

# NAACP

*Allentown Branch*

Walt Felton, President  
Dan Bosket, Vice President  
Lisa Conover, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
Barbara Redmond, Secretary  
Glenda Mason, Assistant Secretary  
Dave Hinrichs, Treasurer

July 15, 2023

Mayor Matt Tuerk  
435 W. Hamilton Street  
Allentown, PA 18101

Dear Mayor Matt Tuerk,

On September 14, 2022, three executive members of the NAACP Allentown Branch, Phoebe Harris, Dave Hinrichs, and Barbara Redmond, met in your office to discuss racial issues within Allentown City Hall. During the meeting, Mayor, you assured us there were no racial issues within the organization. You even attended our General Membership meeting to discuss diversity, claiming to be in favor of it. However, recent events within your organization appear to show otherwise. We are deeply concerned with what has been brought to our attention.

We are extremely disturbed by the recently reported incidents of racism and discrimination under your administration in the Allentown City Hall; it's alleged that you, Mayor Matt Tuerk, and some of your staff members have allowed white employees to intimidate their Black and Brown colleagues. What's worse, it's alleged that you and your management seem to back the white employees' discriminatory behavior, granting them the freedom to threaten to shoot Black officers, make racial slurs and comments, scream at Black and Brown colleagues, and even verbally attack their competence and work ethic. Hearing that it is alleged that Black and Brown employees went directly to you with their heartbroken concerns is disheartening. This reported behavior is unacceptable and goes against the values of their civil rights.

Mayor Matt Tuerk, the NAACP strongly condemns any form of discrimination, harassment, or racial bias and does not condone such behavior. Every employee deserves to feel safe and respected at work, regardless of race, color, or ethnicity.

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The NAACP Allentown Branch received a concerning number of complaints from Black and Brown employees regarding racism and discrimination in the workplaces within the City of Allentown.

They are as follows:

It was reported that some white police officers have threatened to shoot their Black colleagues and use racial slurs against them. It's alleged that Black police officers are continuously threatened by their White colleagues. Is it even acceptable for White officers to threaten to shoot them and use racial slurs against their Black counterparts?

It was also reported that some white office supervisors and managers have verbally attacked their Black and Brown colleagues, undermining their abilities and qualifications. It's alleged that White managers rule out Black and Brown employees during promotions, cutting them off from all company decisions. If this is factual, it is hurtful but also unfair and unjust.

It has been reported that some white officers were allowed to sit next to each other and cheat on exams, allegedly with the knowledge and permission of Clarissa Werley. This behavior, if true, is unacceptable and causes racial disparity in promotions, preventing Black and Brown individuals from being promoted fairly. The NAACP takes all allegations of cheating and misconduct seriously, and we want to ensure that your promotional testing is fair and unbiased. We have also launched an investigation into these allegations.

It is alleged that during Black History Month, your white management has been parading timid Blacks to portray inclusion which only insults the Black and Brown employees who must deal with discrimination daily. We will not let this alleged behavior continue at the City of Allentown workplace. Enough is Enough!

We want to address the issue of dress code. We have received complaints that white employees have been allowed to come to work casually while employees of color have been held to a different standard.

Additionally, we have statements that alleged management permits white employees to mock their colleagues of color's sexual preferences and identities. This is disrespectful and creates a hostile work environment that affects these employees' mental health and well-being.

It has been reported that Black and Brown employees are expected to perform tasks without proper training, while White employees are trained.

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We have verification that the recruitment management has also deliberately neglected to post job positions on the city's website, giving them only to White employees. These practices go against your unfair practice policy and create a toxic work environment for your employees.

It's alleged that one of your employees was terminated after bravely speaking up against racism. And it is claimed that this individual reported a colleague's relative for making racial slurs, and as a result, they were fired.

It has also been reported that the department violates the Personnel Policy Manual of the City of Allentown. According to section XVII of the manual, under employee conduct and work rules, page 45, employees in a personal relationship cannot work directly for or supervise the employee with whom they are involved. This policy is in place to promote fair and equitable business conduct. However, it has been reported that the department is not adhering to its policy, which can negatively affect the workplace environment.

When asked to supply an ethnic breakdown of employees, you reported 29 Blacks, 104 Latinos, and 632 Whites; the numbers show a significant underrepresentation of Black and Latino individuals. Furthermore, it has been alleged that Black and Brown employees are being removed or harassed to find employment elsewhere. We call on Allentown City Hall to embrace diversity and create a workplace that reflects the community it serves.

A former employee of color has come forward with allegations of age discrimination, sexual harassment, and mistreatment by their supervisors. They stated that their ex-supervisor, Maria Quigney, sexually harassed and belittled them. Other supervisors, Vicky Kistler, and Mark Hartney, allegedly constantly talked down to them and failed to provide adequate training for their position. They also reported that their coworkers were instructed not to assist them with any tasks related to their job. As a result of these experiences, they allegedly suffered severe emotional and psychological distress that has made it difficult for them to find other employment. It was reported that these traumatic events had left them feeling useless to any organization.

Additionally, it is alleged that one of your officers of color has been facing discriminatory treatment in the workplace following a mistake made two years ago, for which they have already been reprimanded. Despite their efforts to move forward and improve, it is alleged that this individual is still being subjected to belittlement and ostracization, and their mistake is being used as a public display by sitting at a desk for their wrongdoing.

Even more alarming is the apparent double standard being applied, as alleged white officers who have committed more severe offenses have seemingly faced no consequences for their actions. This is unacceptable and goes against the principles of justice and equality. The

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employees of color believe it is time to speak up against such discrimination and make it public. They stand in solidarity with the affected individual in their fight for justice and equality.

Belittling employees of color with public display appears to be a pattern for you, Mayer Tuerk. We are deeply disturbed to learn about another distressing alleged incident within your organization. It has come to our attention that one of your employees, a woman of color, has faced racism, harassment, and ostracization from her white colleagues. This appalling treatment has resulted in her taking medical leave due to severe emotional and mental distress.

Upon her brave return, instead of being welcomed back and supported, she was stripped of her office and placed in a corner, facing the wall, while a white colleague took over her rightful space. This act of injustice is wholly unacceptable. It conveys that standing against racism in the Allentown City Hall workforce is intolerable, and you will face retaliation.

The NAACP firmly believes that it is your responsibility to create a workplace that is inclusive, respectful, and free from discrimination. We stand in solidarity with this courageous woman of color and want her to know she will not be silenced. We will fight alongside her to ensure that justice is served.

If these reports are accurate, it is time for you, Mayor, to take a stand against racism in your workplace. You must demonstrate that you value diversity, equality, and fairness and foster an environment where every employee feels safe, respected, and supported, regardless of race or ethnicity.

No employee should ever endure the pain and suffering caused by racism, as alleged in the Allentown City Hall. We will not tolerate such behavior and want you to ensure that your workplace is a haven of equality, respect, and opportunity for all. Remember, without the support of the Black and Brown communities, you wouldn't have made it to the top. Please don't take our power for granted.

In conclusion, as stated, we stand firmly against racism in any workplace. The NAACP supports the woman who has bravely spoken out and experienced unimaginable distress. We also support other employees of color who came forward and those still coming forward. We want you to take decisive action to rectify what these employees feel are injustice and ensure that no one else has to endure such treatment. We would also like you to implement additional training and education programs to promote diversity and inclusion within your organization within 60 days. Please do so to avoid further actions being taken by the NAACP. Let us work together to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all.



Together, you and your employees can create a workplace that celebrates diversity and fosters a sense of belonging for every employee. It's time to listen to the voices of the employees of color and work toward the equality and justice they deserve. No Justice, No Desk.

Let us come together as a united force against racism and let these alleged incidents be a catalyst for positive change.

If you have any questions, please contact our secretary Barbara Redmond @ [NAACPALLENTOWN@gmail.com](mailto:NAACPALLENTOWN@gmail.com). She will direct all inquiries to the appropriate parties.

Sincerely,

The NAACP Allentown Branch

Cc:

Derrick Johnson, National President, and CEO  
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NAACP PA State Conference  
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