

ACLU of Wisconsin: Set to appeal to DPI as Chippewa Falls continues to mishandle discrimination complaints

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CHIPPEWA FALLS – The ACLU of Wisconsin announced today that it had filed an appeal with the Department of Public Instruction on behalf of Ti'nya Singletary, a Black 8th-grade student who experienced racial harassment, disparate discipline, and inadequate curriculum on Black history while attending Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District (CFAUSD).

On October 22, District officials rejected Ti'nya's initial discrimination complaint, downplaying problems of racism within its schools and denying claims that it fails to address harassment when students come forward to report it appropriately.

This is the second recent instance in which CFAUSD has refused to take responsibility for complaints of harassment made by students. The District argued earlier this month that it was similarly [not to blame](#) for the severe discrimination faced by members of the Cultivative Coalition, a group of former Chippewa Falls students represented by the ACLU in a separate pupil discrimination case.

In this case, CFAUSD found that Ti'nya did experience racial harassment that created a racially hostile environment. This finding contradicts its conclusion in the Cultivative Coalition action that there is "no evidence" of a racially hostile climate in the District. However, the District claims that its response to the harassment Ti'nya

experienced was adequate, a claim Elisabeth Lambert, staff attorney with the ACLU of Wisconsin who has represented students in both cases, says is simply not valid.

Instead, the District punished Ti'nya for her reaction to the harassment while failing to intervene and stop the incidents from recurring reasonably.

“The District’s latest denial only confirms what we already knew to be true: Chippewa Falls refuses to acknowledge its role in creating a harmful and unwelcoming learning environment for students, thereby allowing a cycle of harassment, discrimination, and mistreatment to persist throughout its schools,” Lambert said. “It is tragic that a public school district with a legal and moral obligation to protect students continues to demonstrate this level of inaction when conflicts arise.”

The Cultivative Coalition stated:

“The Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District continues to engage in a cycle of victim-blaming while refusing to acknowledge their part in creating and tolerating a hostile and unwelcoming environment for marginalized students. While we are not shocked by this decision, we find ourselves increasingly disappointed with the district’s inability and outright refusal to take responsibility for the pervasive cycles of discrimination occurring inside their schools.

We stand in solidarity with the Singletary family, who filed a discrimination complaint on behalf of their daughter. The District has a responsibility to protect each and every one of its students. Yet, it continues to ignore the discrimination and harassment of its marginalized students and often punishes them for their own victimization. We will continue to support Ti'nya and her family as well as the many other marginalized students who were victims of CFAUSD’s gross neglect in protecting its students.”

A copy of the appeal made to DPI is available online here:
https://www.aclu-wi.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/-singletary_appeal_letter.pdf

This press release is available online here: <https://www.aclu-wi.org/en/news/aclu-wisconsin-set-appeal-dpi-chippewa-falls-continues-mishandle--discrimination-complaints>