# Parents allege racism mishandling at The Madeleine School leads to student expulsion and community unrest



An incident at The Madeleine School, a Catholic institution in Portland, Oregon, has escalated into a significant controversy involving allegations of mishandling a racist incident, leading to the expulsion of a student and widespread community unrest.

Karis Stoudamire-Phillips, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) executive at Moda Health, and her husband, renowned jazz musician Mike Phillips, claim their son was expelled from The Madeleine School after reporting that another student called him the n-word. The couple, known figures within Portland’s Black community, say that when they approached the school's principal, Tresa Rast, to address the incident, the situation became confrontational and ultimately led to the police being called.

Stoudamire-Phillips acknowledged to Oregon Live that the exchange with the principal became “heated,” explaining, “I told [Rast], you do understand that I don’t have confidence in you, based on my previous experiences with you.” During the conversation, Principal Rast reportedly challenged the parents, asking, “Well, if you don’t trust me, why have [your child] at this school?” Following the refusal of the parents to leave the premises, Rast called 911, alleging that they were “yelling at the employees and refusing to leave.”

Mike Phillips described the police call as a “complete abuse of power” and “an act of violence,” highlighting the different implications for a Black man having law enforcement summoned against him. He said, “You have to understand that a Black man having the cops called on him is a totally different implication.”

Days after the confrontation, The Madeleine School informed the family that no disciplinary action would be taken against the accused students, who denied using the racial slur. In response, Stoudamire-Phillips sent an email condemning the school’s position, calling it “simply ludicrous to insinuate that one of the only Black boys in the entire Madeleine school would inflict such trauma on himself and lie [about the racist epithet].”

Shortly after, the couple received notification that their son had been expelled. The school cited a breakdown of trust and confidence necessary for a cooperative relationship between parents and school officials as the rationale.

The Stoudamire-Phillips family’s involvement with The Madeleine School predates this incident; despite prior difficulties and dissatisfaction with the principal’s handling of issues involving their older son, they continued volunteering at the school to aid in improving its racial equity and social justice policies. Karis Stoudamire-Phillips brings experience from DEI work on the boards of various Portland institutions, including De La Salle North Catholic High School, St. Mary’s Academy, the Portland Rose Festival Foundation, and the Boise-Eliot Neighborhood Association.

Following the expulsion and public fallout, the Stoudamire-Phillips family has hired legal representation and is demanding the removal of Principal Rast and that the school institute comprehensive changes to its policies addressing racism.

The incident has prompted significant responses from the school community. Several parents have withdrawn their children from The Madeleine School, including families who say their children overheard the racial slur directed at the Stoudamire-Phillips’s son. One parent recounted that when they raised concerns, Principal Rast reportedly told them she believed the claim was fabricated and suggested their child undergo therapy to “deprogram from the anti-racist training” received in Portland public schools.

A letter signed by fifty parents has been sent to the parish priest, requesting the reinstatement of the expelled student and a thorough overhaul of the school’s approach to racism allegations. The letter accuses Principal Rast of committing “an act of violence and overt racism” by calling the police on the parents.

Additionally, the family of one of the few other Black students at the school wrote to call for Principal Rast’s resignation, describing a pattern of racial discrimination at the school. They highlighted incidents including “students being made fun of for their skin tone and hair texture and other slurs,” noting an absence of schoolwide communication or formal responses to such occurrences.

In an email addressed to the school’s parents on 23 April, Rev. Bonaventure Rummell, the parish priest, acknowledged the strain recent conflicts have placed on the school community. He stated, “The Madeleine School remains committed to building its community based on love, understanding, and respect for the dignity of all people as modeled by Jesus Christ.” He further emphasised the school’s dedication to providing “a safe environment for all staff and students that is free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying.”

The situation at The Madeleine School remains a focal point of intense discussion within Portland, with calls for institutional change and debates over the handling of racial issues within educational environments.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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