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IDRA, Lubbock NAACP join Slaton and Lubbock Families in Demanding End to School-Based Racial Discrimination

Complaints Filed to Office for Civil Rights

Yesterday, IDRA joined students, families and the Lubbock NAACP to challenge racially discriminatory practices in two west Texas school districts through an administrative complaint filed with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Attorneys from Ellwanger Law, ACLU of Texas, and Texas Civil Rights Project serve as legal counsel to the complainants. The complaints allege that Slaton ISD and Lubbock-Cooper ISD failed to protect Black students experiencing racial bullying and harassment in their schools and imposed inappropriate and harmful discipline against those students.

IDRA chief legal analyst [Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D.](#), led research, community support and strategy in collaboration with co-complainants and legal counsel.



Outside the Lubbock-Cooper ISD board meeting: (L-R) Sarah Moore-Harris, community supporter; Devon Durham, complaint participant; Tracy Kemp, complaint participant; Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D., IDRA; Shardae McGaha, complaint participant; Mary Harris, community supporter; Phyllis Gant, Lubbock NAACP

"All students deserve to feel safe and welcome in school," Duggins-Clay said. "We are hopeful the U.S. Department of Education will facilitate a resolution that eliminates the

districts' discriminatory discipline practices and effectively addresses the racially hostile environment.”

The [Slaton ISD complaint](#) describes incidents of Black students being sentenced to the district's disciplinary alternative educational program (DAEP) without evidence or in violation of state and federal law. Multiple Black students experienced a daily onslaught of racialized taunts, threats and jeers from other students.

“The families of these children repeatedly reported the racial harassment and bullying that was causing their children emotional distress to Slaton administrators,” the complaint states. “But the administrators failed to take prompt, effective action in response to these complaints, instead leaving Black children to defend and support themselves.”

The [Lubbock-Cooper ISD complaint](#) describes Black children being subjected to an environment of “constant and near-daily bullying on the basis of race.” Further detailed in an [August 2022 letter](#) submitted by Ellwanger Law, students were subjected to derogatory language and racial slurs as well as the “sounds of cracking whips as they walked through the halls of the middle school due to the white students playing such sounds on their phones each time they encountered a Black student.” The complaint adds, “The white students would also go beyond the sound of cracking whips by initiating the sounds of monkeys as the Black students walked by.”

Yesterday, families from both school districts and dozens of supporters from the broader Lubbock community attended the Lubbock-Cooper ISD school board meeting as three Lubbock-Cooper families testified.

“We are going to keep fighting until you make changes,” Tracy Kemp told Lubbock-Cooper ISD board members.

The complaints list a number of demands for resolution, including revised district anti-harassment, anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies; training of school and district staff on Title VI and appropriate school discipline practices; effective and age-appropriate prevention programs for students; systems for student and family input; alternatives to exclusionary discipline placement, such as restorative practices; an external evaluator to regularly assess the educational climate and effectiveness of policies; and annual reports posted online summarizing the reports of racial bullying and harassment.

“Mechanically imposing discipline against students engaging in racially discriminatory conduct or duly reciting platitudes that a school does not tolerate racial harassment is not sufficient action,” Duggins-Clay said.

The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, which enforces Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, will evaluate the complaints to determine whether to open an investigation. The Department is already actively reviewing two complaints filed by Lubbock-Cooper ISD families in April 2022.

Even with the pending complaints, school and district leaders should not wait to ensure their students have safe and welcoming school environments to learn. The students and families in Slaton ISD and Lubbock-Cooper ISD deserve accountability and positive change. Their lives have been irrevocably altered because of their schools' discriminatory practices.

“No child should be forced to endure a racist learning environment,” Duggins-Clay said.



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For more **information** about these complaints, contact Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D. (paige.duggins-clay@idra.org)

If you are seeking **legal representation** in a discrimination matter, contact David Henderson at Ellwanger Law (dhenderson@equalrights.law)

Watch IDRA social media for updates: @IDRAedu (Twitter & Instagram); @IDRAed (Facebook)

See the NBC News story by Mike Hixenbaugh

Taunted for being Black, a student fought back, civil rights complaint says. The 30-second fight derailed her life.

Reports of racist bullying at Slaton High School are part of a pattern of discrimination in and around Lubbock, Texas, civil rights groups say. They're filing complaints and calling on the federal government to investigate.

[Read NBC News Story](#)



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