



## **NAACP Asks Center Grove Superintendent to Address Cultural Insensitivity**

### **Report to Be Filed with U.S. Departments of Education and Justice**

INDIANAPOLIS -- January 3, 2022 – The Greater Indianapolis NAACP Branch #3053 today released a copy of a letter sent to Center Grove Schools Superintendent Richard Arkanoff, expressing concerns about a school environment that allows cultural insensitivity and does not have proper measures in place to create an atmosphere where all are considered equal.

While complimenting the principal's initial response to a recent incident where a white student put on a “blackface” to mock a Westfield High School football player, local NAACP President Chrystal Ratcliffe and Legal Redress Chair Roderick E. Bohannon noted that concerned parents are calling for greater explanation and appropriate discipline. The letter also notified Superintendent Arkanoff of the branch's intention to file a report of findings with the U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Department of Justice Community Affairs Department in Chicago.

The branch's Education Committee and Legal Redress Committee have worked recently on other blatant decrimination cases involving the Carmel Police Department and the Westfield-Washington School District. The Greater Indianapolis NAACP is seeking to establish a similar process, working with the school and the school district to discuss the incident, the district's compliance with state cultural competency requirements, and plans to follow up, with appropriate measures to ensure greater cultural intelligence and standards of civility result from this intolerable incident.

The letter can be found below.

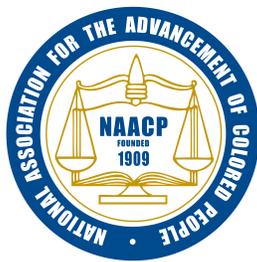
#### **GREATER INDIANAPOLIS BRANCH 3053**

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December 27, 2021

Dr. Richard Arkanoff, Superintendent  
Center Grove School Corporation  
4800 Weststone Crossing Road  
Greenwood, Indiana 46143

Dear Superintendent Arkanoff:

The Greater Indianapolis Branch of the NAACP, on behalf of our community, writes to express concerns about a social media post showing a white player on the Center Grove football team in “blackface,” apparently mimicking an African- American football player from Westfield High School. In the wake of a great victory, it appears excitement gave way to racial inappropriateness and cultural insensitivity. Our thought is that the atmosphere on the bus and within the athletic department is a product of an overall school environment that allows for such negative behavior, because the district does not have proper measures and mechanisms in place to create an atmosphere where all are considered equal.

While we applaud the initial response from Center Grove Principal Dr. Jeffrey Henderson, who included an apology and expressed intent to investigate, we are deeply concerned that the district has not yet sufficiently dealt with this matter and the underlying culture of the school and district that led to this unfortunate event.

The Greater Indianapolis NAACP is seeking specifically to understand how the school district intends to address this isolated situation and also details concerning current and future efforts to ensure that both students and staff are working toward greater cultural intelligence and standard of civility. We would like to be able to soon report progress on this to our State and National leadership, and as well concerned parents and the Greater Indianapolis community, who have been offended by this incident and are calling for greater explanation and appropriate discipline.

The Greater Indianapolis NAACP, through our Education Committee and Legal Redress Committee, have worked with many school districts in our area to ensure fair and appropriate treatment of all children in our community. We understand that state law has a requirement for Cultural Competency training and policy adherence for all Indiana schools. We will seek to discover your adherence to the requirements of state law, as we work with the Indiana State Department of Education to ensure they are providing appropriate oversight over Indiana schools to ensure the greater cultural health of our school communities.

In pursuit of such accountability, we will also file a report with the U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Division, and the U.S. Department of Justice Community Affairs Department in Chicago. Laws that require cultural competency in all Indiana schools are not being enacted so incidents like this gross example are normative.

The leadership of our Education Committee and Legal Redress Committee are available to discuss this incident, required cultural competency training and our process for dealing with this situation. We can be reached through the Co-Chair of our Legal Redress Team, Dr. Ivan Douglas Hicks, via text at (317) 205-1022 or by contacting Stephanie at his office at (317) 250-0855.

Sincerely,

Ms. Chrystal Ratcliffe  
Branch President

*Roderick E. Bohannon*

Roderick E. Bohannon, Esquire  
Chair, Legal Redress Committee

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