

Dr. Sandra Betters Files Federal Lawsuit Against Nardin Academy

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For many months, Dr. Betters has remained quiet even as she has been subjected to harassment, retaliation, unauthorized recordings in violation of Nardin's school policy, unwarranted and ultimately unsubstantiated complaints, defamation, the callous leaking and widespread dissemination of private and confidential information concerning her daughter's health and wellbeing, an unlawful termination and even a death threat. She is now courageously standing up to tell her story with the conviction that correcting the record and telling the truth will ultimately benefit Nardin and its community.

To that end, on August 24th, we filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of Dr. Betters, against the Nardin Academy and various individual defendants. The lawsuit, [which can be read here](#), alleges that when Dr. Betters joined Nardin in June 2021, she encountered a school plagued by: (i) exorbitant unauthorized spending; (ii) a resulting budget deficit and huge debt; (iii) self-dealing on the part of multiple Board members and Academy staff; and (iv) the unlawful misappropriation of monies received pursuant to the Paycheck Protection Plan.

In addition, according to the [Complaint](#), Dr. Betters learned upon her arrival that there were only 11 faculty members in the Upper School (the high school) who held certification in education *and* that the Principal of the Upper School lacked the credentials and certification as *either* an educator or an administrator. To make matters worse, there had not been a formal program of studies in place since 2016 and the Academy did not even meet the minimum number of school days to qualify for the aid the school fraudulently applied for, accepted and used. As a result of these and other issues, Nardin – which holds itself out as a prestigious academic institution – had been experiencing declines in academic success and enrollment long before Dr. Betters took the job.

As alleged, prior to Dr. Betters' arrival, countless students and alumni publicly shared stories of racism at Nardin, including the frequent use of the n-word. Despite paying lip service to these concerns, the Academy had failed to take meaningful steps to address the severe lack of support for students of color and the underrepresentation of diversity within the faculty, according to the Complaint. When Dr. Betters insisted on taking steps to address these issues, she was met with extreme hostility and concerns from board members and others about the admission of "students of a lesser caliber;" *i.e.*, Black students.

In short, the [Complaint](#) contends that Dr. Betters and her family experienced the horrible events and threats described because Nardin and the individual defendants named in her lawsuit unlawfully retaliated against her because she would not capitulate and turn a blind eye to their unlawful conduct. Now that Dr. Betters has been removed from her role, Nardin has inexplicably brought back in many of the same people who were responsible for the many issues described above.

Statement of Michael J. Willemin, Partner, Wigdor LLP, and Monica Hincken, Of Counsel, Wigdor LLP

“Dr. Betters worked tirelessly over the course of two years to improve the Nardin Academy and bring its practices in line with its outwardly expressed commitments to academic excellence, integrity, transparency, diversity and inclusion. This work should have been supported and applauded.”

Statement of Dr. Sandra Betters:

“I joined Nardin with the conviction that, together with the Nardin community, we could improve upon an already excellent institution. I maintained this conviction even after I uncovered the significant misconduct and other troubling behavior described in my Complaint. Even now, I am hopeful that once the truth is known, the school can begin to heal and realign itself with its core values.”

Press Coverage:

[8.24.23 Buffalo News](#)

[8.24.23 WBEN](#)

[8.24.23. WGRZ](#)

[8.24.23. WIVB](#)