

# The Sundial

Issue 7 | Spring 2024

Women  
Presidents  
of CSUN

Fighting  
Racist AI

Diversity in  
Conversation

Perspectives on Campus

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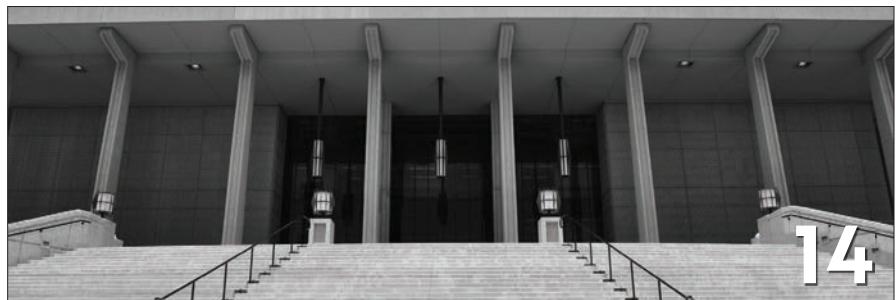
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Cover: A Sundial file photo of the entrance of the University Library.



# Letter from the EDITOR

**D**iversity is power. The second spring issue aims to highlight the diversity of our campus and society.

The cover showcases the University Library with headlines of some of the issue's stories. The text across the iconic façade symbolizes our diversity is as integral to our identity as the library.

California State University, Northridge has had four consecutive women presidents, the first of whom led the campus through the 1994 earthquake relief, which was covered in the first spring issue. Blenda Wilson's leadership can be read about in Yesterday's News along with the following three presidents.

The university also boasts programs, spaces and student-led organizations that champion people's identities, including the Asian American Studies Department, Pride Center and Black Student Union.

CSUN is a campus with imaginative minds and ambitious dreams, which the Sundial strives to uplift and highlight. While we look toward the future, we remember our history and celebrate our present. People are the most important part of CSUN and it is our responsibility to recognize and respect all of whom come through campus.

While this issue's main focus is on the diversity of campus and American culture as a whole, the stories in every iteration of the magazine seek to acknowledge such.

Everyone is someone. No story is too small. No thought is too abstract. No feeling is too emotional. Journalism is the art of storytelling and our goal is to tell as many stories as we can to the best of our abilities.

Спасибо,

*Саша Алиханов*

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# Powerful Matadoras Through the Ages

WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH CASAS

**C**alifornia State University, Northridge women presidents have made a difference over several decades.

Since 1992, there have been a total of four female presidents at CSUN. Each paved the way for their successors while accomplishing historical merits of their own. From demonstrating outstanding resilience in times of hardships to advocating the importance of higher education, they had a common objective to promote inclusion within higher education to fight for equity.

From left to right, Wilson at a podium. (From the University Archives Photograph Collection) Koester at a podium. (Courtesy of California State University) Harrison at a podium. (Sundial File Photo) A portrait of Beck. (Sundial File Photo)

*Continued on next page*





From left to right, portraits of Wilson and Koester. (From the University Archives Photograph Collection)

The first female president of CSUN was Blenda Wilson, who was inaugurated in 1992.

President Wilson started her career in higher education as an assistant provost and assistant to the president of Rutgers University in New Jersey from 1969 to 1972. She then continued to work in administrative positions within institutions of higher education as a means to advocate for minorities.

Wilson made history the day she was named president. Not only was she the first woman to become president at CSUN, she was also the first African American woman within the United States to acquire a title of that magnitude within higher education.

Wilson remained president for seven years. During her term she oversaw the reconstruction of the university after the 1994 Northridge earthquake. The earthquake caused damage to parking structures, campus buildings and the University Library. In 1999, Wilson's term ended, and was followed by an interim president.

Jolene Koester was instated as president in 2001, making her the fourth president of CSUN. Koester began her career in education as a communications professor at California State University, Sacramento. During Koester's term as president, which lasted for a little over a decade, enrollment rates increased significantly and the university's performance showed an overall increase.

After her time at CSUN, Koesters came out of retirement to take on the role of CSU interim chancellor. She launched several programs to ensure the success of transfer students and minorities. Additionally, as interim chancellor, she made efforts to eliminate discrimination and harassment within the CSU system.

In April of last year, Koester was awarded a Tosney Award for Career Service in Higher Education Leadership from the American Association of University Administrators for her continuous efforts.

In 2012, the third female president, Diane Harrison, was appointed. She was named one of the 500 most influential



From left to right, portraits of Harrison and Beck. (Sundial File Photos)

people in Los Angeles during her tenure by the Los Angeles Business Journal.

Prior to becoming president of CSUN, Harrison held the same position at California State University, Monterey Bay. Before then, she was at Florida State University, where she worked for 30 years.

With her experience, Harrison built important connections and encouraged students to succeed. Under her leadership, there was an increase in CSUN students graduating on time and a considerable increase in donations. Harrison was originally going to retire in 2020, but maintained her position amid the beginning of the pandemic.

In 2021, President Erika D. Beck, the fourth and current female president, took the helm.

Early in her career, Beck worked in various capacities for other universities with the objective of increasing the overall success of students. During her time at Nevada State University, she advocated for minorities and diversity, and

improved graduation rates overall.

Beck also served as president of California State University, Channel Islands, and helped the university excel in promoting higher education as fair and impartial. In a matter of four years, Beck spearheaded CSUCI's success as a university and helped it rank at a national level in multiple categories.

According to an interview with Authority Magazine, Beck strives to incorporate CSUN's values of equity, inclusion and belonging into all aspects of campus. Coming into the position during the pandemic, Beck is navigating the campus into a new era of academics.

Beck continues to lead CSUN and carry on the legacy of her predecessors.

# Demographic

What ma

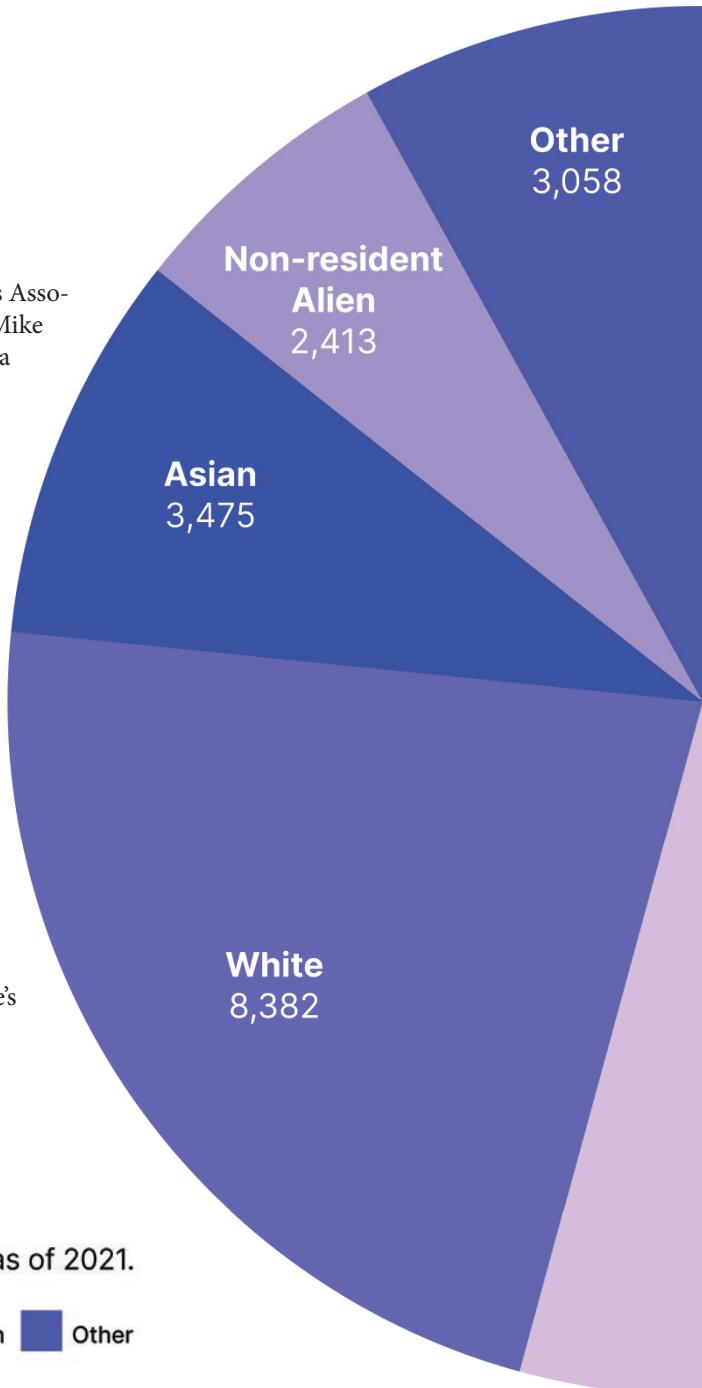
California State University, Northridge is well-known for its strong academic programs in the business, film and arts departments, along with being the epicenter of the 1994 Northridge earthquake. However, the university is best known for its diversity within its student body.

In 2021, Hispanic and Latino students made up more than half of all enrolled undergraduate and graduate students on campus (51.1%, according to Data USA). The second-largest demographic group were white students, at 20.9%, followed by Asian students at 8.6% and Black/African American students at 4.48%. Smaller percentages included 0.132% of students identifying as Native American or Pacific Islander.

CSUN has more than 300 clubs and organizations that can help students find their home away from home. Some clubs and organizations are tailored to specific colleges and majors, such as the

Asian American Journalists Association for students of the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media and Communication.

The university also hosts various fraternities and sororities that cater to certain demographics of students, including Alpha Sigma Theta, Alpha Phi Alpha and Alpha Psi Rho, which are fraternities for Jewish, Black/African American and Asian/Pacific Islander men, respectively. Outside of Greek life, clubs like Black Student Union, Asian American Christian Fellowship and Chabad Jewish Center help students make friends and spread awareness about one's culture.



## Enrollment by Race & Ethnicity

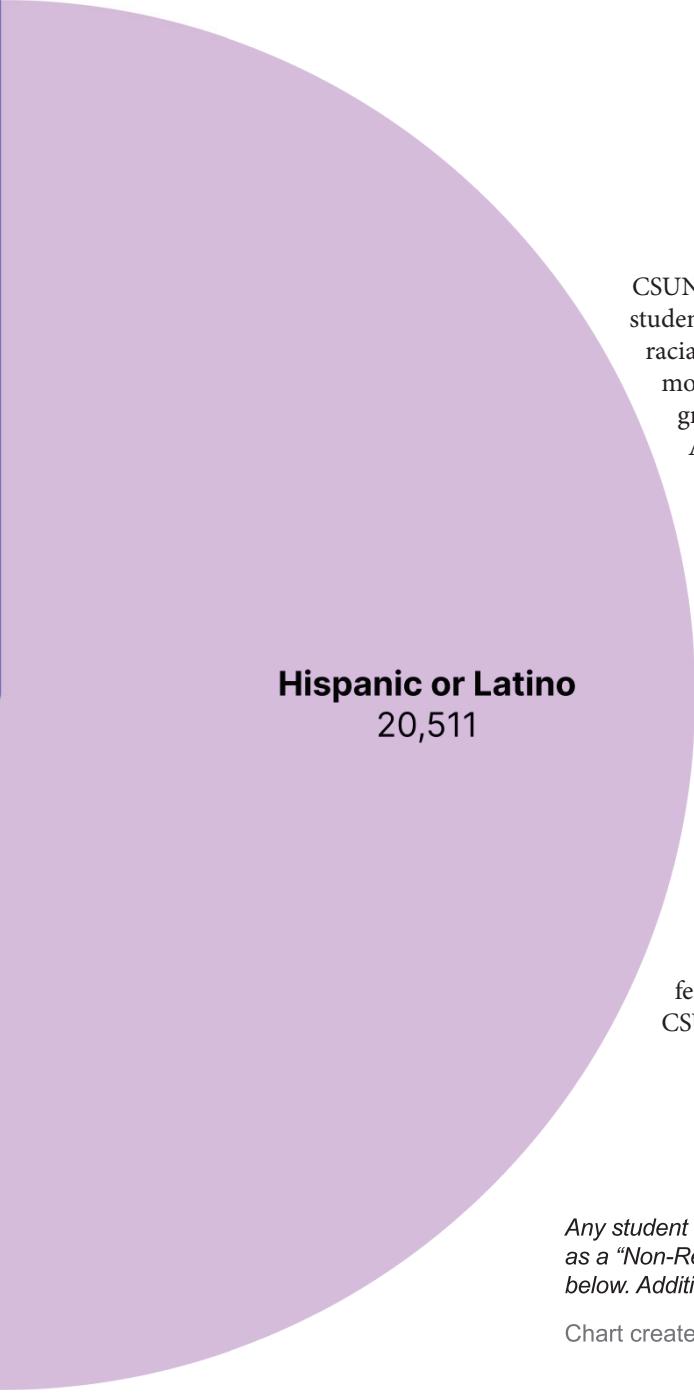
Data breakdown of CSUN's race demographics. Accurate as of 2021.

Hispanic or Latino    White    Asian    Non-resident Alien    Other

# CS Rankings

## makes CSUN stand out in *diversity*?

WRITTEN BY JAY KULKIN



**Hispanic or Latino**  
20,511

CSUN offers financial support for students from different ethnic or racial backgrounds as well. The most popular scholarship program for Black and African American students is Black Scholars Matter, located in Manzanita Hall room 112, which is surrounded by walls filled with murals of African and African American figures of the past. Other scholarships include the Northridge Scholars Program, the Dianne F. Harrison Award and the International Matador Scholarship, which are only available to international students.

There are 31% more female students enrolled at CSUN than male students,

with a gender ratio of 57% women to 43% men, according to CollegeSimplify.com. CSUN has generally high gender diversity within their student body, compared to the U.S. average of 56% female students.

With these factors in mind, CSUN has been consistently ranked as one of the most ethnically diverse schools in the California State University system and the state of California. A Wall Street Journal article recently ranked CSUN the No. 1 College for Diversity in the Western U.S. CSUN ranked third nationwide in the same list.

With 17 cultural clubs and over 300 clubs and organizations to choose from and participate in, CSUN is a melting pot of students looking to jumpstart their careers and further their education in the CSU system, where all are welcome.

*Any student who is studying in the United States on a temporary basis is categorized as a “Non-Resident Alien”, and the share of those students are shown in the chart below. Additionally, 2,269 students (5.66%) did not report their race.*

Chart created with Datawrapper by Jay Kulkin.

# PROGRAMMED PREJUDICE

## FIGHTING RACISM IN AI...

WRITTEN BY TRISHA ANAS & ILLUSTRATED BY KEVIN SILVA

With more technological advances becoming heavily integrated into daily life, the rise of artificial intelligence has become something to welcome and fear.

For some, this new tech is nothing to be worried about. It is a tool, after all. But for others, there are growing concerns about the information going into the AI database and how it could be used to perpetuate biases.

Contrary to the belief that AI is a recent concept or idea, it has been around since the first half of the 20th century, according to an article on Harvard University's website. The idea blossomed from science fiction, and scientists had already become familiarized with the concept by the 1950s. The rest is history.

While the technology is impressive, there have been growing concerns about how it is being used, who is feeding the information into these AI programs, and what information is

being fed, specifically with technology like facial recognition and ChatGPT.

According to a segment on NPR's All Things Considered, University of California, Los Angeles professor Safiya Noble talked about how AI is already being integrated into the criminal justice system.

"We saw from the very important research done by Julia Angwin and her team around the COMPAS recidivism prediction software a couple of years ago how Black people who were charged with crimes were more than four times likely to be sentenced to very severe punishment, as opposed to white offenders who were committing violent crimes and were more likely to be released on bail," Noble said.

COMPAS, short for Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions, is software used by U.S. courts to determine and predict if a defendant is likely to commit a crime again.

According to Noble, this specific program uses histories of arrests in specific ZIP codes to calculate its outcomes; because of this, Angwin and her team found the software to be disproportionate due to the history of over-policing and over-arresting within the Black and Latino communities.

Noble said the change to disparities in this technology should start with including a more diverse workforce.

"We have a total exclusion, for the most part, of Black and Latino/ Latina workers, Indigenous workers and women of color," Noble said. "There's no question that if you had a more diverse workforce, you might detect some of these things. You might ask different questions. You might ask some of the harder questions. But fundamentally, we have to have a robust human and civil rights framework for evaluating these technologies."

**"FUNDAMENTALLY, WE HAVE TO HAVE A ROBUST HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING THESE TECHNOLOGIES."**

**- SAFIYA NOBLE**



In another instance, the use of AI in facial recognition technology has also received criticism for racial bias.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology conducted a study that found several facial recognition technologies with “demographic differentials,” confirming racial bias within these programs, according to an article in *The Washington Post*.

The article also states that Asian and Black communities were 100 times more likely to be misidentified as compared to white men, and that Native Americans had the highest false-positive rate of all ethnicities.

In 2020, Netflix released the film “Coded Bias,” which concerned computer scientist Joy Buolamwini, who discovered disparities in facial recognition technology while working on a creative project at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Buolamwini tried to create an “Aspire Mirror” for her science fabrication class,

in which the mirror would use facial recognition and reflect an aspiring image to motivate and empower whoever used it.

What she found was that the tech had difficulty identifying her face. But when she tried putting on a white mask, it had no problem. The realization that AI was not neutral further sent her into a rabbit hole of where this data input was coming from and what she could do to change it.

In 2016, following this discovery, Buolamwini formed the Algorithmic Justice League, a nonprofit organization that combines art and research to increase awareness surrounding the issue of AI further perpetuating racism.

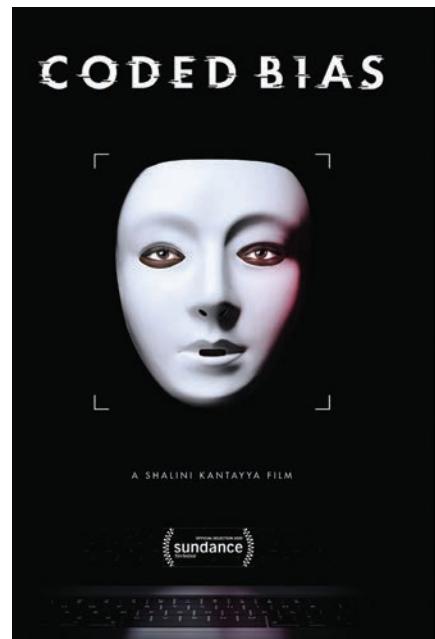
This discrimination is not only present in facial recognition and the criminal justice system — it is also becoming a growing concern in the workforce.

Reuters released an article in 2018 revealing that Amazon had been utilizing AI in its recruitment process and that the tech showed a bias against women. Amazon's tech taught itself to prefer male candidates and to penalize any resumes that used the word "women's" in it.

So, what is the solution to this seemingly relentless, discriminatory entity?

The critics of AI say that more consideration and regulation should be considered when developing and analyzing these programs. As Noble noted, a diverse workforce is an excellent place to start. And whether you love it or hate it, AI looks like it's here to stay.

And while the Algorithmic Justice League may not have Superman, Batman or Wonder Woman, there's no doubt they will be there to combat any AI biases standing in their way.



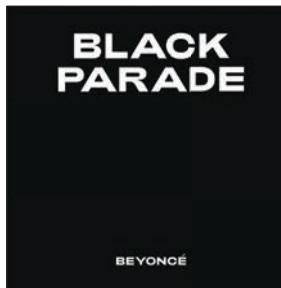
Film poster for "Coded Bias".



KEY  
SMASH!

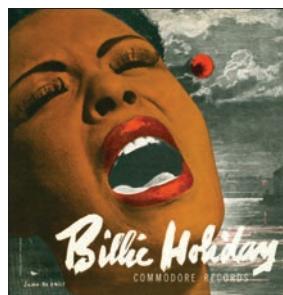
# Cantando

WRITTEN BY SASHA ALIKHANOV



## Black Parade

Beyoncé



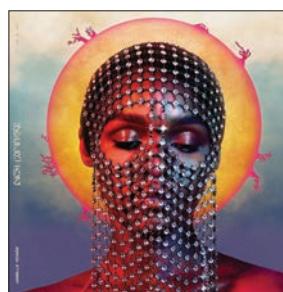
## Strange Fruit

Billie Holiday



## Liquid Smooth

Mitski



## Americans

Janelle Monáe

Beyoncé celebrated Juneteenth in 2020 with the release of "Black Parade," which dropped amid the worldwide response to the murder of George Floyd. In the single, Beyoncé commemorates Black culture and activism, which fit into the subsequent "Black is King" film and deluxe version of the album "The Lion King: The Gift." The proceeds from the single were put toward BeyGOOD, the Beyoncé-founded public charity foundation which supports Black-owned small businesses.

Billie Holiday's 1939 song "Strange Fruit" protested the widespread lynching of Black people in the U.S. The songwriter Abel Meeropol first published the lyrics as a poem in a union magazine, and it was sung by his wife and Laura Duncan before Holiday. The lyrics compare victims of lynching to fruit rotting on trees, which was met with resistance from Holiday's record label and producer. After finding people to work with, the song was released and eventually named the best song of the century by Time.

In 2012, Mitski released her debut album "Lush" as a part of her junior project at university. The lyrics of the opening track "Liquid Smooth" illustrate the role of age in a woman's perception and the impermanence of beauty. Mitski poetically comments on how it feels to be a woman in a society consumed by beauty and despondent about aging. After describing herself as chemical and nothing more in the first verse, she asks the listener to capture her as she falls from grace.

Janelle Monáe closed her 2018 album "Dirty Computer" with "Americans." As a concluding song, it reiterates the Grammy-nominated project's commentary on racism, misogyny and homophobia as they relate to patriotism. Monáe intertwines American iconography like Uncle Sam and the country's flag with subversive themes of sex and pride. By referencing issues including police brutality, the wage gap and inescapable impoverishment, she recontextualizes what it means to be a proud American. "I'm not crazy, baby," sings Monáe. "I'm American."

# Matador Marquee

WRITTEN BY SASHA ALIKHANOV



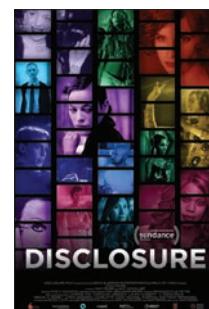
## "Killers of the Flower Moon"

is a 2023 drama depicting the murders of members of the Osage tribe in Oklahoma amidst their rising wealth in the 20th century. After oil was discovered on their land, their economic status rose, and outsiders plotted to steal their headlights. Lily Gladstone, who portrayed Mollie Burkhart, is the first Native American nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actress.



## "Hidden Figures"

is a 2016 drama about a group of Black women who changed the Space Race. The mathematicians performed calculations that launched astronaut John Glenn into orbit and cemented the U.S. as a superpower outside the atmosphere. The film, based on a book of the same title, brought widespread attention to the women's accomplishments and contributions to NASA. It was released on Christmas Day and was the highest-grossing Best Picture nominee at the Academy Awards.



## "Disclosure"

is a 2020 documentary that breaks down the representation of transgender people in media. Multiple transgender people in the entertainment industry narrate the history with their experiences and perspectives on prominent portrayals. The film aims to deconstruct stereotypes perpetuated in film and television to educate viewers. As representation grows and evolves, transgender people are more accurately depicted, which the narrators commend.



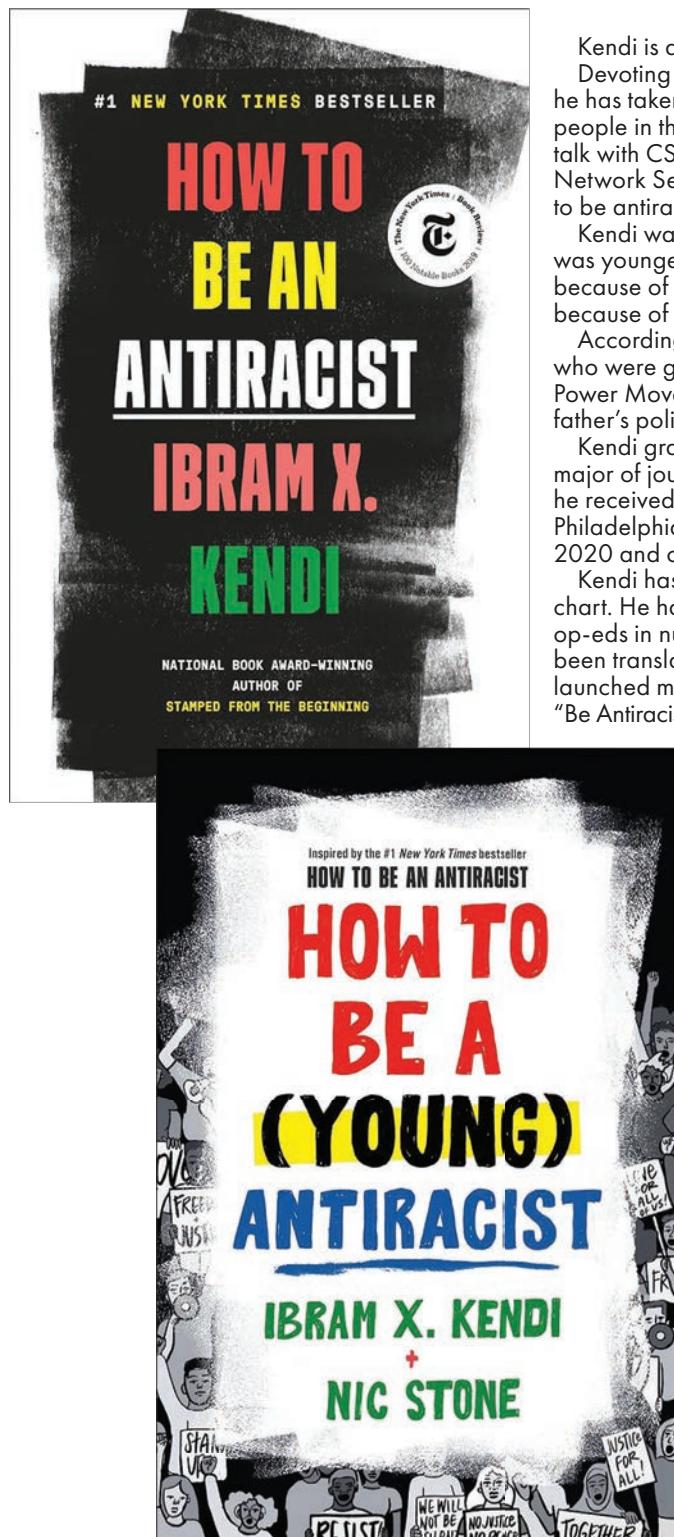
## "Coded Bias"

is a 2020 documentary about the prejudice programmed into artificial intelligence. Professor Joy Buolamwini found AI could not recognize the faces of dark-skinned women, which led her to investigate the perpetuation of biases within under-regulated emerging technology. As AI is being integrated into varying levels of society, scientists like Buolamwini are working to ensure it is inclusive. More can be read about the film and its topic in the feature story about racism in AI.

# Book Club

WRITTEN BY OUANESSA NANA

**D**r. Ibram X. Kendi is an American author who won the National Book Award for his nonfiction novel "Stamped from the Beginning." He was the youngest author to win the award at just 34 years old. He later released the critically acclaimed "How to Be an Antiracist" in 2019.



Kendi is a historian and professor who engages in antiracist activism.

Devoting his time to history and highlighting the issues of racism in the U.S., he has taken the world by storm. He was named one of the most influential people in the world in Time magazine in 2020, and he participated in a Zoom talk with CSUN students in 2022 in the Essential Talks Anti-Racist Learning Network Series, where he spoke about oppression within academia and how to be antiracist on campus.

Kendi was born in New York City and raised in Jamaica, Queens. When he was younger, he dreamed about playing basketball, which was discouraged because of its ties to Black stereotypes and the repercussions he could face because of them.

According to Kendi's personal website, his parents were Christian activists who were greatly influenced by Black liberation theology and the 1970s Black Power Movement. His mother was involved in Black feminist activism, and his father's political ideals were a clash of antiracism and assimilation.

Kendi graduated in 2004 from Florida A&M University with a double major of journalism and African American studies. In 2010, at 27 years old, he received a doctorate in African American studies from Temple University in Philadelphia. He founded Boston University's Center for Antiracist Research in 2020 and continues to serve as the director.

Kendi has written nine New York Times bestsellers, five of them topping the chart. He has published academic essays in books and journals, as well as op-eds in numerous periodicals, such as the New York Times. His books have been translated into multiple languages and sold around the world. Kendi launched multiple major media projects, including an action podcast called "Be Antiracist," which was named the Best New Podcast of 2021 by Variety.

Kendi co-founded The Emancipator, a publication that endeavors to change the conversation of racial injustice and equity. He also has a production company called Maroon Visions, where he produces film and television projects. Its first project was a docuseries called "Skin in the Game," which was released on ESPN+ in September 2023. It focuses on the convergence of race, society and sports.

In his book "How To Be an Antiracist," Kendi connects with his developing notion of racism through five decades of lived experience. He touches base on his scrutiny and understanding as an adolescent, a student and a professor. Kendi embraces his mistakes, admitting he has his own racist conducts. Kendi believes that being antiracist is the only way to achieve equal opportunity and justice for everyone.

In 2019, Kendi created a children's version, "How To Be a Young Antiracist," to educate young readers and encourage them to be just and equal. Kendi co-wrote this book with novelist and activist Nic Stone. Together, they told brief tales with details that connect to their shared experiences. They also created a journal called "The Young Antiracist's Workbook" for readers to document their experiences and emotions in their journey to become antiracist.

People internalize ideas and form opinions while they are young, when one's morals are greatly influenced by their environments and the people they are surrounded by, Kendi explained in a Time 100 interview. He went on to say young people can be misled, which makes having access to informative sources important.



# Diverse Discussions

WRITTEN BY ANTHONY VASQUEZ

**C**alifornia State University, Northridge students care about diversity on campus and the topics of cultural groups, religion, gender identity, sexuality and socioeconomic status.

In numerous interviews, students shared they feel aware of the diversity on campus. They feel this is often done through the large variety of courses offered, which encourage conversations among professors and peers about topics they find important. Clubs and organizers on campus create activities and events that celebrate different cultures and heritages and create environments where students can meet with, connect with and learn about others.

The consensus of the conversations is the welcome and liberating feeling of being on a diverse campus. Here is what they said.

“I personally do feel comforted that CSUN has a diverse student body because I feel that everyone you meet on campus has an interesting story to tell. It allows me to acknowledge different situations and gain an understanding of various backgrounds. Along with the benefits of CSUN having a diverse student body, I feel that it also ultimately fabricates a safe and welcoming environment for everyone. I would also say I feel represented and included on campus because I know that there are groups I can join with other individuals that have similar cultural backgrounds that I do.”

**Angel Divinagracia, *Biology and Nursing***

“Well-being in a diverse campus is honestly really good for me. I grew up in LA, so I was already used to everyone coming from different backgrounds... I personally do feel represented in CSUN just because of the classes they offer, there's always coming for everyone.”

**Kenji Perreras, *Psychology***

“I think that it is very nice because there are a variety of people who are like me one way or another who I can look up to. I feel very represented and included because there are many activities and people I can socialize with, many of which are people who are LGBT and a lot of people who are Filipino, so it makes it easier to relate with people.”

**Jules Thompson, *Theater***



The main entrance of the University Library. (Sundial File Photo)

“As a first-gen Hispanic student, college has always been a big “what if,” a scary new beginning with lots of doubts and hesitation. As of fall 2023, CSUN has been nothing but very welcoming. Not only to me, but countless other students with different ethnic backgrounds.”

**Oscar Plascencia, *Biotechnology***

“CSUN makes sure you are seen and represented with the countless activities and clubs that incorporate any ethnicities. For me specifically, my Hispanic culture has been shown and represented with game nights and other fun activities... CSUN has done a fantastic job including my heritage and they clearly don’t shy away from any other. They help embrace differences and equality and they sure know how to make their campus feel like home.”

**Oscar Plascencia, *Biotechnology***

“Me being a person who is considered mixed race, I feel like I belong, honestly.”

**Shade Robinson, *Psychology***

“Being on a diverse campus is incredibly enriching as you get exposed to various perspectives, cultures and backgrounds, fostering a more inclusive and vibrant community which promotes cultural exchange and mutual respect. As a residential advisor, you play a pivotal role in building connections among students, encouraging mutual understanding, and contributing to the experiences that make up the college community. Embracing diversity not only enhances the living and learning environment but also cultivates valuable skills in communication, empathy, and cultural competence.”

**Serenity Starkey, *Emerging Media Production***

“I love that we have a diverse student body. It brings a lot of comfort as I believe that having a diverse study body is crucial as you are bringing together multiple individuals with different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. I would say I do feel represented and included on campus. CSUN provides several resources and spaces for students on its campus. These spaces and resources always are welcoming and do not hold judgment. A lot of the resources have helped me through hard times and I never felt unwelcome.”

**Serenity Starkey, *Emerging Media Production***

# The Horrors of ~ Black Girlhood ~

By Toni Kamara

There is a beauty as well as horror to what growing up as a girl means. But intersecting Blackness and other aspects of your identity creates a whirlwind of not only how the world sees you but how you see yourself. Do you present yourself in a certain way that makes people question who raised you? Do you have the freedom to exist in a world that constantly belittles your existence? Who will you become with the people you surround yourself with? I believe there have been slow improvements to how girlhood doesn't have the same white perspective.

Normally, narratives contribute to the melodramatic and sometimes traumatic retelling of what Black girlhood looks like. However, there are other ways that it can be depicted than the typical sob story. I wish to share the true

horror behind Black girlhood. Necessarily, this does not mean movies involving horror, but rather how these movies do not contribute to the expected narratives. My definition of the horror in question is how the films showcase the true Black girl experience in a way that is unfamiliar, and at times, unsettling. Another definition of this horror is how the experiences of growing up as Black girl are portrayed in a way that is non-stereotypical and non-traditional. "Saint Omer" and "Eve's Bayou" are two movies which showcase the horrors of Black girlhood.

"Eve's Bayou" is the earliest encounter I had with this trope, and the reason I chose to write this piece. I recall watching this movie and feeling like I discovered a whole new world of Black cinema. The typical Black narrative always

consists of gang violence, abuse, or a character overcoming a traumatic experience (or all three in one). This movie has a Black girl at the forefront revealing the importance of her culture and her heritage. It does not diminish her identity, but rather elevates it and gives it a new voice. While narrating, Eve retells the story of her childhood living in the bayous of Louisiana with her family. The "horror" of this movie is not only the Southern gothic aesthetic but the emphasis of a lost culture. The movie's core is the aspect of African American spirituality (voodoo) specially between Eve and her aunt, Mozelle. Mozelle runs a business where she helps women by telling their fortunes. Eve, familiar with Mozelle's abilities, soon taps into her own. Eve begins to see visions into the



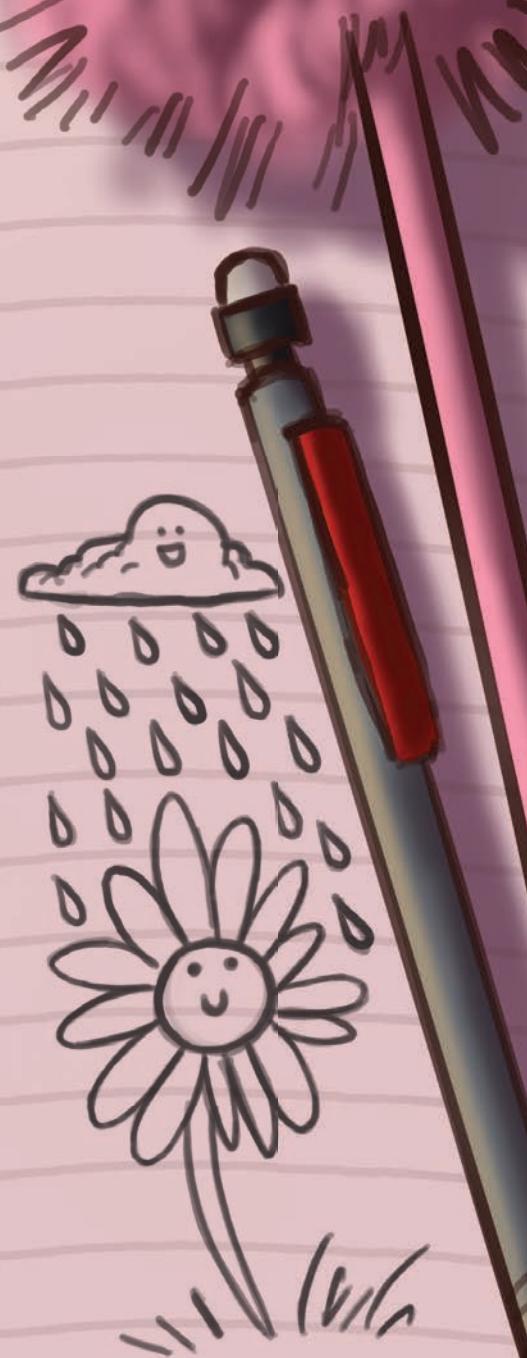


future and begins to warn others of the danger she sees. Eve's visions cause trouble in her family as she witnesses her father's infidelity. However, far more sinister truths come to the surface. This culture of spirituality for the women in Eve's family creates a connection as well as a divide. Eve has the abilities however her mother and sister do not possess the same. These aspects of spirituality in Southern African American culture are the horror shaping Eve's childhood. Like ghosts, they haunt her girlhood and cause her to understand the eerie nature of her upbringing.

In "Saint Omer", Rama attends the trial of a mother who killed her daughter. As the trial carries on, Rama begins to dissect the role motherhood has in her life, past and future. Between scenes in the courtroom and Rama, there is a direct link to Black girlhood, typically to how it can be taken away. The horror in this movie is the relationship between mothers and daughters. Reflections of the lives of Rama and Laurence, the mother trailed, begin to blur in this case. The film is French and caters to the perspective of those of African descent. I am not familiar with this culture; however, girlhood

can translate in any language. Like "Eve's Bayou", it shares an eeriness. There are images such as the haunting visuals of the sea as Laurence tells her story, and isolated images of Rama's childhood with her mother. For example, there is a scene of Rama using her mother's bowl after she eats from it. She takes her mother's bowl, washes it, and makes cereal for herself. Mothers will give up anything for their daughters to not have to face what they have. In the case of Laurence, this painful truth comes to realization.

Black girlhood is something that is not always limited to childhood; it can be experienced at any age. As previously mentioned, the "horror" is not only the visual, but rather how Blackgirlhood is depicted. From my explanation, it can be described as the experience of growing and changing through a certain event, person, thing in a specific time or place in a character's life. "Eve's Bayou" and "Saint Omer" focus on the narratives of Black girls and women, telling stories of their past, to better understand their present.





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