

1/1/2024

To whoever is reading this, I hope you are doing well!

I also humbly implore you not to look at the length of this email and quickly dismiss its content as I'm sure you receive thousands to this email box. I assure you this will be no ordinary read and YOU could be the first step in the positive progress of supporting the autism community!

I'm reaching out regarding the amazing story I read in a post about Armani Williams who is now part of NASCAR as its first driver with autism. As an autism mom, I was so excited to come across this post and see NASCAR lean into inclusion of persons on the autism spectrum. However, that excitement and pride was soon poked at, as a young man, whose name is Derick S. Streater, came to this celebratory post and chose to bully me for the comment I made in support of Armani and NASCAR. How do I know he was a bully? He self-identified as a bully by stating these words, "...as an online bully. I love this", were his words to me as part of his exchange (I've attached some of the screenshots of our conversations). Of course, this made me very upset for several reasons, and on a number of different levels. As a mom with a son on the autism spectrum, that has navigated a lot of hatred and bullying directed at my son, this brought up a lot of memories where I've had to deal with these kinds of situations with my son. It was a stark reminder of what is next to come in the work world for him. When it's adults, it more crushing because adults know better, though they don't always choose better!

I went to Derick Streater's Facebook page. He has on NASCAR gear in some of his photos. Let me start by acknowledging, I know NASCAR can't police every single employee and I would never advocate doing so. However, there is an opportunity here for NASCAR to create more dialogue and show their support against workplace bullying and their unwillingness to tolerate it. While Derick is wearing NASCAR gear, I have know way of knowing if that is because he works for you or not. I certainly hope he does NOT work there as he also admits to going to work to "be mean" to his coworkers (screenshots of this also). That is absolutely unacceptable in any environment, especially at work where we all have to go to earn a living to provide for our needs and wants. No one should be denied that opportunity, including persons with autism. Having a different ability can be challenging enough, than to add intentionality of harm by colleagues at work where employers are required to provide a safe place, which is both physical and mental. Again, I don't know that Derick works there because I could not find any information to confirm or deny it but at minimum, he's a NASCAR fan. There were other derogatory comments that he made on the post in which he engaged me, that I found to be horrendous in nature.

So, what am I asking of NASCAR? Three things... First, for the safety of Armani Williams and any other neurodivergent members of the NASCAR organization, please have HR to check to see if Derick Streater is a NASCAR employee. If he is, then I certainly would like to hear how this will be handled. This is really a safety issue for neurodivergent persons or any person that he chooses to target with his bullying. If he is not, then great. Second, what is NASCAR's stance or more importantly, how will you use this as a teaching opportunity to set the tone for billions and trillions of eyes and ears that interact with NASCAR. There needs to be constant and regular voices in support of diversity and inclusion for persons with autism and to show non-tolerance of bullying; especially in the workplace. I have a plan on how NASCAR can frame this to both acknowledge it and be actionable. Third, I am asking NASCAR, it human resources and media departments to be open to discussing and sharing in that plan and implementing actionable steps with me and my organization, The Black Book



Experience. At a time when our country is trying to sweep DEIBA under a rug, this incident shows there needs to be continued efforts to keep it alive. NASCAR has a huge voice and arena (so much power!!!), so your support and acknowledgment can have an impact on this work.

As an autism mom and autism advocate working in this space doing the work that my business does, we need to both, keep the discussion going and put action behind it. I have shared my story and experience as a way to show why this work is still needed on the social media platforms for my business. If Derick does not work for you, he works for someone, where again, it is important to take a stance that this kind of behavior will not be tolerated, and he should not be allowed to bully and terrorize people in this way. We know the harm that bullying causes. Many have lost their life because of being bullied. Online bullying has made this worse! If I can save one person by helping to deter or stop one bully then it is worth the effort. Persons with autism deserve to live and thrive the way any of us do. Human Resource education and training has deeply entrenched policies or aspects related to diversity, but this aspect of it is often an overlooked piece as organizations focus on age, gender and race. Marginalized groups in the areas of those with disabilities like autism are just as important.

Here is a link to a post where I discuss this incident. Please....Take a look at the full story, as the screenshots here only tell part of it. [The Black Book Experience \(@theblackbookexperience\) | TikTok](#)

I look forward to hearing from NASCAR via email or phone... [REDACTED] to move this great work forward!

-signed,

an Autism Mom, Autism Business Owner and North Carolina Neighbor

Laquan Black