

Confidential Memorandum

To: Members of the Executive Committee of the LCCC

Date: February 8, 2021

Fr: Members of the DEI Committee & BBEC

Re: Serious Concerns about the Chamber's handling of DEI issues
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As sub-committee co-chairpersons and as Members of the DEI Committee, we are writing this memorandum to you as the governing board of the Loudoun County Chamber who has the express authority to act, and address our concerns enumerated below. We would like to request a formal response in writing, and we would like to meet with you to discuss these concerns over a zoom call at the earliest possible time.

As you know, February is “black history month” and January 18th, 2021 was the official MLK, Jr. holiday. We were disappointed to see that neither the Chamber nor the DEI Committee had planned events or commemorations of these important national events for the Loudoun business community. And when it was raised on our DEI call two weeks ago, there was a scampering to try and connect with the BBEC and tap into what they had already planned. That is not a proper response. This was yet another reminder of the challenges we face with an all-Caucasian staff at the Chamber and a DEI leadership that after being in existence for several years, missed something so basic as to do calendar planning around black history month. This is a serious oversight that we cannot allow to go beyond this moment. And we will not.

Our first DEI call of 2021 was on January 27, 2021. Those of us who had expressed concerns to Tony about what happened on the December 16th call, made a collective decision that we would wait patiently and respectfully to see how our serious concerns raised about that meeting were addressed or not. Regrettably, those concerns put in writing and taken directly to Tony and Staci were not addressed. **At all.** Despite this disregard for us as professionals of color, we still conducted ourselves professionally and even volunteered for sub-committee chairmanships or other needs to support the overall success of the committee. To add insult to injury, an email

correspondence that was forwarded about speakers to members of the BBEC by Tony was not properly scrubbed at the bottom and what it says is simply stunning, offensive and must be taken seriously and addressed by this committee. (Please see attached Exhibit A).

Since our last meeting and given these troubling incidents we have met with and talked to key members of the black business community, the NAACP, the women's business community in Loudoun and they felt we had to raise these issues to the executive committee level immediately. We agree and we are doing so now.

Let us start with the **December 16, 2020** DEI meeting (and subsequent email correspondence 12/20-12/22 which we can provide upon request): On that call the Chair of the DEI Committee, Lisa Kimball made some inappropriate and racially insensitive comments. The notes that followed recapping the call were inaccurate and equally offensive. This was raised immediately with Lisa directly in writing and to Tony by several black DEI committee members. His response was that he was not going to do anything about it or address it, and instead he would rewrite the notes sent out on 12/21. He did not.

More recently, the members of the BBEC have been planning a Black History Program, to honor leaders who have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the empowerment and advancement of African Americans and people of color across the country. Some of those leaders confirmed were HRH Princess Zama Zulu of South Africa (Lineage to King Shaka Zulu of South Africa) Senator Boysko, Tony Perkins (WUSA 9), and Pastor Michelle (NAACP President) to name a few. There was one potential leader, who had not yet confirmed, which was Reverend Jesse Jackson. When the BBEC made Tony and his team aware of the attendees, Tony's response to his team in an email on or about February 4, 2021 was, "*Did Nicole really just book an African Princess and has a line on Jesse Jackson? I am speechless at that, but we do need a handle on how to explain this program. Right now, it sounds like a free for all.*" That kind of commentary is culturally illiterate, Mean-spirited. And mocking of the level of speakers the BBEC is trying to spotlight during this month.

Finally, although we do not wish to get into a contest of wills about process. We do want to give this committee the benefit of our wisdom as leaders in HR, Diversity, and Inclusion. And our extensive knowledge of best practices from our over 50+ years of collective experience in Fortune 100 companies as well as being trainers in those companies presently. Here are our suggestions for how we move forward and address these issues transparently.

Regarding the BBEC, the Chair & Co-Chair will not conduct any BBEC events until the following best practices are implemented:

1. A formal, written apology, from Loudoun's President Tony Howard for his blatant disrespect and disregard of valid concerns brought to him and his very insensitive email.
2. A formal, written apology, from Loudoun Chamber's Executive Board.
3. A conversation and apology from the DEI Committee Chair Lisa Kimball
4. Immediate placement, of a DEI Director as was suggested at the December 16, 2020 meeting.
5. Mandatory DEI training and leadership EIQ training for the Exec Committee, the DEI Committee Members, and Chamber staff.
6. A commitment from the DEI Chair & Vice Chair, to put together an action plan, to become a more inclusive committee that will consider holidays for ALL ethnicities and groups represented within the chamber. And a commitment to seek counsel from this group and input on racially sensitive matters that may arise in the media, in meetings, in political events or otherwise that impact the Loudoun business community.

In summation: The Executive Director of the Chamber and Board Members, as well as DEI Members cannot summarily dismiss race and gender conflicts when brought to their attention, particularly not when they are taking place under the direction of the Chair of the Diversity Committee. That is simply unacceptable to us and it should be to all of you. We also want to clear up the "reparations" issue once again.

Education Sub-committee co-chair Sophia Nelson suggested on our December 16, 2020 call that we needed staff diversity; a point that had been made before by others over the past two years. Her suggestion was that since "turn-over" and "retention" of staff had been used as a default position as to why there had been no black or brown hires, that we raise funds through corporate sponsors and create a staff role such as a DEI director for the Chamber or an HR role that would allow us to get some diversity on the staff quickly. This was shot down and deemed "reparations" by the Chair of DEI on our call and in the notes.

Ironically, at the January 2021 meeting, Tony announced that he is going to bring in a DEI expert on the staff. That is great, however, the credit should be given to DEI committee members who suggested. A suggestion that was deemed "reparations". There is no consistency and leadership on the direction we need to go in and how we evaluate best practices to help us build a more diverse business community in Loudoun County. This must change quickly.

Thank you for your full and immediate attention to this matter.

EXHIBIT A—

< **FW: BBEC: Black History Month Celebrati...**

Okay, let's be comprehensive about what we need from our BBEC leaders this Friday:

1. An agenda for the 2/18 BBEC program, including who is leading the program and who speaks when. (Did Nicole really just book an African Princess and has a line on Jesse Jackson? I am speechless at that, but we do need a handle on how to explain this program. Right now, it sounds like a free for all.)
2. What photos and titles do we need? Do we need bios for marketing? I suspect not, with this many "speakers." Maybe for introductions only.
3. I need to find out how they want to market this program. Our Chairs want to be front and center on marketing, but with this lineup is that wise?
4. We have a BBEC event the following week. Is that just Carmen speaking?

What am I missing?

Thanks - Tony

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 4, 2021 11:59 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED] ✕
[REDACTED]

