

Note from Debbie Hillman  
Aug. 26, 2019

This is a slightly reformatted copy of the document that I received. (I had to reformat before posting on my website.) Before quoting, please check with either (1) the official complaint lodged with the Board of Ethics, or (2) one of the two authors, Trisha Connolly and Albert Gibbs.

Ethics Complaint Against Alderman Braithwaite  
August 11, 2019

We believe Alderman Braithwaite demonstrated **1) Abuse of Power** (*Violation of Code of Ethics 1-10-4 Standards of Conduct*), **2)** (a breach of) **Impartiality** (1-10-4 Standards of Conduct), **and 3) Intimidation by a Public Official** (*Violation of 720 ILCS 5/12-6 from Ch. 38, par. 12-6*) during the City Council meeting of July 15, 2019. From the dais, during City Council meeting on July 15, 2019, Alderman Braithwaite threatened, ridiculed and intimidated “white people” against publicly supporting their Black friends and fellow residents and from publicly engaging in discussions around racism.

The infractions as described in Evanston’s Code of Ethics:

**1) Abuse Of Power Of Office.** No officer or employee shall, use the prestige, power or influence of his/her office or employment to engage in any transaction which is, or would to a reasonable person appear to be, in conflict or incompatible with the proper discharge of his/her official duties, or which impairs, or would to a reasonable person appear to impair, the officer's or employee's independence of judgment or action in the performance of official duties. This prohibition shall extend to any use of official position or employment for a purpose that is or would appear to a reasonable person to be for the private benefit of the officer, employee or any member of their family, rather than primarily for the benefit of the City.

**2) Impartiality:** Every officer and employee shall perform his/her duties with impartiality and without prejudice or bias for the benefit of all citizens of the City.

**3) Intimidation by a Public Official**

The standards of (the Code of Ethics) are: intended to supplement and comply with the provisions regarding municipal officers in 65 ILCS and 50 ILCS 105/1 et seq., and any other state statutes or ordinances of the City relating to ethical conduct for City officers and employees.

**The obligations of (the Code of Ethics) shall not be limited to the provisions of the state statutes specified herein, nor shall the failure to include in this Chapter any provisions of a state statute release officers and employees of the City and other covered individuals from obligations, responsibilities and penalties imposed by state law.**

(720 ILCS 5/12-6) (from Ch. 38, par. 12-6)

**Sec. 12-6. Intimidation.**

(a) A person commits intimidation when, with intent to cause another to perform or to omit the performance of any act, he or she communicates to another, directly or indirectly by any means, a threat to perform without lawful authority any of the following acts:

**(5) Expose any person to hatred, contempt or ridicule**

We feel Alderman Braithwaite violated the Evanston Code of Ethics when, as Alderman, from the dais, during a City Council meeting, Alderman Braithwaite used intimidation as he scorned and ridiculed white residents by exposing them to contempt and ridicule from his position of power with the intent to

silence all “white folks” from publicly discussing concerns surrounding racism in Evanston. Video here: July 15, 2019 City Council (2:50:55) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOiyhgvWgtw>

Ald. Braithwaite, during the City Council meeting, from the dais, scorned, ridiculed and discouraged white residents from expressing concerns about racism and attempted to alienate White residents from Black residents when he said; “I really sit here and **have a difficult time when I hear white folks admonishing me and using the word racism like it's some coin phrase that you just came up with.** Unless you've walked in my shoes or any one of us blacks sitting back here, **I suggest you keep that to yourself. You want to have that conversation internally, I'm a big fan of that internal versus external conversations. Do that.**”

Mr. Braithwaite did not make these comments in private, as a private citizen between individuals. He made these comments in his position as an Alderman during a City Council meeting. In addition, when the Council adjourned, a white resident politely approached Ald. Braithwaite in Council Chambers to discuss his comment (above), and Alderman Braithwaite abruptly cut off the resident (Ray Friedman) shouting at him saying: **“Shut up, just shut up.”** This response to Mr. Friedman only reinforced the intimidating effect of Ald. Braithwaite’s comments from the dais and his intent to silence white residents and to cast a chill on First Amendment protected speech and to sever their public support of black residents.

We assume Mr. Braithwaite is aware of the countless number of white freedom marchers and protesters in the 50’s and 60’s who publicly supported the civil rights movement against segregation and other institutional racist policies. (Some were brutally murdered for standing and protesting against racist institutions and segregation such as Rev. Bruce Klunder, Rev. James Reeb, William Lewis Moore, Andrew Goodman to name a few.) We have to wonder if Mr. Braithwaite thinks those white people who protested alongside Blacks should have just stayed home and **“kept to themselves”** and kept the conversation quiet and **“internal?”** There were those of that mindset during this period in history who wanted white people to stay home and to remain silent on the issues of racism. We question the intention and the goal of Mr. Braithwaite’s spiteful comments on the dais. We can’t help but wonder if perhaps Mr. Braithwaite wasn’t doing the bidding of those who want to undermine support given to aggrieved Black community members and to weaken their cause and broader support. He seemed intent on casting a chill and fear among white people who sympathize with Black residents’ concerns and speak in support.

These words spoken here by Professor Curtis Austin in this TedTalk titled: “Black Panthers White Lies,” about the importance and need for collaboration among races and ethnic groups to resolve issues of institutionalized racism describe why we feel this complaint and an appropriate recommendation in response is very important. The entire 14 minute video is valuable however starting at about **8 min. 30 seconds until the end**, Mr. Curtis describes the importance of different ethnic groups uniting to confront racist programs and policies:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPN8LHVeFYA>

This uncivil and hostile behavior of Mr. Braithwaite should not be tolerated. His attempt, as an official from a position of power to restrict the public speech of one race is unethical. We believe we have a Code of Ethics, in part, to protect residents from being publicly mocked, ridiculed and intimidated by officials in their positions of power on the dais.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Submitted by:

Albert Gibbs  
Trisha Connolly