



## Racism & Bias Start at the Top: Purdue NW Chancellor Should Resign

December 22, 2022 by Educator Barnes

Graduation at Purdue Northwest was tainted by Chancellor Thomas Keon on December 10 due to his racist remarks during commencement, where he mocked Asian language and dialect by making noises to represent a made-up Asian language. After the news spread, Keon issued an apology. He called his remarks “unplanned” and “off-the-cuff.” He also mentioned being “inclusive to all people.”

Dr. Trisha Morita-Mullaney, a professor in Purdue University's education department, said, "Linguicism and racism towards AAPI and NNHI communities are real." Linguicism is when a person is mistreated or discriminated against based on the language they speak

Journalist Michelle Li responded to Keon's apology on Twitter and said, "Say it again but next time do it with more feeling." Li went viral after sharing a racist voicemail in response to a New Year's Day segment when she shared she eats dumplings on that day. In the voicemail, the racist complainer said Li was being "very Asian" and needed to "keep her Korean to herself."



What that person meant for evil, Li used for good and united Asians around the globe with #VeryAsian.

Let's not forget #StopAsianHate.

Racism is real. As a Purdue grad, I am not shocked by this. Although I attended school at Purdue's main West Lafayette campus, it is no secret that racism, bias, and harmful actions are alive and well on Purdue's campuses. Yes, there are issues with racism against Black students. There wouldn't be a sign that states, "Protect Purdue's Black Students" if it wasn't an issue. I took that picture in October 2022, by the way.

Guess what? As a Black woman, I can want Black people to be treated better and fight for my Asian brothers and sisters at the same time. The mocking sounds, comments about the food Asian students ate, and jokes about them being smart in math were some of the comments I heard.

When you think about Purdue NW, if the chancellor was bold and brave enough to mock Asian speech during a commencement ceremony, it shows that this behavior is the norm. Don't get me started about the faculty behind him that laughed along with him.

The faculty senate has asked the chancellor to resign and passed a no-confidence vote, with the majority voting they had no confidence in his leadership. As of this publication, there has been no word about Keon resigning. If he doesn't resign, only the board of trustees can fire him.

If he stays in his position, it sends the message that hate is tolerated. Is that the message Purdue NW wants to send to its faculty and students?