

Bellevue Coaches Association

March 3, 2016

John Harrison
Bellevue School District
12111 NE 1st Street
Bellevue, WA 98005

Re: Complaint

Dear Mr. Harrison:

I am in receipt of a complaint from a member of our association with regard to their treatment during an interview (that he describes as more of an interrogation) which the Bellevue School District requested and required him to attend as an employee of the district. The complaint is from Rick Brown. As I go through the grievance process as outlined in our collective bargaining agreement, for the moment let us proceed as if we are at the informal grievance stage. Mr. Brown has asked BCA to assist him in this matter and BCA has agreed to do so.

First, in his interrogation (as he puts it), he was subjected to repeated questions over and over and over again which had absolutely nothing to do with the defined scope that you provided back in October. The interviewers from the WIAA made it very clear that they did not have a defined scope and that they had no intention of limiting their questions to those you outlined in your October 2015 letter. The investigators advised Rick Brown that they are aware of the BSD requested limitations, and they advised that they had a meeting with BSD about these limitations, but they are proceeding as instructed by the WIAA which conflicts with the BSD limitations. In other words, they are going to ask whatever it is they want to.

Secondly, the investigators/interrogators proceeded to barrage Mr. Brown with questions about persons of African American ancestry. Where they lived, had he ever been inside their homes, etc. It got to the point where Mr. Brown had to interrupt the interrogation and question the interrogators as to why they were only asking him about African American families and he asked them why their process was so incredibly racially biased. They responded that they were simply asking questions from a list that you (John Harrison of BSD) provided them with of "people with questionable addresses to focus on". At that point, it was agreed to immediately contact you (John Harrison) via telephone and confirm this assertion being made by the interrogators. During this call, which all in the room could hear, you vehemently denied providing the WIAA interrogators with such a list. You clarified that in

answer to a request from the WIAA investigators (interrogators), you had provided them with a list of 42 families who had lived outside of the middle school feeder school attendance boundaries prior to enrolling at Bellevue High School as freshman and that the list had absolutely nothing to do with "questionable addresses or persons to focus on".

When the phone call ended, the interrogators did not apologize for intentionally misstating what the list was for (i.e. they did not apologize for lying), and instead pointed out to Mr. Brown that there were not being racist or biased and that they were simply reading from a list provided by the school district and that they did not know who was black or who was white. Mr. Brown then repeated his earlier question and asked them why then weren't they asking him questions about any of the Caucasian families from the list. The interrogators became noticeably upset, raised their voices rather loudly in an intimidating fashion and proceeded to ask him immediately about two Caucasian families in a very loud, sarcastic, rude, and condescending tone. As an African American man, Mr. Brown takes this kind of behavior very seriously: Mr. Brown then told the interrogators that, 'You do know black from white, and you just proved my point'. At that point, the interrogators abruptly and tersely stated that the "interview" was over, and the meeting ended.

However, at that point, as people were packing up to leave, the interrogators asked counsel for the BCA if she had any additional information or examples regarding claims of racial bias or claims of racism in this WIAA investigation. Counsel for BCA replied to them that she did actually have quite a few examples and would be happy to share them. Then, in order to protect her client from further exposure to racially insensitive commentary or examples of racism on the part of Mr. Westinghouse and Mr. Blackstone, the attorney for BCA asked Mr. Brown to leave the room and go home which he did. At the behest of the WIAA interrogators, a phone call was then made to a BSD administrator who was present at other interviews/interrogations as the interrogators stated that they wanted to prove to BCA counsel that other meetings with other families were not in fact racially biased, nor did they exhibit rather clearly racist behavior on the part of the interrogators. The interrogators were not successful in reaching the BSD administrator they were trying to reach. Counsel for BCA then told them to contact her after they hear back from the BSD administrator they were trying to reach to prove that they were not acting in a racially biased manner and demonstrating incredibly racist behavior during their interviews/interrogations. In talking to BCA counsel this morning regarding the situation, as she has not received any contact back from the WIAA interrogators, we are under the understanding now that the BSD administrator they were talking to must have not agreed with them and that their behavior in other meetings was in fact racially biased and that their behavior was in fact overtly racist or we would have heard back by now as they had promised.

In looking online for the definition of racism I find, "racism consists of ideologies and practices that justify or cause or perpetuate unequal treatment of groups or individuals based on criteria of perceived racial or ethnical differences". Mr. Brown's question was never answered

and it is an important question... why are these two Caucasian men only asking this black man questions about where black families live and not asking about where the white families live....except at the end and only after being prodded and challenged about it? Their later attempt to sarcastically name two other Caucasian students and to do so in a clearly angry and derogatory way only furthers the point being made by Mr. Brown. When Mr. Brown advised them that they are proving his point, they become noticeably angry and upset and ended the meeting with him. To Mr. Brown, the interrogators repeated naming of only African American families from a list which contains families from many ethnicities is a practice that is perpetuating the unequal treatment of African Americans and to Mr. Brown, creates an incredibly inappropriate, uncomfortable and racially charged setting for him. As Mr. Brown is there at this meeting at the behest of the Bellevue School District in his capacity as a current employee of the school district, what happened at this meeting to him is happening to him as part of his role as a BSD employee and this cannot be allowed. BSD cannot continue to allow this kind of treatment to go on with regard to its employees. We ask that the two investigators/interrogators be immediately dismissed for the following reasons:

1: Intentional factually incorrect statements (i.e. lying) made by the two investigators/interrogators about a list containing "questionable addresses and/or persons to focus on" and the purpose of that list. Also lying about not knowing who was black and who was white from the list.. and proving during the meeting that they actually did know.

2: A continued (and repeated) refusal by the investigators/interrogators to even attempt to follow the five-item scope letter that BSD promised this employee would in fact be followed...and then intentionally not being followed and the investigator/interrogators are not even shy about saying that they are not going to follow them. As there has been no documentation from BSD alerting BCA or any of its employees that the WIAA investigator/interrogators do not or might not follow the five item scope, you (i.e. BSD) must still be under the impression that the investigator/interrogators are actually following it... but they are not and BSD is not protecting its employees with regard to this.

3: Most importantly, a continued racially biased line of questioning, racially insensitive comments and sarcasm and moments of flat-out racism referred to above that have no business in the workplace at any time for Mr. Brown as one of your employees.

4: The taint of their racially biased and racially insensitive line of questioning to Rick Brown (and to many others BCA has been told) and the results stemming from that kind of behavior and line of questioning will forever tarnish and cloud what should have been asked and discussed as part of the five-item scope. Given this, unless these two interrogators and the information they have garnered through their improper practices and racially biased line of questioning and racially insensitive conduct with persons like Mr. Brown are immediately dismissed, then BSD will be permitting and accommodating a racially biased report and racially motivated conclusions to forever be part of the record. In other words, BSD would be

accommodating this kind of behavior to be permanently allowed on paper as part of the results of the investigation in question. To persons like Rick Brown, this cannot be allowed to happen and goes to the very heart of what the experts refer to as latent racism. ...racism by persons who come from a generation where behavior like this is so ingrained into their upbringing to the point where they are not even cognizant of its inappropriateness. The message they are sending to Rick Brown and persons similarly situated is that black persons should not be living in West Bellevue and if they are, then something is amiss.

In any event, BCA understands that very similar concerns were first brought to your attention back in the early fall of 2015 and quite a number of times since. BSD has chosen so far to allow these incredibly harmful and insensitive behaviors and actions to go unchecked....at the expense of many including Rick Brown. If BSD does not step in here to correct this, the entire investigation going back to last summer when it started and back to the time when Mr. Westinghouse stated publicly that "he is going to level the playing field", while that is an inappropriate statement in and of itself, when methods such as those being used by Mr. Westinghouse and Mr. Blackstone are allowed to happen, their latent racism permeates throughout the entire investigation. Mr. Brown would like to set up a meeting at your earliest convenience to discuss these issues and the remedy that is being proposed in this complaint and informal grievance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pat Jones', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Pat Jones
President
Bellevue Coaches Association