

May 26th 2021

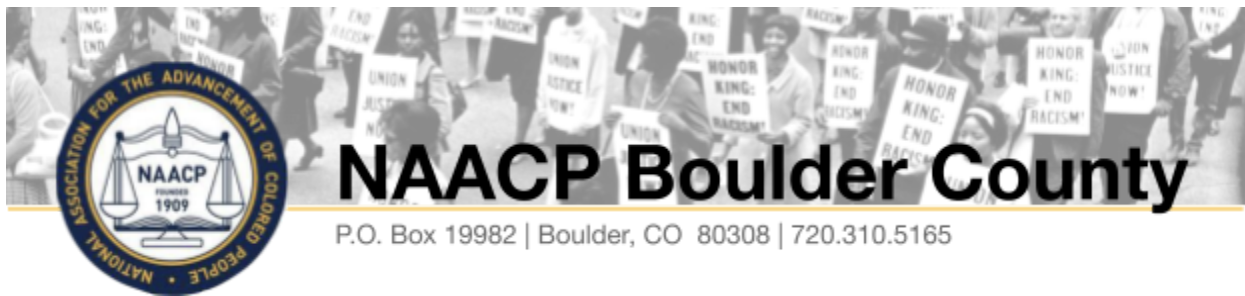
Dear St. Vrain Valley School Board Members,

We write to you today to express thanks to Superintendent Don Haddad for his recent email addressing the disgusting and racist reenactment of the murder of George Floyd by three Mead High School Students, and to discuss further actions the district can take to address this matter. His condemnation of these students' behavior was appropriate, and his support for our Black students' and families' well-being was much needed.

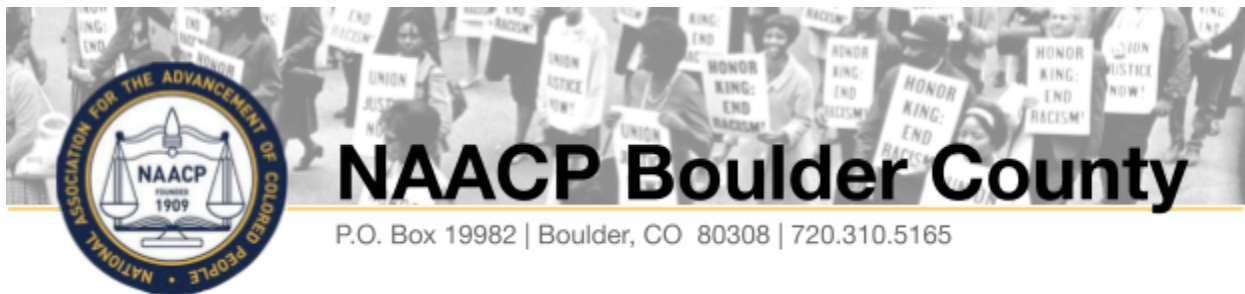
Unfortunately, Superintendent Haddad's words are not enough to address the epidemic of racism that has existed in our schools for decades. We ask that the district take bold and rapid action to protect families such as mine from harm in our schools. Racist actions traumatize Black students and their families and contribute to post-traumatic responses that are misrepresented as behavior that warrants discipline rather than support. School administrators who do not address those actions with the swiftness and seriousness that they warrant add to that trauma and teach white students that such actions are a normal part of their school environment.

We recommend that SVVSD ensure these students are held accountable for their actions, and take proactive steps to prevent similar incidents in the future. In addition, formal structures should be put in place to support students and their families when discriminatory events do occur. These proactive and systemic changes are crucial, as this event was not an isolated incident of racism but one of many. There is no shortage of racism in our schools, and principals should be held accountable for racist incidents, especially since our district's mission is to be an exemplary school district which inspires and promotes high standards of learning and student well-being. Below we detail the steps that should be taken to begin to repair the harm done to the Black community and protect us from racism moving forward:

- 1. The students in the photo should be dealt with in the most serious manner possible, and we recommend that amends are made.** In addition to any other consequences deemed appropriate by the district, the students should not be allowed to return to SVVSD unless they have made a public apology and made reparations for their actions. To protect other students from their racist attitudes, the offending students should be required to participate in anti-racism training and restorative justice workshops prior to re-enrollment. While some in the community have discussed the idea of criminal charges of disorderly conduct, and while we recognize that students of color have been charged for incidents less severe than this one, we do not wish to introduce more policing into our schools. Instead, we would like this incident to be addressed through school discipline methods, and for Black and Brown students to be shown the same courtesy going forward.



2. **The code of conduct should be updated to include a clear definition of what constitutes a bias-related incident and what disciplinary actions should be taken in response to a bias-related incident.** While we understand that the district cannot publicly state the disciplinary actions taken in this case due to privacy concerns, there should be a zero tolerance stance on bias-related incidents on or off of school grounds. Bias-related incidents refer to any act or behavior that is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and reasonably believed to be motivated by a consideration (real or perceived) of race, color, creed, religion, age, sex, gender, national origin, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, citizenship status, veteran status, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law. SVVSD should create a publicly accessible document with the partnership of the BIPOC community that clearly defines all disciplinary infractions, including bias-related incidents, and disciplinary actions that will be taken. Clear, appropriate, and consistent consequences will help to eliminate the discrimination and bias that fuel the disproportionate harrasment and punishment of BIPOC students.
3. **Mead High School's handling of this incident and broader racial climate should be reviewed.** All bias-motivated incidents should be reported to the superintendent immediately and treated with the utmost seriousness. Because the incident was so egregious, we recommend a further review of the culture at Mead High School that goes beyond this incident to facilitate a greater understanding of why the students involved thought this behavior was acceptable.
4. **The district should provide mandated anti-racism training for all staff each year, and staff performance evaluations should include assessment measures on racial equity.** Teachers and administrators in SVVSD have not received anti-racism training in over a year, and there is no system in place to evaluate their performance on matters of equity. We would like to continue partnering with the district to develop a formal procedure to hold educators accountable for their responses to racist actions in their schools. Furthermore, we recommend that SVVSD create anti-racism standards for principals and schools, and consequences for when they fail to meet these standards to protect students, families, teachers, and staff of color.
5. **The district should support Dr. Haddad's agreement to partner with the NAACP Boulder County to create formal affinity groups to support parents and students of color.** Currently, concerns about students' experiences of racism are often directed to outside organizations and community groups because there is no dedicated entity inside the district to address their concerns, hear their voices, and offer support. The lack of affinity groups within our district leaves families feeling unsupported and leaves the district unaware of festering issues. The district should also avail itself of the lived experiences of these affinity groups' members and allow them to advise on how to handle matters of equity. Furthermore, these groups should be empowered to connect students and parents to culturally responsive mental health resources provided by the district when they experience racial trauma in our schools.
6. **The district should create a system for tracking bias-related incidents that occur in our schools.** We would like to see a standardized reporting system for families to make the district aware of these issues when they arise. Currently, because no such system exists,



parents/guardians should expend a significant amount of energy and emotional labor to ensure that their concerns are addressed. It is unfair that the burden of educating teachers and administrators about racism and other biases currently falls to parents and students who are experiencing the stress and trauma of bias in their everyday lives. A transparent system for reporting bias that results in action and that all parents are made aware of would minimize the additional trauma caused to families who are experiencing racism and other biases in our schools.

Allowing racism to persist fails our students, minimizes their learning, harms the well-being of students of color through disproportionate harassment, bullying and mistreatment of students of color. The Mead High School students who reenacted the murder of George Floyd need to be held accountable for their deplorable behavior; as do any adults who enabled these students to progress this far in their education without teaching them to be respectful, anti-racist, citizens.

We look forward to hearing what steps you will take to support Dr. Haddad in holding schools, principals, and students accountable for racist or otherwise biased actions, and what proactive steps you will take to protect communities of color from racism in SVVSD schools. Please share your response with Alicia Graves, Chair, Education Committee, NAACP Boulder County at [boco.naACP.ed@gmail.com](mailto:boco.naACP.ed@gmail.com)

Sincerely,

Alicia Graves  
Education Committee Chair  
Executive Committee Member  
NAACP Boulder County Branch

**Showing Up for Racial Justice  
(SURJ) Families of Boulder County  
El Comite  
ELPASO Movement  
YWCA Boulder County  
St. Vrain Valley Safe School Coalition  
100 Black Men of Denver, Inc.  
Being Better Neighbors  
Colorado Immigrant Rights Organization**