

United States Court of Appeals
for the Fifth Circuit

United States Court of Appeals
Fifth Circuit

FILED

November 18, 2025

Lyle W. Cayce
Clerk

No. 25-60065

AUSTIN M. PULLIAM,

Plaintiff—Appellant,

versus

BENTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT; JADA RICH,

Defendants—Appellees.

Appeal from the United States District Court
for the Northern District of Mississippi
USDC No. 3:23-CV-389

Before SMITH, STEWART, and RAMIREZ, *Circuit Judges*.

PER CURIAM:*

Appellant, Austin M. Pulliam, a white man and a former high school coach, filed suit against the Benton County School District (“BCSD”) and his former colleague Jada Rich (collectively, “Appellees”). Rich, a black woman and an educator, reported Pulliam to BCSD, claiming that Pulliam used the N-word several times, criticized another black colleague, and used

* This opinion is not designated for publication. *See* 5TH CIR. R. 47.5.

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tobacco on school grounds within just ten days of working at Ashland High School and Middle School. BCSD then terminated Pulliam.

Pulliam sued Appellees in the district court, alleging discrimination under the Fourteenth Amendment, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq., and 42 U.S.C. § 1981. The district court granted Appellees' motions for summary judgment, holding that Pulliam could not show that BCSD's decision to fire him was pretext for racial discrimination, that BCSD terminated him without good cause, or that Rich tortiously interfered with his contract. Pulliam appealed.

On appeal, Pulliam argues that there is sufficient evidence to show that Rich exhibited discriminatory animus toward him, and that this animus influenced BCSD to terminate him without good cause. Appellees argue that Pulliam was fired because he violated the Mississippi Educator Code of Ethics three times after working for only ten days.

After reviewing the parties' briefs, the record, the applicable law, and considering oral arguments by the parties, we AFFIRM the district court's judgment.