

SALINE CASE STUDY

A Mexican-American father was telling parents at the Saline school board meeting about racism in the schools and about how students in the high school taunted his son with “taco,” “enchilada” and “dirty Mexican” left his son in tears. While standing, the father was interrupted by a white man who asked, “Then why didn’t you stay in Mexico?”

A parent turned to the man and gasped “no, you should leave now.” An African-American father stood up and confirmed that his son was taunted with racist slurs as an everyday experience.

Community members marched through the streets with signs “We are a nation of immigrants” and “Hate has no home here.” Students asked the school district to create a curriculum that included content on racism, and started a new club called Students against Racism. School officials announced a series of community meetings to discuss the situation.

Students confronted the school board and demanded that they create policies against hateful and racist speech. They stood in the front of the room with their arms locked as they addressed the board. The board president warned the students not to clap or talk out order. The superintendent said they would try harder, and subsequent community meetings were scheduled.

Meanwhile white students sued the school district because about an earlier incident for which they had been suspended for posting racial slurs about their Black classmates on social media. They argued that they have a right to freedom of speech.

The students had posted the n-word several times on Snapchat. In a chat titled “Racist,” followed by two gorilla emojis, one student introduced another to a chat with a message saying “My ni**,” while another responded by saying “Sup ***.” More messages were posted afterward by the same students including “White Power” and “The South will Rise Again.”**

The White students --- and their attorney --- claimed the school district should not be able to discipline them for their racist messages and hate speech. They argued that is that they have a constitutional right to freedom of speech and cannot be penalized for what happens outside of school

The superintendent posted an online comment about inappropriate racist comments using derogatory terms about African Americans. He said that hate has no place in our schools, and that the district strongly denounces the words of these students. He called for efforts to make students of color feel safe in the school district by explicitly calling out the language as racist and integrating educational opportunities inside and outside the classroom.

SALINE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- **If you were at the meeting when a white parent said something racist, would you say something and, if so, what?**
- **Do students have a responsibility to “do something” and, if so, what should students do?**
- **What should teachers do? Administrators? Community members?**
- **If you were asked to organize a workshop for students, to help them learn how to respond, what would you want them to learn? What would you want teachers to learn?**