



Press Statement
September 10, 2021

It is the Lewiston Mayor's and City Councilors' belief that Auburn City Councilor Leroy Walker's attempt to simplify the achievements of John Jenkins through harmful stereotypes and unfounded rhetoric by way of distorting the reality of important issues only fosters negativity and divisiveness within our two cities.

Race is an issue that our communities cannot afford to ignore. We will not accept racist comments that breed division, conflict, and disparagement. The egregious remarks made by Councilor Walker were hurtful and detrimental to our communities. His sentiments do not align with how our governance views and protects its residents. His words will not derail our push for inclusivity, equality, and diversity. As a Council, we have chosen to celebrate John Jenkins at a perfect time.

John Jenkins was an exemplary man, mentor, community volunteer, and entrepreneur. He was the first African American ever to be elected to the Maine Senate and Mayor of both Lewiston and Auburn. He leaves behind a legacy that is larger than life and filled with joy, happiness, humility, courage, and excellence.

Councilor Walker's comments were not only reckless and irresponsible but also divisive, especially at a time when the community needs unity. This was a call for remembrance but not acknowledging Councilor Walker's words sets a dangerous precedent for populations of color.

To all persons hurt by the comments made by Leroy Walker, specifically our communities of color, though we will never understand the anger, hurt, and fear attached to his words, we stand with you. As a collective, we must work together and forge alliances that dismantle the ideals portrayed in the words spoken by Leroy Walker. It is important not to only acknowledge John Jenkins as a black man. He was more than his race. He was a great man, a man who did NOT need to earn our respect; if anything, we hope the community of Lewiston and Auburn earned his.

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