

For Immediate Release

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Monday, January 18, 2016

### **Community Groups Gather Outside Bellingham City Hall to Reclaim MLK Day Celebration**

**Bellingham, WA** - Community groups and Bellingham residents gathered outside Bellingham City Hall to hold a counter celebration of the annual Martin Luther King Day. City of Bellingham has held annual celebrations of such an important day for people of color while misrepresenting the work of Martin Luther King and the Black people's movement of this country.

Groups such as Whatcom/Skagit International Workers of the World, Racial Justice Coalition, Community to Community and Latino Advocacy read excerpts from MLK speeches and hold signs calling for an end to City practices that perpetuate racism, systematizes racial profiling and denies the lived experiences of local communities of color.

Amongst their demands were calling Mayor Linville and Chief Cook to stop denying racially profiling by local police. The accounts from community members, early data, and other indications show significant racial profiling in our area. Bellingham Police Department recently changed their policy to allow stopping and detaining of suspected immigrants, and calling Customs and Border Patrol.

Calling for community control through the implementation of a *strong* Civilian Oversight Commission. *Police can't police themselves.*

Begin data collection and stop spending public funds on racial profiling and ineffective policing policies and practices. *Start investing in ways to keep our community safe by collecting and sharing comprehensive data.*

Calling for an end to the demilitarization of police; police should protect the people and all members of our community, not use military gear, equipment and tactics against the people.

And mandate consistent, effective *implicit bias training* for all law enforcement officers, staff, supervisors, municipal employees, and government contractors.

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