



OPEN LETTER TO WMDT NEWS 47

AND

THE MARYLAND CAUCUS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERS

AND

THE WICOMICO COUNTY NAACP

On February 24, 2023, during the Kent Island v. Parkside basketball playoff at Kent Island High School, a Parkside High School team member committed an assault on a Kent Island player while the ball was in play. Video from the game shows the Parkside student throwing a “sucker punch” and hitting the Kent Island student in the face, causing him to fall to the floor of the court. An immediate reaction from the crowd ensued and the game was subsequently forfeited by Parkside.

In its haste to sensationalize the incident, local news station, abc News 47, alleged that the Parkside student was reacting to racial slurs made by Kent Island students, parents and fans prior to and during the game. It solicited commentary from the spokesperson for the Maryland Caucus of African American Leaders (MCAAL) and the Wicomico County NAACP (WCNAACP) who, apparently relying on ABC News 47's reporting the occurrence of racial slurs, stated that he “do[es] not condone anybody taking swings at anybody else but...”

After a proper, extensive investigation that included review of the video evidence and interviews with players, officials, coaches and others, it is apparent that abc News 47's reporting was haphazard and erroneous. The Queen Anne's County Public Schools finds that there is zero evidence of any racial slurs or animus having occurred before, during, or after the game.

QACPS takes great exception to ABC News 47's negligent reporting and the MCAAL and WCNAACP spokesperson's tacit approval of violence by minor, school-aged children. The Parkside High School student's behavior was unacceptable and there can be no exceptions or 'buts' that attempt to justify such behavior.

QACPS is dedicated to instilling in our student's civility and respect for others. The evidence that we have reviewed concerning this incident leads us to believe that the Kent Island High School team members, their parents and fans, demonstrated nothing short of that civility and respect before and during this game.

We are confident that the Wicomico County Public Schools will conduct its own investigation into its player's violent behavior and take the appropriate steps to ensure that such an assault does not again occur at Kent Island High School or in any other forum.

The QACPS superintendent of schools has filed with the MPSSAA a formal complaint regarding this matter.