



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN
FOUNDATION

Dear Chancellor Donald Reaves,

As the Director of the Human Rights Campaign's Youth & Campus Engagement Program, I'd like to offer our organization's support in dealing with the recent attacks against WSSU student Aaron McCorkle. As I'm sure you're aware, Aaron was the victim of a stream of hateful messages and comments from fellow students as well as radio personality and WSSU alum Brian McLaughlin. A few of the messages are included below. Our organization works to improve the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people across the country and my program specifically works with campuses to ensure that they are safe and inclusive learning environments for LGBT students, faculty and staff.

In regards to the attacks against Aaron, we call on the university to act swiftly and deliberately in addressing this situation, starting with issuing a clear statement to the student body that this type of conduct is unacceptable.

As the first sentence of the WSSU *Policies Governing Student Life* states, "Students should exemplify socially approved standards of good conduct and behavior." It's important that the university set the tone by communicating to all students that hateful personal attacks against fellow students, or anyone for that matter, are not socially approved standards of conduct.

We also join student and staff in calling for the removal of Brian McLaughlin from his duties as a WSSU announcer. Clearly, the messages espoused Mr. McLaughlin do not demonstrate the ideals of WSSU.

Additionally, it's critical that faculty and staff, as well as students, receive comprehensive training on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues. Having administrative support for these trainings sends a clear message that LGBT people are a valued part of the campus community. It also provides a platform for learning, development and relationship building on campus that can help stem future incidents of hate and intolerance.

There are a number of ways these trainings could be implemented and I would like to offer my time to meet with campus administrators to discuss possible paths to implementation.

Lastly, HRC is working with Aaron to identify and support any additional needs he may have. If there are campus support services available to Aaron – and his LGBT peers -- we encourage the university to proactively offer them. Clearly this type of directed hate has an emotional impact and providing support to Aaron and other LGBT students at this time is crucial.

As an additional note, our Youth & Campus Program has a specific HBCU project that works with campuses to be inclusive of all individuals, including LGBT students, faculty and staff. I am available to meet with WSSU administration at any time to discuss a course of action to not only address this current situation but to bolster measures to prevent future cases like this. Please feel free to reach out to me at sultan.shakir@hrc.org or at [202-572-8957](tel:202-572-8957). For more information on the Human Rights Campaign, visit www.hrc.org

Sincerely,

Sultan Shakir

Director, Youth & Campus Engagement Program

Human Rights Campaign

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WORKING FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER EQUAL RIGHTS

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Excerpts of messages: "If y'all let a drag Queen be Mr. #WSSU, I quit. Straight up."; "#WSSU: y'all really letting a dude, that goes out in drag #nshit, run for Mr. Ram? Have y'all lost y'all mutha fu***in minds, man?!"; "Yes we ARE talking about this putrid sh**. Y'all have completely lost it. The n**** dresses in drag, & HE will represent our school?"; and "...Get the f*** outta here. Ya turning the position into a f***ing joke. Clowns."

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