

The *Mais* Case

Case Name: *Mais v. Albemarle County School Board*

Case Status: On February 22, 2023, the federal District Court for the Western District of Virginia ruled that the case could continue.

Significance: Whether teachers should be racially harassed and punished by school policies that discriminate against students and other teachers based on race.



Background: Emily Mais was an assistant principal at Agnor-Hurt Elementary School in Albemarle County, VA. The school implemented teacher trainings that assigned negative or positive characteristics to each person based solely on skin color. Emily expressed concerns that it was creating an environment that was bad for everyone, and in which white people were constantly villainized and minorities were disempowered and portrayed as perpetual victims. Emily’s concerns were ignored. In the final training session about the racial makeup of the school’s employees, Emily suggested gathering more data to get a better picture. Emily inadvertently used the word “colored people” instead of “people of color.” Although she immediately apologized, her continued apologies didn’t matter – the school staff berated her constantly for the next few months, calling her names, mistreating her, and demonizing her for a slip of the tongue. Emily was eventually forced to resign for the sake of her physical and mental health. The Albemarle County School Board claims it wants to eliminate racism in its school system, but unfortunately, its policies and practices do exactly the opposite. Public schools should not foster race-based division and resentment, but that is exactly what Albemarle County Public Schools is doing. Its training and policies encourage teachers to treat students differently based on their race—that’s racist and wrong. Attorneys at the Alliance Defending Freedom filed a lawsuit against the school district for creating a racially hostile work environment that forced Emily to leave her job, and the federal District Court for the Western District of Virginia ruled that the case can continue.

Key Points

- Schools should not force good administrators to resign for promoting a healthy school environment by speaking out against racist policies.
- Schools should not adopt training programs that promote racial division and hostility, nor incentivize staff to berate each other for mistakes.
- The program was never about simply training teachers. Instead, it was intended to divide people based on race.

Key Facts

- The curriculum sets up a classic Catch-22, in which a white person’s objections to the content of the curriculum are simply evidence that he or she is a racist who needs further training on the curriculum.
- While the school allowed an administrator to compare white parents to slave owners, Emily was doggedly harassed and ultimately forced to resign over a slip of the tongue for which she immediately apologized. One administrator even compared parents who voiced concerns over these policies to racist slave owners.

The Bottom Line: Administrators have a responsibility to advocate for the good of their students, staff, and families. Educators should not be punished for voicing concerns about policies they see as harmful.