

**NAACP Branch Meeting March 1, 2023
Berkshire County Branch**

6:06 pm

Dennis Powell (DP henceforth): Good Evening everyone the time being 6:06 I am going to call this general meeting of the NAACP to order. I'm going to ask for a moment of silence. As we take this moment, again, we want to acknowledge the Berkshire's indigenous people whose land we occupy, the Mohegan, The Nipmunc and all other tribes deserving our attention and acknowledging of the sacredness of the past.

We also want to acknowledge on this March 1st, Women's month, and think about all the great women who pioneered and cut paths for those of us to follow.

Thank you very much I am going to reverse our agenda a bit because we're going to start with our co-chair of Political Action committee and ask her to introduce our presenter this evening. So Helen, it's all yours.

Helen:

Thank you Dennis. So this is a little bit out of our scope, but we don't currently have a chair for the health committee. If anyone is interested, let us know. As being a part of the Berkshire Health System, I was excited about this new role that has been created, and knowing Charles personally, I wanted to give him an opportunity to come and join us. I think we all know that there are health disparities for people of Color, especially Black and brown folks, so we are trying to plug in where BHS is on identifying these problems and how they are planning to move forward is very impactful for the community.

Our guest is Charles Redd, he is a longtime resident of Berkshire County and has been a nurse for almost 30 years working in the ICU, at Baystate, and most recently he has taken the position of the newly created DEI position at Berkshire Health Systems. (Helen passed the mic over to Charles, asked him to introduce himself and stated that there would be a question and answer section led by Kamaar afterwards).

Charles Redd (CR): (He thanked everyone for having him and gave some of his background. He explained that the reason he has this role is because he asked why there wasn't a diversity officer at Fairview. And then he was appointed to the role. The CEO recognized it as an important position so he started out in August.)

He had to figure out his role and breaks it down into 3 areas

- Community Relationships
- Looking at Workforce and wanting to make it more diverse and engaged
- Health and recognizing health equity

**From this point onward there was an in-depth and robust conversation with many detailed questions posed by branch members and fielded by the guest. The questions that were posed in the chat can be found below:*

Kelan O'Brien

Dropping some questions in here while I'm wrapping up work—apologies for multitasking right now. Charles—thanks for advocating for BHS to create this role and stepping into it. I'm curious if you can share a bit about how BHS supports and provides care for trans and non-binary folks. For example, do caregivers ask for pronouns and look beyond “biological sex”? How are trans men, intersex folks, or nonbinary folks who have the capacity for pregnancy that are not “pregnant women” cared for? Thanks!

Dawn Stern

Hello. Charles thank you for being here. You said we are getting immigrant families “from the current conflict”. Can you specify please?

Given the statistics that Ms. Moon read, are providers being trained in 'trauma-informed' practices? Recognizing PTS(d) in members of the global majority?

Lori Murphy

Hi Charles, Thanks so much for being here. While white males still die by suicide at much higher rates, the rates of suicide for Black males and American Indian males have been increasing in the last few years. Can you speak to the available mental health resources through BHS to address all of our residents' mental health needs appropriately. Thank you.

Alisa Costa

Thank you so much for being here. Is BHS prepared to hold itself accountable to the community on DEI? Is there a willingness in leadership to publish what you are tracking and how you are progressing in the future?

Vicky

Are you also building relationships with other DEIs in other organizations (city, Brien Center, for example) and creating a stronger collective impact? What impact indicators do you use?

Alisa Costa

What can a person do if they believe they were treated improperly because of their race, gender, etc

*Please see the recording of this meeting for almost an hour long Question and Answer period between the branch members and guest, namely Charles Redd, providing answers.

7:02 pm

Kamaar asked about whether or not BHS has a written policy regarding all of the aforementioned issues.

CR stated that he helps support Patient Experiences and also answers to the CEO. "Trust me, we've got a ways to go. But the addition of this department and this position really adds an extra layer to some of those challenges."

CR: "I'm complaining because I waited too long in the waiting room as compared to I'm complaining because you made fun of the way I talk- those are two very different things. . . . Open and honest communication is really what is going to be important."

7:08 pm

Wendy Penner asks if BHS has BIPOC people on the board or otherwise take other actions to gather qualitative data.

CR: As far as the board is concerned- we are striving to make our board more diverse. He mentioned pipeline programs that they've created where people are being trained to be CRAs and medical assistants. And the focus truly is on the bipoc communities. Even going into the high schools.

7:13 pm

DP: Hi Charles and thank you for joining us this has been really amazing. I wanted to ask if you had an opportunity to read the op ed that the NAACP put in the paper on Saturday February 4th about the inclusion report cards being able to boost efforts.

CR: I didn't have the opportunity to read it. I apologize.

DP: One of the things we were asking was corporations that are involved in DEI efforts. And we are challenging different orgs to do an inclusion report card.

7:17 pm

CR: The reason why I'm here is because the state said that we must address health equity and we have to share that information and share where we are successful as well as where we need to make changes. Massachusetts is the first state to put this in place
Invited everyone to call him with anything of concern. Or questions or even just sharing a good idea.

(Put in chat from Kamaar: If you are interested in connecting with Charles from BHS - credd@bhs1.org)

7:26 pm

Helen talked about how in the health world we accept certain things as facts as opposed to asking why or figuring out the social determinants that cause it.

Helen: I would like to support what Charles is saying. He was one of the most present administrators at Fairview.

7:28 pm

CR: I appreciate you inviting me and asking great questions. I'm really looking forward to working with all of you in the future.

7:29 pm

DP: A deep appreciation to you Charles for coming on and fielding so many questions. I can assure you that we are here to work with you and we are not shy at holding people accountable.

Ok so we will now go into our regular meeting. I was hoping to be able to give a treasurer's report but I also realize that Marcus Coleman has changed jobs working for a Black owned financial group that all are within his age range. And by making this move he is able to remain our treasurer and we are thrilled about that. He's working on our audit. We'll hear from him at the next meeting.

Everyone received the minutes from our minutes secretary and these are the minutes from our February 1st meeting. I will ask for a motion to accept those minutes.

Marjorie Cohen motion to accept minutes

Seconded by Laurie Norton

All in favor, unanimous

DP: You're all aware that our DEI op ed letter did go in the paper. We are getting some really great responses to that.

NEACC had its annual meeting. Our NEACC president has resigned and they are looking for a new president with elections in October.

The NAACP is sponsoring the opening night of the Urban Bush Woman's Haint Blu. (DP read the description of the performance). Sabrina and Shirley will be performing in this. It runs from April 19th to 22nd. April 19th is the opening night that we are sponsoring. It's for NAACP members. There are going to be 50 slots open. I'm opening them up to the EC first and then the general membership and we'll get that information out to you- it'll be a first come first serve basis.

Report of Committee Chairs

7:38 pm

Daryl:

Nothing too significant to report. Holding steady. Just over 400 members so things are good.

DP: We have a partnership through Greylock Credit Union where they are giving new members of the bank the opportunity to join NAACP and Greylock is paying for their membership so each month we are receiving names and memberships. Last month we received \$630 for 21 members. So this is really great. We're working on connecting with these members.

7:39 pm

Shirley; Race Relations. This committee continues to be very busy. We've closed a couple situations. We are grateful to Eve Shatz for helping us in moving an eviction case to the proper court and resolved it to the satisfaction of the person who connected us. We have another eviction situation. We just concluded another case having to do with a bully. (Shirley explained in depth).

7:45 pm

DP: Political Action, Helen or Kamaar?

Helen: I don't know if it's been mentioned in the General meeting but we are planning a candidate training for May 13th with some speakers of color across the state. It will be an all day training starting at 9 am and will end with a panel discussion at 5 pm with breakfast and lunch provided. So anyone that's interested in running for office because municipal elections are this year, more info will come out. Or if you're interested in getting involved in ballot initiatives to learn the ropes. . . . Kamaar and I are working on having a regular monthly meeting so that email will come out soon.

DP: Is Kamaar anything housing related?

Kamaar: Yes, the political action committee and the housing committee are now combined. CHAPA is starting a municipal engagement initiative, to do outreach to historically marginalized populations. . . .(more to come on this)

DP: Helen, did you want to mention the event that's coming up?

Helen: Progressive Mass which is a statewide org has a great section that shows a racial justice section about active legislative bills. They are having a gala via zoom. This Sunday at 7 pm. Tickets start at \$35

<https://secure.actblue.com/donate/pmgala23?refcode=HCHM>

DP: Thank you. CommunicationsDarcie and Kate. Darcie, great newsletter as usual, I enjoyed reading it.

7:53 pm

Kate: A basic call to everyone to submit anything they'd like to include in the newsletters. Darcie has been doing a phenomenal job pulling everything together. WE are starting communications

for summer events like Juneteenth so look for those. We can include our contact in the chat if you want us to report out on anything.

Darcie: I want to remind members that if they change their email address, please let the branch know. There have been some issues about certain people not receiving newsletters. Reach out to our general email until we can fix it.

7:55 pm

Rebecca: Website. Nothing really new on the website but 2 comments on things that we referred to tonight. So the minutes get sent to me from Marisa when they are ready. And I post them. But also if you go into our website, you will see the Minutes and Reports page. So please go into and look at them so we can approve them. When Mr. Redd was here there were several references to the Op Ed. that's also up on the website under the "about us." the "we speak out" section.

DP: How is the learning circle going

Rebecca: Both programs are going very well - we are half way through. Lots of good discussion and lots of engagement.

7:57 pm

DP: Economic Development: AJ?

AJ: Good evening everyone. AJ shared the BBEC website of grant opportunities. If you have any questions please reach out.

DP: AJ do you want to tell us about your appointment by the government?

AJ: yea, I'm on governor Healy's Black empowerment advisory committee for the state of mass. I'm honored to represent- even though we're not a monolith.

DP: When does the committee come together?

AJ: I had a meeting with Tanesha Sullivan. The committee met on monday for the first time in person.

8:04 pm

DP: Thank you and congratulations. Any new business?

Kamaar: Last year we did the west side mural project. This year it's going to be happening again. So we'll be able to offer stipends this year. Reach out to me if anyone is interested

8:06 pm

Marjorie Cohen: I've gone to a number of cities who have mural tours. It would be nice to have a collective piece of paper to visit them all. We're really getting a lot of nice murals now.

Kamaar: I'm not a member of the TDI coalition. I think there are plans to have a mural festival toward the end of the year. I don't know if it will incorporate our murals. Our awesome communications team was pushing us to have a QR code. So maybe we can do something like that this year. I'm working for them to be hung in Durant park.

DP: Diane wanna mention the event next Thursday at the Mahaiwe?

8:08 Pm

Diane: Yes, "She's Said/She said" will be at the Mahaiwe at the 9th. We've got a discount code.

DP: Anyone else?

I will entertain-

Marjorie: motion to adjourn

Kamaar: seconded.

Thank you everyone. I appreciate everyone's presence.

*As recorded by Marisa Massery