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## Concerning- CCDA President

1 message

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Erica Lynn <erica.lynn@thevillagelansing.org>  
To: churchilldownslansing@gmail.com  
Bcc: Adam Hussain <adam.hussain@lansingmi.gov>

Mon, Jan 20, 2025 at 5:36 PM

To the Churchill Down Neighborhood Association Board,

I am writing to address an incident that took place during, and after, the most recent SWAG community meeting on Monday 01/14/25 involving the President of the Churchill Downs Neighborhood Association; Jacquese West.

During a discussion about the plans for the development at Holmes and Pleasant Grove much of the conversation focused on the Malcolm X memorial part of the project. During this conversation my husband; Mike Lynn Jr. voiced that there are far too many Black voices missing from the conversations up to this point, and that SWAG may not be best suited to be the conveners of the community with this as a priority. Mike is very dedicated and vocal on centering Black voices in plans, policies, anything that involves or could impact the Black community. During this discussion it became very clear that Mr. West was agitated with the conversation, based on the comments and tone of his additions to the conversation. It was decided to adjourn the meeting, and the Board remained to continue talking with Mike and I.

It was during this conversation that Mr. West made comments (I will paraphrase, but I heard the entire conversation) on how he hates Lansing and "Lansing n! \*\*as", that there are only "2 kinds of n! \*\*as (not bleeped out at all as it was said) in Lansing; ones that work for the State or that *want* to work for the State." That he loves being in Atlanta because it's all Black people there, so if the police stop you or there's problems with a job or a manager, everyone's Black, so you can't call it racism. He then made a comment directly to the room in reference to Mike that "this is what's wrong with n! \*\*as!" He was asked repeatedly are you seriously saying that and he continued to double down. The N word alone was unacceptable, hard R or not, for him to be using, especially aggressively, in that space representing the CDCA. He then took it a step further, and during an exchange with my husband, began yelling, cursing, stood up, and told him to "shut the f\*\*\* up b! \*\*h" multiple times before storming out of the building.

The comments made by Mr. West are not examples of implicit bias, which often operates unconsciously. They were explicit, intentional, and harmful. When anyone verbalizes harmful stereotypes or rhetoric about Black people, it reinforces damaging narratives, erodes trust, and legitimizes discrimination from others. This is especially unacceptable from his platform, in an organization committed to making the neighborhood of Churchill Downs better, a neighborhood with a significant Black and minority population. I want to highlight that much of the work that we (Mike and I) do with our co-founded organization; The Village Lansing has focused on bridging the gap between what many see as 2 cities. This is largely why we host our annual Father's Day Peace Picnic at Wainwright Park, and have been attending and inviting our supporters and Village community to the CDCA Picnic. We can see the divide in the makeup of

attendance at each, and situations like this are harmful to this work.

All of the work that I do in my day job is centered on racial and social justice. I am tasked with managing projects through equity, centering the most impacted, and amplifying the unheard voices. Bias in leadership, regardless of race, cannot be excused or ignored. As far as I know, SWAG has taken steps to address this incident since he serves on that Board as well, and they were witnesses to all of this. Accountability is essential, if Mr. West is unwilling to step down, I urge the board to uphold its bylaws as outlined below and take appropriate action.

Erica Lynn

*Article II, Section 3 Removal from General Association Membership:*

*A member will lose their voting right and membership in the CDCA if at least two thirds (2/3) of the CDCA members present at that meeting support that action. For this meeting two Executive Board members not involved shall count the ballots. The member in question should be told any reasons for removal and be given a chance to respond before a vote is taken. Some possible reasons for removal: Not acting in the best interest of the Association, Behavior that is unethical, illegal, disruptive, or Disrespectful.*

*Section IV, Section 5 Removal from Executive Board:*

*Executive Board members may be removed from office by the CDCA using the same membership removal process outlined in Article II, Section 3. Some possible additional reasons: Not being active in their elected position, Conflict of interest, Not being fiscally responsible, Misuse of their position. In a case involving the possible removal of the CDCA President, the Vice-President shall preside over the meeting For this meeting two Executive Board members not involved shall count the ballots.*

Erica Lynn

**The Village Lansing**

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**When a flower doesn't bloom you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower. - Alexander Den Heijer**