1	COURT OF APPEALS
2	STATE OF NEW YORK
3	THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK,
4	Respondent,
5	-against-
6	NO. 41
7	JONATHAN BATTICKS,
8	Appellant.
9	20 Eagle Stree Albany, New Yor September 9, 202
10	Before:
11	CHIEF JUDGE JANET DIFIORE
12	ASSOCIATE JUDGE JENNY RIVERA ASSOCIATE JUDGE LESLIE E. STEIN
	ASSOCIATE JUDGE EUGENE M. FAHEY
13	ASSOCIATE JUDGE MICHAEL J. GARCIA ASSOCIATE JUDGE ROWAN D. WILSON
14	ASSOCIATE JUDGE PAUL FEINMAN
15	
16	Appearances:
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25	Karen Schiffmille Official Court Transcribe



	CHIEF JUDGE DIFIORE: The next appeal on this					
2	afternoon's calendar is appeal number 41, The People of Th					
3	State of New York v. Jonathan Batticks.					
4	MR. MCCOY: May it please the					
5	CHIEF JUDGE DIFIORE: Why don't you wait a					
6	moment, and we'll have the this first group clear					
7	out. Thank you.					
8	MR. MCCOY: Thank you, Your Honor.					
9	CHIEF JUDGE DIFIORE: You're welcome.					
10	Counsel?					
11	MR. MCCOY: May it please the court. May I also					
12	remain seated for this argument?					
13	CHIEF JUDGE DIFIORE: You may, sir.					
14	MR. MCCOY: Jonathan R. McCoy with The Legal Aid					
15	Society of New York, here today on behalf of the appellant					
16	Mr. Jonathan Batticks.					
17	May I reserve two minutes for rebuttal?					
18	CHIEF JUDGE DIFIORE: You may.					
19	MR. MCCOY: Thank you, Your Honor.					
20	CHIEF JUDGE DIFIORE: You're welcome.					
21	MR. MCCOY: At the heart of this case, of this					
22	appeal the issue at the heart of this appeal is what					
23	conduct on behalf of a juror, on a juror's part, requires					
24	the trial court to undertake a Buford inquiry. I submit					
25	that, in this case, the facts that are present					

presented to this court, are far afield from those contemplated by a note for a Buford. This is not an unusual case, involving an obviously trivial matter, where all parties agreed that the jury's impartiality could not be affected.

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Instead, we have - - - we - - - we're confronted with a case where a juror interrupt the proceedings to announce that she was very offended by co-counsel's cross-examination of the complainant, in which he used and/or repeated the phrase old N-word.

JUDGE STEIN: Counsel, can - - - can I just clarify one thing? You seem to perhaps conflate a little bit the - - - the two te - - - tests, one of grossly unqualified, and the other of misconduct of a substantial nature. Did you raise the misconduct issue in the - - - in the trial court?

MR. MCCOY: I don't believe any of the counsels below ex - - - explicitly stated that they believed that she was - - - she had committed substantial misconduct.

JUDGE STEIN: Okay. So - - so do you agree
that we should be focusing on the grossly unqualified sta - standard here?

MR. MCCOY: I think that the two standards, in this case, kind - - - kind of bleed into one another, insofar as counsel's arguments as to why she was grossly

1	unqualified all relied upon what constituted substantial
2	misconduct. She committed misconduct by speaking out from
3	the jury box, violating the court's admonitions. And that
4	conduct became sub substantial misconduct when she
5	threatened to act unlawfully by striking herself as a
6	juror. What
7	JUDGE FAHEY: In other words, you're saying that
8	the misconduct made her grossly unqualified?
9	MR. MCCOY: Her misconduct ev evinced in -
10	an inability to remain fair and impartial to the
11	defendants in the case.

JUDGE FAHEY: She was grossly unqualified.

MR. MCCOY: Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE FEINMAN: So when you say that she is no longer able to be fair and impartial, that's based on what exactly?

MR. MCCOY: The fact that she took the - - - she was taking the - - - the line of questioning personally, and - - - and in fact, stated that she found it very offensive, which implicated her ability to remain fair and - - -

JUDGE FEINMAN: But how would you know - - - lawyers say all sorts of offensive things in the course of trial and jurors are offended; doesn't mean that they have necessarily departed. And here the - - - the court



actually observed everything, all right. It's not like something that happened - - - when you do a hearing, for example, under substantial misconduct, it's typically when that misconduct has occurred outside of the presence of the court, and - - - and you need to sort of get what the facts are.

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What is it that you think the court was going to learn by conducting a hearing?

MR. MCCOY: By conducting a Buford inquiry, the court could have learned whether that juror could separate her emotional reaction from hearing the phrase old N-word, used or repeated by co-counsel, from her duty to - - - to be a fact finder in an impartial and fair manner.

So the court could have interrogated what her emotional reaction consist - - - consisted of, how strong that emotional reaction was to her or for her, and whether that would've impacted her ability to remain fair and impartial as a fact finder.

And I should note that this court announced in - in Kuzdzal that all that's required to trigger a Buford inquiry is some indication that a juror may be grossly disqualified. Or - - -

JUDGE STEIN: What about the fact that - - - that the - - - this whole discussion or - - - or line of questioning by counsel was not Mr. Batticks' counsel, it



was counsel for a co-defendant, who had raised a completely different defense then Mr. Batticks. Why - - - how does - - - even if everything that you say is true, how does that show any bias or impartiality toward this defendant, Mr. Batticks?

MR. MCCOY: It shows a potential - - - a potential for bias or impartiality against Mr. Batticks, because they were all tried before a single jury under a - - under an acting-in-concert theory regarding the fight between these - - - the three defendants and the complainant. So the imputation of potential bias or partiality - - -

JUDGE STEIN: Well - - -

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MR. MCCOY: - - - flows naturally - - -

JUDGE STEIN: But isn't that always the case when there is a joint trial on those grounds? That an - - - that - - - that anything that's - - - that's said about one defendant is going to cause impartiality toward another defendant? Doesn't that sort of go against the whole policy there?

MR. MCCOY: Well, I - - - I think that if the -
- the court had undergone a Buford inquiry in this case,

this court could be assured, or Mr. Batticks could be

assured, that he received a fair trial and could've - -
the court could have gained knowledge as to whether she



would actually be imputing any bias or partiality against Mr. Batticks himself.

CHIEF JUDGE DIFIORE: Counsel, you would agree that an inquiry of a sworn juror during the trial would be extraordinary by a judge. I assume you would agree about that. That's an extraordinary sit - - - it's not a usual step.

MR. MCCOY: It's not a usual step.

CHIEF JUDGE DIFIORE: So here's my question to you. So we review this issue under an abuse-of-discretion standard. Why wasn't the path chosen by this judge: the curative instruction telling the jurors, if they can't be fair and impartial, alert the court's staff, and the judge will take whatever action was appropriate? Why wasn't that a more reasonable and measured approach then the judge actually inquiring of this one juror in the middle of the trial?

MR. MCCOY: For several reasons.

CHIEF JUDGE DIFIORE: Um-hum.

MR. MCCOY: The first reason is that - - - is that the court met - - - misinterpreted this court's precedent in Mejias in reaching its determination that a Buford inquiry was unnecessary.

Secondly, this - - - this juror had already been admonished by the judge in open court, and to admonish her



1	a second time, due to the use of the reported curative
2	instruction, could have only may have only increased
3	the amount of bias partiality that she felt towards defense
4	counsel for placing her in that position.
5	So getting back to
6	JUDGE GARCIA: I'm sorry, Counsel, this
7	over here.
8	MR. MCCOY: Sorry.
9	JUDGE GARCIA: This trial court proceeding took
10	place before our decision in Kuzdzal, right? I think it
11	was 2013; our decision is 2018. Would that have affected
12	the trial court's ability to exercise its discretion here?
13	MR. MCCOY: Well, at the the decision
14	made by the trial court here certainly did not predate this
15	court's decision in Mejias, and and
16	JUDGE GARCIA: Right
17	MR. MCCOY: in Mejias
18	JUDGE GARCIA: but Kuzdzal came after
19	Mejias, so Kuzdzal is now the law. Does that change your
20	view of what the trial court was empowered to do here?
21	MR. MCCOY: No, Your Honor, because in Mejias,
22	the court this court stated that given some
23	indication that a juror has engaged in some disqualifying
24	conduct, then a Buford inquiry is mandated.

JUDGE RIVERA: So your point is Kuzdzal didn't

1	necessarily change that aspect of the law?						
2	MR. MCCOY: It did not.						
3	JUDGE RIVERA: So that's not new law?						
4	MR. MCCOY: It was just a re						
5	JUDGE RIVERA: In your opinion?						
6	MR. MCCOY: a restatement of the law as it						
7	exists.						
8	CHIEF JUDGE DIFIORE: Thank you, Counsel.						
9	Counsel?						
10	MS. HAUSNER: If Your Honor will allow, I will						
11	also remain seated. I						
12	May it please the court, Rebecca Hausner on						
13	behalf of the People.						
14	The juror in this case had an entirely						
15	understandable and foreseeable reaction to co-defendant's						
16	counsel's efforts to bait and goad the victim into having						
17	reaction on the stand.						
18	JUDGE RIVERA: Coun Counsel, that may						
19	may be true, but that's not really the question, right?						
20	The question is whether or not the judge should have made						
21	an appropriate inquiry to determine what, if any, impact						
22	that questioning had on her, given her outburst and her						
23	threat that she would leave if counsel didn't change the -						
24	what counsel was doing during that cross.						

MS. HAUSNER: First of all, Your Honor, I think

that's exactly right, that it was within the court's discretion, and we defer to trial courts under these circumstances for precisely that reason, because they do have the ability to observe the jury - - -

JUDGE RIVERA: Counselor, no. I think we've said that if - - - if - - - if there's enough to trigger the inquiry, you've got to do the inquiry. You can't choose not to do the inquiry based on information you don't have because you didn't do the inquiry.

MS. HAUSNER: But in this situation, the trial court did have ample information before it. The trial court was able to observe the entire lead-up prior to the juror's reaction, and that context is important because the juror did not react the first time co-defendant's counsel uttered the epithet in this situation. She absorbed the evidence, and no doubt saw that it was relevant to this co-defendant's justification defense at trial, and she didn't react the second time, or the third time, or the fourth time.

JUDGE RIVERA: Well, just in - - - in the same way that the Chief Judge says it - - - correctly so, it's unusual, perhaps, to make this inquiry. Isn't it unusual to have this kind of an outburst, to threaten to walk out?

MS. HAUSNER: This was certainly a heightened expression of frustration in the sense, but it - - -



2 even more cause for an inquiry? 3 MS. HAUSNER: It's - - - it's all a matter of 4 degree in this situation, and the juror did react with, as 5 I said, a heightened degree of frustration, but this court 6 has - - -7 JUDGE FAHEY: But wasn't - - - wasn't - - -8 excuse me. Wasn't that exactly defense counsel's strategy? 9 Didn't defense counsel here deliberately act in - - - in an 10 obnoxious and aggravating manner to try and elicit a 11 response? And he got the response, right? 12 MS. HAUSNER: Exactly, Your - - -13 JUDGE FAHEY: That - - - that's what happened. 14 So that being the case, it's clear to everybody who's ever 15 sat in a courtroom that that's what happened. So if that's 16 the case, doesn't a judge have an obligation to make sure 17 that this juror's able to go forward and continue to be 18 fair and impartial? 19 MS. HAUSNER: I think that it's correct, Your 20 Honor, that the defense attorney was, to use your word, 21 being obnoxious - - -2.2 JUDGE FAHEY: Oh, of course. 23 MS. HAUSNER: - - - and I think that's exactly 24 why this court has created a carve-out for impatience and 25 aggravation with attorneys, because jurors do react to the

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JUDGE RIVERA: So why - - - why would that not be



1	tactics and strategies
2	JUDGE FAHEY: Well, yeah. It's
3	MS. HAUSNER: of defense attorneys at
4	trial.
5	JUDGE FAHEY: it's just a very unusual
6	reaction. It I mean the reaction was so unusual tha
7	the DA at trial, I think, agreed that said there was
8	no reason for a mistrial but would not object if the court
9	chose to replace the juror.
10	MS. HAUSNER: But respectfully, Your Honor, the
11	first thing that the prosecutor noted, was that she agreed
12	with the trial court's assessment
13	JUDGE FAHEY: Uh-huh.
14	MS. HAUSNER: that the reaction was tied to
15	the frequency of the of the word, of the
16	JUDGE FAHEY: Of course.
17	MS. HAUSNER: offensive racial slur being
18	uttered.
19	JUDGE FAHEY: If he had just said it once, I
20	agree with you, it it wouldn't have created the
21	situation. That's why I'm saying it seems obvious that he
22	did it on purpose, but the DA did say that they would not
23	object if the court decided to replace the juror.
24	MS. HAUSNER: Again, at at first, she
- 1	



she agreed with the court's assessment, and I - - - I would

just point out, Your Honor, that it's - - -1 2 JUDGE FAHEY: But do you agree with what I just 3 said? The DA did say that. Didn't the DA then say that 4 they would not object if the court chose to replace the 5 juror? 6 MS. HAUSNER: Yes, Your Honor. But I do not 7 think that that actually ties into the analysis for what I 8 just - - - for the reason I just described. But also, it 9 could be that this particular ADA was in fact advised that 10 in these situations where there's - - - the question of discharge of a juror comes up, and you have a full - - -11 12 you have your full staff of alternates ready to come in, 13 that maybe her assessment was that it was better to sort of 14 acknowledge the fact that she - - -15 JUDGE FAHEY: It seemed like a very practical 16 response. Why have a case overturned because a juror 17 didn't - - - made an appropriate - - - inappropriate action 18 in the midst of a trial? It seemed, given this case - - -19 I'm pretty familiar with it - - - it seemed like the DA 20 made a very reasonable response. 2.1 MS. HAUSNER: Again, that may have been a 22 reasonable stance to take, but she did align herself to the 23 judge, and ultimately - - -24 JUDGE FEINMAN: But - - - but it's one thing - -

MS. HAUSNER: - - - it was the judge's decision. 1 2 JUDGE FEINMAN: - - - you know, for the DA to 3 take that response. It doesn't necessarily mandate that 4 the judge do that. That's the point. 5 MS. HAUSNER: Yes, Your Honor. And it was 6 ultimately the judge's decision whether or not to conduct 7 one of these very invasive inquiries, and the - - - the 8 fact remains that this court has given discretion to trial 9 courts in these situations - - -10 JUDGE WILSON: Well, the dis - - - the discretion in our cases mostly shows up in certain - - - in the 11 12 ordinary circumstance, where - - - which is to Judge 13 Feinman's earlier point - - - the - - - what the judge 14 first has to evaluate is, information from a spectator, 15 from somebody in the hallway, from another juror saying - -16 - essentially re - - - repeating hearsay to the judge. And 17 the first thing the judge has to do is figure out what is 18 this information; is this person who is - - - who is, you

None of that has to happen here, right? The - - the judge has actually perceived the - - - there's not a
factual issue we normally have in these Buford cases,
right?

know, as in Kuzdzal, providing the information credible?

MS. HAUSNER: Correct.

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JUDGE WILSON: And my concern here is - - - is -



-- which shouldn't surprise you, is the following: that the juror has demonstrated herself grossly unqualified, because she has taken over the cross-examination. I'm -- put the shoe on the other foot, which is sort of what Judge Fahey was asking in a way. Suppose as it happened to you while you were trying a case, and you started asking some questions designed, perhaps, to get some kind of reaction out of the defendant, who was testifying on his own behalf, and a juror got up and said, if you ask that one more time, I'm walking out. You don't want an inquiry?

MS. HAUSNER: Respectfully, Your Honor, the issue that the defense attorneys were concerned with below was the potential that this juror was harboring some animus against one - - one defense attorney, co-defendant's counsel. None of the jury - - none of the defense attorneys below, not the court and not the prosecutor, were concerned with the misconduct aspect that appellant pushes - - presses on appeal. No one was concerned with her ability to abide by the court's instructions, and in fact, her conduct through remainder of trial proved that she was able to abide by the court's instructions.

So the whole issue of steering the crossexamination away from what the defense attorney initially intended was not even raised as a complaint by the defense attorneys below. And I think that's exactly because he



could get out the evidence that he wanted. He already had gotten a concession out of the victim that he may have been called a racial slur that preceded the violence in this case. And all the parties in the courtroom clearly knew that he had already gotten what he wanted. And this fifth and final use of the racial slur was entirely gratuitous for that reason.

So - - - and just - -
JUDGE WILSON: Well, we don't know really know that, because we don't know what the next question would have been.

MS. HAUSNER: There - - - he had - - - but he had already - - - we know from his summation - - - we know from co-defendant's counsel's summation that he was concerned - - -

JUDGE WILSON: In any event - - -

MS. HAUSNER: - - - with demonstrating that - - -

JUDGE WILSON: In any event, your answer to my question seems to imply that you would have wanted an inquiry of the juror. It's just that here, they didn't ask for that, and it's not preserved.

MS. HAUSNER: I - - - I can't say whether or not this defend - - - this defendant's attorney wanted an inquiry. In fact, he was the one who had requested a mistrial. So I can't speak for what his trial strategy



was. But the record does show that he was trying to get a rise out of - - out of the victim.

That strategy didn't pan out. He got a rise out of the juror instead. But again, that expression of frustration demonstrated who - - her irritation with the tactic that defend - - co-defendant's attorney had chosen at trial. It was not an indication of bias, and it certainly was not an indication that she couldn't remain fair and impartial.

And I think that's exactly why the trial court in this situation fashioned the remedy that it did. It - - - it left - - - it gave leeway - - - it left open an avenue for this juror to come forward and express any concerns that she may have had - - -

equating what she is saying is difficult for her to continue to hear like any other irritant. And it's not.

As you said, it's a racial slur - - - slur; it has a particular history. We don't even use all of the letters in this particular slur as a consequence of that history.

So how is it that a judge, having observed this, having heard this, does not have an inquiry to see whether or not, given what is the cause of - - - of her anger and frustration, and her outburst, may have some lingering effects beyond, okay, now you're not going to do it

anymore; I can move on.

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MS. HAUSNER: I think, again, that's exactly why the judge created this avenue for her to come forward. I think based on his own observations, it was entirely tied to the repetition and her frustration with the repetition, because if it wasn't, she would have reacted the first time. But he left open this avenue. And I think this court has said in Mejias and it said in Kuzdzal that trial courts do have the discretion to form these preliminary steps instead of launching directly into a potentially unwarranted and uncalled for invasive inquiry - - -

JUDGE RIVERA: But what's the downside in this case? Given - - - given that this is so unusual and so outrageous to say to a lawyer, if you don't stop, if you - - - just don't - - - I don't want you to do that anymore, otherwise I am getting up and going and stop my service on this jury.

Why - - - why is it so unreasonable to say that requires a judge to make an inquiry of her - - - of that juror? Excuse me.

MS. HAUSNER: Initially, Your Honor, I - - I would disagree with the characterization that she was - -

JUDGE RIVERA: I mean, the judge might come out after that inquiry and decide that she should stay seated, right?

MS. HAUSNER: Initially, I - - - the characterization of the record that she was attempting to strike herself from the jury or no longer wanted to deliberate - - - $\frac{1}{2}$

JUDGE RIVERA: I don't know, it says, "Or I am leaving."

MS. HAUSNER: And that was a reflection of the fact that she did not want to hear the word again. She had grown tired of hearing the word because it was uttered so gratuitously, because it was so unnecessary. And is it possible that the judge could have done an inquiry in this case? It - - it's possible that a judge could have done an inquiry, but the - - - the point is that the law doesn't require him to do an inquiry in this case. An inquiry was not required.

He instead elected to pursue a completely reasonable and effective strategy of admonishing the juror, removing the jurors from the courtroom, soliciting input from the defense attorneys, and then instructing the jurors that they couldn't hold questions asked against the parties, they should not prematurely form opinions, and that they should come forward if they had any concerns.

And of course, the record has - - - the record is perfectly clear that she did not come forward with any concerns, and nothing about her demeanor during the dur - - duration of



the trial raised any - - -

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JUDGE RIVERA: Of course, now that she harbors particular hostility, she may not wish to do so, and it may very well be that she would react differently if inquired by the judge face-to-face.

MS. HAUSNER: Again, Your Honor, I - - - I think that is why we leave these issues to the trial court, who had the benefit of observing her demeanor in court.

CHIEF JUDGE DIFIORE: Thank you, Counsel.

MS. HAUSNER: Thank you.

CHIEF JUDGE DIFIORE: Mr. McCoy?

MR. MCCOY: Thank you, Your Honor. Respondent argues that the curative instruction that the court formulated for the jury was the same kind of limited curative instruction that this court found to be acceptable in both Mejias and Kuzdzal.

However, that misstates the fa - - - the facts of the record. The judge in this case stated after the - - - the request was made for an inquiry that he would not be giving an inquiry because of his misinterpretation of the holdings of Mejias. And then, and only then, did he give the - - - the jury the option to volunteer themselves as possibly - - - to make that legal determination, if you will, of whether they were fair and impartial, or could not remain fair and impartial.



And then, by - - - sidestepping the procedure prescribed by this court in Buford, as the means for determining whether a juror could remain fair and im - - - fair and impartial, that juror was to report to a court officer, and in that judge's words, there would be no question after such a report, that he would then discharge here. That is anathema to what Buford and its progeny represents.

And speaking to the point of speculation, when the court - - - in - - - in the - - - in the lower court, stated that without hearing anything else from a juror, that it would assume that all the jurors could remain fair and impartial, it was basing its assessment of Juror 6's partiality or impartiality necessarily on impermissible speculation, which again is anathema to the Buford - - - Buford and its progeny.

And just one last note. The Buford inquiry is suppose - - supposed to be tactful and probing of the potentially unqualified juror. So while it might - - - maybe unusual to engage in the inquiry - - - and - - - and with regard to the full span of cases, a judge might have on the docket, the tactful and probing requirement ensures that the inquiry gets to the issue of what - - - of their fairness, impartiality, their qualifications as a juror, and as was noted, can, in fact, rehabilitate that juror.

1	CHIE	EF JUDGE	DTF.TOF	KE:	'I'hank	you,	Counsel.
2	MR.	MCCOY:	Thank	you,	Your	Hono	ſ.
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1		CERTIFICATION				
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