



## Praise for island's efforts to tackle racism

Jonathan Bell

Updated: Dec 13, 2017 04:51 AM

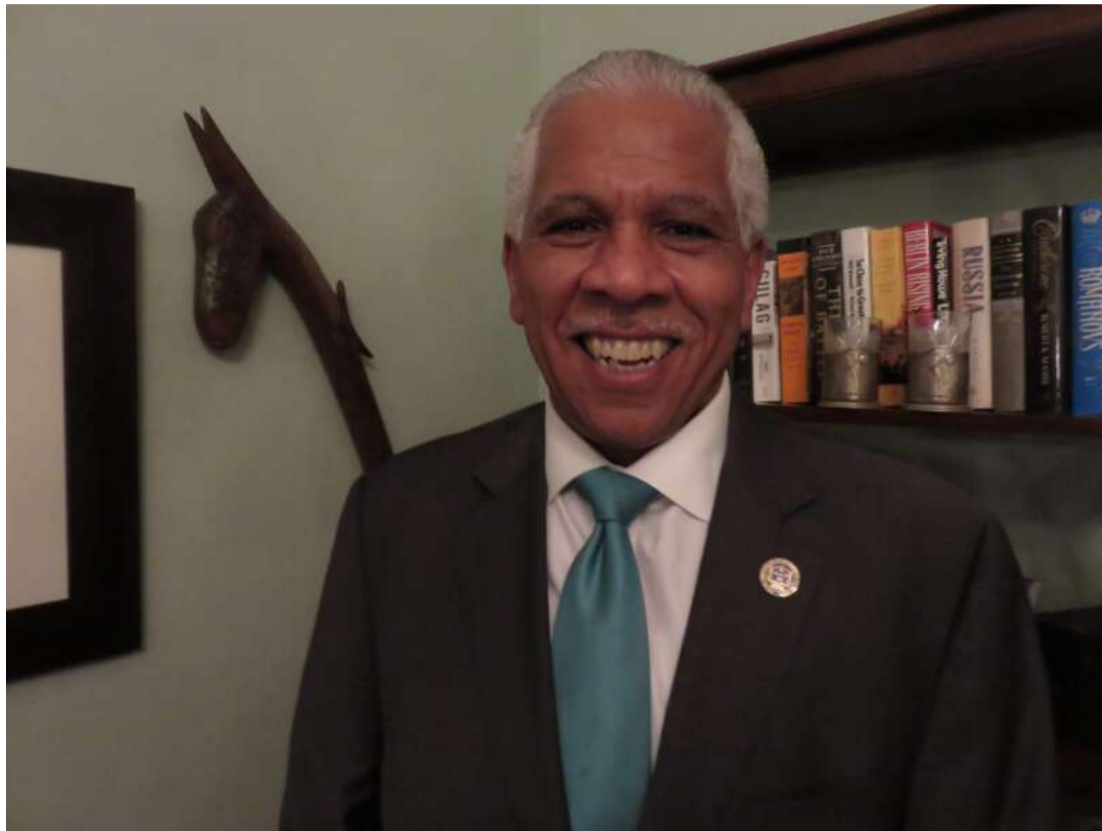
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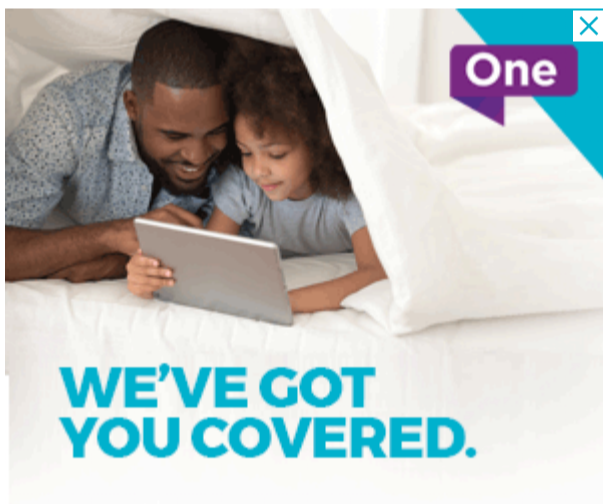
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Voice of hope: NAACP official Hilary Shelton brought his message to the island (Photograph by Jonathan Bell)



A prominent voice from the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People has praised local efforts to grapple with the island's legacy of racism.

Hilary Shelton, director of the NAACP's Washington bureau, commended the latest round of truth and reconciliation "community conversations" organised by the group Citizens Uprooting Racism in Bermuda.

"It's a very good idea — the only way we can move forward is by being able to reconcile where we have been and what we are, and move forward to where we need to be," Mr Shelton said.

The activist, who serves as the NAACP bureau's senior vice-president for advocacy and policy, visited the island last week as a guest of Curb and the United States Consul General to Bermuda, Mary Ellen Koenig.

Acknowledging the "painful element of the past" was essential, Mr Shelton said — and critics of the exercise were "missing the point — they're just not taking into consideration the value of getting to know their neighbours better".

"It's about finding shared values," Mr Shelton added. "The more we have these conversations, the more we see how alike we really are."

Curb had just completed a second round of small group dialogues, in which members of the public gathered over six weeks of private sessions to share and

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discuss experiences of race.

Participants followed up in a talk circle with Mr Shelton at the US Consul's residence, covered by *The Royal Gazette* on condition of anonymity.

One woman told the group that the narrative of "two Bermudas" endures, with demonstrations for worker's rights "swarmed by the black community" and LGBT rallies "swarmed by the white community".

She added: "In these separate dialogues, their agendas are totally different."

A biracial woman responded that "people who show up represent people who want to show up", and reflected that the shock of the Parliament protests of December 2, with pepper-spray used on demonstrators, had grown only more painful one year on.

While the white community was often said to duck the issue of race, she noted that white participants in the Curb talks had proved receptive.

And a black Canadian expatriate, who said she "sounds white down the phone", described the difficulty of navigating Bermuda's racial divisions — telling the group: "I haven't been disadvantages — but I haven't been advantaged either."

A white Bermudian man suggested "three Bermudas", with "a middle where there's great interaction between blacks and white".

He added: "I understand that we have to get our past experiences out, and divest ourselves of our frustrations.

"If we're able to talk with each other and agree with each other's perspectives, we're well on the road to recovery, but we have to do so realising that we may not agree."

A white woman who said she had "pretty much given up hope of unity before this process" said she had found the Curb talks "transformative and elevating", adding: "I have vastly more hope today than I had three months ago."

Another said the impetus of the talks should be directed towards pushing for legislative change.

Mr Shelton recalled the activist Martin Luther King, Jr telling a reporter in 1964 that he would "continue to move to change hearts and minds in this world — but I need policy".

A black male participant said that veterans of the talks "need to engage people who are too afraid or not open minded enough to get involved in something like this".

He added: "I'm not somebody who just wants to do this for seven weeks and then stop."

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Published December 13, 2017 at 7:00 am (Updated December 13, 2017 at 10:51 am)

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[Marksman](#) • 3 years ago

For Bermuda racism like any other social problem' work in progress 'but the real problem is well within the two political party's were the OBA were the majority of supporters are White and the PLP which is predominantly Black based. - it dos'nt take a rocket scientist to see that our political system causes racial division.

Happily to say that Bermudains in general are courteous, easier to get along with and have good understanding and don't like the aggressive style of racism of the US and would rather tolerate each other. .... yes there are some exceptions.

1 ^ | v • Share ›

[bermuda bye](#) → [Marksman](#) • 3 years ago

Actually...the PLP makes no bones about it being a black Party and pays lip service at best to the rest...Whereas by default the opposition are mainly supported by whites who EMBRACE multiculturalism as a demonstrated reality. So it follows if the PLP were to openly embrace multiculturalism and diversity..the politics of Bermuda would change...In simple...the OBA have along with its predecessors demonstrated a will to be inclusive...The PLP have NOT!...Therein lies the difference..

^ | v • Share ›

[Noel Ashford](#) • 3 years ago

Let me get this right we are singing praises for this while trampling on human rights for the LGBT community ? No praise should be given to this bigoted PLP government for anything related to human rights at current, further more, how can those creating a clear divide in society be the same ones getting praise for said efforts to close a divide. The intent here is honorable but the PLP in no way have progressed race relations in Bermuda and should not be credited for their behavior, rather the opposite in my humble opinion. The longer we keep acting like it's ok to deny rights and decency to any segment of Bermuda, the worse off we all are.

6 ^ | v • Share ›

[Oliver](#) → [Noel Ashford](#) • 3 years ago

Help me out here, where in the article is anything mentioned about praising

government? Curb and the NAACP are mentioned but I see nothing concerning government. Mr. Shelton said he praised local efforts meaning Curb.

2 ^ | v • Share ›

**Interested Party** → Oliver • 3 years ago

When CURB became a mouthpiece for the Politicians Lying to the People, I guess, CURB became associated with them...

1 ^ | v • Share ›

**bermuda bye** → Interested Party • 3 years ago

Correct

^ | v • Share ›

**Mutual Respect** → Noel Ashford • 3 years ago • edited

Don't forget they also changed the Human Rights Act to make it secondary for Non-Bermudians. Everything the new Government has done so far has been against improving Human Rights. Walton Brown isn't such a fighter of human rights after all and it seems to have just been lip service all along

6 ^ | v • Share ›

**Redford** → Mutual Respect • 3 years ago

The PLP - a Party based on the removal of discriminatory, racist practices in their own country - formulating and passing discriminatory legislation. Go figure!

^ | v • Share ›

**Mutual Respect** • 3 years ago

"Dr King's wife Coretta Scott King carried on his work, and dedicated her life to fighting for LGBT rights alongside civil rights – believing that he would have done exactly the same." Ironic inna?

3 ^ | v • Share ›

**Oliver** → Mutual Respect • 3 years ago • edited

I don't know why people tend to bring up past people of importance and then attempt to pull them into modern time discussions. Martin Luther King, a great man, is often used for this. Someone will attached a quote or a statement made 60 years ago that was made on an issue all together different with that of an issue of today, LGBT rights is one of them. Mr. King was a black Baptist Minister born in 1929 in Georgia. As there, to my knowledge, is no record of him addressing this issue why keep bringing up his name.

^ | v • Share ›

**Robert X** → Oliver • 3 years ago • edited

No. MLK did not publicly address the issue back then because it wasn't on anyone's radar and would have distracted from his main mission. But, to be fair, if anyone is in a position to know his private thoughts and what his position would have be in later years, it is his wife - who was an active supporter of gay rights.

1 ^ | v • Share ›

**Oliver** → Robert X • 3 years ago

Then it should be her name that is used, not his. I just don't think it is right to use a person who is held in high esteem and has since passed as a champion of something they never spoke on. Mr. King is but one of many that are used this way. It would be a great thing for SSM to have him as a supporter but it just didn't happen. Why is there even the need to bring up past people to bring legitimacy to an issue that many people living can do.

^ | v • Share ›

**Bermuda male** → Oliver • 3 years ago

So what would JESUS say!

1 ^ | v • Share ›

**Derek A. G. Jones** → Bermuda male • 3 years ago

Exactly.

^ | v • Share ›

**Robert X** → Oliver • 3 years ago

In MR's initial comment it WAS her name that was used.

^ | v • Share ›

**Oliver** → Robert X • 3 years ago • edited

Yes, you are correct. It was used as a side. The name Coretta Scot King is well recognized on its own. The comment is written as to draw attention to the Reverend as he is referenced in the article but not for LGBT.

^ | v • Share ›

**Mutual Respect** → Oliver • 3 years ago

Read the article "Mr Shelton recalled the activist Martin Luther King, Jr telling a reporter in 1964.."

^ | v • Share ›

**Oliver** → Mutual Respect • 3 years ago

I did. My point being he wasn't speaking about LGBT rights. LGBT wasn't even a thing in 1964. He was speaking to civil rights with regards to the US colour divide.

^ | v • Share ›

**Derek A. G. Jones** → Oliver • 3 years ago • edited

The LGBT comment came at the beginning with the suggestion it was only whites who support them.

Why is it a problem recalling such a significant figure when it comes to race relations?

^ | v • Share ›

**Oliver** → Derek A. G. Jones • 3 years ago

Derek, you're way off base. Look at my comments, they are in relation to what MR stated nothing to do with the beginning of this article and nothing to do with race relations. I don't know what train you took to get from my A to your B but I'd say shut that track down until the NTSB have a chance to clear it.

^ | v • Share ›

**Derek A. G. Jones** → Oliver • 3 years ago • edited

But MR's comments are based on the article itself where both points have been raised. He tied in the irony of Dr King's wife's support of LGBT and the earlier comment about only whites support LGBT campaigns. Naturally that's the basis for your response then. That's not a stretch.

^ | v • Share ›

**Oliver** → Derek A. G. Jones • 3 years ago

No, No, No.

^ | v • Share ›

**AllYourRace BelongToMe** • 3 years ago

Right after suppressing gay rights black rights are being celebrated? The rich white man must be laughing.

^ | v • Share ›

**I Bacon** → AllYourRace BelongToMe • 3 years ago

It doesn't seem to be the rich white men that are homophobic.

^ | v • Share ›

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