

**PLEASE READ, ACT, & PASS THIS INFORMATION ALONG**

**RE: The Disrespectful Behavior of Some House Republican Legislators to Our Black Legislators**

**Greetings, Champions for Justice and Equity,**

As a community, we should all be saddened, appalled and outraged that at a time when we need to work toward building unity to solve important issues within our state, where has been a lack of civility and blatant disrespect demonstrated when Black representatives stood and boldly opposed legislation that was harmful and discriminatory to our Black children.

On February 18, 2021 members of the Indiana House of Representatives, Rep. Gregory Porter and Rep. Vernon Smith, who are members of the Indiana Black Legislative Caucus (IBLC), were booed and intimidated by some of their White legislative colleagues. Although the Speaker of the House, Rep. Todd Huston, made a statement that called for order and respect within the chamber, there needs to be a stronger message sent from our community to protest the incidents that occurred.

Additionally, we must insist that a more meaningful accountability must occur. While a verbal reprimand was needed, there is a need for exacting more, such as a financial cost or removal of power from the legislators who began the boos and altercations that ended with Rep. Vanessa Summers feeling like she would be assaulted by another male Representative, Rep. Sean Eberhart. Without additional follow through, this situation will only embolden others to feel they can do the same and expect no consequential reprimand. Rep. Robin Shackleford, Chair of the IBCL has called for implicit bias training. Although we know there will be opposition to this request, this could be a first step along with others.

**As soon as possible**, please join me in contacting those listed below with emails or calls to express your concern about the insulting and situation that occurred. Thanks to the African American Coalition of Indianapolis and the Concerned Clergy Coalition for their quick responses. Let's join together to let the Legislative Body, Government leaders from other branches, and others in the community know we cannot condone the disparate, unjust and arrogant comments and actions perpetrated on our Black Representatives who not only have the authority, by right of election, but also the moral duty to speak on our behalf.

**These names may help you clarify the details of the news events listed below:**

Rep. Robin Shackleford D-Chair Indiana Black Legislative Caucus

Rep Phil GiaQuinta D-House Minority Leader

- Rep. Greg Porter D-Indianapolis
- Rep Vernon Smith D-Gary
- Rep. Vanessa Summers D-Indianapolis

Rep Todd Huston R-Speaker of the House

Sen. Rodric Bray R- President Pro Temp of the Senate

- Rep. Sean Eberhart R-Shelbyville

- Rep. Jim Lucas, R-Seymour
- Rep. Alan Morrison R-Brazil

**HERE ARE SOME IDEAS FOR WHAT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND COLLEAGUES CAN DO:**

***First:***

***Read the media coverage about incident, and decide if you think it is worth you taking the time to be outraged and moved to action:***

*The Indianapolis Star:*

<https://www.indystar.com/story/news/politics/2021/02/18/indiana-gop-lawmakers-boo-shout-down-black-colleagues-house-floor/4491682001/>

[\*The Indiana Black Legislative Caucus statement\*](#)

*The Indianapolis Star: Friday, 2/19/21*

<https://www.indystar.com/story/news/politics/2021/02/19/black-leaders-call-training-booing-indiana-statehouse-fight-racism/4505561001/>

*The Indianapolis Star: Saturday*

<https://www.indystar.com/story/news/politics/2021/02/19/black-leaders-call-training-booing-indiana-statehouse-fight-racism/4505561001/>

[\*Indianapolis Urban League / African American Coalition of Indianapolis statement\*](#)

Here's a nice straightforward commentary on the situation (Sheila Kennedy)

<https://www.sheilakennedy.net/2021/02/the-appalling-indiana-statehouse/>

Article: [Statehouse.com](#). It looks like where Sheila Kennedy got her info, and it has the advantage of being a true news source:

<http://thestatehousefile.com/44466/booing-jeering-hallway-altercations-mar-house-debate-on-school-district-boundaries-bill/>

Both The Atlantic (Adam Harris) and The New York Times (Nikole Hanna-Jones) have reported instances in Louisiana and Alabama where white communities have tried to separate from minority communities, as is the case that Rep. Porter and Rep Jordon argued for when they were booed.

**HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO IMMEDIATELY:**

**CHOOSE ONE OR TWO: Contact our Government Leaders:**

**Let them know that we expect them to take a stand against inappropriate and unwarranted behavior toward our Black legislators; and that, furthermore, we will not accept or tolerate such attitudes and actions of disrespect**

- Contact Republican: Indiana State Speaker of the House:
  - The Honorable Rep.Todd Huston - Email: [h37@iga.in.gov](mailto:h37@iga.in.gov)
  - Thank him for his statement, but ask him to do more to ensure that such disrespect does not occur again

- Contact Information: Legislative Assistant: Brittany Jenkins Phone: 317-232-9677 | 1-800-382-9841
  
- Contact Republican: Indiana President Pro Temp of the Senate:
  - The Honorable Sen.Rodric Bray [Senator.Bray@iga.in.gov](mailto:Senator.Bray@iga.in.gov)
  - Ask him as the Senate majority leader to communicate to members of the House and Senate the need for respect, civility and implicit bias training
  
- Contact your representative to ask them to speak up on the incident and champion respect civility, morality, and racial justice
  - Find your Representative: <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/find-legislators/>
  
- Contact Governor Eric Holcomb
  - To send an email click on: <http://www.in.gov/gov/2752.htm>
  - Ask him to share his position about civility and racial inclusion based on the incident, and the need for implicit bias training for government officials
  - Ask his staff to forward information to his new Chief Equity, Inclusion & Opportunity Officer Karrah A. Herring J.D. and, ask that her information be placed on the Governor's website
  
- Contact Chief Justice Loretta H. Rush
  - **Media Contact:** Kathryn Dolan, Public Information Officer [kathryn.dolan@courts.in.gov](mailto:kathryn.dolan@courts.in.gov)
  - Ask the court to issue a statement about the need for all government branches to practice civility and for all people, regardless of race and the need for implicit bias training for all government officials
  
- Contact the Indiana State Bar Association
  - [communication@inbar.org](mailto:communication@inbar.org)
  - Ask them to make a statement and take a stance

**CHOOSE ONE OR TWO Media Outlets: Contact them:**

- Respond to the Indianapolis Star articles online at the end of the articles, or with a Letter/Mesage to the Editor (200 words or less)
  - Contact Kaitlin Lang [kaitlin.lange@indystar.com](mailto:kaitlin.lange@indystar.com) and Arika Herron [arika.herron@indystar.com](mailto:arika.herron@indystar.com) to thank them for covering the story and following up on future resolution.
  - Editor: To send an editorial <https://static.indystar.com/en/submitletter/>
- Write letters/email individually to The Indianapolis Recorder and tell our concern (200 words or less)
  - Robert Shegog President/CEO [newsroom@indyrecorder.com](mailto:newsroom@indyrecorder.com)
  - Oseye Boyd Editor [oseyeb@indyrecorder.com](mailto:oseyeb@indyrecorder.com)
- Write letters/emails to Chalkbeat (An Education Newspaper) and share our concerns about the legislative issues that concern our children (200 words)
  - Chalkbeat Indiana [in.tips@chalkbeat.org](mailto:in.tips@chalkbeat.org) or [contact@chalkbeat.org](mailto:contact@chalkbeat.org)
- Contact Fox 59
  - [fox59news@fox59.com](mailto:fox59news@fox59.com)
  - Thank them for their coverage and ask them to follow up with resolution
- Contact WFYI News
  - WFYI <https://www.wfyi.org/contact-us>
  - Thank them for coverage and follow up on resolution
- Contact Indiana Public Media
  - Contact form: <https://indianapublicmedia.org/about/contact.php>

- Ask for coverage; state your opinion
- Contact
  - WTTV 4      [news4@cbs4indy.com](mailto:news4@cbs4indy.com)
  - WRTV 6      [https://www.wrtv.com/call6?\\_ga=2.84447513.1091980239.1613977573-2002122115.1613977573](https://www.wrtv.com/call6?_ga=2.84447513.1091980239.1613977573-2002122115.1613977573)
  - WISH 8      [newsdesk@wishtv.com](mailto:newsdesk@wishtv.com)
  - WTHR 13      <https://www.wthr.com/contact-us>
  - WFYI 20      WFYI <https://www.wfyi.org/contact-us>
  - WXIN 59      [fox59news@fox59.com](mailto:fox59news@fox59.com)
  - 1310 The Light - Tina Cosby [tmcosby@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tmcosby@sbcglobal.net)

## ORGANIZATIONAL CONTACTS:

- Contact organizations who have made statements and thank them and let them know you support their stance
  - **The Indianapolis Urban League and the African American Coalition of Indianapolis(Collective Listing)**
    - Tony Mason and Mark Russell
    - [info@indplsul.org](mailto:info@indplsul.org)
  - **Concerned Clergy Coalitions**
    - Julia Carson Government Center 300 E. Fall Creek Pky, Indpls. IN 46205, (800) 771-4061
  - **The Indiana Black Legislative Caucus**
    - **Rep Robin Shackleford, Chair**
    - [https://indianahousedemocrats.org/members/robin-shackleford/full#form\\_individual-member-contact](https://indianahousedemocrats.org/members/robin-shackleford/full#form_individual-member-contact)
    - RaeVen Ridgell, Legislative Assistant 317-232-9827, 1-800-382-9842

- Post of your Facebook about the incident. Include some of the links above for others to read
  - Share your concern
  - Share a news link
  - invite others to contact Todd Huston, Speaker of the House

Use all social media forms you have access to and make a statement about your concerns:

- Messages, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and any other platforms you use
- Contact news media outlets you know: call, email or write them (TV, Radio, Print Media)

Write and organize collective letters from your affiliated organizations, sororities, fraternities, and other civic and social groups and add signatures of leaders or names of groups

**ALSO:**

- Invite others in your spheres of influence to join your efforts
- Share with others what you think we should do to bring additional attention to this issue
- Share other ideas with me that you think will make a difference

**INVOLVE OUR YOUTH**

- Contact college students you know and ask them to discuss this and take action
- Contact young activists that you know in the city and state to ask for their voices to be heard on this issue

You may not be able to do all of these things, but I implore you to do at least one.  
 "If not you, then who? If not now, then when?" --Hillel the Elder.

Gwendolyn J. Kelley, Ph.D. , Concerned Community Stakeholder,  
[gwenkelley@comcast.net](mailto:gwenkelley@comcast.net)