



WATCHUNG HILLS REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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To the Members of the greater Watchung Hills Regional High School Community:

Hate will not define us as a community. Our students envision a culture of upstanders - a term coined by our own students - that stands for safety, inclusivity, and a sense of unity. In order to create an ideal environment for learning, we strive to eliminate all racist language and behavior in the Watchung Hills community.

In spite of our best efforts, a hateful act recently rattled our entire community. During an off-campus Halloween party, two members of our student body disrespected members of our entire community by “dressing up” inappropriately and enforcing negative racist stereotypes. Although the incident did not occur on school grounds, it has had an impact on our entire student body and the accepting environment we try to create for all our students. Acts of intolerance have disrupted our ability to focus on academics, and we are calling for student and administrative action to begin repairing our community. These students’ choice to dress up in offensive costumes has had a direct, negative impact on our school and beyond, and therefore we have planned an equally powerful response.

This school-wide initiative is designed to ensure that an incident like this never occurs again. We know our community is stronger because of our diversity, and we want to become more united than ever and not allow outside factors to divide us. We want to stand together against hate. The students and teachers realize that acknowledging our many social and cultural differences can only make us stronger. We want to stand up in solidarity with one another, while simultaneously embracing difference. We believe this moment calls for deliberate action.

While initially, the incident caught us by surprise, we are ready to act. Inspired by the “National United Against Hate Week” (11/17-11/23), **The Watchung Hills students and faculty plan to begin to repair the pain this incident caused by inviting you all to attend our *Warriors United Against Hate* community event on Wednesday, November 20th, 2019. Beginning at 5:45 PM, students, teachers, parents, and community leaders are all invited to walk around the high school track at Tozier Field.** Participants will complete a single lap with their phone lights out to symbolize healing and forward-thinking. The event will conclude in the auditorium with a presentation by a national reconciliation consultant, Mr. Guillermo Lopez and representative leaders of the student body. Coming together as a community is a crucial step in driving hate from our high school. As part of our school’s strategic plan to create a more equitable environment, this evening of healing is one step toward improving school climate. Please join us next Wednesday as we strive to eliminate divisive century-old racist stereotypes and continue to highlight the principles that unite us: equity, inclusion, and diversity.

~The students of Watchung Hills Regional High School