

STATE OF MINNESOTA
COUNTY OF HENNEPIN

DISTRICT COURT
FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
CASE TYPE: EMPLOYMENT

L. Lee Tyus Jr.,

Plaintiff,

v.

General Mills, Inc.,

Defendant.

Complaint

Jury Trial Demand

For his Complaint against Defendant, Plaintiff L. Lee Tyus Jr., hereby states and alleges upon knowledge, information, and belief as follows:

Jurisdiction & Venue

1. Defendant General Mills, Inc. is a Minnesota business corporation doing business in the State of Minnesota, with a registered office address of 1010 Dale Street North, St. Paul, Minnesota, 55117.
2. General Mills is a corporation and may act only through natural persons as agents or employees.
3. Plaintiff L. Lee Tyus Jr. is an adult, Black man who resides in the County of Washington, State of Minnesota.
4. At all relevant times, Tyus Jr. was a Packing Technician at General Mills.
5. At all relevant times, Tyus Jr. and General Mills were “employee” and “employer” under Minn. Stat. § 363A.03, subd. 15 and 16.

6. Personal jurisdiction exists over General Mills because the violations of law occurred in Minnesota and involved Minnesota state law.

7. Venue is proper because the violations of law occurred in the County of Hennepin, where General Mills employed Tyus Jr.

Factual Allegations

8. In November 2019, Tyus Jr. began working at General Mills.

9. In January 2025, Tyus Jr. received a mid-year performance appraisal stating he was “on track” in all areas of his job.

10. Further, the review stated Tyus Jr. consistently met and completed requirements, respected people with wide range of perspectives, was seen as someone with integrity, received feedback well, and fit in well to his team.

11. In February 2025, General Mills participated in Black History Month.

12. Black History Month is intended to honor and spotlight Black leaders, activists, artists, investors, educators, and others whose work has shaped history.

13. Black History Month is also intended to educate the broader public about often-overlooked aspects of Black history and culture and to recognize the struggles Black communities have faced—and continue to face—especially in the fight against racism, inequality, and injustice.

14. The colors black, red, and green—the colors of the Pan African flag—are often associated with Black History Month as they can be used to emphasize Black solidarity, resistance, and cultural pride.

15. The colors red, black, and green should not be used in performative ways during Black History Month, such as decorating schools or workplaces without providing meaningful education or support for Black communities, as such use may be understood as a superficial, offensive, and/or discriminatory use that ignores their historical significance.

16. On February 1, 2025, as part of its acknowledgement of Black History Month, General Mills displayed flyers with information regarding Black history on tables in the breakroom.

17. One flyer discussed the Tulsa Race Massacre, which occurred when white mobs attacked the prosperous Black community of Greenwood in Tulsa, Oklahoma, killing as many as 300 Black residents and destroying more than 1,000 homes and businesses.

18. General Mills' flyer contained a photo of buildings burning in the Massacre, with a few bullet points of information stating:

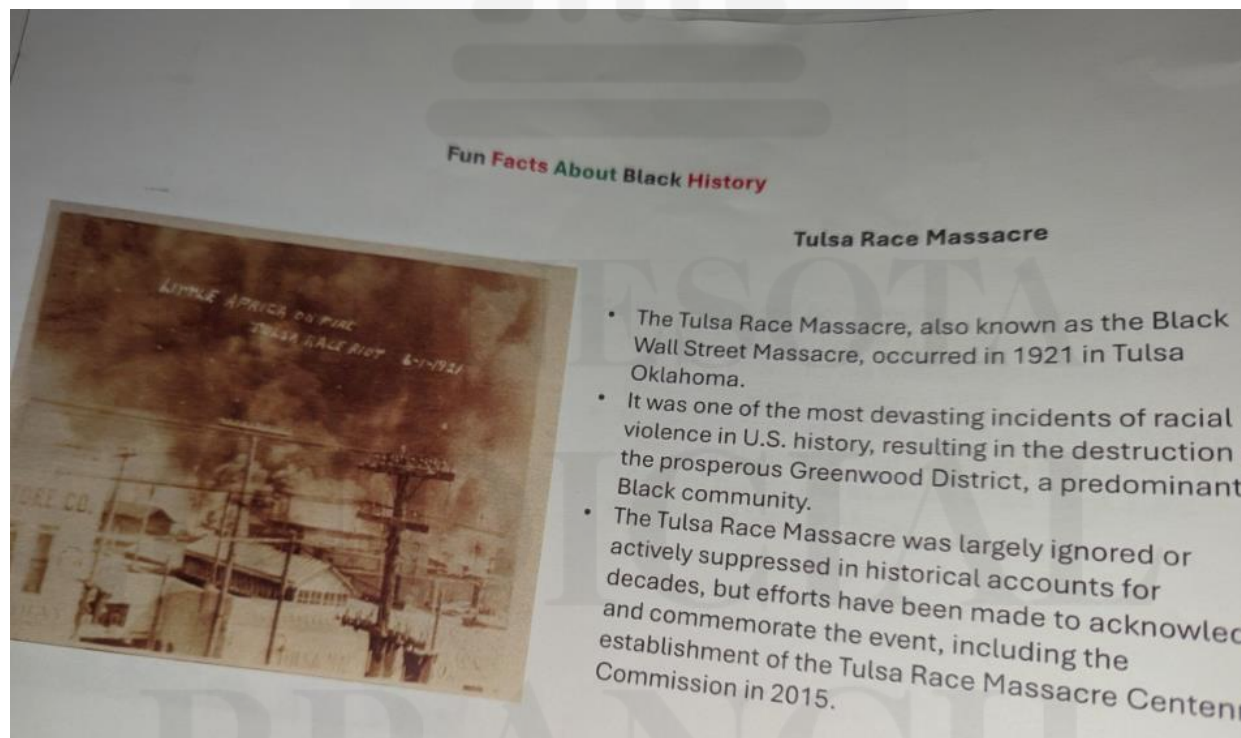
- The Tulsa Race Massacre, also known as the Black Wall Street Massacre, occurred in 1921 in Tulsa[,] Oklahoma.
- It was one of the most devastating incidents of racial violence in U.S. history, resulting in the destruction of the prosperous Greenwood District, a predominant Black Community.
- The Tulsa Race Massacre was largely ignored or actively suppressed in historical accounts for decades, but efforts have been made to acknowledge and commemorate the event, including the establishment of the Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission in 2015.

19. Another flyer that General Mills placed on tables in the breakroom discussed Black Codes, which were state-sanctioned laws enacted after the Civil War to strip newly freed Black people of their rights and force them into exploitative labor, effectively recreating slavery under a different name.

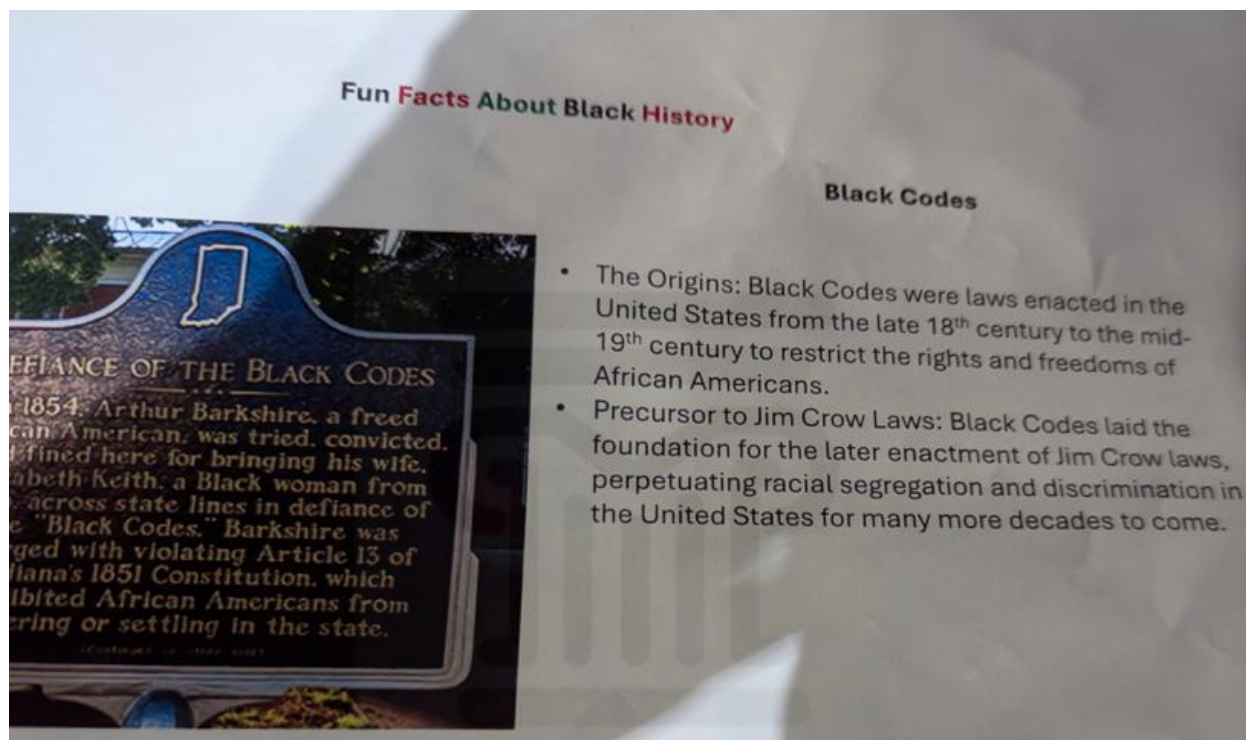
20. General Mills' flyer contained a photo of a historical marker discussing Black Codes, with a few bullet points of information stating:

- The Origins: Black Codes were laws enacted in the United States from the late 18th century to the mid-19th century to restrict the rights and freedoms of African Americans.
- Precursor to Jim Crow Laws: Black Codes laid the foundation for the later enactment of Jim Crow laws, perpetuating racial segregation and discrimination in the United States for many more decades to come.

21. Tyus Jr. observed the flyers and realized they were titled "Fun Facts About Black History," in black, red, and green lettering:



Flyer about the Tulsa Race Massacre titled "Fun Facts About Black History"



Flyer about Black Codes titled “Fun Facts About Black History”

22. As a Black person, Tyus Jr. found these flyers offensive and discriminatory.
23. Tyus Jr. immediately reported his belief that the flyers were offensive and discriminatory as they described historic racial injustices as “fun facts.”
24. Tyus Jr. had a conversation with General Mills’ Human Resources (HR) Manager and the Team Lead regarding his report.
25. Tyus Jr. asked whether similar events involving white individuals would be labeled “fun facts.”
26. The HR Manager responded, “No, it would just be labeled ‘American Tragedies.’”
27. Tyus Jr. used vacation time and/or sick leave because of General Mills’ inadequate response to his concerns.

28. On February 14, 2025, Tyus Jr. emailed General Mills' Plant Manager about the situation, saying he believed General Mills distributed "racially unjust, inconsiderate, hateful, and unprofessional documents[.]"

29. Tyus Jr. expressed disappointment with lack of resolution and the emotional and financial damage General Mills' conduct caused him.

30. Tyus Jr. explained the situation caused him to use his paid time off and exert time and energy to deal with General Mills' response, stating: "Much like the massacre[,] I wish this didn't happen and I could put energy into something actually 'Fun' or doing the work as I have for years before now."

31. On or about February 18, 2025, Tyus Jr. talked with General Mills' Plant Manager and his Team Lead about his reporting of racial discrimination.

32. Tyus Jr. was informed no apology would be issued.

33. Tyus Jr. also submitted a formal complaint to EthicsPoint, General Mills' internal platform for ethics and compliance, to report the discrimination he was facing regarding the discriminatory flyers.

34. That day, General Mills placed Tyus Jr. on leave.

35. General Mills claimed it was "To better understand [Tyus Jr.'s] need for restrictions and your ability to work safely," and directed him to submit medical information if he wanted to return to work.

36. Tyus Jr. had not requested any accommodation or leave.

37. General Mills placed Tyus Jr. on leave based on a perceived disability.

38. After learning he was being placed on an involuntary leave, Tyus Jr. responded that he was “being retaliated against for my beliefs and aren’t being allowed back to work which feels again like an injustice.”

39. On March 8, 2025, Tyus Jr. was allowed to return to work, however when he did so, he learned that General Mills had deactivated his access card, and he was not able to access his workplace.

40. As Tyus Jr. attempted to return to work, another General Mills employee commented, “At least they don't have your picture on the wall.”

41. This comment demonstrated that other General Mills employees understood Tyus Jr. was being denied access to the building.

42. It also suggested other General Mills employees now believed Tyus Jr. had been banned from the General Mills workplace.

43. This caused Tyus Jr. great emotional distress, including feeling embarrassed, degraded, humiliated, disrespected, vilified, and retaliated against.

44. Tyus Jr. contacted his Team Lead about being prevented from returning to his scheduled shift.

45. On March 13, 2025, General Mills’ Legal & Corporate Affairs Senior Employee Relations Lead, Tracey Hatchew, contacted Tyus Jr. to discuss his “allegations of harassment and retaliation.”

46. Tyus Jr. spoke with Hatchew to express that he did not believe General Mills had adequately responded to the “Fun Facts” situation.

47. Hatchew encouraged Tyus Jr. to share her contact information with others who may have also been offended by the “Fun Facts” flyers, so they could also reach out to her.

48. Following that conversation, Tyus Jr. put a document together with the information Hatchew provided to him.

49. The document stated:

Hello fellow GMI,

Tracy Hatchew General Mills Legal & Corporate affairs would like to hear from you if you were offended by General Mills Chanhassen Human Resources, Management, and Plant manager calling the Tulsa Race Massacre (Black Wall Street Massacre) “Fun” in the table toppers put out in February. Rights are protected, you are protected and need not fear retaliation as retaliation is illegal.

Tracy.hatchew@genmills.com

612-605-0562

50. Tyus Jr. showed the document to a General Mills supervisor and received permission to place copies of the document on the breakroom tables.

51. Shortly thereafter, on March 19, 2025, General Mills instructed that Tyus Jr. be escorted from the building.

52. General Mills then terminated Tyus Jr.’s employment.

53. General Mills stated it terminated Tyus Jr. because of “multiple violations of General Mills’ standards of conduct and policies.”

54. When asked for clarification, General Mills stated an Employee Corrective Action Form encompassed all the reasons for Tyus Jr.'s termination.

55. The Employee Corrective Action Form was dated March 14, 2024, five full days before General Mills terminated Tyus Jr.

56. The form stated the reasons for Tyus Jr.'s termination as follows:

On March 14th, you remained on company property after being asked to leave. This is a violation of the Personal Conduct Standard, specifically the prohibition of "Insubordination or failure to carry out the instructions of a manager, etc." Additionally, you distributed flyers to other employees without prior authorization, violating General Mills' Solicitation and Distribution policy. Finally, you were dishonest with leadership and HR regarding your FOB malfunction, we have concluded that you tried to use your FOB at a time you were not scheduled to work. It is our practice to have FOBs deactivated while employees are on leave. This is a violation of the General Mills Code of Conduct regarding honesty.

57. None of the allegations made by General Mills in the Employee Corrective Action Form are true.

58. The form was signed on March 19, 2025, by Hatchew as the Manager and the HR Approver.

Count One
Race and Color Discrimination
Minn. Stat. § 363A.08, subd. 2

59. Plaintiff Tyus Jr. realleges each paragraph as if fully stated herein.

60. It is an unlawful discriminatory practice for an employer to discriminate against an employee on the basis of race and/or color with respect to the terms, conditions, or privileges of employment.

61. Tyus Jr. is a member of a protected class because he is Black.

62. General Mills discriminated against Tyus Jr. with respect to the terms, conditions, privileges, and benefits of his employment, including but not limited to, by placing him on involuntary leave, falsely accusing him of violating its policies, and ultimately terminating his employment.

63. General Mills' conduct adversely impacted Tyus Jr.

64. General Mills' conduct was motivated by Tyus Jr.'s race and/or color.

65. General Mills' conduct constitutes discrimination and an unfair discriminatory practice, and it has violated Tyus Jr.'s rights under the Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA).

66. As a direct and proximate result of General Mills' unlawful conduct, Tyus Jr. has suffered damages including lost earnings and benefits, emotional distress, embarrassment, humiliation, and other compensatory damages.

67. Based on the foregoing, Tyus Jr. is entitled to judgment in a reasonable amount in excess of \$50,000, which should be trebled; a civil fine; and his reasonable costs and attorney fees.

Count Two
Disability Discrimination
Minn. Stat. § 363A.08, subd. 2

68. Plaintiff Tyus Jr. realleges each paragraph as if fully stated herein.

69. It is an unfair employment practice for an employer to discriminate against an employee because the employee has or is regarded as having a physical, sensory, or mental impairment that materially limits one or more major life activities.

70. At all relevant times, Tyus Jr. was disabled or was regarded as being disabled by General Mills.

71. Tyus Jr. was qualified for his position at General Mills.

72. Tyus Jr. was subject to an adverse employment action due to being disabled or being regarded as disabled by General Mills.

73. General Mills discriminated against Tyus Jr. with respect to the terms, conditions, privileges, and benefits of his employment, including but not limited to, by placing him on involuntary leave, falsely accusing him of violating its policies, and ultimately terminating his employment.

74. General Mills' conduct adversely impacted Tyus Jr.

75. General Mills' conduct was motivated by Tyus Jr.'s disability and/or perceived disability.

76. General Mills' conduct constitutes discrimination and an unfair discriminatory practice, and it has violated Tyus Jr.'s rights under the MRHA.

77. As a direct and proximate result of General Mills' unlawful conduct, Tyus Jr. has suffered damages including lost earnings and benefits, emotional distress, embarrassment, humiliation, and other compensatory damages.

78. Based on the foregoing, Tyus Jr. is entitled to judgment in a reasonable amount in excess of \$50,000, which should be trebled; a civil fine; and his reasonable costs and attorney fees.

Count Three
Retaliation for Opposing Discrimination
Minn. Stat. § 363A.15

79. Plaintiff Tyus Jr. realleges each paragraph as if fully stated herein.

80. It is an unfair discriminatory practice for an employer to discriminate against a person because that person opposed discrimination.

81. Tyus Jr. engaged in protected activity when he opposed the race, color, and disability discrimination he experienced at General Mills.

82. General Mills subjected Tyus Jr. to intimidation, retaliation, and/or harassment because of his opposition to discrimination in various ways, including but not limited to, by placing him on involuntary leave, falsely accusing him of violating its policies, and ultimately terminating his employment.

83. General Mills' actions adversely impacted Tyus Jr.

84. General Mills' conduct was motivated by retaliatory intent in response to Tyus Jr.'s opposition to discrimination.

85. General Mills conduct constitutes reprisal in violation of MRHA.

86. As a direct and proximate result of General Mills' unlawful conduct, Tyus Jr. has suffered damages including lost earnings and benefits, emotional distress, embarrassment, humiliation, and other compensatory damages.

87. Based on the foregoing, Tyus Jr. is entitled to judgment in a reasonable amount in excess of \$50,000, which should be trebled; a civil fine; and his reasonable costs and attorney fees.

Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff L. Lee Tyus, Jr. prays for judgment against Defendant as follows:

1. As to Count One, a judgment in favor of Tyus Jr. against Defendant in an amount in excess of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000), together with costs and disbursements herein, pre- and post-judgment interest, and all other relief the Court deems just and equitable.
2. As to Count Two, a judgment in favor of Tyus Jr. against Defendant in an amount in excess of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000), together with costs and disbursements herein, pre- and post-judgment interest, and all other relief the Court deems just and equitable.
3. As to Count Three, a judgment in favor of Tyus Jr. against Defendant in an amount in excess of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000), together with costs and disbursements herein, pre- and post-judgment interest, and all other relief the Court deems just and equitable.
4. Tyus Jr. is entitled to all costs of Court.
5. Tyus Jr. be granted other and further relief as the Court deems just, proper, and equitable.

Dated: June 10, 2025

STORMS DWORAK LLC

/s/ Naomi E. H. Martin

Jeffrey S. Storms, #387240

Naomi E. H. Martin, #402332

Isabel L. McClure, #401759

222 South 9th Street, Suite 470

Minneapolis, MN 55402

Phone: 612.455.7057

Fax: 612.455.7051
jeff@stormsdworak.com
naomi@stormsdworak.com
isabel@stormsdworak.com

Attorneys for Plaintiff



MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
BRANCH

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The undersigned hereby acknowledges that pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 549.211, subd. 2, costs, disbursements, and reasonable attorney and witness fees may be awarded to the opposing party or parties in the litigation if the Court should find that the undersigned acted in bad faith, asserted a claim or defense that is frivolous and that is costly to the other party, asserted an unfounded position solely to delay the ordinary course of the proceedings or to harass; or commit a fraud upon the Court.

Dated: June 10, 2025

/s/ Naomi E. H. Martin

Naomi E. H. Martin, #402332

Attorney for Plaintiff

MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
BRANCH