

## **BOARD OF ETHICS MEETING**

Tuesday, October 15, 2019

7:00 p.m.

Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, **Room G300**

### **AGENDA**

**1. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM**

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

September 17, 2019

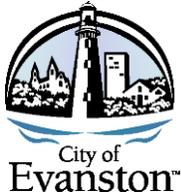
**4. NEW BUSINESS**

Hearing on Complaint 18-BOE-004 filed by Trisha Connolly and Albert Gibbs against Peter Braithwaite

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting:

November 19, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in Room 2404



## **MEETING MINUTES**

### **BOARD OF ETHICS**

Tuesday, September 17, 2019

7:00 p.m.

Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center  
2100 Ridge Ave, Room 2404

Members Present: Jennifer Billingsley, Karena Bierman, and LJ Ellul

Members Absent: Elizabeth Gustafson and Vincent Thomas

Staff Present: Judge Russell Hartigan, Contract Counsel for the Board of Ethics

Presiding Member: Jennifer Billingsley, Board Chair

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1. **Quorum:** Chair Billingsley declared that the Board had a quorum, with 3 of 5 members present and called the meeting to order.

2. **Public Comment:** The Board opened up the meeting for public comment. Albert Gibbs, Trisha Connolly, Peggy Tarr, Sean Jones, Clare Kelly, Mike Vasilko, Misty Witenberg, and Madelyn Ducre made public comments regarding 19-BOE-0004

3. **Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

#### August 20, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Member Ellul moved for the Board to adopt the minutes of August 20, 2019 with revisions incorporated. Member Bierman seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Billingsley moved that the Board go into executive session pursuant to the Illinois Open Meetings Act and City of Evanston Section 1-10-8, "Administration of [the] Code [of Ethics] to consider the evidence and testimony presented in the complaint. The Chair stated the applicable sections of the Illinois Open Meetings Act were 5 ILCS 120/1(c)(4) and (15). Member Ellul seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Executive Session:** 19-BOE-0004

5. **The Board came out of executive session.**

Chair Billingsley moved the Board of Ethics to find that the Board of Ethics has jurisdiction over Complaint 19-BOE-0004. Member Bierman seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Billingsley stated the hearing for Complaint 19-BOE-0004 will occur at next month's meeting.

Chair Billingsley provided an update on the Board of Ethics' input on changes to the Code of Ethics.

6. **Adjournment:** Upon motion by Member Ellul and second by Chair Billingsley, the meeting was adjourned with all voting in favor.

Ethics Complaint Against Alderman Braithwaite  
August 5, 2019

We believe Alderman Braithwaite demonstrated 1) **Abuse of Power** (*Violation of Code of Ethics 1-10-4 Standards of Conduct*), 2) **(a breach of) Impartiality** (1-10-4 Standards of Conduct), and 3) **Intimidation by a Public Official** (*Violation of 720 ILCS 5/12-6 from Ch. 38, par. 12-6*) during the City Council meeting of July 15, 2019. From the dais, during City Council meeting on July 15, 2019, Alderman Braithwaite threatened, ridiculed and intimidated “white people” against publicly supporting their Black friends and fellow residents and from engaging in discussions around racism.

The infractions as described in Evanston’s Code of Ethics:

1) ***Abuse Of Power Of Office.*** No officer or employee shall, use the prestige, power or influence of his/her office or employment to engage in any transaction which is, or would to a reasonable person appear to be, in conflict or incompatible with the proper discharge of his/her official duties, or which impairs, or would to a reasonable person appear to impair, the officer's or employee's independence of judgment or action in the performance of official duties. This prohibition shall extend to any use of official position or employment for a purpose that is or would appear to a reasonable person to be for the private benefit of the officer, employee or any member of their family, rather than primarily for the benefit of the City.

2) ***Impartiality.*** Every officer and employee shall perform his/her duties with impartiality and without prejudice or bias for the benefit of all citizens of the City.

3) ***Intimidation by a Public Official***

The standards of (the Code of Ethics) are: *intended to supplement and comply with the provisions regarding municipal officers in 65 ILCS and 50 ILCS 105/1 et seq., and any other state statutes or ordinances of the City relating to ethical conduct for City officers and employees.*

***The obligations of (the Code of Ethics) shall not be limited to the provisions of the state statutes specified herein, nor shall the failure to include in this Chapter any provisions of a state statute release officers and employees of the City and other covered individuals from obligations, responsibilities and penalties imposed by state law.***

(720 ILCS 5/12-6) (from Ch. 38, par. 12-6)

**Sec. 12-6. Intimidation.**

(a) A person commits intimidation when, with intent to cause another to perform or to omit the performance of any act, he or she communicates to another, directly or indirectly by any means, a threat to perform without lawful authority any of the following acts:

**(5) Expose any person to hatred, contempt or ridicule**

We feel Alderman Braithwaite violated the Evanston Code of Ethics when, as Alderman, from the dais, during a City Council meeting, Alderman Braithwaite used intimidation as he scorned and ridiculed white residents by exposing them to contempt and ridicule from his position of power with the intent to silence all “white folks” from publicly discussing concerns surrounding racism in Evanston. Video here: [July 15, 2019 City Council](#) (2:50:55)

Ald. Braithwaite, during the City Council meeting, from the dais, scorned, ridiculed and discouraged white residents from expressing concerns about racism and attempted to alienate White residents from Black residents when he said;

**“I really sit here and have a difficult time when I hear white folks admonishing me and using the word racism like it's some coin phrase that you just came up with. Unless you've walked in my shoes or any one of us blacks sitting back here I suggest you keep that to yourself. You want to have that conversation internally, I'm a big fan of that internal versus external conversations. Do that.”**

Mr. Braithwaite did not make these comments in private, as a private citizen between individuals. He made these comments in his position as an Alderman during a City Council meeting.

In addition, when the Council adjourned, a white resident politely approached Ald. Braithwaite in Council Chambers to discuss his comment (above), and Alderman Braithwaite abruptly cut off the resident (Ray Friedman) shouting at him saying: **“Shut up, just shut up.”** This response to Mr. Friedman only reinforced the intimidating effect of Ald. Braithwaite’s comments from the dais and his intent to silence white residents and to cast a chill on First Amendment protected speech and to sever their public support of black residents.

We assume Mr. Braithwaite is aware of the countless number of white freedom marchers and protesters in the 50’s and 60’s who publicly supported the civil rights movement against segregation and other institutional racist policies. (Some were brutally murdered for standing and protesting against racist institutions and segregation such as Rev. Bruce Klunder, Rev. James Reeb, William Lewis Moore, Andrew Goodman to name a few.) We have to wonder if Mr. Braithwaite thinks those white people who protested alongside Blacks should have just stayed home and **“kept to themselves”** and kept the conversation quiet and **“internal?”** There were those of that mindset during this period in history who wanted white people to stay home and to remain silent on the

issues of racism. We question the intention and the goal of Mr. Braithwaite's spiteful comments on the dais. We can't help but wonder if perhaps Mr. Braithwaite wasn't doing the bidding of those who want to undermine support given to aggrieved Black community members and to weaken their cause and broader support. He seemed intent on casting a chill and fear among white people who sympathize with Black residents' concerns and speak in support.

These words spoken here by Professor Curtis Austin in this TedTalk titled: "Black Panthers White Lies," about the importance and need for collaboration among races and ethnic groups to resolve issues of institutionalized racism describe why we feel this complaint and an appropriate recommendation in response is so very important. The entire 14 minute video is highly valuable however starting at about **12 min. 30 seconds until the end**, Mr. Curtis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPN8LHVeFYA>

This uncivil and hostile behavior of Mr. Braithwaite should not be tolerated. We believe we have a Code of Ethics, in part, to protect residents from being publicly mocked, ridiculed and intimidated by officials in their positions of power on the dais.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

**LAW OFFICES OF C. SHAWN JONES  
708 CHURCH STREET, SUITE 235  
EVANSTON, IL 60201  
JONES@LAWEVANSTON.COM  
(847) 475-1700 | FAX (847) 739-7248**

October 11, 2019

Evanston Board of Ethics  
City of Evanston  
2100 Ridge Avenue  
Evanston, IL 60201

RE: Board of Ethics Complaint – Peter Braithwaite  
19-BOE-0004

Dear Board of Ethics:

Please consider this as a Motion to Dismiss the referenced Board of Ethics charge brought by Trisha Connolly and Albert Gibbs against Alderman Peter Braithwaite.

As you know, this law firm represents Peter Braithwaite, Alderman of the 2nd ward and a hearing on the referenced ethics charge is now set for October 15, 2019. For the reasons set forth herein, the Board of Ethics must dismiss this matter in its entirety. There are no questions as to the facts underlying the claim made, and therefore the Board should be able to reach a conclusion as to the merits of the charge without a hearing. Should the Board wish to hear arguments as to why Evanston ordinances and state law are (or are not) implicated by a statement made by Ald. Braithwaite during the Call of the Wards portion of a public meeting, argument alone could be permitted.

There is absolutely no dispute as to the facts underlying the charges brought – all allegations took place during a recorded public meeting to the Evanston City Council. To the extent any dispute remains to any alleged facts, then for purposes of a Motion to Dismiss those disputes will be resolved in favor of the Complainant.

**The Comments**

The meeting at issue occurred on July 15, 2019, during the regular portion of all City Council meetings known as “Call of the Wards.” The Complaint contains a partial transcript of the comments made by Ald. Braithwaite. A more complete transcript (available on the video recording of the meeting maintained on the City of Evanston website), follows:

“I don’t apologize for whoever’s feelings that I hurt. I really sit here and I have a difficult time when I hear white folks admonishing me and using the word racism

like it's some coin phrase that you just came up with. Unless you've walked in my shoes or any one of us black sitting up here, I suggest you keep that to yourself. You want to have that conversation internally, I'm a big fan of that. Internal versus external conversations, do that. But by no means do you stand in any type of judgment where you can sit there and call us racists. This is an amazing town that I love. We all back behind this dais give our time, energy and sacrificing time away from our family to serve this community for everyone. Sad, really sad that this issue has become for racially divisive. Love this town, where my kids are able to grow, have whatever conversations, benefit from the diversity. Crazy as it may seem at times – but it's an amazing town.

To those who say they want to leave I say go. Pack up and leave.”<sup>1</sup>

The context in which these comments were delivered may or may not be important to the Board. However, even without any context whatsoever, it is impossible to reach a conclusion that these comments alone – and there is no allegation in the complaint other than a shortened version of these comments – could constitute a violation of the Evanston Code of Ethics.

Rather, the fact that certain residents have decided to bring ethics charges based on these comments, and continue to attempt to prosecute Ald. Braithwaite, exhibits a form of what scholars have called “White Fragility.” In this case, White Fragility applies not only to the residents who brought the ethics charges – the Board of Ethics itself must now examine how White Fragility played a role in its decision to determine it had jurisdiction of this matter based on comments by a Black alderman challenging a group of white activists for accusing the City Council of racism. The Board of Ethics should not be a body dedicated to the protection of white fragility.

Northwestern professor Dr. Jose Medina, who teaches critical race theory and communication theory at the University, noted after reviewing this case:

I took a look at the documents you sent me [the Connolly-Gibbs complaint and a transcript of Ald. Braithwaite's comments] and *it is a clear (in fact, paradigmatic) case of "white fragility"* in which a person of color's criticism of the use of the term "racism" by white individuals is *automatically assumed to be a way of scorning, ridiculing or intimidating. There is no scorn, ridicule, or intimidation* in what Alderman Braithwaite says when he expresses his opinion that they are appropriating the term "racism" in a problematic way and they should not be so quick in rushing to public accusations of "racism" before they do some soul-searching about what that term means (starting with "internal conversations," as he puts it). It is a *paradigmatic instance of white fragility* to admonish people of color and demand an apology from them while at the same time appropriating the term "racism" to be used by white subjects and without any criticism from non-white subjects. *If there is any silencing or intimidation here,*

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<sup>1</sup> The Complaint also contains an allegation, pure hearsay, that Ald. Braithwaite told one Ray Friedman to, “Shut up, just shut up.” Ald. Braithwaite denies using these words. Further, Mr. Friedman has not joined the complaint and therefore this allegation is irrelevant. Even were it proven to be true, though, there is no universe in which telling an individual to “shut up” would constitute a code of ethics violation.

*it is clearly in trying to treat the Alderman's refusal to apologize and his suggestion that they resort to "internal conversations" as speech that should be censored and disallowed.*

The scholar who coined the expression "white fragility" was Robin DiAngelo...  
(Email from Dr. Jose Medina to Atty Shawn Jones, Oct. 9, 2019, emphasis added)

R. DiAngelo herself agrees that the ethics charge against Ald. Braithwaite is an example of white fragility. When asked about this case in particular, her office wrote back by email: "Jason Toews here, Dr. DiAngelo's assistant. She agrees that this is *a textbook case, and a tragic one* at that." Email from "[Contact@RobinDiAngelo.com](mailto:Contact@RobinDiAngelo.com) to Attorney Shawn Jones, Sept. 26, 2019, emphasis added.

This motion will examine white fragility in greater detail a bit later. Even absent the fragility of the complainants, however, the complaint fails to state any code of ethics violations.

### **The Allegations**

The codes allegedly violated, in their entirety, are set forth below:

1. **Abuse of Power of Office.** No officer or employee shall, use the prestige, power or influence of his/her office or employment to engage in any transaction which is, or would to a reasonable person appear to be, in conflict or incompatible with the proper discharge of his/her official duties, or which impairs, or would to a reasonable person appear to impair, the officer's or employee's independence of judgment or action in the performance of official duties. This prohibition shall extend to any use of official position or employment for a purpose that is or would appear to a reasonable person to be for the private benefit of the officer, employee or any member of their family, rather than primarily for the benefit of the City.

2 **Impartiality.** Every officer and employee shall perform his/her duties with impartiality and without prejudice or bias for the benefit of all citizens of the City. No officer or employee shall grant or make available to any citizen any consideration, treatment, advantage or favor beyond that which is available to every other citizen.

3. **Intimidation by a Public Official.** The standards of (the Code of Ethics) are: intended to supplement and comply with the provisions regarding municipal officers in 65 ILCS and 50 ILCS 105/1 et seq., and any other state statutes or ordinances of the City relating to ethical conduct for City officers and employees.

The obligations of (the Code of Ethics) shall not be limited to the provisions of the state statutes specified herein, nor shall the failure to include in this Chapter any provisions of a state statute release officers and employees of the City and other covered individuals from obligations, responsibilities and penalties imposed by state law.

720 ILCS 5/12-6) (from Ch. 38, par. 12-6)

Sec. 12-6. Intimidation.

(a) A person commits intimidation when, with intent to cause another to perform or to omit the performance of any act, he or she communicates to another, directly or indirectly by any means, a threat to perform without lawful authority any of the following acts: ...

(5) Expose any person to hatred, contempt or ridicule...

### Complainants have Failed to State A Valid Claim of Code Violations

Initially, Ald. Braithwaite admits that the code of ethics applies to him, and therefore we are not disputing that portion of the Board's finding of jurisdiction. As an elected alderman in the City of Evanston, the Evanston Code of Ethics applies to Peter Braithwaite. To the extent doing so is necessary, we stipulate to this point.

The first two charges, however, are not and cannot be implicated by a statement made during call of the wards. "Abuse of power" refers to a City official using the influence of office or position "in any transaction" which conflicts with "the proper discharge of his official duties." There can be no dispute that no transaction took place here – Ald. Braithwaite made a statement of opinion during an announcement part of the meeting.

Even were the Board to stretch this provision to implicate the last sentence, "This prohibition shall extend to any use of official position or employment for a purpose that is or would appear to a reasonable person to be for the private benefit of the officer, employee or any member of their family, rather than primarily for the benefit of the City," Ald. Braithwaite's could not be a violation. No possible reading of Ald. Braithwaite's comments could be considered as being for his **private** benefit.

Similarly, "Impartiality" also refers to the performance of an alderman's duties as the alderman of a ward in Evanston. The second part of the "impartiality" code section is actually a key to its reading, and lack of applicability to the statements made by Mr. Braithwaite at call of the wards. The code section applies to impartiality performing official duties – to preferring one citizen over another.

In order to violate the code of ethics requiring impartiality, therefore, an alderman or City official would have to do something – to make some decision or cast a vote – that improperly favored one individual over another. No decision was made. No action was taken. Ald. Braithwaite simply made a public statement at call or wards expressing his opinion. This cannot be a violation of the impartiality portion of the Code of Ethics.

Turning to the most problematic complaint, Connolly and Gibbs argue that Ald. Braithwaite's comments violate the state criminal code outlawing intimidation by a public official, a charge which can get one two to ten years in the state penitentiary. They make this argument based upon their belief that by stating his opinion Ald. Braithwaite "scorned and ridiculed white residents by exposing them to contempt and ridicule from his position of power with the intent to silence all 'white folks' from publicly discussing concerns surrounding racism in Evanston."

Drs. Medina and DiAngelo, in emails cited above, both consider this charge a "paradigmatic" and "textbook" example of white fragility at work.

In *White Fragility, White Fragility: Why it's so Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, author Robin DiAngelo argues that white people, when challenged about racism, react in a number of predictable ways. She describes the concept as follows:

“White people in North America live in a society that is deeply separate and unequal by race, and white people are the beneficiaries of that separation and inequality, as a result, we are insulated from racial stress, at the same time that we come to feel entitled and deserving of our advantage. Given how seldom we experience racial discomfort in a society we dominate, we haven’t had to build our racial stamina. Socialized into a deeply internalized sense of superiority that we either are unaware of or can never admit to ourselves, we become highly fragile in conversations about race. We consider a challenge to our racial worldviews as a challenge to our very identities as good, moral people. Thus we perceive any attempt to connect us to the system of racism as an unsettling and unfair moral offense. ***The smallest amount of racial stress is intolerable*** – the mere suggestion that being white has meaning often triggers a ***range of defensive responses***. These include emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt and behaviors such as ***argumentation***, silence, and withdrawal from the stress-inducing situation. These responses work to reinstate white equilibrium as they repel the challenge, return our racial comfort, and maintain our dominance within the racial hierarchy. I conceptualize this process as *white fragility*. Though white fragility is triggered by discomfort and anxiety, it is born of superiority and entitlement. White fragility is not weakness per se. In fact, it is a powerful means of white racial control and protection of white advantage.” *White Fragility (WF)*, pgs 1-2

It would appear that , Ald. Braithwaite’s July 15 comments caused some level of discomfort among a few white people. Nevertheless, those comments did not and never could constitute a code of ethics violation – the stress led instead to a defensive reaction. As described by DiAngelo, “White fragility is a state in which even a minimal amount of racial stress in the habitus becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. Including ‘argumentation.’”, such as the ethics complaint that resulted from Ald. Braithwaite’s comments. *WF*, pgs 103-4. One type of comment noted by DiAngelo that can result in such a response: ***“People of color choosing not to protect white people’s feelings about race (challenge to white racial expectations and the need for, or entitlement to, racial comfort).”*** p. 104.

“One way that whites protect their positions when challenged on race is to invoke the discourse of self-defense. Through this discourse, ***whites characterize themselves as victimized, slammed, blamed, and attacked***. Whites who describe the interactions in this way are responding to the articulation of counternarratives alone; no physical violence has ever occurred in interracial discussion or training that I am aware of. Their self-defense claims work on multiple levels. They identify the speakers as morally superior while obscuring the true power of their social positions. The claims blame others with less social power for their discomfort and ***falsely describe that discomfort as dangerous***. The self-defense approach also reinscribes racist imagery. By positioning themselves as the victim of antiracist efforts, they cannot be the beneficiaries of whiteness. Claiming that it is they who have been unfairly treated – through a challenge to their position or an expectation that they listen to the perspectives and experiences of people of color – they can demand that more social resources (such as time and attention) be

channeled in their direction to help them cope with this mistreatment.” *WF*, page 109

Resorting to a criminal statute such as intimidation was not surprising to DiAngelo, who later writes:

“The language of violence that many whites use to describe antiracist endeavors is not without significance, as it is another example of how white fragility distorts reality. By employing terms that connote physical abuse, *whites tap into the classic story that people of color (particularly African Americans) are dangerous and violent*. In so doing, whites distort the real direction of danger between whites and others. This history becomes profoundly minimized when whites claim they don’t feel safe or are under attack when they find themselves in that rare situation of merely talking about race with people of color. *The use of this language of violence illustrates how fragile and ill-equipped most white people are to confront racial tensions, and their subsequent projection of this tension onto people of color.*” *WF*, pg110

The net result of this complaint, and the actions of a particular group of speakers when approaching City Council on issues of late, is a form of bullying. As described by DiAngelo:

“White Fragility as a form of Bullying 112-113

“If we need to cry out so that all the resources rush back to us and attention is diverted away from a discussion of our racism, then we will cry.. If we need to take umbrage and respond with righteous outrage, then we will take umbrage. If we need to argue, minimize, explain, play devil’s advocate, tune out, or withdraw to stop the challenge, then we will.

“White fragility is a form of bullying; *I am going to make it so miserable for you to confront me – no matter how diplomatically you try to do so – that you will simply back off, give up, and never raise the issue again. White fragility keeps people of color in line and ‘in their place.’* *WF*, page 113

“In a common but particularly subversive move, racism becomes about white distress, white suffering, and white victimization.” *WF*, page 134

Those who consider themselves more liberal, evolved, ‘woke,’ or generally sympathetic to racial issues are not immune from the devastating impact of our predominately white society. In fact, DiAngelo argues, it is the white liberal who often causes the most damage: “I believe that *white progressives cause the most daily damage to people of color*. I define a white progressive as any white person who thinks he or she is not racist, or is less racist, or in the ‘choir,’ or already ‘gets it.’ White progressives can be the most difficult for people of color because, to the degree that we think we have arrived, we will put our energy into making sure others see is as having arrived. None of our energy will go into what we need to be doing for the rest out our lives engaging in ongoing self-awareness, continuing education, relationship building, and actual antiracist practice. White progressives do indeed uphold and perpetrate racism, but our

defensiveness and certitude make it virtually impossible to explain to us how we do so.” *WF*, pg 5.

During the citizen comment portion of the July 15, 2019 City Council meeting, a number of white residents attacked City Council for what the first speaker called the “racial motivations” behind a resolution seeking to censure Clerk Reid. The last speaker went so far as to call the proposed censure “a clear example of white supremacy.” Throughout citizen comment, and in one-on-one conversations before the meeting ever began, resident after resident hinted, referred, and at times openly accused the Council of pursuing the censure because of racist motivations.

When faced with these comments, Ald. Braithwaite challenged the speakers. His comments hearkened back to earlier writers: “People of color, including W.E.B. DuBois and James Baldwin, have been writing about whiteness for decades, if not centuries. *These writers have urged white people to turn their attention onto themselves to explore what it means to be white in a society that is so divided by race.*” page 25. I.e., “Internal versus external conversations,” as mentioned by Ald. Braithwaite on July 15.

When faced with a challenge to their racial worldview, some residents behaved in a very predictable way and accused Ald. Braithwaite of ethical violations, even going so far as to invoke the language of violence in invoking a criminal intimidation statute. The complaint does not state a claim for any such violations; instead, it shows the concept of White Fragility at work.

The Board of Ethics should not be the last great protector of white fragility. Issues of race and racism are complex, ever-shifting, and dynamic. They require us to allow ourselves to be challenged, to accept feedback, to learn and grow. Every time a person of color challenges a white speaker, it is not “intimidation” or any other form of ethics violation.

The Board of Ethics charges against Ald. Braithwaite must be dismissed immediately and entirely. The Board should not only dismiss this claim without a hearing, it should take a stand and make it clear to residents that such frivolous claims will no longer be tolerated. Aggrieved, fragile whites already take up far more resources than they should costing the City, and its less fortunate residents, literally tens of thousands of dollars in litigation, FOIA, hearing officer, attorneys fees, and related expenses.

We are better than this. Please do your part. Thank you.

Sincerely,

  
C. Shawn Jones, Attorney for Ald. Peter Braithwaite

CC: Client

Thu Oct 10 2019 11:24

**Subject:** Transcript of the alderman's comments  
**Sent:** October 9th 2019 7:44 PM  
**From:** jose.medina@northwestern.edu  
**To:** sjones@lawevanston.com [ sjones@lawevanston.com ]

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Dear Shawn,

I took a look at the documents you sent me and it is a clear (in fact, paradigmatic) case of "white fragility" in which a person of color's criticism of the use of the term "racism" by white individuals is automatically assumed to be a way of scorning, ridiculing or intimidating. There is no scorn, ridicule, or intimidation in what Alderman Braithwaite says when he expresses his opinion that they are appropriating the term "racism" in a problematic way and they should not be so quick in rushing to public accusations of "racism" before they do some soul-searching about what that term means (starting with "internal conversations," as he puts it). It is a paradigmatic instance of white fragility to admonish people of color and demand an apology from them while at the same time appropriating the term "racism" to be used by white subjects and without any criticism from non-white subjects. If there is any silencing or intimidation here, it is clearly in trying to treat the Alderman's refusal to apologize and his suggestion that they resort to "internal conversations" as speech that should be censored and disallowed.

The scholar who coined the expression "white fragility" was Robin D'Angelo ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin\\_DiAngelo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin_DiAngelo)), and you can see a summary of her book-length account of the phenomenon here:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White\\_Fragility\\_\(book\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Fragility_(book))

Best wishes,

Dr. José Medina  
Walter Dill Scott Professor of Philosophy  
Department of Philosophy  
Northwestern University