

LOOKED SUSPICIOUS
DOES NOT RESPECT AUTHORITY
NEEDS TO LEARN SOME MANNERS

HE WAS PROFANE
LOOKED AT ME
WRONG

HE **SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE WHAT HE DID**
WAS JUST LOOKIN' FOR TROUBLE
WAS LOUD **SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN THERE IN THE FIRST PLACE**

PROBABLY A CRIMINAL ANYWAY
YOU KNOW HOW THEY ARE

FAILED TO COMPLY
JUST ANOTHER THUG
SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO THE POLICE



Victor Santander and Justin Dottery/Staff

Disrespect of black men demoralizing

By Solé Ruiz
A Perspective

Every black person has a story of when they were taught how to act when confronted by the police. I was in high school—many of my black male friends were younger.

We see black people killed, brutalized and tortured by the police on a near daily basis. It cycles through viral videos, haunts our histories and makes recurring appearances in our nightmares.

Now it's on our campus.

I wasn't watching a stranger be taken down by four Southwestern College officers. David Rasean Vereen is my friend. I ran towards the computer screen the video was playing on as I recognized his voice.

Brutality against my people is not new. Each time I see black men assaulted, I picture my brother, my future children. This time it is someone I really care about.

I wept as I watched my friend David slammed to the ground by the police. His pleading echoed throughout the Devore Stadium parking lot. His only protection was a student filming the brutality. God only knows what might have happened to David if the police knew no one was watching.

Community members do not want to believe something like this can happen on such a diverse campus. Some viewed it as a rare outside plague that slithered in and infected Southwestern College.

That is false.

Black students do not need a viral video of a black man being brutalized by police to understand because this is a reality we face every day. Even at a fine institution like Southwestern that promotes education and awareness, we are defined by the color of our skin.

People quickly formed uninformed opinions as the video went viral. Controversy broke out before David was even united with his family. I saw how people downplayed his assault because he swore. I heard people justify his assault because of a "misused" handicap placard.

What many people do not know is that David tore his anterior cruciate ligament in 2017.

"I tweaked my knee a couple times after my ACL surgery," he said.

He used his mom's handicap placard to make it less painful to walk to class.

David had a previous altercation with the same officer over the placard, but not about "misusing the placard." The first encounter was over the placard being expired.

An officer followed David to his car like he was stalking prey. He assumed David was still using the expired one.

David explained that the placard was up to date and would not expire until 2021, but the police officer took it upon himself to continue to harass him. This ultimately led to him being slammed to the ground, his face smashing the hot pavement.

It is easy for an outsider looking in to say, "He deserved it for not complying," but no one deserves inhumane treatment.

Race played a part in this violence, whether it was direct or subliminal.

Peers who are not black expect us to justify our reactions. They ask questions like, "Why didn't he just follow orders?" They expect us to plead our case on police brutality. We are worn down. When we voice our concern, we are said to be loud and aggressive.

Southwestern College administrators refused to admit that the officers handled the situation poorly. This encouraged people to think that what was done to David was somehow acceptable. I asked SC Chief of Police Dave Nighswonger how would he feel if it was his son wrestled to the ground. Instead of giving an honest and humane answer, he hid behind the college's favorite excuse, "It's an ongoing investigation."

Our college administrators and police demonstrated a startling lack of empathy and showed they do not care for black students and our safety.

We heard promises of justice and change, but no action plan.

David's story is one that scares black mothers. They lie awake at night in fear for their black children. This was a traumatic experience for David's loving mother that will be scared into her memories. David will also have to carry pain right up through the day he has to teach his children how to act when confronted by the police.