

**YJCW
NAACP**

PRESS RELEASE

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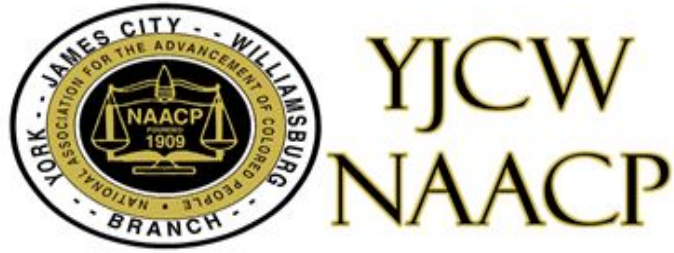
YJCW NAACP BRANCH'S RESPONSE TO THE SURFACING OF A YORK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPUTY IN A BLACKFACE HALLOWEEN COSTUME

YORK COUNTY, VA—The York-James City-Williamsburg (YJCW) Branch of the NAACP is appalled by the surfacing of Facebook photographs showing York County Sheriff's Deputy Jean Browning in a blackface Halloween costume depicting Congresswoman Frederica Wilson, a United States Congresswoman from Florida.

For decades, blackface has been synonymous with hate, degradation, and bigotry. Originally, white actors wore tattered and worn clothing, applied burnt cork to blacken their skin, and used soot to create the appearance of wider, fuller lips to imitate the appearance of African Americans. White performers profited from blackface by mocking black behavior and culture and promoting false stereotypes that African Americans were lazy, destitute, and unintelligible.

On Monday, November 6, 2017, YJCW NAACP Branch President, Brian J. Smalls, Esq. and Chair of our Legal Redress Committee, John Tarley, Esq., convened a meeting to address the Branch's concerns to York County officials. The consensus of all in attendance was that Deputy Browning's decision to dress in blackface was wholly inappropriate and completely unacceptable. Although it was acknowledged that our concerns were legitimate, it was clear that there would be no disciplinary action taken against Deputy Browning by the sheriff's department. It was commented to Mr. Smalls that had Deputy Browning been wearing a "noose" or a derogatory sign, disciplinary action would be appropriate. However, it is the Branch's position that blackface in and of itself should be enough to warrant disciplinary action.

Deputy Browning has been assigned by the York County Sheriff's Department as the program instructor for the York County School Division's Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program. One of DARE's central missions is establishing positive relationships



between students and law enforcement. Deputy Browning's conduct expressly contradicts DARE's goal by mocking members of the York County community and school division.

York County is a culturally and racially diverse area, and should seek inclusivity of all community members rather than division. It is inappropriate and disheartening when anyone mocks someone's race, but it is inexcusable when someone connected with our law enforcement finds it acceptable to paint their face to impersonate African-Americans.