

## ANTI-BLACK

FROM B1  
things such as issuing a formal apology to Black employees, creating leadership pipelines for minority candidates, and changing the hiring process to make it more inclusive.

### Southwestern's response to report

When asked how much progress Southwestern College has made toward implementing the recommendations, spokeswoman Lillian Leopold sent The San Diego Union-Tribune links to monthly reports on racial climate on campus produced by the college's leadership team.

Those reports show the university has largely followed the recommendations by taking immediate and ongoing actions.

Some of them are one-time actions, such as issuing a formal apology to Black staff members, hiring a consulting firm to review Human Resources practices, and appointing a vice president for equity, diversity and inclusion.

Other recommendations require ongoing work, such as making employment data more transparent, strategizing ways to increase faculty diversity, and hosting quarterly forums on race.

Records show that Southwestern College has hosted dozens of workshops and forums on race for students, faculty and executive-level staff this year. The college also now requires implicit bias training for all hiring committee members.

In terms of transparency, Southwestern now publishes annual reports on diversity, records show.

One recommendation that hasn't been met is establishing a leadership development program. Efforts to get that program off the ground were stalled by the COVID-19 pandemic, Leopold said.

Southwestern College also conducted a student and employee survey in March.

Results showed that 40 percent of employees felt there was a lot of racial tension at Southwestern College and that 50 percent of employees had witnessed discrimination on campus.

Additionally, Southwestern College's survey, which was conducted more than a year since the USC report was published, reached similar conclusions.

Specifically, the survey found that a higher percentage of Black employees were dissatisfied with employee diversity and that Black employees were less likely to report positive experiences compared to non-Black employees.

In response to this story, Southwestern College issued the following statement:

"Southwestern College takes pride in being the only public institution of higher education in Southern San Diego County serving a diverse community of students and employees. Southwestern College works to embrace our wonderful diversity and always strives to foster a collaborative and inclusive environment."

"Southwestern College has long had policies against racism and discrimination. The College will continue to uphold the highest professional standards for all its employees and will continue to build and strengthen equity and inclusion in the workplace. The College is committed to remaining a leader in San Diego County to ensure there is no place for racial discrimination in our community."

### The lawsuit

Southwestern College declined to directly answer any questions about the lawsuit or make employees available for interviews. Instead, the college referred specific questions to an outside attorney.

"Southwestern College was made aware of the lawsuit that has been filed by current and former employees alleging racial discrimination in their employment with the college," President Murillo wrote in a statement. "The College is reviewing the complaint, takes the allegations raised seriously and will address any issues in an appropriate and thorough manner."

The outside attorney, Aaron Hanes of the Winet Patrick Gayger Creighton & Hanes law firm, said he was still reviewing the 37-page complaint. The document contains several allegations and names dozens of individuals; therefore, it will take some time to determine their validity.

"It's probably premature

to comment on any specific allegation," he said.

One of the most recent allegations happened in January. Brandon Williams, a 29-year-old Black man, claims tension between the counseling department's Black workers and everyone else was so high that he was the only Black employee to attend a training retreat.

During a discussion on race, a Latino employee dismissed USC's report by allegedly claiming that there "is no anti-Blackness on campus; instead, the campus is anti-Latino." When Williams brought up the report to challenge the claim, his fellow co-workers were unmoved, according to the lawsuit.

Another Black employee who is suing Southwestern, Veronica Burton, has worked in the counseling department since 1998. As one of the most senior employees, she applied for the role of acting dean in 2018, the role that eventually went to Dean Aragoza.

"Despite being the most qualified candidate on paper, having had the most relevant experience, including specific experience to SWCCD, Burton was again passed over for the promotion," the lawsuit states. "Burton believes that her race played the most important role in her being denied the Interim Dean position."

Burton was particularly upset that Aragoza got the job because he had previously told co-workers in the department that he had "issues" with Black people, particularly with Black men, according to the lawsuit.

"According to Aragoza's own admission, whenever he would be in meetings with Black employees, he would shake because he would be scared and nervous," the lawsuit says. "Not because any person in said meeting did anything to Aragoza, but instead solely because of the person's Black skin."

Dr. Abdimalik Buul was at that meeting where Aragoza admitted to being scared of Black men. Buul, who left Southwestern College after a series of what he described as discriminatory incidents, is a co-plaintiff in the lawsuit.

After USC's report was published, Buul joined a task force meant to address racism on campus. He claims the task force got off to a poor start.

During another task force meeting, the same employee "decided that using her best judgment meant that she could say (n-word) in the meeting. While (she) was verbally reprimanded for her comments, her comfort in saying such derogatory terms in a professional setting spoke volumes about SWCCD's anti-Black environment," the lawsuit claims.

Two other Black employees of the counseling department allege similar stories of being treated differently than their non-Black co-workers.

In 2015, Stacey Mathis had a baby and started pumping breastmilk at work. She'd seen other mothers do the same and didn't think there would be a problem.

However, the person in charge of scheduling told Mathis that she could only pump for 15 minutes a day and anything beyond that would come out of her paycheck, the lawsuit alleges.

"Mathis' non-Black co-workers were not subject to this rule," according to the lawsuit.

James Rose claims he was denied overtime work during the Fall 2019 semester even though other non-Black workers in the counseling department were given overtime.

When he confronted acting dean Aragoza about this, Aragoza became angry and "claimed that Rose was 'living above his means.'"

According to the lawsuit, Aragoza and Rose had never discussed personal finances so Aragoza had no reason to make that statement.

"Aragoza's comments further cemented in Rose's mind that the real reason for Aragoza denying Rose's overtime request was not because of SWCCD's lack of money, but instead because of Aragoza's pre-conceived and bigoted notions about Black people and their alleged misuse of finances," the lawsuit claims.

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## A PATH FORWARD Steven P. Dinkin

# For some, a Thanksgiving like every other day

Many Americans, it seems, are thankful for human contact. And they'll go the extra mile for it.

Amid a nationwide surge in COVID-19 cases, millions of people boarded airplanes and millions more got in cars, off to spend the holiday with family and friends.

All this despite a stern advisory from the Centers for Disease Control that Americans stay put and spend Thanksgiving only with immediate family.

My family complied. Our celebration was different this year — at home in San Diego, rather than in Milwaukee with my mother. But the nest was full and pleasantly noisy with our three grown children at home.

Other households — more than a quarter of a million, in fact — had a more somber gathering without their loved ones, lost to COVID-19.

However, there's a large population of Americans for whom Thanksgiving is just like any other day, except for a turkey dinner: the 2.3 million people held by the criminal justice system in its network of 1,833 state prisons, 110 federal prisons, 1,772 juvenile correctional facilities, 3,134 local jails, 218 immigration detention facilities, and 80 Indian Country jails (along with other facilities).

Wendy Sawyer and Peter Wagner of the Prison Policy Initiative have noted that the United States locks up more people per capita than any other nation, at the staggering rate of 698 per 100,000 residents. (El Salvador is in second place, with an incarceration rate of 615 per 100,000 residents.) On any given day, 2.6 percent of the entire adult U.S. population is under correctional supervision, including probation and parole. That's more than 8 million people.

The large number of people sitting in prison — and entangled in the criminal justice system — is a reflection on our country's priorities. The U.S. Department of Education noted in 2016 that state and local spending on prisons and jails has increased at triple the rate of funding for public education (pre-school through grade 12) in the last three decades.

Also consider this: 44,000 youth under the age of 18 spent their Thanksgiving in a juvenile facility (which operate a lot like jails and prisons). Many are being held for offenses that aren't even crimes, like running away, truancy and incorrigibility. And there are deep disparities along racial lines: While they represent just 14 percent of youth under the age of 18, 42 percent of boys

and 35 percent of girls in custody are Black.

Derrick Hardaway was 14 when he took part in the murder of an 11-year old in Chicago. Hardaway, who is Black, recently told his story to The Marshall Project. He was labeled a juvenile "super predator," who was believed to be afflicted with "moral poverty" that rendered him incorrigible, remorseless and very dangerous. Hardaway said, "If someone labels you a super predator, people are always going to prejudice you. Once you have that label on you, you can't escape it; it's stuck there. I'm not a predator. I was a kid who made a terrible decision."

Tried as an adult, Hardaway served 20 years in prison. He was released in 2016.

This story brought to mind the work we do at the National Conflict Resolution Center, which can lead to very different outcomes for youth like Hardaway.

I'd like to believe that our thinking in San Diego has evolved — away from reflexively punishing youth who get in trouble, toward restorative interventions. The San Diego Unified School District recently approved a new discipline policy for students, in which suspensions or expulsions from school are now considered a last resort. Instead, students

build coping and communication skills (that's where NCRC comes in) and work together to solve problems, before they escalate.

Inevitably, some problems do escalate, resulting in harm. Here, NCRC engages with the youth in honest conversation about the harm, in a way that motivates them to acknowledge responsibility and find ways to make things better. We pay attention to the youth's interests, needs and strengths, which are used to form the basis of a restorative action plan. To ensure their success, we bring in essential community supports — positive influences who open up possibilities.

For youth who might otherwise end up in the prison system, these types of restorative practices are a lifesaver. If we could implement them in school districts across the country, we'd have a clear path forward and stand a good chance of reducing our prison population.

And that is an outcome for which we could all be thankful.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCRC's programming, visit [ncrconline.com](http://ncrconline.com)



TAMMY SPRATT SAN DIEGO ZOO GLOBAL

**A biologist from the U.S. Geological Survey rescues a pond turtle from the San Gabriel Mountains in an area at risk for mudslides, this fall.**

## TURTLES

### FROM B1

The little reptiles are "about the size of a dessert plate," she said, with olive to brown shells and shiny yellow eyes.

"They have almost like a smile when you look at their little face," she said. "Who doesn't like a cute turtle?"

Southwestern pond turtles are one of two recently recognized species that were previously thought to be a single species, and are both under review for endangered status. Gray said. Urban development has wiped out their habitat, and invasive predators including crayfish, nonnative frogs and largemouth bass compete for resources and poach the quarter-sized turtle hatchlings. The species occupies coastal freshwater habitats from the San Francisco Bay Area to northern Baja California, Mexico, but is now rare in Southern California, the zoo stated.

Then the Bobcat fire dealt a new, devastating blow to their population, prompting their evacuation. The rescued reptiles will be held at the zoo until their habitat recovers enough to sustain them. For now, she said, it's a wasteland.

"It almost looks like a moonscape of just burned vegetation," Gray said. "You can see there's nothing left on the hills."

Southern California's ecosystems

evolved to withstand wildfire, and plant communities and animals adapted to survive it. But climate change, coupled with shifts in the fire regimen, has resulted in more intense blazes that char entire ecosystems and destabilize the landscape during subsequent winter rains.

"They're hotter and dryer and they go faster," Gray said. "It creates a mudslide of ash and soot that turns essentially to concrete. It's pretty devastating."

The crushing earthfall could fill in refugia pools and change water chemistry, creating dangerous conditions for the turtles, Rich Burg, environmental program manager for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, said in a statement. Those flows could create a "Pompeii effect" that could entomb the animals in ash, Gray said.

Scientists will monitor the burned area and determine when it's safe to bring them back. They hope to return them home in the summer, after spring rains and mudslide risks have passed, and vegetation has regrown enough to stabilize the landscape.

"That would be the best, to get them back out there as soon as possible," she said. "That way they have the chance to eat food and reproduce and be turtles, do their turtle thing in the wild."

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## FOR DISNEY+, SAN DIEGO HAS 'THE RIGHT STUFF'

BY MICHAEL JAMES ROCHA

### SAN DIEGO

For Disney+, San Diego apparently has all the right stuff.

"The Right Stuff," an eight-episode series that just wrapped up its first season on Disney+, is headed to San Diego for filming starting in March of 2021.

The series — based on the 1983 Oscar-winning film adaptation of Tom Wolfe's "The Right Stuff" starring Sam Shepard, Ed Harris and Dennis Quaid — has chosen to film its second season in America's Finest City, according to the city of San Diego's Film Office.

The television show has not yet determined locations for shooting, but it is expected to film locally for 88 days starting in March.

The San Diego Film Office, an arm of the city's Special Events & Filming Department, was established in 2015 "to support and grow the local film industry and to promote the San Diego region as a competitive, film-friendly destination," according to a statement.

A streamlined permitting system, according to a statement, coupled with a tax credit incentive administered by the California Film Commission, makes San Diego "an attractive draw."

"We are thrilled to welcome 'The Right Stuff' to the San Diego region. The California Film & TV Tax Credit Program has been a critical incentive in attracting productions to San Diego," Brandy Shimabukuro, film liaison for San Diego's Film Office, said in a statement. "Productions like these help bolster our local economy and civic pride, while also creating and sustaining jobs in the film industry."

"The Right Stuff" joins a growing list of TV and movie productions that have chosen San Diego as its filming locale, including Paramount Pictures' "Top Gun: Maverick," FOX's "Pitch," Netflix's "Ingobernable" and TNT's "The Last Ship."

"It's great to see the state's tax credit program bring high-quality jobs and significant production spending to San Diego," Colleen Bell, the California Film Commission's executive director, said in a statement. "The city has a rich history of film and TV production and this exciting news is a big win for the local economy."

"The Right Stuff" stars Patrick J. Adams as Mercury astronaut John Glenn. Adams co-starred on USA's "Suits" and has appeared locally on stage in the Old Globe's 2016 production of Anna Ziegler's world-premiere play "The Last Match."

The show, which premiered on Disney's streaming service Oct. 9, chronicles the space program's growth.

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