



Kristen Clarke
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Shaheena Simons
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Civil Rights Division
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

Re: Civil Rights Complaint against Bonham Independent School District and Bonham Municipal Court

Dear Assistant Attorney General Clarke and Chief Simons:

After filing our February 6, 2024 complaint related to Bonham Independent School District and Bonham Municipal Court, several parents, students and staff contacted us about experiences similar to those described in the original complaint. A former custodian at Bonham High School recalled that a student hung a noose in the school gym and students called him and other custodians the n-word. Teachers and staff were aware of these incidents but failed to address them and the employee was fired after he reported the racist incidents. Another student, who wished to remain anonymous, reported similar experiences among students: White students are constantly using the n-word and bullying students of color in front of teachers without any consequences. This student also recalled a social media post about bringing back slavery. When word spread of this post, the teachers hid the White student who posted it behind a desk in the front office, guarded him away from other students, and locked the doors to the office. The reporting student has been called a “beaner,” the n-word, and “wetback” by White students at their school.

Five students asked to be included as complainants. The following complainants experienced the same forms of racial harassment and discrimination by Bonham ISD described in our original complaint:

- Student K.B. has a disability and Bonham ISD threatened to refer him to truancy court for absences that were related to his disability. Both K.B. and his sister have been routinely called racial slurs by classmates despite complaints to Bonham ISD staff.

- Student J.R. is a Latino student with a disability. Bonham ISD sent J.R. to a disciplinary alternative school (DAEP) for a disproportionately long placement for acting in self-defense though it did not send the White student who had attacked him to the DAEP.
- Student C.H. is a biracial student who has been subjected to incidents of bullying and racial discrimination, including being repeatedly called the n-word, with the school failing to adequately address any of these racist acts despite being informed.
- Student J.G. has a disability but was punished by Bonham ISD for conduct related to his disability and denied necessary accommodations. He was also frequently subjected to peer harassment on the basis of his race and disability as well as harassment from teachers.
- Student B.A. was referred to Bonham Municipal Court for truancy which nearly forced B.A. into a GED program against his wishes. He described the racial harassment in Bonham as “out of this world.”

The stories of these youth further illustrate the violations alleged in the initial complaint and the need for a thorough Department of Justice investigation.

I. Student K.B.

K.B. (9 years old) and his sister (13 years old) are half-Black and they identify as Black. Both students are called the n-word by peers all the time--at school, on the bus, and while playing school sports. Their mother has complained to teachers, principals, and coaches, but nothing has been done about this. K.B. has also been discriminated against by the school for his disability, which is a type of narcolepsy. Despite knowing about this issue for years, the school did not communicate that him falling asleep in class was a problem until this school year when he reached the 3rd grade--the grade where students begin to take state standardized tests. He was finally evaluated for special education. He has been absent a lot due to sleep studies and doctor's appointments that his single mom has to travel long distances to. His mother gave doctor's notes or notified the school for any absences due to doctor's appointments and disability-related exhaustion. The school administration did not accept all of these absences as excused and also stated that even an excessive amount of excused absences can work against him. School administration has taken this 9-year-old out of class to talk to him about attendance in the hall and has threatened his mother with referrals to truancy court. K.B. has also been berated by one of his teachers for falling asleep in class. As a result, K.B.'s parent filed a local level grievance and K.B. was moved to a class with a different teacher.

II. Student J.R

J.R. was a freshman last year at Bonham High School. He is a Latino student who receives special education and Section 504 accommodations for dyslexia, enjoys playing soccer and is typically well behaved at school. In October 2023, a White student physically attacked him in the lunch line. While J.R. defended himself, he was sent to the DAEP and excluded from extracurricular activities including soccer for a full 30 days.

Meanwhile, the White student who attacked him only received a three-day suspension despite being the instigator of the fight. Bonham ISD never conducted a manifestation determination to explore whether the conduct was caused by his disability or failure to implement his accommodations, which his mother did not know was required. While attending the DAEP, J.R. recalls that he did not receive his dyslexia accommodation of oral reading of select assignments, any visits from his high school teachers, or all his assignments. As a result, he failed a course. Additionally, he missed out on the opportunity to try out for soccer when tryouts were held because the school bans all extracurricular participation for students while placed in the DAEP.

III. Student C.H.

C.H. is a 13-year-old biracial (Black and White) student in eighth grade who attended Bonham ISD until November 2024. Since fourth grade, C.H. has been called the n-word by her classmates and one White student in particular who bullied her. The White student called C.H. the n-word in fourth grade when she would pass her in the hallway between classes, and again called C.H. the n-word in November 2024. This incident occurred while C.H. and the White student were standing next to each other in the lunch line. The White student was holding the clothing tag from the inside of her T-shirt, had pulled it around facing C.H. and said, “rip this off [n-word].” C.H. replied asking the White student, “did you just say the n-word?” The White student replied, “I think I did, or I might’ve, it just slips sometimes.” C.H. and a friend who had heard the slur went to the Dean of Students, Nick Foster, to report the incident, who said he would talk to the White student. Mr. Foster went to sit down at the table where the White student and her friends were eating where C.H. could overhear both the White student and her friends denying that she had used the n-word. After speaking to the White student, Mr. Foster came back to C.H. and her friend and told them the White student had denied saying the n-word. In response, C.H. asked Mr. Foster to check the cameras because the cameras record sound; Mr. Foster did. Resultantly, that day, during the same lunch period, the White student was given about 15 minutes of lunch detention in the same room, placed at a separate table where she ate with other students, and was only prohibited from talking.

In another situation involving a White student, C.H. had again been called the n-word, and reported it to the Principal, Meghan Cryer-Weaver. In that situation, the White student said to C.H., “you need to keep my name out your mouth, you [n-word].” He used a hard “R” when calling her the slur and was placed in ISS for only one day after she reported it. The students at school began to target C.H. saying, “don’t say the n-word around her because she’ll snitch,” to which she responded, “I sure will.” This happened about every day this school year.

In response to the racial slurs, C.H.’s mother had reached out to the previous Superintendent hoping to address them, but nothing changed. This past summer, C.H.’s mother reached out to the new Superintendent and talked to her for 30 minutes. In the beginning of the 2024-25 school year both the Principals of I.W. Evans Intermediate School and L.H. Rather Junior High School told students either in an announcement in the cafeteria or during an assembly that was held the first or second week of school, that

they would take racism seriously because use of racial slurs had become so prevalent amongst students the previous year with everyone (all the students) saying the n-word. Still, C.H. continued to be subjected to repeated racial slurs.

Prior to repeatedly being called the n-word and being bullied, C.H. never had any mental health concerns, but she now does. As a result of Bonham ISD failing to address the racial incidents, C.H.'s mother moved their family to Mobile, Alabama in November 2024.

IV. Student J.G.

J.G. is a 17-year-old Black student who attended BHS from the 2020-2021 school year until December of 2023. J.G. has been diagnosed with asthma and an intellectual disability due to his extremely low scores on standardized tests. J.G.'s most recent IEP specifies that J.G. "experiences significant limitations in intellectual and adaptive behavior ... expressed in the student's conceptual, social, and practical everyday living skills." The IEP also states that J.G. may "vary in his ability to be socially responsible." According to his mother, his disabilities cause him to get frustrated and upset easily. Due to these disabilities, J.G. received special education services at BHS.

While he attended BHS, J.G. was subject to frequent bullying based on his race and disabilities. J.G.'s classmates called him "monkey," "special ed," the n-word, and said he eats bananas. They also bullied him for not being able to spell and took pictures of him naked after sports practice and circulated the images around the school. Occasionally, even J.G.'s teachers mocked him. In first grade, J.G.'s teacher frequently teased him by claiming that he smelled bad. In middle school, J.G.'s special education teacher told him that he ruined her school year and that he was the reason she was retiring. This bullying alongside J.G.'s intellectual disabilities manifested in J.G. avoiding classes and having conflicts with other students. J.G. would enter his special education classes late and leave early so that he would not be seen by students who bullied him for attending special education. J.G. was also goaded into fights by students who picked on him while knowing about his emotional vulnerability. Consistently, BHS responded to J.G. with punishment rather than the behavioral accommodations required by his IEP.

On four separate occasions during the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years, BHS assigned J.G. to in-school suspensions for misconduct which BHS determined to have manifested from his disabilities:

In February of 2022, J.G. was suspended after a friend returned a toy pellet gun to J.G. during school hours, since another student later grabbed the toy pellet gun from J.G.'s backpack and shot it in their locker room. Even though J.G.'s acceptance of the toy pellet gun during school hours was determined to have manifested from J.G.'s disability, BHS declined to reassess J.G.'s accommodations or goals to consider what new supports he might need. BHS also gave J.G. a five-day-in-school-suspension even though it acknowledged that "being out of classes for an extended period of time would not be in

the student's best interest" and that J.G. was "generally well-behaved at school" apart from this "isolated incident".

One month later, BHS gave J.G. a 20-day in-school-suspension for hanging out with a group of students who shot toy pellet guns at other children. BHS acknowledged it had "no evidence of [J.G.] shooting the ORB gun at others," despite having camera footage of the event, and J.G. denied that he shot one of the toy pellet guns. BHS nonetheless suspended J.G. for the "mistake [of] choosing to be in a group of students who were misbehaving." Despite this being the second incident which involved J.G. and a pellet gun, BHS did not form a behavior intervention plan when BHS disciplined J.G.

In December of 2022, BHS gave J.G. a 10-day in-school-suspension for mistakenly fighting with another student. J.G. saw the student "hitting" his sister which led J.G. to fight with the student, but J.G. did not realize that the student was playing around and did not actually hurt J.G.'s sister. Once more, BHS acknowledged that "being out of classes for an extended period of time would not be in the student's best interest", but BHS still imposed the suspension even though J.G. was apologetic and "there [did] not seem to be a risk of continued conflict with the other student."

Lastly, in February of 2023, BHS gave J.G. a 5-day in-school suspension for arguing with another student after staff asked J.G. to stop; J.G. was upset that the student called J.G. the n-word and then tried to fight J.G.. In total, J.G. was suspended in school for 43 days and suspended outside of school for one day between August 2020 and May 2023, although the reasons for some of these other suspensions are not fully detailed in his record.

In August of 2023, J.G. was also referred to the DAEP for 6 days after he skipped classes with a group of students. When J.G. returned to campus, he was accused of having smoked marijuana. BHS interrogated J.G. for the rest of the school day without informing his parents. J.G. wanted to call his parents, but BHS threatened to handcuff and jail J.G. if he tried to call them. J.G. was also shouted at during the interrogation and questioned in the presence of others despite his accommodations calling for "private discussion about behavior." BHS referred J.G. to the DAEP for this incident, placing him in an alternative, segregated learning environment. The school originally proposed placing J.G. in the DAEP for 90 days to a full school year, but reduced the placement to six days after J.G.'s parents obtained legal representation. J.G.'s IEPs, however, required "positive reinforcement" and "clearly defined limits" as behavioral accommodations. In addition to the DAEP referral for this incident, BHS also banned J.G. from football for the rest of the summer.

In September of 2023, BHS removed J.G. from all athletics for a citation for tobacco paraphernalia he received outside of school, even though his IEP recommended athletics as an elective. Contrastingly, BHS allowed other athletes who received the same citation with J.G. to remain in sports. According to his mother, BHS removed him from athletics for two reasons: retaliation for obtaining legal representation during the DAEP referral and disability-based discrimination because it was difficult for J.G. to learn and

remember plays. Due to the repeated harassment and discrimination which J.G. was subjected to by B.H.S., he opted to graduate early in December of 2023 rather than face any additional problems at school.

V. Student B.A.

B.A. is an 18-year-old Black student who attended Bonham ISD from 2019-2023. While he attended Bonham ISD, B.A. described the racial harassment he faced as “out of this world.” White students called B.A. the n-word on several separate occasions while playing sports and at football games. At a football game, a White student bumped into B.A. and told him, “move gorilla.” Near the end of his eleventh-grade year, on May 8, 2023, B.A.’s mother disenrolled B.A. from Bonham High School (BHS) so he would not face more discrimination. He then enrolled at Princeton ISD and has since graduated. Before he graduated from Princeton ISD, B.A. had to repeat his junior year since he received no credits in Bonham ISD.

BHS sent B.A. to the DAEP program twice while he was enrolled at the school. In January 2022, BHS first referred B.A. to the DAEP for 45 days due to “persistent misbehavior.” The school told B.A. this was because he had been suspended in-school too many times, he was argumentative, and he wanted things to go his way. According to B.A., this was in response to the following series of events:

- B.A. was in in-school suspension (ISS) and the teacher tried to take his jacket. B.A. wouldn’t let her because he was cold. She threatened to call the assistant principal so B.A. gave her his jacket.
- The next day during lunch, B.A. finished his lunch and put his head down on the desk. The teacher wanted him to do an essay. B.A. wanted to rest and do the essay after lunch. The teacher called the assistant principal.

BHS extended this DAEP referral for 27 days after B.A. violated the referral’s trespass warning three times. The trespass warning prohibited B.A. from being on Bonham ISD’s property until he completed the DAEP. Such violations occurred when B.A. delivered a blanket to his sister at a Bonham ISD school during a snowstorm, and when B.A. attended a BHS softball game.

In April 2023, BHS again sent B.A. to the DAEP for 60 days since BHS alleged that B.A. used “rude language,” “threatened his teacher,” and was found with a vape and vape charger. This occurred two days after B.A. finished a 38-day ISS placement for arguing with a football coach after school, followed by a 9-day ISS placement for being tardy. The DAEP referral stemmed from B.A. joking to his teacher stating, “If I’m tardy, run my ones.” Although B.A. intended for this statement to be a joke as he often joked with this teacher in the past, the teacher considered it threatening. B.A. apologized to the teacher once he realized his joke offended the teacher. B.A. was then sent to the school’s office. While B.A. waited in the school’s office, the school police officer searched B.A.’s backpack without B.A.’s consent and found a vape and vape charger. The BHS principal then moved B.A. from his office to a room used for suspensions. When B.A. sat calmly

outside the room instead of entering it, the principal threatened to have B.A. arrested for “disturbing the peace.” While B.A. was sent to the DAEP for this incident, BHS often treated White students differently. For example, when a White student cut B.A.’s friend with a knife during a fight, BHS only suspended the White student in-school for 10 days.

B.A. was absent for 50 days during the 2021-2022 school year and 20 days during the 2022-2023 school year. Although BHS sent B.A. numerous letters about his truancy, B.A. did not receive these warnings. During B.A.’s first DAEP placement in 2022, B.A.’s court involvement with Bonham Municipal Court caused him to be tardy four times while he attended court appointments. Rather than help B.A. address the causes of him missing school, BHS repeatedly disciplined B.A. with suspensions, referrals to the DAEP, and referrals to municipal court.

Overall, BHS suspended B.A. in-school for 46 days and suspended him outside of school for 10 days throughout his three years at BHS. BHS also sent B.A. to the DAEP for about 132 days during this same time. In sum, B.A. spent about 1/3 of his schooling at BHS in disciplinary environments rather than the traditional classroom setting. Often, BHS suspended B.A. for vague and subjective reasons such as “Violation of Student Code of Conduct”, “failure to comply with rules”, and “gross failure to comply/blatant insubordination.” BHS also frequently suspended B.A. in-school for being tardy.

Two weeks before the end of the 2022-2023 school year, B.A.’s family withdrew B.A. from BHS since BHS explicitly asked Bonham Municipal Court during a truancy court hearing to order B.A. into a G.E.D. program. During this hearing to determine B.A.’s court orders, the judge did not let B.A. speak. The judge then placed B.A. on a zero-tolerance plan that required B.A. to enter a G.E.D. program if he violated any portion of the plan. B.A. withdrew from BHS after BHS suspended him for three days during his second DAEP referral for having a phone on him. BHS claimed that B.A. violated the court order by having a phone at school while B.A. understood the judge to have only recommended to his mother to confiscate his phone. B.A. feared that remaining at BHS would force him into a G.E.D. program, so he opted to attend Princeton ISD where he was required to complete the DAEP placement before entering traditional schooling again.

The additional accounts from parents, students, and staff, along with the experiences of five new complainants, further illustrate the racial harassment and discrimination described in our February 6, 2024 complaint against Bonham Independent School District. These accounts, which include racial slurs, harassment and discrimination, and staff’s awareness paired with inaction, highlight the critical need for a comprehensive investigation by the Department of Justice.

Respectfully submitted,



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