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Today we are here to announce that this morning we filed a lawsuit in the United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan on behalf of five boys (3 represented by their mothers since they are still minors) against the Grand Rapids public school district (GRPSD) and numerous officials of GRPSD.

We allege that they failed to provide a safe and equal educational environment at Grand Rapids University Prep Academy (GRUPA) in Grand Rapids, Michigan and that they were deliberately indifferent and unreasonable in their response to teacher on student sexual assault and sexual harassment of students in violation of state law and Title IX which guarantees equal educational opportunity.

In short we allege that the constitutional and civil rights of our clients were violated.

The five boys whom we represent were all formerly students at GRUPA. They all had been students of Jamila Williams from approximately sixth grade forward since the inception of GRUPA and had been instructed or tutored by her in math or she had been their personal advisory teacher.

We allege that all of our clients were sexually harassed or assaulted by Ms.

Jamila Williams. Ms. Williams is now in prison after having been convicted of four counts of criminal sexual conduct with boys who were 15 and 16 when they were victims of the assaults.

We allege that Ms. Jamila Williams often acted in a sexually inappropriate manner at GRUPA and that her inappropriate conduct was at least in part known by certain GRUPA employees.

For example, our lawsuit alleges that she would “snap” her thong underwear at the back of her pants in the hallway and made comments about the sexual attractiveness of young male students openly in front of many students during school.

In addition, we allege that she would lock her door and turn off the lights in her classroom during the day while alone with male students. Williams also was known to simply take certain male students off campus during the school day, and not properly “sign out” students who were not assigned to her-nor account for their whereabouts-which was required by District policy and school policy.

Then on Monday May 27, 2013 a complaint was made by a parent to a GRUPA teacher about hearing students discussing inappropriate text messages between Ms. Williams and some students. The teacher notified the assistant principal.

Then on June 3, 2013 one of the mothers of our clients came to the school to

confront Jamila Williams after hearing about the allegations. Ms. Williams was suspended on June 4, 2013, but our lawsuit alleges that once these parents complained, the District did nothing more to investigate or act on its own to address the allegations, other than send out a letter to parents on June 4, 2013 and refer the students to the Grand Rapids Police Department.

The Grand Rapids University Prep/GRPSD officials suspended Williams the next day, June 4, 2013.

No investigation was done by the District, nor any remedial action taken to remedy the harm done and violations of the law, nor was any accommodation or assistance made to the student victims of the abuse to enable them to remain as students at University Prep, or help them transfer to educational institutions where they would be able to enjoy access to their public education.

No interviews were ever done of the student victims by any representative of the District, nor were any interviews done by the school district of the assailant/teacher involved, office staff at University Prep, or any students or witnesses, or the Principal or Assistant Principal about how the assaults occurred, when and where, nor any efforts undertaken to remedy and avoid future such violations of law.

No effort was made to help the student victims stay at University Prep, nor was anything done to reach out to the parents or families to assist them with the

interruption in the student's access to educational opportunities due to the violations of law and sexual harassment.

In fact, school officials took overt actions to encourage some of the student victims to leave the school, or made it impossible for them to stay.

The lack of any affirmative actions by any of the Defendants during the school days between May 27, 2013 and June 3, 2013 permitted Jamila Williams to engage in efforts to intimidate the Plaintiffs, continue to sexually abuse them, and try to find out who had "blown the whistle" on her actions.

Williams interrupted some of the Plaintiffs while in class or taking exams to find out how much information had been shared with parents or authorities while her classroom was watched for her by Assistant Principal Kenyatta Hill.

Williams was allowed to work all day June 3. After she was confronted by the one mother on June 3, she went to each Plaintiff's classrooms, pulled them out of class to talk to them in the hallways to interrogate them about who had told on her, and what had been said.

Despite their continuing duty to investigate and address the sexual assaults, from that point forward School District officials conducted no investigation of the assaults on Plaintiffs, ever.

The School District's alleged Title IX Coordinator was told about the sexual activity of Williams with the plaintiffs, but conducted no investigation at all, saying

it was simply a criminal matter and deferred to the police investigation completely.

For almost 7 days after the sexual texts were brought to the School's attention, no school district investigation was done.

The sex-based harassment deprived Plaintiffs of access to the educational opportunities or benefits of the school.

The School District and its Defendants responded with deliberate indifference to the sex-based harassment, and then we allege that they retaliated against those who were abused.

The District defendants did nothing to accommodate the student victims' needs to successfully finish their remaining school year free of harassment, nor did any investigation into the events themselves.

The Defendants made light of the situation's impact on the students' access to education, and/or blamed the students for the events, and made it difficult or impossible for the students to continue at G.R. University Prep, or transfer to equally adequate educational opportunities.

The District actively retaliated against the student victims by telling them they were not welcome at the school, and/or refusing to release transcripts promptly or facilitate their access to an education free of discrimination.

The school claims that they did an investigation, but how could they have investigated but never interviewed one of the victims? We believe that their so

called investigation itself shows that the school was deliberately indifferent to what had been done to these teenage victims. To make matters even worse, the school failed in every respect to attempt to help the victims with their emotional needs, their educational needs and either directly or indirectly made it impossible for the victims to continue their schooling at the same place.

Each of our clients has suffered, not only because of what was done to them by Jamila Williams but by the school's failures to abide by federal law, to conduct a proper investigation, to reach out to the victims and ensure that they were protected and taken care of and that they could resume their education without undue disruption. Instead, the school turned a blind eye to the victims.

We are seeking compensatory and punitive damages in an amount according to proof at trial and injunctive relief. Our clients were sexually discriminated against, sexually harassed, sexually assaulted and denied the equal protection of the law.

This lawsuit is about accountability by the school where Ms. Williams taught. The school is responsible not only because Ms. Williams was a teacher there, but primarily because the school failed in every respect towards our clients and violated Title IX.

We believe that when all the facts come out in court that Grand Rapids University Prep Academy will get failing grades and that in the future they will

more fully understand their legal obligations and the consequences of denying students the equal educational opportunity and protection which students are entitled to enjoy.

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