

An Open Letter to USA Swimming and its CEO Tim Hinchey

Fix the Cause of Your Sexual Abuse Epidemic, Not Just the Symptoms

For decades, USA Swimming has treated the sexual abuse of minor swimmers as a “symptom” by focusing treatment on the coach. This treatment has primarily consisted of covering up for the criminal sexual behavior of its member coaches. This widespread cover up within USA Swimming has been well chronicled¹.

This Open Letter is demanding that Mr. Tim Hinchey, CEO of USA Swimming, fix the root cause of the sexual abuse epidemic which continues to afflict the sport of swimming. Having been deeply involved in the handling of sex abuse claims against USA Swimming for more than a decade, it is clear to us that there remains a deeply embedded culture within your organization which condones the criminal sexual behavior of coaches towards its underage athletes. This culture is similar to that of the Catholic Church, where a long-standing unofficial code enabled rampant sexual abuse by punishing those who report and rewarding those who remain silent.

This must end, and it must end now.

On June 10, 2020, we held a press conference to announce the filing of several new lawsuits against USA Swimming². At that time, we asked that you, Mr. Hinchey, take immediate action against those who enabled the pervasive sex abuse within your sport. While some action was taken by you since that time with regard to a few individuals³, only one is known to have any involvement in this scandal. Further, there was nothing said or done by you to indicate these actions were taken in response to our demand to clean up the sport.

On behalf of the survivors of USA Swimming coaching sexual abuse, I am once again asking that you, Mr. Hinchey, immediately start dismantling the culture that has been responsible for the sexual abuse of countless minor swimmers. This needs to start with you *publicly* and *permanently* banning *at a minimum* the following eight (8) individuals from USA Swimming. Please do not pass the buck to the U.S. Center for SafeSport or use the “rape and escape” trick that has allowed coaches to resign with their reputations fully intact while evading USA Swimming punishment. Under Article 405 of USA Swimming’s Rule Book, you have the authority to order emergency hearings on matters which if not

¹ <https://www.pe.com/2018/02/16/investigation-usa-swimming-ignored-sexual-abuse-for-decades/>.

² www.espn.co.uk/olympics/swimming/story/_/id/29294147/six-women-sue-usa-swimming-sexual-abuse-coaches.

³ <https://swimswam.com/see-the-10-usa-swimming-employees-who-accepted-voluntary-separation-packages/>.

immediately resolved could cause imminent and irreparable harm to your child members. You must use these powers to expel the following persons from USA Swimming:

- **Murray Stephens**
 - Stephens was the head coach at North Baltimore Aquatics Club in Maryland, home of Michael Phelps, for 35 years and coached for Team USA in the 1996 Olympic Games.
 - USA Swimming has known since as late as October 2011 that Stephens is a sexual predator. Instead of banning him, USA Swimming allowed Stephens to quietly resign and be showered with accolades and honors, including the American Swim Coaches Association (“ASCA”) Hall of Fame.
- **Paul Bergen**
 - Bergen served on USA Swimming coaching staffs to World Championships in 1975, 1978 and 1982 and was an Olympic coach in 1980, 1984, 1988 and 2000.
 - USA Swimming has known for years that Bergen sexually abused Olympian and gold medal winner Deena Deardurff-Schmidt throughout her teenage years. USA Swimming has refused to ban Bergen, creating the excuse that Bergen’s crimes occurred prior to USA Swimming’s formation in 1980. Instead, USA Swimming honored Bergen by naming an international swim meet for young kids after him. Bergen’s name was not removed from that meet until we publicly called attention to it in 2013.
- **John Leonard**
 - Leonard is currently in a leadership role with USA Swimming and remains active with ASCA, a lobby mechanism for swim coaches across America designed to oppose any regulations on coaches it represents.
 - As the head of ASCA for over 30 years, Leonard was responsible for the decision to honor Stephens with a spot in the ASCA Hall of Fame, knowing full well his history of sex abuse. The same year, Leonard put coach Pete Malone in the ASCA Hall of Fame, following Malone’s sudden resignation from the Kansas City Blazers.
 - When Everett Uchiyama was abruptly and quietly removed from his position as National Team Director of USA Swimming for his admitted sexual abuse of a minor female swimmer, Leonard dismissed this criminal activity as the “errors of a young man”. After Uchiyama was peddled to a nearby posh country club in Colorado Springs, Leonard, on behalf of ASCA, awarded him with a coveted swim school franchise for use at the club’s aquatic center through which Uchiyama would have access to minors.
 - In leadership positions with USA Swimming since 1990, Leonard has acted as a vocal and determined opponent to meaningful solutions to protect children from abuse, including working against a Code of Conduct, Zero Tolerance Policy, Child Protection Policy and expanded background checks.

- **Mary Jo Swalley**

- Swalley, as head of USA Swimming’s Southern California regional arm, or “local swim committee” (“LSC”), since 1989, virtually handed over a young teenage swimmer to Uchiyama. Swalley did not intervene nor pay for separate hotel rooms for the swimmer and Uchiyama to attend junior nationals, allowing Uchiyama to abuse the swimmer in the hotel room they shared. When this swimmer’s sexual abuse claim came to light several years later, Swalley lamented at a USA Swimming-related board meeting that she mishandled the situation and openly feared that she would be treated as the “fall guy” due to the sexual abuse that followed.
- In subsequent leadership roles with USA Swimming, including Vice President, Ms. Swalley failed to support efforts to establish policies and programs aimed at preventing sexual abuse by coaches and otherwise, based on information gathered to date, covered up for predator coaches.

- **Mark Schubert**

- Schubert is arguably the most decorated coach in the history of USA Swimming. He also has an established history of remaining silent and failing to take action to protect minor swimmers when presented with information about predator coaches⁴.
- Kelley Currin was sexually abused by her then swim coach Rick Curl beginning in 1982, when she was just 13 and he was 33. The abuse continued for approximately 5 years. This abuse was well known within the swimming community.⁵ Schubert recruited Kelley to swim at the University of Texas in 1989. Shortly after arriving at the university, Kelley confided in Schubert about her abuse. Schubert’s callous and depraved reaction was to dismiss her from the team after determining that she was a “distraction”.
- Schubert was on the board of ASCA when that organization bestowed Curl with the “Coach of the Year” award in 1994.
- In his capacity as National Team Director for USA Swimming in 2010, Schubert learned that Olympic Coach Sean Hutchison was sexually abusing his swimmer Ariana Kukors. Schubert unconscionably decided to withhold this information until after he was fired by USA Swimming when he tried to extort his way into replacing Hutchison at the Fullerton Aquatics Swim Club (“FAST”).⁶
- Schubert retaliated against well-respected swim coach Dia Rianda for complaining about predatory behavior displayed by fellow coach Bill Jewell⁷.

⁴ <https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/06/12/mark-schubert-is-a-legend-for-making-us-swimmers-champions-but-did-he-fail-when-they-needed-him-most-2/>.

⁵ In 1988, for example, gold medal winners David Berkoff and Pablo Morales openly talked about how Curl was “banging” Kelley.

⁶ <https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/02/16/documents-reveal-warning-signs-of-sean-hutchisons-misconduct-against-ariana-kukors/>.

⁷ <https://www.oregister.com/2013/03/04/documents-detail-allegations-of-swim-coach-impropriety/>.

- When Schubert was in a position to effect positive change within USA Swimming, he remained silent and took no action against the following coaches known by him to be predators: George Gibney, Scott McFarland, Daniel Adam Dusenbury, Will Colebank, Murray Stephens, Richard Quick, Paul Bergen, Andy King and Mitch Ivey.
- **Clint Benton**
 - Benton is a longstanding board member for the Pacific Swimming LSC.
 - After receiving a sex abuse complaint concerning Andy King in 2003, Benton took orders from Wielgus to cover-up it up. Benton willingly complied despite being a mandated reporter at the time. As part of this conspiracy, Benton also ordered another mandated reporter, coach Steve Morselli, to remain silent. As a result of the silence and coverup, Andy King went on to sexually abuse at least one minor girl starting in 2009.
- **Millie Nygren**
 - Nygren has served on the board for Pacific Swimming for decades.
 - Nygren was aware of Andy King's predatory conduct in Pleasanton, CA in the early 1980s. As a board member of the club where King coached, Nygren participated in the decision not to renew King's contract. Nygren failed to notify law enforcement about King's criminal behavior. As a result, King went on to sexually abuse several swimmers over the next 25 years in the San Francisco East Bay; State of Washington; Modesto, CA; and San Jose, CA.
- **Steve Morselli**
 - Morselli is currently the head swim coach for a USA Swimming member club in Pleasanton, CA.
 - Morselli was notified of the sex abuse complaint concerning Andy King in 2003 and stayed silent when requested by Clint Benton despite also being under a legal obligation to report King to the police and/or Child Protective Services ("CPS"). Morselli admitted that he knew King was prone to making sexually inappropriate remarks to minor swimmers and yet did nothing about it.

Wielgus most certainly did not act alone when he enabled dozens of predator coaches to sexual abuse swimmers. For over two decades, Wielgus worked alongside a loyal managerial staff, including present Chief Operating Officer Mike Unger. Unger has been employed in a managerial capacity within USA Swimming since 1993 and for a long period of time was the Assistant Executive Director. When Wielgus was rendered disabled due to cancer, Unger temporarily served as Executive Director. It is no secret that Unger was close to Wielgus both professionally and personally.

Wielgus also reported to several different board members and presidents, including Carol Zaleski (1994-1998), Dale Neuburger (1998-2002), Ron Van Pool (2002-2006), Jim Wood (2006-2010) and Bruce Stratton (2010-2014).

An immediate investigation needs to be launched for the purpose of determining what, if anything, these managerial agents and board members knew about sex abuse claims. If anyone had such knowledge and did not act in the best interests of sexually abused swimmers, they should be immediately fired and/or permanently banned from the sport.

Enough is enough. It is time to clean house immediately. Through these lawsuits, we hope to once and for all sanitize your sport and ensure that USA Swimming has honest, moral and caring persons in positions of authority whose first priority is to keep kids safe.

Sincerely,

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