

TEACHER STATEMENT

Indigenous peoples are not “Indians”, we never have been, and we never will be. Christopher Columbus made a mistake that was erroneously written down in history books and stuck. Columbus made this mistake because he thought he had reached India when he had really stumbled upon the Americas by accident.

Indian is not the correct term for the First Nations, Indigenous, and Tribal people that span all the way from the top of Canada down to the southern-most tip of South America. In Adam Rutherford's new Book, [A Brief History of Everyone Who Ever Lived: The Human Story Retold Through Our Genes](#), modern science has proven through genetic research that all First Nations, Indigenous, and Tribal people throughout the entirety of the Americas are interrelated human beings, which of course includes Mexican, Hispanic, and Latino people. None of us are “Indians” - Indian people live in or are from the country India.

With the inception of TRIBE time and the maintaining of the Indians mascot at JBHS, I believe we as the adults at JBHS and in the district are doing a major injustice to our students - we are teaching them that maintaining false history and systematic racism via the continued use of a now historically and scientifically proven mistake is something the adults on this campus and in this district are ok with and willingly feed into on a daily basis.

It is with this history and scientific data in mind, that I acknowledge with you, my friends and peers, what happened at our faculty meeting on Monday, January 28th, 2019. I am aware that some of you may not agree with me; however, I cannot in good conscience stand idly by and say nothing about the posters that were handed out that day.

Unfortunately, when I look around our amazing school, I see example after example of appropriation that often appears confused for appreciation – a prime example being every fall when in the Freshman hallway there are feathers with student’s names, and without fail someone finds it funny to re-tape the feathers into a penis shape on the wall. If that is appreciation, please someone explain it to me.

The following are serious questions I ask us to consider:

Would it be alright for us to be called the JBHS Whites and have posters for HONKY time?

Would it be alright for us to be called the JBHS Mexicans and have posters for BEANS time?

Would it be alright for us to be called the JBHS Blacks and have posters for SLAVE time?

If none of those would be alright with us, why then is it alright for us to be the JBHS Indians and have TRIBE time?

You may be asking yourself right now why this is important enough to me that I felt compelled to write this letter. Please allow me the time to explain.

I am a proud enrolled tribal member in my home state of North Dakota with the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. I can fairly safely concur that I may be the one and only enrolled tribal member on staff at John Burroughs High School. Others may be decedents. I am guessing I am likely the only person on staff who has a letter at my home from the United States Federal Government with a listed enrollment number and blood quantum clarifying my “Indian-ness” to be tracked for the entirety of my life.

According to [census.gov](https://www.census.gov), in 2014, it is estimated that less than 2% of the American population is Native American or Alaskan Native. As of 2015, it is noted on [bia.gov](https://www.bia.gov) that there are 566 federally recognized tribes – BIA stands for Bureau of Indian Affairs, which was established to track and number Indigenous peoples at the inception of what is now the United States of America.

Genocide is genocide no matter which context or land it happens on. Because there are so few Indigenous Americans left, few people know about the numbering of Native peoples and the killing of millions to establish colonies for what we now know as the United States of America. Indigenous peoples were killed with the intention they be eradicated, via systematic means, as were Armenians, as were people in Rwanda, as were people in Guatemala and Iraq. Much like Jewish people in WWII Germany, Native Americans were also numbered, which as outlined above is a practice continued to this day by the U.S. Government via the BIA.

Being less than 2% of the overall population means approximately 5.4 million people out of the total American population of 318.4 million people are Native American or Alaskan Natives and enrolled tribal members. Though that number seems small, and therefore maybe insignificant to some, science now proves that categorization and number count inaccurate. Given that genetic research now proves First Nations, Indigenous, and Tribal peoples are all interrelated, the number of people that should be included in that percentage is much larger, and is closer to 21% of American citizens.

More importantly, a very large percentage of the students attending high school at JBHS every day are in that 21%. US News and World Report states that our student population is .2% Native American, 9% Asian, 2% African American, .1% Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander, 47% Hispanic, 38% Caucasian, and 4% two or more races. Using the logic provided above regarding the population of the USA, one can estimate that roughly 50% of our student population at JBHS is Indigenous in some way or another. We adults should respect those cultural ties and celebrate those uniquely intertwined and beautiful cultures, not appropriate any of them.

I read the memoir Night by Elie Wiesel with my 10th grade English students every fall, and we talk about what Mr. Wiesel reflects upon in his writing regarding his experience of surviving life in a concentration camp in WWII Germany. The two quotes that stick with me the most are the following:

“They are committing the greatest indignity human beings can inflict on one another: telling people who have suffered excruciating pain and loss that their pain and loss were illusions.”

&

“Human suffering anywhere concerns men and women everywhere.”

During the week we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King jr. with a federally recognized holiday, I have the great pleasure of teaching his seminal piece "Letter from Birmingham Jail". In this letter, Dr. King states, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." That quote is also in mind as I draft this letter to our wonderful school.

Dr. King states that the answer to any witnessed injustice is non-violent direct action. Please consider this letter my non-violent direct action concerning the mascot name and acronym TRIBE for our intervention time. I cannot in good conscience hang the posters handed out in my classroom. I am asking all staff members to join me in a conscious and loving protest against the cultural appropriation and systematic racism those posters represent.

In their place, I propose we come up with new posters for LEARN time or PRIDE time – there are any number of less offensive acronyms that all of us intelligent people could come up with as a united whole.

I also ask we begin the process of changing the mascot name at this school. It is my belief that the 2019 graduating class should be the last class to graduate from this school as the JBHS Indians.

I will lovingly leave you with this thought - Do we want to stand idly by and teach our students systematic racism and social injustice, or do we want to be like Nobel Peace Prize winners, Elie Wiesel and Dr. Martin Luther King jr. and stand up for what is right?

Thank you for your time to read this letter and your consideration of action.

TEACHER STATEMENT

Over the course of the thirteen years I have been a teacher at Burroughs, principled and courageous administrators, faculty, and students have attempted to address the Indian mascot that persists here despite progressive decisions and legislation across the country banning this damaging practice. We are decades behind a nationwide movement in educational institutions to change Indian mascots.

For perspective, Stanford University changed its Indian mascot in 1972. Likewise, the Board of Education for the Los Angeles Unified School District mandated the discontinuation of Indian mascots district-wide in 1997. The NCAA restricted the use of Indian mascots in 2005. A ground-breaking decision made by the Oregon State Board of Education in 2012 banned Indian mascots in schools statewide.

Why is changing the mascot necessary? Consider:

"The use of American Indian mascots as symbols in schools and university athletic programs is particularly troubling because schools are places of learning. These mascots are teaching stereotypical, misleading and too often, insulting images of American Indians. These negative lessons are not just affecting American Indian students; they are sending the wrong message to all students." --former APA President Ronald F. Levant, EdD

and

"One way that Native Americans, and sensitive non-Natives, suffer is living in a hostile discursive climate. Being continually surrounded by stereotypes of Native Americans, such as the case at schools with Native American mascots, is a form of racial harassment that affects people." --Laurel L. Davis and Malvina T. Rau, from *Team Spirits*.

I understand that this is difficult. The Indian mascot here at John Burroughs is clearly a deeply rooted tradition that spans generations of alumni whose children likely now attend this school. Some traditions, however, as Rosemary expanded upon in her response, need to be changed. We are advocating for and prioritizing mental and emotional wellness at our school and in our district. It is imperative then, that we know that the American Psychological Association has continually shown that the use of Indian mascots and the logos accompanying them damage the self-esteem of Native American children, offend most Native Americans in general, and reinforce stereotypes that dehumanize Native Americans.

At JBHS, these logos are displayed on uniforms, on faculty and staff shirts, on gymnasium walls and floors, on paperwork, around the main office, in classrooms, in display cases, and--most blatantly--above our main entrance. No matter how artfully done, these depictions are tied to our use of the Indian as a mascot. Therefore, they are all part of our misappropriation and objectification of Native Americans for our purposes.

Lastly, the Common Core explicitly states that as part of the portrait of students who meet the standards, "they actively seek to understand other perspectives and cultures."* How can we expect this of our students when we allow such professionally denounced, culturally misrepresentative images to pervade our campus?

**Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, "Introduction"*

"A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be." --Rosalynn Carter

Additional Resources:

listing of the history of schools nationwide that have retired their Indian mascots over the decades:
<http://jayrosenstein.com/pages/honormascots.html>

summary of the APA resolution recommending retirement of Indian mascots:
www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/indian-mascots.aspx

National Congress of American Indians long standing opposition to Indian mascots:
<http://www.ncai.org/proudtobe>

NCAA Press Release on restricting use of Indian mascots:

<http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/PressArchive/2005/Announcements/NCAA%2BExecutive%2BCommittee%2BIssues%2BGuidelines%2Bfor%2BUse%2Bof%2BNative%2BAmerican%2BMascots%2Bat%2BChampionship%2BEvents.html>

TEACHER STATEMENT

In the most literal and fundamental way, "Indian" is a word to describe a broad racial/ethnic group comprising hundreds of tribes native to this country - provided it's not about the Asian subcontinent. Forgetting the fact that most of us at Burroughs are not racially or ethnically Indian, would we ever call ourselves the "John Burroughs Caucasians" . . . the "John Burroughs Latinos" . . . the "John Burroughs African-Americans" . . . or the "John Burroughs Asians"? Our current mascot is a throw-back to a time when people's intentions might have been to conjure a fighting warrior, but it's outdated now and always did overlook the brutal history of the millions of Native Americans who died, lost their lands and otherwise suffered when the Europeans arrived.

ALUMNI STATEMENT

As a proud graduate of the 1955 senior class, I think it's about time we joined the 21st century and gave the current teens, and the future of our nation, the opportunity to move forward and decide on a proper replacement for our outdated symbol. Good luck to them all!

ALUMNI STATEMENT

As an alumnus of JBHS, Class of '77, I want to offer my whole hearted support for changing the mascot. A race of people should never be made into a cartoon mascot, no matter the original intentions or the sentimentality that people feel for it.

I recall when I was ASB President and the issue was brought to me by a couple of students who had a native american heritage. They found it offensive and belittling. It really opened my eyes. I brought the issue up and got soundly laughed out of the room. I am so happy that today's kids are more aware of structural racism.

I do believe that teenagers can make wise decisions about the future if they have good guidance in seeing the impact and other viewpoints.

ALUMNI STATEMENT

Get rid of that mascot. I know there are probably more elder folk who will take the time out of their day to defend it, but frankly it is offensive and inappropriately insensitive.

ALUMNI STATEMENT

As a graduate of Burroughs High School, Winter '55, I find myself with a difference of opinion from some. I think the idea of changing the school mascot should reflect the thinking of the current students.

ALUMNI STATEMENT

I am ok with the current student body deciding the future of our mascot as long as they consider the input of any JBHS Alumni and/or indigenous people in the region.

ALUMNI STATEMENT

As a 2009 graduate, I regret not taking more action while I was a student at Burroughs. The indigenous folks that I know & love continue to express to me that the mascot is harmful to public awareness of the diversity within the indigenous community. Many tribal councils have been asking for decades that these changes take place as well. They name mascots like the JBHS "Indian" as a harmful caricature. They & I prefer expanded public education on the history & living culture of indigenous peoples that are part of our communities. I encourage undecided students to vote to change the mascot, and direct their energy toward advocating for public education of the Tataviam & Tongva peoples.

ALUMNI STATEMENT

It's time to change the mascot of John Burroughs High School to something more appropriate to the name of the person for whom the school is named.

ALUMNI STATEMENT

I am alumni of Burroughs 1975. I have received the information that there is consideration to remove the "Indian" as the mascot of Burroughs. I support this strongly. I believe it is not really for anyone but the youth of today to decide their future and that includes the mascots as well as the names of their schools. (I also attended David Starr Jordan Junior High as reference)

I am appreciative of the history of the mascot and what it may mean to many people who have attended Burroughs. I believe that the spirit in which the mascot was chosen was, for its time, aligned with what those back then believed were wonderful attributes of what they called Indians. But in addition to learning and owning the history and harm that was done to the Native Americans, it is imperative to admit the term Indian itself is not accepted by the culture and people of those whose attributes we admired and we must honor them. That is the duty of our wisdom in 2020.

During my time at Burroughs, it was through the efforts of my classmate's mother that the name of the drill team was changed from a more offensive term to Indianettes. That tiny beautiful spark of awareness took 45 years to get where it is today. Forty five years. Imagine that?

I believe we should offer our amends to the Native Americans by retiring that mascot and something new. This will show the honor they deserve.

ALUMNI STATEMENT

First of all, let me say I hope all of you are staying safe and being level headed about this pandemic we are experiencing. We are all in this together.

We, the class of 1959, understand just like you, what a difficult chore it will be to change the JBHS Mascot. I am writing to you as an individual and not representing anyone other than myself. I feel very close to this subject because while at Burroughs. I was an athlete, the a capella choir President, member of legislative council, in a school musical, member of Boy's council and Lettermens' Club President. I went on to become a

teacher in 2 High Schools and at De Anza Community College. My background is and was in athletics, as an athlete, a coach, and Athletic Director at a high school and at De Anza. I taught for a total of 33 years and have been retired now for 19 years, so that is why I can honestly say you have a tough choice to make. During those 33 years, I was a high school athletic director and a Community College Athletic Director and worked with athletes, cheerleaders, mascots, and coaches. I know how deep this feeling is about changing something that has been a mainstay of the school. It is its own identity. It has ties that go back to before your grandparents' era. Keep this in mind when you decide. I know you want to be up-to-date and use your own identity. However, many of us have gone under those hallowed gates at Burroughs. We also remember and have deep memories.

Through my 23 years of being involved with California high school students, and another 10 years with young adults, I know you will do the best job in deciding what to do. I know you will take into consideration the number of students who have cheered "Go Burroughs!" and "Go Indians!" throughout the many years of this great tradition at John Burroughs High School. Like all of the schools where I have been a teacher, it has been the Principal who started the school and who was responsible in naming the school and the mascot. So, John Burroughs had their first principal who was a graduate of Stanford University, and Stanford's colors were red and white, and they were also the Stanford Indians. So, now comes the dilemma of showing respect to the Native Americans, the Alumni, and yourselves, while doing what must be done. I know that it is an impossible feat to keep the Indian mascot. That choice is out the window and would not show respect for people of color. The "Black Lives Matter" movement is upon us, and we must show them that we have taken their movement into consideration. You must show that all people are being considered, and respected.

So now, I address you, the leaders of John Burroughs High School. Please carry on a great tradition by choosing a new school mascot that can identify John Burroughs High School. You, the leaders, will be setting a new legacy and still represent our legacy of past times gone, but still remembered. You must decide on choosing something strong and long lasting; something memorable and indigenous to Burbank and the San Fernando Valley. Make it fierce so our adversaries will know with whom they are dealing. Make it identifiable so you can create a mascot for the school. So, just as I started this letter, I say.. "We are all in this together". I always used to tell my students, "You are the creator of your own destiny!" So I will respectfully tell you to create your legacy, create your destiny, create a John Burroughs identity. Please think of me and all who have come before me. I hope we (the older generation) matter!

ALUMNI STATEMENT

I'm an alum of JBHS class of '06. It should be up to the students what you want to be represented by. I and many others support what you're all trying to do. Your voices and opinions are valid and real and I see no reason for any adults to insist you keep a problematic mascot. You've got this.

ALUMNI STATEMENT

I write to you today with a request to update the mascot of John Burroughs High School. Established in 1948, "the Indians" does not clearly reflect the Burroughs community or its members, and it is a nagging relic of a more ignorant time. A petition was introduced to people in the Burbank community and we have gathered over 2,400 signatures so far; among them are lifelong Burbank residents and employees of the BUSD. I

encourage you to review the comments on the petition, which show a wide range of graduating classes who are eager for this change to finally take place. I hope you'll note my favorite suggestion from Juliet Lowrie ('88), who said "I vote that the class of 2020 that missed their graduation votes to pick the new mascot!". While this doesn't make up for the chaos and stress of the Class of 2020's senior year, it is power and agency you can offer to students who have had a great deal of power and agency taken away from them over the past several months.

As the Washington football team updates their racist mascot, I hope that JBHS can follow suit and make the right choice. There are many reasons this mascot should not be in place, but consider the following, if nothing else. BUSD's website states that the district provides support using the "Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child" approach (<https://www.burbankusd.org/wellness>). This is in direct opposition to the American Psychological Association's call to retire American Indian Mascots, which cites the "harmful effects of racial stereotyping on social identity development and self-esteem of American Indian young people." You can read more about the APA's call to end these mascots here:

<https://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/indian-mascots>.

I write with great pride as a student raised and shaped by Burbank schools; please help us do better for our communities.

ALUMNI STATEMENT

As the oldest of seven kids who went through Stevenson, Jordan & Burroughs, I am sentimental about the friends, memories & overall experience. I was often distracted from the academic objectives. One of those distractions was becoming a songleader along with four other girls. We were in our world: designing outfits, going to Cal State Long Beach for training and hoping that football players would ask us out on dates. I vividly recall the high pitched exuberant "spirit" on the field, the quick paced exchange of "excitement" in the gym for basketball games, etc. We had an amazing time leading the crowds in cheers for our team. Even though we usually ended up going to Bob's afterwards all in the back seat with my Dad as chauffeur (so embarrassing). The "mascot" was not as important as the happening. Athletes competing, at their best with support from family & friends. The mascot was symbolic for the time.

ALUMNI STATEMENT

I left that "Indian" mascot long ago when I became mindful of the genocide that stole this land from the native people of this land. That would have been maybe like when I moved beyond the pressing issues of the day at the table we occupied in the cafeteria for snack and lunch breaks. Furthermore, the current symbol does not go well with my Black Lives Matter and my self-made sign in front of my house. And now, Burbank needs a Big Cat mascot to take care of that dog up the hill!

ALUMNI STATEMENT

Hello Gen Z! and their Millennial parents. To be honest I'm ok with JBHS Cardinal as Stanford changed to that decades ago. With that you could retain team colors. Just might be the right thing to do at this time.

ALUMNI STATEMENT

I am from the class of '62. I was the first girl to run for student body president. I bring this up not because I won (I didn't), but because at the time it was unimaginable to have a girl president. But I -- and my friends -- imagined it! We were breaking with tradition. And now it is time to break with tradition again. I hope that nostalgia will not stand in the way of confronting emblems of our nation's systemic racism. Let's join the nationwide movement in educational institutions to change Indian mascots!

ALUMNI STATEMENT

I am proud that JB students will decide their mascot for themselves. It is after all their own image.

For me, I am afraid that my mascot will always, always be the very personalized Indian. A very proud, unbowed Kiowa warchief.

I was at Berkeley in the 60s and hope I understand your concern about racism and symbols-- as much as anyone can understand them who is not "them". (I was in Indian Guides as a kid, eh?) You want to be politically correct in a time where everyone is offended by everything. My dad told me that if you listen to everyone, you do nothing -- like a horse in a corral roped in six directions. Some people think the world is flat. Some people can look at an inaugural photo and see the greatest crowd in the history of mankind. Some people look and see shame. If you sincerely look at it as a symbol of degradation and pain, then I would ask you what should you do about it? Eliminate the image or improve the image. Nihilism is self-limiting. Personally, I was glad we were not the "white naturalists" or "happy campers" -- but something that meant something. Do you see a mocking image like the prophet in *Charlie Hebdo*? Should the school nickname be the "Kiowas"? The "*Satantas*"? Ah, but then there may be descendants of settlers killed who would resent the honor paid to a famous chief.

For me, I never thought of the image as a caricature. The name "indian" was not offensive to me simply because it *was* American and meant in 1962 when I graduated not a wounded knee; but a fighting spirit. My descendants are black and white. My family and my wife speak Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish, Norwegian, Hungarian, Slovak, and a snattering of English (thanks to Mr. Sage). My Slovak grandmother was ostracized as a ("tot")a hundred years ago for marrying a Hungarian!! Times change, and you will too! I think of myself as American. I think of the Kiowa mascot as American. Don't abandon "Indian" because it is generic. Follow the rope that holds what is the best for you. To me, my impression will always be the honor given the indian representing the stoically, feral resilient resistance to a brave new world that we may have to accept but which we should always question.

ALUMNI STATEMENT

I recognize that there is a lot of name changing going on in our country relative to ethnicity and/or negative historical events. I have studied American Indian history. These are proud and courageous people. Chief Joseph's famous words, "I will fight no more forever.", as well as the history of our wars against the American Indians, still saddens me. In our era many believed that dressing up in an Indian costume meant many things such as bravery, or being proud of American Indians, but we were ignorant. If our high school team name offends American Indians then I don't believe we have the right to continue using it.

BUSD EMPLOYEE STATEMENT

I am 110% supportive of our students since this is their school and they should have their voice matter... Change is hard for a lot of people, but change is often for the better. Our wonderful country wouldn't be where it is today if we did not allow change - women would not be allowed to vote, people of different backgrounds and race would not be able to go to school together.

COMMUNITY MEMBER STATEMENT

I am disheartened that there is going to be a vote for this change to occur. Was there a vote to change the books or curriculum for school regarding certain terms being used in those books? Why is it that my people have to endure this misappropriation of our culture and heritage. Why do we have to be honored or celebrated as a mascot?

My people have endured and continue to endure pain and suffering. We were labeled and called savages. We continue to see the ridicule of our culture and sacred heritage because of mascots. Example, when I go to a game and I have to hear or see people chanting scalp, tomahawk chop, people dressing with makeshift headdresses. All those misappropriation of my culture and the culture of my people. We were forced to change our name, cut our hair and not speak our own language. The US government promised a lot and to this present day the government still holds back on their promises.

And now this subject, a vote on whether to keep the mascot. I have done my research and this issue has been going on for years. Several people want this change and it should be enough to make it happen. More people have been complaining or feel our culture, our heritage should not be used as a mascot. We are not extinct, we are here and ENOUGH is enough.

No one's race, cultural or identity should be used as a mascot. If schools, teams or associations want to honor or celebrate us, Natives of this land, then do it the honorable way. Name a school after my people, a street, dedicate a placard or a hall, construct a monument, dedicate a piece of art or display a piece of art from my people.

This tradition is wrong, hurtful and demeaning to our culture. We can do better, please let's do the right thing and CHANGE the mascot.

"all lives cannot matter until Black lives and the lives of indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) matter. We are taking steps to actively work towards being fully anti-racist, not only in word, but also in policy, practice, and accountability. " (John Burroughs website)

God bless, my utmost respect to everyone!

ALUMNI STATEMENT

A long time ago--in the last century, when innocent '50s doofs roamed Clark Avenue, we knew even then that we were indeed lucky to attend John Burroughs. Believe it or not, our Class of '60 is still active 60

years later. We love our alma mater. You have voted overwhelmingly to change the mascot. Good for you. If that is the opinion of the kids, it's aces.

When my wife and I visit, we stay at the Safari nearby. [*An entertainer, I play in SoCal several times/year when I'm not with cruise lines.*] The refurbished campus and structures are wonderful. They speak volumes for my beloved hometown.

We are in a new day. The chaos of these four years has made us begin to embrace thoughtfulness. I pray that your generation will continue to demand social progress, shun hate and exalt opportunity whenever and wherever you are.

Indians worked for us. But times change. Even the paleolithic Washington professional football club has awoken. Past is nothing more than prologue. Congratulations on your thoughtfulness. May Burroughs forever lead the way!