months of keeping the language in the media and being visible in the community, we willingly tolerated the negative behavior hoping that over time people with high reactivity would become less reactive and presumably, safer for our Black community members.

4) *We ALWAYS de-escalated at our protests.* When attending protests where yelling was permitted, we worked with those protestors to redirect the energy to peaceful direct action organizing. We NEVER “enticed” (did he mean “incite?”) and to claim we were is patently false.

We have always WANTED TO BE SAFE. MANY of our women are trauma survivors yet willingly subjected ourselves to hatred, especially from many white males, to stand UP for our Black community members. Our Black folk who demonstrated were subjected to racial trauma at EVERY EVENT, EVERY PROTEST by members of OUR community.

Yet there was little compassion for any of them by our “loving community” on the right, left, or middle. The silence of our white community members is a secondary, deeper wounding for which our members still grieve. Our first year of organizing, may still believed in the idea that there would be SOME org, or our party, or some group of WIU faculty, or some clergy, or some professionals who would actually step up and show up and begin challenging this community’s hate. While some did, far more drove by pretending our people were invisible - including those in the highest positions of authority.

This comment clearly demonstrates why we do not believe Chief Barker cares about the harm he is doing to our people and our leadership team with these types of emails to his entire department. We see Black Lives Matter protests as positive. The negative behavior we received we put out on social media for our protection but also to alert our Black community members who is - and isn’t - safe for them. That’s important to know if your Black child, for instance, was going to be visiting the home of someone who screamed obscenities at us for holding BLM signs.

The hate is already present in the community, well known to those of us paying attention. The only people who don’t recognize it are many of these white people who are culturally incompetent due to their all- or mostly-white social circles, churches, schools, families. *We don’t need a “gotcha” moment to prove it’s here. Just grab a BLM sign and stand on the corner and it’s evident.*

To suggest we’d put ourselves or anyone else in harm’s way for such a stunt isn’t just libelous, it sets us up for both being targeted for violence and victim-blamed if suffering it. Our Police Chief should be held accountable for such a disgracefully dehumanizing lie.

“In order to prevent this and be able to say we offered our services..”

This sentiment is an excellent example why our protestors do not feel the police officers here, with a few exceptions, care about our safety. Due to the police officers posting negative sentiments online about us, combined with the negative attitude of the officers who came to our protests to “identify the leaders,” we ended our protests.

Our protestor’s expressed fear that the negative police sentiment against us - which we now know for months has been led by Chief Barker’s emails insulting, dehumanizing, and denigrating us and our org - would cause the police to

perhaps fail to respond appropriately, or even in a way which might cause us more likely to be harmed, as has happened in many other communities.

We do wish to state Officer Jeff Hamer and one of the female officers we dealt with always treated us with respect and concern. Yet police leadership continues to cause many of our members and leadership team members to now fear EVER CALLING MACOMB POLICE for *any* request for help, knowing how the officers have been conditioned by their leadership to have negative bias against us.

Our concerns about Chief Barker nor the police have been ignored by the City Council, Mayor Inman, and City Administrator Scott Coker, and after over 18 months of OpEds, public comments, an online petition, and many protests and park events, we have not been granted space on the agenda at a city council meeting, nor a town hall, nor an investigation. In one case, Mayor Inman winked at Chief Barker after Heather McMeekan spoke about these concerns at city hall: <https://www.facebook.com/375144019788982/videos/681810896015189/> The community appears fully behind Chief Barker and the police department.

Fact: Chief Barker wrote an email claiming a backchannel from the IL AG

To our surprise, our FOIA returned Barker claiming a backchannel in the Illinois Attorney General's Office. It works like this:

Complaints against Barker, other police submitted to the Illinois Attorney General

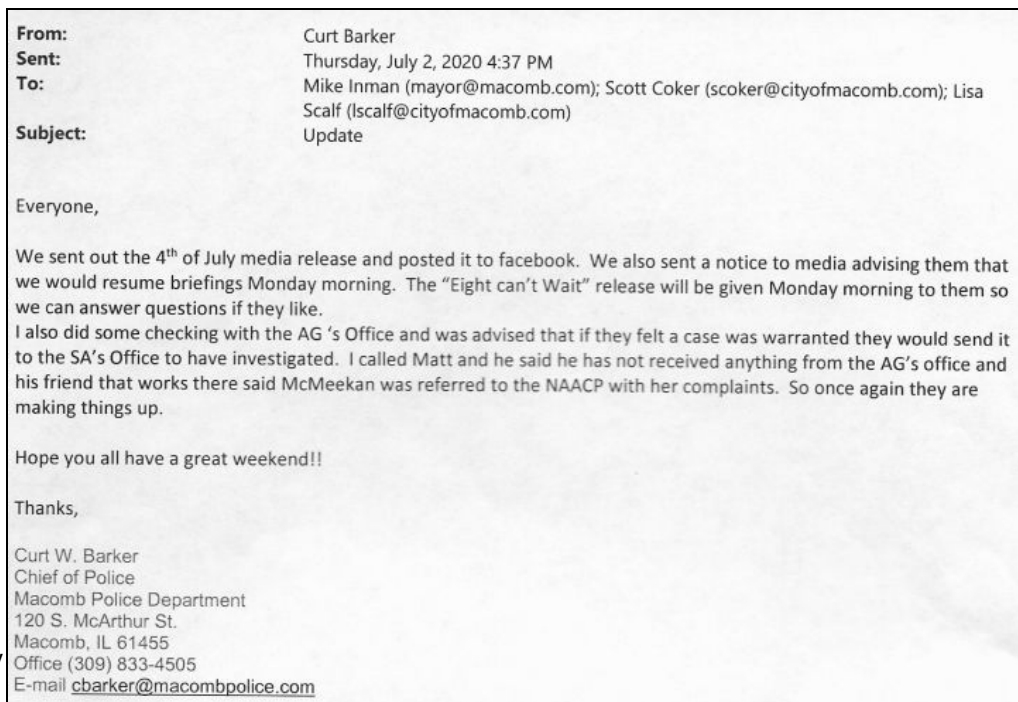
> who shared with McDonough County State's Attorney Matthew Kwacala

> who shared it with Chief Barker

> who used it (or misrepresented it) in a possible attempt to discredit our complaints by claiming we're "making things up" to Mayor Inman, Scott Coker, and City Attorney Lisa Scalf.

Chief Barker was the subject of many of our complaints,

INCLUDING complaints from Black folx that he and several of his officers retaliated against those trying to



force the police to allow them to submit complaints about the police.

“I called Matt (AG) and he said he has not received anything from the AG’s office and his friend that works there said McMeekan was referred to NAACP with her complaints. So once again they are making things up.”

Matt refers to McDonough County State’s Attorney, Matthew Kwacala, for whom we have received several complaints about malicious prosecution but for which the persons with such complaints have expressed fear of retaliation.

About Our Submitted Complaints

We submitted two types of complaints to the IL AG.

- Complaints for OMA, FOIA violations and political disruption tactics, including libel against our org
- Complaints filed on behalf of those without financial, tech, class privilege

We submitted complaints about possible violations of the OMA, Ethics, and FOIA along with concerns about inappropriate political disruption tactics being used against civil rights organizing on behalf of OUR organization; and we submitted complaints on behalf of Black community members and students to assist them in filing pattern complaints.

Once we filed the complaints on behalf of other people, that was the end of our org’s involvement in those complaints. By our understanding, those individuals weren’t filing complaints for which they were expecting to receive justice for themselves unless it was found to be illegal. The IL AG currently cannot investigate individual complaints, just investigate patterns of misconduct. And it takes many such complaints to find the evidence for a pattern to meet the standard for investigative authority. We were hoping that people would at least receive some measure of justice knowing their complaints were adding to the awareness of the functioning of the local police.

We discovered that many of these already traumatized and disenfranchised persons lacked the privileges necessary to carry their complaints through the process. Most of those who submitted complaints are living in entrenched intergenerational poverty, and struggle to maintain phone access, much less email/internet. Some are transitionally housed, moving often due to lack of rent, mental health issues, domestic abuse. Most gave up on the process well before any formal investigation was even begun.

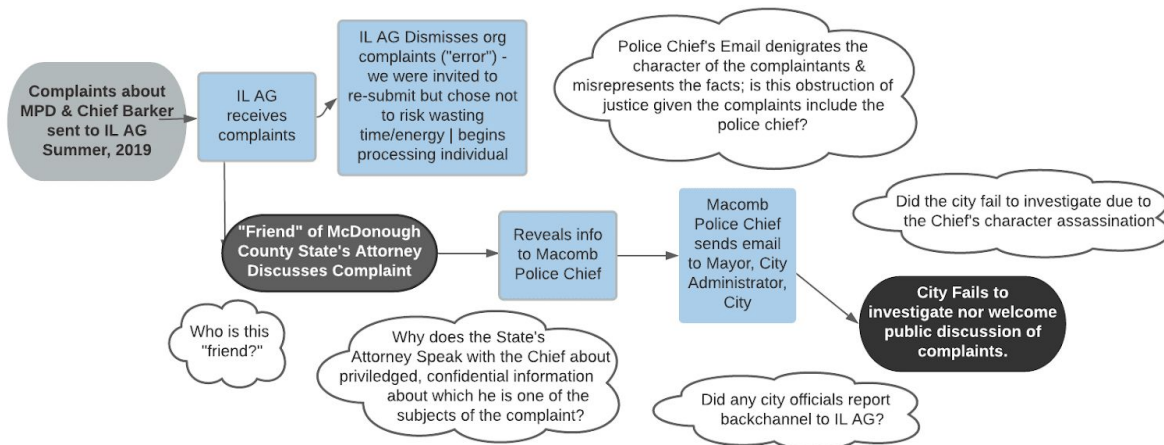
When I spoke at the city council, I was not aware that most had been unsuccessful at completing the necessary steps in the process. After being accused of lying, we checked in and that’s when we discovered that persons filing complaints need support all throughout the process or the process cannot begin to work for them.

The complaints about our org were dismissed by an error by the IL AG, according to the paralegal assigned to our cases. The person handling them mis-understood the IL Human Rights act, believing that orgs could not file for violations of human rights/civil rights violations. We challenged the dismissal, and were told they had been erroneously dismissed and that we were welcome to re-file. Our leadership team decided to re-focus our energy from filing complaints to instead hosting educational events and protests to begin addressing the rising hate we were seeing escalate rapidly online in the area.

So, while Chief Barker was accurate that our complaints were dismissed, it wasn’t because they had been investigated and found invalid. They never made it that far in the process. We do believe we may be looking at dozens of possible cases deserving of re-trial, expungement, or appeal.

Chief Barker is misinforming the city leaders, and denigrating us in the process. That he has a good motive for discrediting myself and our org makes us want an independent investigation in case this may be possible obstruction of justice for attempting to thwart suspicion for the complaints against him.

FOIA'd Email from Macomb Police Chief Curt Barker to Mayor Inman, Affirmative Action Officer/City Administrator Scott Coker, City Attorney alleging backchannel in IL AG's Office



Fact: Chief Barker allows his Deputy Chief to use abusive, inappropriate tactics against those submitting complaints about officers.

We submitted a complaint against a Macomb police officer for incitement of hate and vitrol against us on his personal tactical/concealed carry website. We also submitted this complaint to the Macomb Police Department to see how the complaint process works, how community members can expect to be treated by the MPD Leadership, and how the department responds to complaints.

- [Trained Police Liaison Evaluation of Macomb, Illinois Police Department "Complaint" Procedure](#)
 - [Link to Youtube Video of complaint](#)
- DWMC Board Public Comment to city council after reviewing video/transcript of treatment of Heather McMeekan and Dr. Essie Rutledge by Deputy Chief Dave Burnham [no response given] <https://www.democratic-women.org/2020/11/02/our-complaint-to-mpd/>
- Annotated complaint: https://www.democratic-women.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/DWMC_-_Complaint-Against-Officer-JP-McLaughlin-10_19_20-2.pdf
- Best Practice Guide for handling complaints against officers <http://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/BP-InternalAffairs.pdf>

Fact: Police Chief Curt Barker has changed his narrative about several cases once we began asking questions. He had the department stop holding press briefings and stopedp responding to all follow-up questions from several local journalists about the cases we brought up at our events and at the City Council.

- *McDonough County Voice* Newspaper Editor Michelle Langhout is the person to contact about her paper's interactions with city leadership. Her email: mlanghout@mcdonoughvoice.com.

[Our petition for Chief Barker to step down or be removed](#) from power has several hundred signatures from within our county, and over 12.5k signatures overall. The Mayor and white city council members continue to refuse to acknowledge the petition and do not appear to take our complaints seriously.

RJC Concern: Local Black people and Black WIU students have suffered numerous civil, constitutional, and human rights violations under Chief Barker's leadership.

After almost 18 months of interviewing community members (including Black WIU students), having had members of our organization and protestors subjected to the chief's leadership mistakes and getting no help from city hall, we are now making our concerns broadly known in the hopes that an investigation will happen from an agency with oversight authority. In spite of our best efforts, no help is forthcoming locally.

Case Examples

A disabled Black man with a caregiver was sent on a one-way train to Chicago with no resources. His caregiver was not notified. The disabled man was found weeks later in the freezing cold streets of Chicago, suffering from frostbite. NO accountability was taken, there was not even so much as an apology for the harm done to this man and his family. ([Link](#))

A disabled Black mother was brutalized and denied medical care, despite having a head injury. She was falsely charged in an attempt to cover up the police abuse. There has been NO admitting of wrongdoing, and the MPD is still actively trying to get her locked away. ([Link](#))

She alleges and had told several witnesses that a woman known to her had tried to drive her vehicle at her in an intimidating manner, causing her to fear for her and her baby's life. She attempted to report the incident by calling the police, but was passed to a phone which had no voice mail, a situation which has been reported by several individuals and may indicate a need for checking the complaint process.

She encountered that same woman who was working as a cashier at a gas station. The manager's witness statement verifies she was threatened verbally by the cashier. Following this verbal threat to her life and that of her baby's, the mother (who has PTSD and DID) pushed a bottle of disinfectant off the counter onto the floor. The bottle did not touch the cashier.

Now, she is being charged with battery that we believe was self-defense and understandable in a trauma-informed review of this incident. A Mom with PTSD/DID having her and her baby's life threatened could understandably cause a momentary self-defensive response after having their lives threatened.

The arresting officer made several factual errors in the report, which do not match the manager's eyewitness account. The police officer gave the factually inaccurate info to the newspaper, which printed it as fact. The Housing Administrator saw the article and cancelled the Mom's housing contract. (It has since been restored upon appeal.)

Chief Barker has not held this officer accountable, and they are still actively trying to get her charged and locked away. ([Link](#))

Several Black people have also reported they tried to get the police to accept their reports of getting harassed by white men in vehicles while trying to intimidate/pretend to be trying to hit them, scream racial slurs, fly confederate flags out their windows, etc, yet the police did not take their reports, in some cases actively discouraging them from making a report and even retaliating on them. We believe an investigation will provide sufficient evidence to show a pattern of racial targeting in this community followed by police refusing to even file reports Black community members request.

When an incident near campus appeared to get no response from the police, despite video and neutral eyewitness testimony as to the danger and apparent intent to harm a crowd of Black folk at a party, we challenged the police leadership to perform a proper investigation. They did, after direct action organizing with phone calls, social media posts, emails. Yet, instead of expressing concern for the victims of the violence and thanking the neutral eyewitnesses who stepped forward to document via social media video and eyewitness evidence, the Mayor and Chief instead complained about people asking them to do their jobs. ([Link](#))

Getting neither concern for, nor investigation by, Mayor Inman into why the police were refusing to take complaints, our organization began doing sidewalk Black Lives Matter protests every week - for months - to begin standing up for our local Black community.

Our peaceful Protestors played top-40 music and did not yell back nor respond to any negative behavior unless the person was causing safety concerns. We did attend and support other protests where some verbal interchanges were allowed, but we worked with the leadership teams to cease such escalating interchanges to de-escalate.

Protestors, witness, and journalists experienced many examples of blatantly hateful/racist/misogynistic/xenophobic behavior from white people in vehicles, including many trucks and other vehicles driving aggressively past. We documented it on our Racial Justice

Coalition Facebook page to combat local community leaders' denials about these problems being present in this community.

Chief Barker has relayed authoritarian and openly white supremacist ideology.

In a 2016 discussion with concerned teacher/librarian Chanel Sasse, Ms. Sasse brought up the policing of Black people and People of Color who have moved to Macomb from urban areas. Chief Barker proclaimed that because a majority of Macomb is white, that he ***“has to enforce white cultural norms,”*** and that assimilation is part of enjoying the safety of Macomb. ([Link](#))

When discussing the county's planning of preventative measures for COVID-19, Chief Barker expressed repeatedly that his biggest frustration was “not being in charge.” Barker believes that law enforcement should play a bigger role in managing a public health crisis, yet refuses to have his department do its job enforcing pandemic community spreading protections. ([Link](#))

Chief Barker shares posts with racist, anti-BLM, anti-democratic, anti-immigrant, and anti-protest rhetoric on his social media accounts. He shows poor judgment in shares, even sharing posts which later were determined to be Russian propaganda.

Do these types of communications express a worldview which would create trust in most marginalized persons? (screenshots below)

Curt Barker Retweeted

Chad Prather - Pa... · Nov 14, 2016
College protesters! This is what I think about THAT. #GoToClass

Protesting the protesters
youtube.com

19 146 155

Curt Barker Retweeted

Robert Neville · Nov 12, 2016
Imagine the huge relief of immigration officers & people who want to actually do their jobs in the DOJ and the FBI.

Deportation Officers Celebrate Trump's Victory
buzzfeednews.com

28 479 730

Curt Barker @barkercw · Nov 10, 2016
This is why the country voted for Trump. The law and order candidate! If you don't like democracy, move to Canada #TrumpProtest

Curt Barker @barkercw · Nov 8, 2016
We are the Silent Majority #Eleven816 | Donald J. Trump for President
youtu.be/3lrrPG5iPAK

U.S. Cellular 12:40 AM 9%
facebook.com

Like Comment Share

Curt Barker
January 31, 2017 at 6:55 PM

Allen West January 31, 2017 at 11:20 AM
It's not a BAN. And it's not on MUSLIMS. Please share this video to shut down this hysteria once and for all.
http://go.clarionproject.org/ban/

Like Comment Share

Associated Press

“We’re actually enforcing a much wider range of immigration laws than

TWITTER.COM
Curt Barker (@barkercw) | Twitter
The latest Tweets from Curt Barker (@barkercw):...



Curt Barker

December 10, 2017 at 8:56 AM ·



David Croom December 9, 2017 at 6:05 PM ·



Watch this amazing performance of the National anthem at the Army vs Navy football game today.

Not a single knee being taken!!

This is a group of young men and women who love and serve their country! God bless our troops! 🇺🇸 #MAGA #ArmyNavyGame



Like



Comment



Share