



Published by Denver City Councilman Charlie Brown

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Fairness prevails - diversity video pulled

A simple - and justified - complaint about an ill-considered city diversity training video has led to a national controversy and the shelving of the video.

In the video, a white city worker played by an actor makes an insensitive remark about an Hispanic coworker, is suggestive with a woman at an office vending machine, speaks offensively about the weight of another woman who's making copies and teases a new coworker about his slight stature and young age.

City worker Dennis Supple, feeling the video stereotyped white workers, complained to the Career Service Authority and his councilman, Charlie Brown, who wrote a letter of concern to Mayor John Hickenlooper and Susan Maxfield, city diversity director. The letter also was printed in November's edition of The Email Express. That caught the



The city's diversity training video was discussed on CNN Nov. 27 by Councilman Charlie Brown and workplace expert Stephen Viscusi. "Billy," the hapless city worker played by an actor, is shown in the top picture.

attention of a Rocky Mountain News reporter, and after a story was

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published on Nov. 24, lots of other people started paying attention.

Stories and the video were posted on Denver news websites and drew immediate reaction from readers. An online poll on denverpost.com drew more than 1,700 responses by the end of November to the question, "Do you think a diversity training video produced by the city of Denver unfairly depicts white people?" More than 82 percent of those responding to the poll agreed that it did, while about 12 percent voted no and 5 percent indicated they didn't know.

A similar poll on cbs4denver.com asked: "Do you think the Denver diversity training video discriminates?" Some 81 percent of respondents agreed, and 19 percent said they didn't. (Online polls, of course, reflect only the views of readers who choose to participate.) Readers also posted scores of comments on website stories.

The story quickly moved beyond the Denver daily papers and local TV news, making the video much more widely watched than its creators dreamed. The issue was a hot topic on KHOW's Caplis & Silverman show and on KOA's Mike Rosen Show. On Nov. 27 the story went national with a 5-minute, 25-second segment on CNN's Prime News with Erica Hill. It featured Brown and employment author and radio show host Stephen Viscusi, who said the video should have depicted "a variety of people of different colors"

What's Being Said . . .

"It's a good idea, poorly executed."

- Employment expert Stephen Viscusi, interviewed on CNN Nov. 27.

"Unfortunately, this video is so stupid and awful that it caused a stir among employees not bored enough to just sit there and endure it."

-Columnist Adam Cayton-Holland, Westword, Dec. 6.

"I had the exact reaction the complaining employee did to this video. It started out being funny but quickly became insulting. The production and quality of the video were wonderful, but it was shockingly intolerant of white men."

-City employee, writing to Councilman Brown on Nov.27.

"Under the guise of fighting stereotypes, the diversity-mongers inevitably engage in exactly the kind of behavior they claim to condemn."

Syndicated columnist Michelle Malkin.

"Fortunately, Dennis Supple's complaint has uncovered the way this dysfunctional organization has been running. It is my hope that Councilman Charlie Brown's investigation of the leaking of Supple's personnel file to discredit him will result in the firing of the person responsible and that some level of responsibility will be required in the reorganization of this racist department."

-Larry DeCicco, Evergreen—Letter to the Editor, Dec.6, Rocky Mtn. News.

"This is a significant fraction of the diversity training industry that has been taken over by racist ideological radicals who believe only white people can be racist."

-David Kopel, "Colorado Inside Out" KBDI-12, Nov. 29.

"With all the media attention, this has become the most viewed diversity training video in America."

- Councilman Charlie Brown, speaking on KHOW's Caplis & Silverman show on Nov. 28.

showing workplace insensitivity. The issue was also highlighted in a Dec. 4 USA Today column.

Supple's earlier complaints had drawn only indifferent responses from the city, but all the publicity sparked a quick reaction. Just days after the News story, and at the urging of the mayor's office, the city pulled the video on Nov. 28, a spokeswoman noting it had "struck a nerve" among employees. (It has been shown to about 2,000 city employees as part of diversity training.)

Some found the reason for the action less than forthright. News editorial page editor Vincent Carroll quoted parts of the statement in a Nov. 29 comment: "'We will suspend the use of the video until we can facilitate this collaboration at an upcoming summit.'" Carroll continued: "Translation: We're deep-sixing this video for good. At least that what I assume the career service spokeswoman meant. It's hard to tell when someone talks about facilitating collaboration at an upcoming summit."

A couple of days later, news outlets reported that Supple had been fired from another government job in 1999 after threatening a co-worker with a knife and making a racial slur. Supple disputes some details of the incident. Councilman Brown, concerned that details of that incident may have been leaked improperly, has filed an open-records request with the Career Service Authority for records of any communications between city employees and Fox 31 News.



Councilman Charlie Brown (left) and Gov. Bill Ritter helped serve Thanksgiving at the Samaritan House on Nov. 22.

Don't be a "puffer"

With cold weather settled in, Denver police have some advice: Don't let your car be a "puffer" - an unattended vehicle left running to warm up. Not only is such a vehicle an easy target for theft, but you also can get a ticket for letting your car idle without you.

Police also note that thieves are on high alert during the holidays, so when shopping put purchases in the trunk or out of sight, make sure garages and back gates are closed and locked and consider whether placement of your tree in the front window might catch the eye of a burglar while you're out.

Brown responds to DU panhandling study

This is the text of a letter from Councilman Brown published in the Winter 2007 issue of the University of Denver Magazine.

I am writing in response to the article "Research disconnects crime and homelessness" that appeared in the fall 2007 issue of the University of Denver magazine. I take issue with the study, which specifically questions the logic behind Denver's anti-panhandling law.

Before passing the ordinance, we on the Denver City Council took a serious look at the panhandling problem on the 16th Street Mall and had lengthy discussions with the Downtown Denver Partnership, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, the mayor's Commission to End Homelessness, homeless advocates, police and downtown residents, business owners and workers.

We heard serious complaints that ranged from "I will never bring my convention to Denver" to "My business is being negatively impacted because customers are being harassed by panhandlers." Most troubling was the real fear for personal safety expressed by many, especially women.

The summary of the study published in the magazine

indicates that the ordinance may need to be reconsidered because it supposedly didn't reduce crime. I am proud of the care and sensitivity the council used in crafting the ordinance, and it's important to note that the law's intention was not merely to reduce crime rates or criminalize certain people.

It's part of a broader program to direct the homeless toward programs that offer real help and to educate members of the public to redirect their generosity to agencies that work with the homeless, rather than giving panhandlers money that all too often is spent on destructive habits.

As John Desmond of the Downtown Denver Partnership notes, "One main point of all these efforts was not to reduce crime per se but to discourage individuals from engaging in antisocial, often threatening behavior, such as panhandling and blocking passage of city sidewalks." Quarterly surveys by the Partnership employees have found a steady decline in both street people and panhandlers on the mall since 2002.

The real motivation behind the anti-panhandling law is compassion, not crime reduction. To me, that is sound thinking that residents and visitors to our city can appreciate.

Grasmere Lake restoration complete



District 6 residents, and everyone who loves and uses Washington Park, received a long-awaited gift in November when Grasmere Lake reopened after a long and much-needed restoration project. A major part of the \$1.6 million effort involved relining the lake's bed, stopping seepage and saving enough water to serve the equivalent of 200 homes.

Reopening festivities on Nov. 9 included a paddleboat race between teams headed by Councilman Charlie Brown (in cowboy hat) and District 7 Councilman Chris Nevitt. Brown's team won by a boat length.

Greet the holiday season with music at Newman

Christmas is in the air all across south Denver, from brightly lit homes to decorated shop windows, and there's also plenty of holiday music to be heard.

Among other venues, the Newman Center for the Performing Arts at DU, 2344 E. Iliff Ave., is offering a wide range of holiday concerts.

Cherry Creek Dance presents Legends annual winter recital, featuring music from all across the rock & roll spectrum, with performers age 2 through adult. Sunday, Dec. 9, 11 a.m., 2:30 p.m., & 6 p.m. Tickets: Cherry Creek Dance, 303-399-8087.

The Denver Brass presents Rhapsody for a New Year, with pianist Alice Rybak and conductor Lowell Graham, Monday, Dec. 31, 4 & 8:30 p.m. (latter with reception). Tickets/info: 303-832-4676 or www.denverbrass.org.

Lamont School of Music presents Annual Carillon Holiday Concert, Sunday, Dec. 9, 3-4 p.m. Free, outdoor concert, rain or

shine, plus traditional holiday fare, with listening area between the Williams Carillon Tower and Stapleton Tennis Pavilion. Info: Lamont Concert Line, 303-871-6412.

Newman Center presents The Glory of Christmas, all-new traditional Christmas show with music, costumes, and family fun, centered around Lorie Line's concert grand piano. . Wednesday & Thursday, Dec. 19 & 20, 7:30 p.m. Tickets at the Center's box office, www.ticketmaster.com or 303-357-ARTS.

Sound of the Rockies presents Annual Holiday Concert, a celebration of sacred and secular music from around the world by Colorado's premier 100-voice men's a cappella chorus, Saturday, Dec. 8, at 2 & 7:30 p.m. Tickets at the Center's box office, www.ticketmaster.com or 303-357-ARTS.

Young Voices of Colorado presents: Season of Light, winter concert of 170-voice children's choir, Saturday, Dec. 15, 7 p.m. Tickets at the Center's box office, 303-357-ARTS or www.ticketmaster.com.