

2019
January



WDN Regional Council
Meeting Summary

Host: Rochester Regional Health
Topic Discussion: Jeremy Kappell and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
Group Discussion: Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP)

**Difficult Topic Discussion:
Jeremy Kappell and Martin Luther King Jr.**

On Friday, January 4, 2019, Rochester meteorologist Jeremy Kappell referred to a park in downtown Rochester New York, named after slain civil rights hero Martin Luther King Jr. as “Martin Luther Coon Park.”

Initially, Kappell denied that the slur was ever said. But on the broadcast, he is [clearly heard "correcting" the term with "King."](#) He then said it was an accident. Two very different sounding words and one that's not commonly used unless it's a slur. Kappell blamed the "error" on speaking too quickly.

Viewers immediately called for Kappell to be terminated. Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren and City Council President Loretta Scott said, in a joint statement: "It was wrong, hurtful and infuriating." Kappell was fired on Monday.

In our difficult discussion participants were asked to put themselves in the shoes of the employer, Channel 10, to discuss the incident and what followed. Should Kappell have been fired? If not, what other actions could have been taken? Why did it take until Monday to reach a decision? If he was not fired how could this be used as a teachable moment?

The consensus of the participants was that the firing was an appropriate action. Some of the comments by the group follow:

- “He said he didn’t realize he’d done it.”
- “Was the environment at Channel 10, conducive to causing this?”
- “I think he has heard or said this before and it just popped out.”
- “I don’t think there was ill will.”
- “I would have kept him and disciplined him. I don’t think this was handled well.”
- “What does this reveal about Rochester culture?”
- “At what point does this type of thing have to stop?”
- “This can’t go unpunished.”
- “Trying to justify this is offensive.”
- “If “it” comes out, you have to take responsibility.”

**Featured Group Discussion:
Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP)**

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Jackson Katz, Ph.D., is an educator, author, and social theorist who is internationally renowned for his pioneering scholarship and activism on issues of gender, race and violence. He has long been a major figure and thought leader in the growing global movement of men working to promote gender equality and prevent gender violence.

He lectures and trains widely in the U.S. and around the world on the imperative of men's leadership in the promotion of gender equity and the prevention of gender violence, and the many intersections in this work among gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity and religion.

Domestic violence and sexual abuse are often called "women's issues." But Katz points out that these are intrinsically men's issues -- and shows how these violent behaviors are tied to definitions of manhood.

At our meeting on the 17th, we used the presentation by Katz to frame a discussion on the impact and origins of gender violence and the "bystander" approach to the sexual assault and relationship abuse fields. The talk can be seen at the following link

https://www.ted.com/talks/jackson_katz_violence_against_women_it_s_a_men_s_issue?language=en

Following the presentation we had small and large group discussions using the following discussion points.

1. Do you agree with Jackson Katz' position the gender violence is really a men's issue? Why or why not? What are some examples that support your position?
2. Katz shared an illustration of how we think and use language to take the attention off of men when it comes to domestic violence. Do you agree with the points made by the example? Why or why not?
Can you think of another example where the way we use and think about language erroneously diverts attention from a group?
3. Victim blaming is pervasive in domestic and sexual violence realms. What is it? What are some examples? Why is it so difficult to address? What suggestions does Katz propose to deal with it? What are your thoughts?
4. The Bystander Approach – instead of seeing things in a binary fashion with men as perpetrators and women as victims, or vice versa, the bystander approach sees all of us as potential bystanders who are neither victims nor perpetrators in a

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given situation. Katz says that engaged bystanders interrupt poor behavior and are not silent when circumstances call for action. What examples can you think of where you have been or seen a bystander?

5. These Are Ultimately Leadership Issues - We need adult men with power to stand up and be accountable. We shouldn't think of the educational work that needs to be done as sensitivity training, but rather as leadership training. This requires a significant paradigm shift in many organizations and it needs to be led by men with power.

In a diverse society/organization if you make or tolerate comments that are sexist, racist, homophobic, etc. you are failing as a leader. If we can make this point to the men and women who are in charge at all levels, it will change the paradigm of people's thinking.