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## Riverside High School Teacher Returns to Classroom After Acquittal on Rape Charge

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A high school teacher in Riverside, California, is back in the classroom after being found not guilty of a rape charge that had upended his career and reputation for over four years.

Lucas Brian Hampton, 34, who taught world history, government, and economics at Martin Luther King High School, has been reinstated by the Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) following his acquittal in March 2025.

Hampton's first trial in 2024 ended in a mistrial after a hung jury could not reach a unanimous decision following just one day of deliberation. A second trial began in February 2025 and concluded with a full acquittal on March 24.

The teacher was first arrested on May 4, 2020, after a woman he met on Bumble, a dating app where women initiate contact, accused him of raping her at his home in 2018. At the time of the accusation, the woman had no known connection to the school or the district, according to Riverside police. Shortly after his arrest, RUSD placed Hampton on unpaid administrative leave, pending the outcome of the investigation.

Initially, police investigators said there was not enough evidence to submit the case to the Riverside County District Attorney's Office. Despite the lack of new information, the District Attorney's Office later requested that the case be submitted in February 2020, and one charge of rape was filed.

## Legal Outcome

Following the not guilty verdict, the school district conducted a legal review of Hampton's employment status. On June 23, he received a letter from the district's legal team confirming that his suspension had officially ended and that he was cleared to return to work.

"After careful consideration and legal review, the district determined that Mr. Hampton must be reinstated, consistent with California Education Code," said district spokeswoman Elizabeth Pinney-Muglia in an email to the *Southern California News Group* on July 8.

Pinney-Muglia declined to provide further details about why reinstatement was not immediate, citing confidential communications between the district and its legal counsel. It remains unclear whether Hampton will return to his previous role at Martin Luther King High School or be reassigned elsewhere in the district.

His return comes at a time when questions continue to swirl about how school districts across the country handle accusations against educators, particularly when those cases don't result in a conviction. For many, Hampton's case underscores the tension between protecting the rights of the accused and maintaining trust within the school community.

While some parents and staff may still feel unsettled, others have pointed to the importance of due process and the need for fair treatment when charges do not hold up in court.

In the meantime, the district has made no further comment on the matter.