



Five Tips To Handle Workplace Race Talks Better Than Starbucks

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Ed Harold was quoted in *Law360* on March 31, 2015. The article "Five Tips To Handle Workplace Race Talks Better Than Starbucks" focused on how the recent backlash to Starbucks Corp.'s "Race Together" push to stimulate discussions about racial issues shows how a bungled approach to workplace discussions about hot button topics can expose employers to ridicule and even legal liability.

Ed was quoted on the importance of not muzzling employees and how ignorance isn't bliss.

"You don't want to be seen as the speech police, even though you have the right to be," said Ed.

Race is such a sensitive topic that employers often try to steer clear of it for fear of inadvertently offending someone or giving ammunition to a would-be discrimination plaintiff — and sometimes that approach makes sense, according to Ed. Sometimes, however, staying mum simply isn't an option.

"I think if you recognize that there are problems, or that people are getting into arguments, or you hear 'I can't believe about what this guy said about Ferguson,' then you have to step in and address it," said Ed.

Ed also stressed the importance of having avenues for workers to raise concerns that workers know about and aren't afraid to use.

"Make sure employees are aware of the reporting procedure, because you can't address problems that you don't know about," said Ed.

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