

## Connecticut boarding school was a ‘nest of child molesters’ that didn’t protect kids from pedophiles



**Former students at Connecticut’s Indian Mountain School say an English teacher was the primary abuser, who exploited dozens of boys for over a decade.**

By [Chris Sommerfeldt](#)  
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They were supposed to be protectors — not predators.

A Connecticut boarding school with a history of sexual abuse is in trouble again after a former student has accused the elite educational institution of refusing to prevent teachers — and one headmaster — from sexually abusing him as a child, a new lawsuit charges.

Matthew Bernstein attended Indian Mountain School in Lakeville, Conn. from 1980 to 1983 — between the ages of 12 and 15 — and was sexually abused by several teachers on a regular basis,

his lawyer, Antonio Ponvert III, said in a statement, calling the abuse against his client "monstrous."

Ponvert said he filed similar suits on behalf of two other former Indian Mountain students last year. Both are pending and accuse the school of ignoring repeated pedophilia.

"(The school's) nest of child molesters inflicted torture and suffering on Matthew that began when he was a defenseless, innocent little boy," Ponvert said. "Like other plaintiffs who filed complaints against the school last year, Matthew was subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation by the very adults who had pledged to protect him."

The suit, filed in Bridgeport Federal Court Friday, identifies the primary abuser as English teacher, Christopher Simmonds, the papers say.

Simmonds allegedly abused, assaulted and exploited Bernstein and dozens of other boys for over a decade and took sexually explicit photos of them to blackmail them into silence, court papers show.

"They depict Matthew and other naked or partially-dressed children engaged in masturbation and other sex acts in various locations on the school campus," Ponvert said, adding that the photographs have yet to be retrieved.

Simmonds also showed his victims hardcore pornography and routinely gave them alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana and cocaine as part of a "grooming" process, Ponvert said.

And Simmonds wasn't a lone culprit.

The lawsuit accuses the school's headmaster, Peter Carlton, of frequenting the boys' showers and commenting on their penises and pubic hair. At one point, Carlton even "rubbed cream all over Matthew's penis," supposedly to treat jock itch, the suit charges.

Yet another staff member, French teacher Windsor Copeland, is identified in the suit as having had a similar relationship as Simmonds in sexually assaulting and forcefully touching students.

Indian Mountain School officials did not return several requests for comment Friday afternoon.

Ponvert noted that not a single staff member reported the repeated abuse despite knowledge of the three educators' nefarious activities.

"Not one adult at this institution came to their rescue," he said.

Ponvert said Simmonds and Carlton have since died, while Copeland is still alive and lives somewhere in Massachusetts.

"The important role in these cases is to make public what happened at this school; to shine a light at this kind of abuse which continues to happen at boarding schools around this country," Ponvert said.