

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS  
EASTERN DIVISION**

MAXWELL LITTLE, JASON BENTON,	)	
JELANI COLEMAN, CELIA COLÓN,	)	
KASMINE CALHOUN, ERICA KIMBLE,	)	
NATHANIEL MADISON, TIFFANY	)	
MADISON, JAMES B. TINSLEY, and	)	
MARK WALKER,	)	
	)	
Plaintiffs,	)	
	)	
v.	)	No. 18 cv 6954
	)	
JB PRITZKER FOR GOVERNOR,	)	
	)	
Defendant.	)	

**COMPLAINT**

NOW COME the Plaintiffs, MAXWELL LITTLE, JASON BENTON, JELANI COLEMAN, CELIA COLÓN, KASMINE CALHOUN, ERICA KIMBLE, NATHANIEL MADISON, TIFFANY MADISON, JAMES B. TINSLEY, and MARK WALKER, by and through their counsel, THE LAW OFFICE OF SHAY T. ALLEN, LTD. and SAMUELS & ASSOCIATES, LTD., and complaining of the defendant, JB PRITZKER FOR GOVERNOR, state as follows:

**INTRODUCTION**

JB Pritzker for Governor has a race problem. Although they hire African Americans and Latinos as campaign workers, the vast majority are herded into race-specific positions where they are expected to interact with the public, offered no meaningful chance for advancement, and receive less favorable treatment than their white counterparts who engage with, as the campaign sees it, a more desirable constituency.

As a result, Black and Latino workers at JB Pritzker for Governor are marginalized, with their efforts put under a microscope and micromanaged while their white counterparts are given

autonomy and concessions. As if the intentional herding of Black and Latino workers into specific areas were not bad enough, the few workers of color who were placed in majority-white working environments were likewise subjected to overt and invidious racial discrimination.

JB Pritzker for Governor has a serious race problem. Contrary to the candidate's many public avowals, rather than working to meaningfully address discrimination, racism is perpetuated, condoned, and ratified by the Campaign. Unfortunately, what is going on behind the scenes of JB Pritzker for Governor in 2018 is startlingly consistent with the JB Pritzker of 2008 who smugly suggested that, *"you don't have to put an African American in that spot... Um, you know, but if you're forced to put an African American in the spot which is my guess is, you're not forced to do anything, but my guess is, a lot of pressure to do it. Of all the African Americans that I can think that are sort of like qualified and people and vetted and people will say oh – that's you know that's, that's a pretty good pick. Um, the one that's least offensive and maybe gets you the most 'cause it gets you that secretary of state appointment is Jesse White..."*

### **JURISDICTION**

1. The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked pursuant to the Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1981; the judicial code 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 1343 (a); and the Constitution of the United States of America.

### **PARTIES**

2. PLAINTIFFS were, at all times relevant, employees for JB Pritzker for Governor.
  - a. MAXWELL LITTLE has been a field organizer with JB Pritzker for Governor since July 2018. He has past organizing experience at the University of Missouri where he was an integral part of the student movement to bring about transformative policy changes to implement diversity in curriculum and become a more inviting campus for all students. He is a Black, or African American, male.

- b. JASON BENTON has been a field organizer with JB Pritzker for Governor since May 2017. He has past campaign experience working with Hillary Clinton for America, and in that role he introduced then-President Barack Obama for the campaign in Jacksonville, Florida. He is a Black, or African American, male.
- c. JELANI COLEMAN has been a field organizer with JB Pritzker for Governor since August 2018. Born and raised in Selma, Alabama, he has past experience working on the Hillary Clinton campaign. He is a Black, or African American, male.
- d. CELIA COLÓN has been a field organizer with JB Pritzker for Governor since July 2018. She has past organizing experience as the Project Manager with the Women’s Justice Initiative; is on the State’s Attorney’s Formerly Incarcerated Advisory Board; is a Fellow with Just Leadership U.S.A.; and is a speaker for the Juvenile Detention Center. In April of 2018, she received a humanitarian award, and facilitates mental health workshops at Cook County Jail. She is a Latina female.
- e. KASMINE CALHOUN was a field organizer with JB Pritzker for Governor during September 2018. She has past campaign experience working with Hillary Clinton’s campaign and more recently with the gubernatorial campaign of Philip Levine. She is a Black, or African American, female.
- f. ERICA KIMBLE has been a field organizer with JB Pritzker for Governor since June 2018. She has past campaign experience working as campaign manager for a county-wide candidate and for 10 years was the Vice President and Division Director for a union. She is a Black, or African American, female.
- g. NATHANIEL MADISON has been a field organizer with JB Pritzker for Governor since July 2018. He has past campaign experience working with the Senatorial Campaign for Doug Jones in Alabama. He is a Black, or African American, male.
- h. TIFFANY MADISON was a field organizer with JB Pritzker for Governor from July through September 27, 2018. She has vast experience working on other political campaigns, including as the Get Out the Vote (“GOTV”) Deputy in Selma, Alabama for Doug Jones’ senatorial campaign; as Campaign Manager for Terrel Marshall; and Field Organizer for Congresswoman Terri Swell. She is a Black, or African American, female.
- i. JAMES B. TINSLEY has been a field organizer with JB Pritzker for Governor since July 2018. He has past campaign experience working with the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and Don Gerard for Mayor. He is currently on the Champaign County Board. He is a Black, or African American, male.
- j. MARK WALKER has been a field organizer with JB Pritzker for Governor since July 2018. He has past experience working as a Staff Writer for the Hornet

Tribune, Host for WHPK FM, and Production Assistant for WGN TV. He is a Black, or African American, male.

3. DEFENDANT JB PRITZKER FOR GOVERNOR (“the Campaign”) was, at all times relevant, the principal and employer for each individually-named Plaintiff. There are over 200 campaign workers for JB Pritzker for Governor, of which about 90 are field organizers. Of those 90, the vast majority of Black and Latino field organizers are herded into POD 4, which comprises the field regions of 5 for the Westside of Chicago, 6 for the Southside of Chicago, and 7 for the Far Southside. For purposes herein, key campaign personnel include:
  - a. Campaign Manager Anna Capara;
  - b. Deputy Campaign Manager Quentin Fulks;
  - c. Field Operations Director Caitlin Pharo;
  - d. Training Director Gabriella Cascone; and
  - e. Deputy Field Director of POD 4 Ebonee Dawson.

#### **FACTS**

4. At all times relevant, the JB Pritzker for Governor campaign has been cesspool of racial discrimination and harassment.
5. For example, Kasmine travelled over one thousand miles to Illinois to work for JB Pritzker for Governor and was one of the few Blacks not herded into POD 4.
6. In fact, she was the only (and possibly first) Black organizer in Peoria; she was later informed by the campaign that she was hired meet a “Black Female organizer quota.”
7. Stationed in Peoria, Kasmine was supposed to be housed with a family that was friendly to the campaign.
8. When the family found out Kasmine was Black, though, they denied her housing.

9. As a result, she was forced to sleep in her car and at the campaign office.
10. Eventually, Caitlin Pharo found her a hotel in an unsafe part of town.
11. When Kasmine complained that she did not feel safe there, she was counseled on the “financial budget” of the campaign and told to “make due.”
12. Even after the chairman of the Peoria Democrats informed the campaign that they could request cheaper rates at safer hotels, therefore not affecting the campaign budget, the Campaign still refused to move her to a safer location.
13. As a result, she resigned her position.
14. Other examples of racial discrimination experienced include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Sending African American and Latino field organizers, on the basis of their race, to perform racist tasks such as to, “go round up 40 Black guys” for an event;
  - b. Denying Latino and African American field organizers the same privileges of their white counterparts, such as telecommuting;
  - c. Denying African American and Latino field organizers the same resources, such as housing and a safe place to work;
  - d. Denying Latino and African American field organizers the same access to the candidate, JB Pritzker, for the events they have planned;
  - e. Micromanagement of African American and Latino field organizers;
  - f. Denial of the equal opportunity to apply for positions of advancement;
  - g. Ignoring the complaints of Latino and African American field organizers;
  - h. The use of crass and racially discriminatory language; and
  - i. Attempting to intimidate and harangue Latino and African American organizers for standing up for their constitutional rights.
15. DeJuan Jackson, as a Regional Field Director, used to take many of the complaints of racial discrimination and harassment related to POD 4 to higher ups on behalf of the organizers.

16. However, in exchange for his silence, he was given a shiny new job title and pay raise. He was also strongly encouraged to cut his dreadlocks; therefore, he no longer comes across as crass and was the least offensive African American that could be put in that spot.
17. As a result of numerous and ongoing complaints of racial discrimination, the Campaign had mandatory cultural sensitivity training on September 12, 2018.
18. Prior to the training beginning, however, all field organizers were required to turn in their cell phones. This had never happened before at any other meeting.
19. The members of POD 4 were then pulled aside by Ebonee Dawson who informed them that she had been instructed to tell the majority-minority regions, “not to say anything stupid” **at cultural sensitivity training.**
20. No other POD, all of which are majority White, was given such an instruction.
21. Once seated, Caitlin Pharo intentionally positioned herself between two Black males in an attempt to further intimidate and silence them **at cultural sensitivity training.**
22. To add insult to injury, the person hired by the campaign to do the training used racial epithets **at cultural sensitivity training.**
23. When Celia tried to ask a question, the training director instructed the person with the microphone not to give it to her.
24. However, at no time did the Campaign address any of the ongoing complaints of racial discrimination against it or announce any changes to eliminate the discrimination.
25. Immediately after the training, Plaintiffs complained; however, their complaints went completely ignored.
26. A week later, Little once more complained, this time stating that he was contemplating whether to file an EEOC complaint as well. This time, the Campaign responded.

27. With less than 40 minutes notice, Anna Capara scheduled a conference call with POD 4 during which she explained the Campaign had completed their investigation into the discrimination (despite the fact they had not reached out to anyone who complained) and that Dawson was verbally reprimanded (even though she had been directed to discriminate against them).
28. The Campaign's response was superficial and meaningless, and the real purpose of the conference call was to attempt to intimidate Black and Latino field organizers into remaining silent about the racial discrimination they face on a daily basis.
29. The discrimination faced by Plaintiffs, both overt and otherwise, was and is so pervasive and severe as to constitute a hostile work environment.
30. Individuals who lack the requisite knowledge to be a deputy field director, such as cutting turf, were placed in positions of authority solely to act as overseers and stifle the complaints of Plaintiffs and other racial minorities from reaching higher ups, as they prefer to ignore the discrimination they know takes place in the Campaign.
31. Despite being overworked and micromanaged, Latino and Black field organizers are constantly reminded that they are valued less by the campaign.
32. For example, the Region 6 Office is placed in an unsafe location. The Footlocker next door was robbed twice in a week; two other stores nearby have been robbed; their office has been cased; a young woman was raped outside their back door; and a gunfight took place right outside their office. All of these crimes happened during the day.
33. Although an alderman offered to let them use space, for free, in a safer location, the request was denied.
34. When they asked to work remotely when it got late, the request was denied.

35. And when they asked why JB Pritzker did not visit their office, they were told that “he’ll visit when they stop shooting.”
36. Apparently, the Region 6 Office is safe enough for Black and Latino men and women, but not a white man.
37. After the Campaign received notice of their intent to sue, they began to allow them to leave the office at 7pm.
38. As a result of the aforementioned conduct, Plaintiffs were harmed.

**COUNT I: SECTION 1981 HARASSMENT**

39. Plaintiffs hereby reallege each of the foregoing paragraphs, as if fully set forth here.
40. Plaintiffs were subjected to unwelcome harassment because of their race that was so pervasive that it unreasonably interfered with their work performance by creating an environment that was intimidating, hostile, and offensive.
41. Defendant directed, tolerated, condoned, and/or ratified the harassment and failed to take prompt remedial action.
42. As result of the conduct, each Plaintiff was harmed.

**COUNT II: SECTION 1981 DISCRIMINATION**

43. Plaintiffs hereby reallege each of the foregoing paragraphs, as if fully set forth here.
44. Each Plaintiff was subjected to discrimination on the basis of his or her race in that they were denied the equal enjoyment of all benefits, privileges, terms, and conditions of their employment as their white counterparts.
45. As result of the conduct of the Defendant, Plaintiffs were harmed.

**COUNT III: SECTION 1981 RETALIATION**

46. Plaintiffs hereby incorporate each of the foregoing paragraphs, as if fully set forth here.



47. By submitting complaints, Plaintiffs engaged in a protected activity that caused the Defendants to subject them to adverse employment actions.
48. As a result of Defendant's conduct, Plaintiffs were harmed.

**PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

WHEREFORE the Plaintiffs, MAXWELL LITTLE, JASON BENTON, JELANI COLEMAN, CELIA COLÓN, KASMINE CALHOUN, ERICA KIMBLE, NATHANIEL MADISON, TIFFANY MADISON, JAMES B. TINSLEY, and MARK WALKER, requests the following relief:

- A. Declare that the acts and practices complained of herein are violations of 42 U.S.C. Section 1981;
- B. Enjoin and permanently restrain Defendant, and all persons in active concert or participation with Defendant, from engaging in any employment practice which discriminates based on race;
- C. Mandate Defendant to timely post all job openings in each office, as well as send out electronic notifications to all employees, and leave such postings open for a reasonable period of time in order to allow all interested employees the opportunity to apply;
- D. Order Defendant to employ a Chief Diversity Officer to oversee and audit the campaign's employment practices, and to prevent and discipline discrimination;
- E. Order that, in the event JB Pritzker is successful in his bid for Governor, he appoint a Chief Diversity Officer to oversee and audit the Executive Branch's employment practices, and to prevent and discipline discrimination;
- F. Order Defendant to create a meaningful anti-discrimination policy which shall be added to the employee manual and distributed to all active and future employees;
- G. Direct Defendants to make Plaintiff whole for all earnings and benefits she or he would have received but for Defendants' discriminatory treatment;

- H. Award Plaintiff back pay, prejudgment interest, and damages for all employment benefits she lost;
- I. General and compensatory damages;
- J. Punitive and liquidated damages;
- K. Attorneys' fees, costs, litigation expenses, and pre-judgment interest; and,
- L. Such other relief as the Court deems just or equitable.

**PLAINTIFFS DEMANDS TRIAL BY JURY.**

Respectfully Submitted,

By: s/ Jeanette Samuels  
*One of Plaintiff's Attorneys*

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