

TOWN OF MARLBORO
OFFICE OF THE SELECTBOARD
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July 14, 2020

Marlboro College
Board of Trustees
2582 South Road
Marlboro, VT 05344

To the Marlboro College Board of Trustees:

On July 1, 2020, the Marlboro Selectboard received a letter from *Black N Brown at DP* (BNBDP), an anonymous “collective of African American, Afro-Latinx, and Latinx alumni of Democracy Prep,” alleging that Seth Andrew, the prospective new owner of the Marlboro College campus, caused “irreparable harm...to the low-income and first-generation students of color that he served as the founder of Democracy Prep.” The letter describes him as “cruel, calculating and abusive, especially to staff of color,” and details “why the sale of the Marlboro College campus to Seth Andrew is not only antithetical to the legacy of Marlboro, but a great human rights concern for the very demographics that he claims to serve.”

During our Selectboard meeting on July 9, 2020, members of the public expressed serious concerns about the allegations made by BNBDP, and the sale of the campus to Mr. Andrew. Democracy Prep staff and alumni also participated in public comment, including Zenzile Keith, a former superintendent of Democracy Prep. During her tenure, Ms. Keith “witnessed a number of racist and white supremacist acts not only committed against students, but against [herself], as an African American woman who worked on the superintendent level.” According to another participant who spoke on behalf of BNBDP, “the collective has received over 350 stories that span both Seth’s time at Democracy Prep and beyond because of the catastrophic legacy that he left.” Excerpts from public comment are included on the following page, and the complete audio recording is available on the Town’s website and at <https://bit.ly/3epUeSs>.

We urge the Marlboro College Board of Trustees and Office of the Vermont Attorney General to conduct a thorough investigation of the testimonies made by the collective, and to be transparent in its findings. The Selectboard also intends to host a professionally-mediated forum to address the collective anger, grief, and confusion related to the closure of the campus, and the allegations directed at Mr. Andrew. We hope that all respective parties will participate.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jesse Kreitzer, Chair



Julia von Ranson, Vice-Chair



Aaron Betts, Member

CC: Office of the Vermont Attorney General
Attn: Attorney General T.J. Donovan
109 State St
Montpelier, VT 05609

Town of Marlboro Regular Selectboard Meeting Public Comment Excerpts (July 9, 2020):

“Black N Brown @ DP”, alleged staff member of Democracy Prep (2012-14):

"The collective was founded to bring voice to the absolute atrocity that occurred at Democracy Prep charter school, that left hundreds of Black and Brown staff, families, kids traumatized and abused in its wake. We thought it was particularly important to be present today to bring voice to the voiceless and to dispel any rumors, or Seth's specific charge, that there were just a few stories. Or that there were exaggerations. To date, the collective has received over 350 stories that span both Seth's time at Democracy Prep and beyond because of the catastrophic legacy that he left...He's just not prepared to run such a college. He has no experience in running a hire education institution. And the experience that he does have, founding a charter network, as mentioned earlier, has left tons of bodies in their wake... There definitely needs to be some examining in what he's going to do to both atone and how he's going to change these processes and his practices and quite frankly his heart. Because the way that he spoke to people, adults, children—the way that he ran his organization is not something that you should have in your community."

Zenzile Keith, former Superintendent at Democracy Prep:

"I'm a former staff member at Democracy Prep and I witnessed a number of racist and white supremacist acts. Not only committed against students but against myself as an African American woman who worked on the Superintendent level...I find it very disheartening that a person, like Seth, can purchase a university that is supposed to train people to work with other students, or to train students period. To work anywhere, in any field, to educate them, when he has absolute disrespect for Black and Brown people. These are things that I actually witnessed. That I actually witnessed myself...The age that we're in, the way that you show that Black Lives Matter, the way that you show that Brown Lives Matter, right, is that you don't allow somebody like this to come into your community and to spread the type of hate and disdain for Black and Brown bodies like he's done in Harlem. An area that I grew up in."

“Telling Truth”, alleged alum of Democracy Prep's founding class:

"I was aware that the school was troublesome when I was in it, even when I was in 6th grade and was one of Seth's trophy children, I said that the school wasn't bringing up students, that it was bringing up robots. But I think once I left I realized the full extent of what a white savior actually is. And what systematic racism is truly within education. And I hope that Seth is never around an environment where he is leading Black and Brown bodies ever again. If anything, if we're going to have a program that's meant for Black and Brown students, it needs to either be run by Black and Brown leadership or by people who are well intentioned and have experience in doing the job. And Seth unfortunately has neither."

The complete audio recording from the regular Selectboard meeting of July 9, 2020 is available on the Town's website and at <https://bit.ly/3epUeSs>.