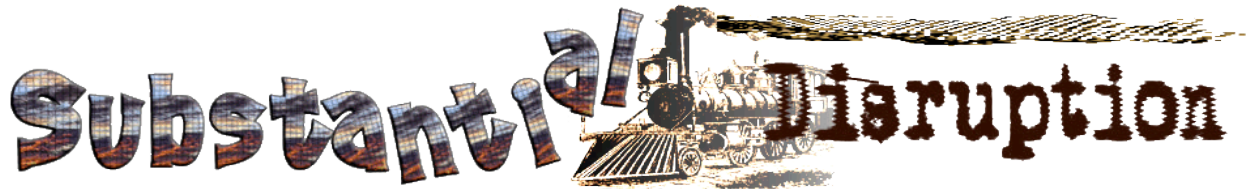


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District Fined, Teacher Facing Loss of Certificate; Student “Bummed Out”

By Mike Tully

JACKALOPE FLATS – A teacher at Jackalope Flats Middle School is facing the loss of her teaching certificate and the Jackalope Flats School District faces a \$15,000 fine after a student complained that a lesson on the Tulsa Race Massacre bummed her out. (The student is not identified because we withhold names of minors who are victims of psychological distress.)

According to court testimony, a student asked a question about the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre during a seventh-grade social studies class. The teacher told the class the incident referred to an attack by a white mob on Greenwood, a prosperous African-American section of Tulsa known as “black Wall Street” and that hundreds of black people were killed and countless homes and businesses were burned to the ground.

The complaining student, a white 7th grader, said hearing about the incident caused her distress. She had not heard about the massacre. “I was like, totally bummed out,” the student told the court. “I mean, killing people and burning their houses and stuff, that’s really gnarly.” She said she had a hard time sleeping that night and told her parents. Hearing about the massacre made her feel guilty, she said, because an all-white white mob attacked and slaughtered black people. The student said she did not personally know any black people, but could sympathize with them because some of her friends liked rap.

The student’s mother promptly contacted the school’s principal and complained about the lesson that troubled her daughter. The principal directed the teacher to meet with the student and her mother. The meeting did not go well.

“I explained to the teacher that lessons like that had no place being taught in our schools” her mother told the Court. But the teacher disagreed. “She said that teaching American history without mentioning slavery, segregation, and racial discrimination is like teaching the Lincoln assassination without mentioning John Wilkes Booth.”

That only made things worse.

“My daughter did not know about the Lincoln assassination,” testified the student’s mother. “She was further traumatized to hear about that.” The student testified that Abraham Lincoln was her favorite president and that she admired him. “He was the greatest president of all time,” she told the court. “He hunted vampires. No other president did that.” Her mother testified that her daughter barely touched her meal that night and did not want to return to school. She said she was also upset by the teacher’s comment.

The trial judge ruled the teacher and school district violated Arizona Revised Statute § 15-717.02 which states that “a teacher, administrator or other employee of a school district” may not allow instruction if “an individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish or any other form of psychological distress because of the individual's race, ethnicity or sex.” The judge found that being “bummed out” by hearing of the massacre satisfied the statute. He fined the school district \$15,000 for the violation in the classroom, as well as the parent conference, noting the broadly-worded law is not limited to the classroom setting or to students. Therefore, he found three violations and included the student’s mother as a victim of psychological distress as well.

The law calls for a maximum fine of \$5,000 for each violation. The law also states, “a teacher who violates this section shall be subject to disciplinary action, including the suspension or revocation of the teacher's certificate.”

The district lawyers, after the trial, said they were considering filing an appeal. The teacher said she planned to resign and move out of Arizona. The student’s parents said they decided to home-school her to spare her the discomfort of learning unpleasant facts.

“We can’t let her stay in school,” her mother told reporters. “We need to protect her from, you know, history and stuff.”

(Do you think this scenario is far-fetched? Well, [take a look at the bill, HB2898](#), which added § 15-717.02 to the Arizona Revised Statutes. The language you need to read is on page 86. Check it out; you’ll be *bummed out*)