**Turner halts $250M development amid racist incidents: ‘We want to change the industry’**

Aug 4, 2020 Bottom of Form

**CINCINNATI**

With a clear statement of intent, a Turner Construction executive told us Tuesday "We want to change the industry."

Dave Spaulding, vice president and general manager of the company that is building a new soccer stadium in Cincinnati, was discussing the aftermath of two racist incidents that occurred on the job site late last week.

Although he would not discuss the specifics of what happened, he acknowledged the incidents **involved two subcontractors who are no longer working on the project.**

One of the instances involved derogatory racist writing inside a port-a-let. We're told the other was an audible racial slur.

Turner worked to verify the details of what happened over the weekend and temporarily stopped work on the $250 million development.

Short of a fatality or a serious injury, it is extremely rare to see a job site shut down, but Turner felt it was needed in order to address the matter without delay.

**For a full day on Monday, Turner mandated anti-bias training for 400 workers. Painful history was a starting point.**

**"Black Wall Street and the burning of Tulsa," Spaulding told us. "The GI Bill and its effect on Black families by not receiving their money. There are things that people had never heard of or taught. So, for a little bit it was a lot of just education and taking things in."**

Coincidentally, Turner started displaying signs last week that read: “Zero Tolerance, See Something Say Something.”

They went up around the same time the instances occurred.

"This stuff is not new," said labor leader Rob Richardson Jr. "It's been happening for a long time. And so, it's a collective grievance. So, you're right, in this moment I do think there is more awareness. And now what I would say is what's going to be done beyond the symbolism, beyond the statements?"

Richardson credits Turner for its strong, swift action, **but points out general society tries to check a box and avoid an honest look at what's reflected in a mirror.**

He hopes America is ready for uncomfortable conversations about where we are and where we need to be.

"I think where America needs to go is where Germany went," Richardson stated.

Since World War II, Germany has made an intentional, concerted effort to acknowledge and display the horrors of the Holocaust.

There are markers and memorials and school instruction about its sins.

"It's clear they embraced what they did so they'd never do it again," Richardson explained. "America did the opposite."

He said the lingering effects of such denial are played out in policing and criminal justice and unequal education.

Richardson believes there is more of an opportunity now for people to have uncomfortable conversations and for corporations to use their power to develop more diverse boards and support black businesses.

Turner wants the investment at the West End site to go beyond any projected profit margin, saying there's too much human dignity at stake whether you're in a suit or wearing a hard hat.

"Turner has always had a zero tolerance policy," Spaulding pointed out. "We decided we have to really work on enforcing our zero tolerance policy."

Black Lives Matter signs hang on every side of the fencing that surrounds the mammoth project.

The stadium is scheduled to open next spring.

Community leaders believe Turner's action sends a forceful message that it takes racist incidents seriously. "We truly believe that if you're silent, you're complicit," said Spaulding.

He added everyone at the west end work site deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.