

November 2, 2015

To: United States Department of Justice

From: The National Movement for Civil & Human Rights, Inc.  
Ellison Bennett, Executive Board Member  
106 Baynes Ave  
Pensacola, Florida 32507

Subject: West Florida High School Injustice of 'Pantsing' Incident

On 1 October 2015, approximately 20+ young men, who were a part of the football team of West Florida High School (WFH), were allowed to board a school bus after a Junior Varsity (JV) football game without adult supervision. Escambia County School District in Pensacola, Florida was responsible for the protection of these young men and they failed miserably in that responsibility. Several of the young men were subjected to their teammates grabbing them and trying to "Pants" them as they got on the bus. The individual who actually started the "Pantsing" incident had the table turned on him and his brother and two of his friends actually "Panted" him. His football uniform was pulled off him and some of the kids on the bus took phone pictures of the incident and uploaded it to social media. (Snap chat)

There were at least 13 students involved in this incident but only three young black men selected for punishment. Neither the High School coaching staff nor the administrator of the school provided any adult supervision for this bus load of children. The only adult on the bus was the bus driver who was also a coach. He could not be expected to drive the bus, watch the traffic and monitor the students all at the same time. When he accepted the multiple rolls, he then became responsible for carrying them out. He failed!

All students involved were Junior Varsity and freshman football Players (very young, playful and impressionable young men) with the exception of the brother of the alleged victim. He was not part of the team and no one could say why he was on the bus.

The community is demanding an independent investigation to be conducted because the school has selected only three students out of a bus load of students to punish. The school Principal has recommended the students be expelled from school which deprives them of an education for 'horse playing'. These are kids who have to apply to attend this school and be able to maintain a high level of excellence in order to be there. They are clearly not disciplinary problem children

and should not now be treated as such. The punishment is too harsh especially when the alleged victim actually put the game in play.

No one is condoning the results of the student's behavior but we believe we should make the people responsible to protect our children bare the blame for not doing so. That would be the administrator of the school, who is ultimately responsible for her staff and the protection of all the students. The coaching staff, who bear the responsibility of ensuring the team gets to and from the games safely. Also, if there were no parents to supervise the bus some of this large coaching staff should have cared enough about these students to ride the bus with them to ensure they were kept safe.

After the incident happened on the bus, the alleged victim got off at the school's field house and jumped on his brother for "pantsing" him on the bus. This would lead a reasonable person to believe his brother and not the other young man accused, was actually the person who "panted" him. The alleged victim, his brother and the two friends who actually started the incident received no discipline for their participation in this event. This leads me to believe the school, the staff and the school district is unfair in rushing out punishment.

When the alleged victim was asked, who pulled his pants off, he named a young man who was not one of his friends and who he and his "posse" had attempted to pull his pants off earlier in the evening. He also told the other team mates he named this kid because he didn't want to get his friends in trouble. So, I would assume he also didn't want his brother to get in trouble.

The following are reasons why we believe we need an independent investigation:

- The coaching staff of this school received no discipline for neglecting to provide minimal protection for these students yet the school removed students from the school.
- The coaches and the entire JV team should be placed on disciplinary suspension for this incident on October 1, 2015.
- All students involved in this matter should be made to bear the burden of punishment including the victim and his brother who started the incident.
- The coaching staff at West Florida High School should be required to explain why they failed to have adult supervision on the bus or why some members of the large coaching staff did not ride the bus themselves.

- The coaching staff and administrator should be required to provide explanations as to why they neglected to address the fight between the two brothers the night of the incident in the locker room (field house). We believe had they done their due diligence the young men would not have had a week to make up lies about the event.
  
- The staff and administrator should give account as to why anyone other than the team is allowed to ride the bus with the team (alleged victim's brother).
  
- The school's resource officer (SRO), who is also a member of the coaching staff, should be made to explain why he was not on the bus with the students.
  
- The SRO should be required to explain why he refused a parent's request to file charges against the alleged victim and his brother for "battery", for attempting to pull off the pants of her son on the evening of the event, yet assisted the alleged victim's father in filing the same charge against an innocent student.

The Superintendent of Schools went on television and said the alleged victim was targeted because of his severe disability. The Superintendent statement is totally opposite of what the alleged victim said or what his father is now saying, "We were all playing, no one came for me". Clearly, there was no intent to harm any of these students. The father is trying to foster a lawsuit against the Escambia County School District with a personal injury attorney but anyone who knows anything about personal injury would know there has to be first an injury. Now he is saying his son was beaten because of his disability, held down and suffered injury. What he failed to mention is his son plays wide receiver on the JV Team and he was promoted to the Varsity Team since this incident occurred. His 'severe' mental and physical impairment is a speech impediment (he stutters).

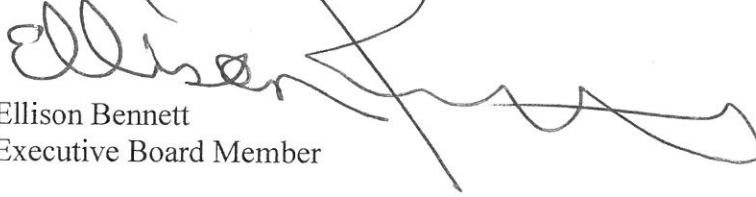
The Superintendent of Schools should be investigated for his participation in fostering a lawsuit against this county as he is an elected official.

Jeffrey Bergosh, a school board elected member, also added to the Pensacola News Journal's blog and his own personal blog, statements that these young men were guilty of criminal acts. He is one of the board members who would have the responsibility of voting on expelling these young men from school. He has already made up his mind and is trying to influence the

mind of the community. There is absolutely no way these young men can expect fairness in the disposition of this situation.

We are requesting immediate intervention on behalf of each and every one of the students on that school bus. These are the best of our community and should not be tainted with a record for horse playing. These young men should be in their classrooms getting an education.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ellison Bennett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Ellison Bennett  
Executive Board Member