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This letter was written by LBUSD alumni who want to see change in their community. It will be circulated for signatures for 1 week and then sent to the School Board. We will continue to collect and add signatures, testimonials, and suggestions to the letter even after it has been sent to the Board.

A 3-page Summary of the letter is available [here](#). A Spanish translation of the Summary is coming soon.

The links at the top of the page serve the following purposes:

- **[Sign the Letter](#)**: Show your support for this letter and its intentions. Signatures will appear at the end of this letter and the 3-page summary.
- **[Submit Testimonial](#)**: Submit testimonial of racism and discrimination experienced or witnessed in LBUSD (can be anonymous). Testimonials will appear at the end of this letter and the 3-page summary.
- **[Suggest](#)**: Submit suggestions for anti-racist actions you would like LBUSD to take. Suggestions will be collected and written [here](#).

If you would like to engage further:

- For more information and ways to get involved, visit our website: <https://lbudagainstracism.carrrd.co>
- For general inquiries and comments about this work, contact lbudagainstracism@gmail.com

August 1, 2020

An Open Letter to the Laguna Beach Unified School District Board of Education

From LBUSD Students, Alumni, Teachers, Families, and Community

We write as students, alumni, teachers, families, and community members of Laguna Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) to urge the Board, and the district at large, to actively combat racism against [Black, Indigenous, and people of color \(BIPOC\)](#) in our community and beyond. This letter incorporates our own ideas, experiences, and research, as well as the actions being advanced by activists of color and in school districts across the nation.

In recent months, a national conversation on race has erupted in response to the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Nina Pop, Tony McDade, Elijah McClain, Oluwatoyin Salau, and countless other victims of racialized violence carried out by police and others. These deaths were not isolated incidents, but a symptom of the [systemic racism](#) and [white supremacy](#) on which this nation was founded and which persist today--through [redlining](#), [the prison system](#), [medical discrimination](#), and more. These unjust systems, and the suffering that they cause, are upheld in our daily lives, individually and collectively.

LBUSD is no exception. Racism in our district occurs both in person and over social media, on and off campus, through covert and overt means--harming both students and staff. As LBUSD students, we all witnessed racial slurs, [microaggressions](#), and more that often went unnoticed, unreported, and/or unpunished. While many of these incidents were often excused as jokes, the conviction that such "jokes" are appropriate is itself a sign of ignorance. And while this culture may have improved since we left LBUSD, our conversations with some current students suggest that it is not eradicated. The district--and all of us as individuals--must recognize our active or passive participation in this culture and deeply investigate our blind spots when it comes to race and identity. We must constantly live the values of openness, inclusion, and acceptance that our community purports to hold but is not consistent in implementing.

We recognize and appreciate that there have been some efforts at combating bias in LBUSD--such as the district's Anti-Defamation League [“No Place for Hate” designation](#), and [recent conversations](#) that LBHS teachers conducted in response to June's national protests. We also appreciate that the Board [recently announced its intention](#) to combat racism in the district and support Black students through a [draft resolution](#). But still more needs to be done, and done more quickly. Though we understand that the journey toward transformational change will take time, there is no time to waste in starting.

LBUSD must be more than passively “not racist”; it must be [actively anti-racist](#). It must fight racism and identity-based discrimination in all parts of the school district (elementary, middle, and high school), at multiple levels (individual, interpersonal, and institutional), and at all times (not just as a reaction to current events). It must take action that is sustainable, holistic, inclusive, mandatory, and measurable, with mechanisms for transparency and accountability built in. It must affirm its stance as an anti-racist institution, offer resources and support for students of color, foster productive dialogues on race and identity among student bodies, and reconsider how policies, curricula, and staff can be updated to meet this significant moment.

The need for this action is about more than addressing instances of racism in LBUSD. It's about raising students to be the best versions of themselves, both in their individual lives and in our collective future. It's about teaching civic education and global citizenship, empowering students to make positive change in a complicated country and world. It's about prioritizing student welfare and safety; all students (and staff), regardless of their race, are damaged by racism, and they can only grow through knowledge, community, and action. It's about helping students understand and express their identities, not as a way to sow division or group people into monoliths, but as a way to promote unity and compassion for one another. And it's about giving students a well-rounded education that will shape their interactions, values, and worldviews, and stay with them for the rest of their lives.

It's also about the unique and vital role that K-12 education can play in dismantling racism. As the only mandatory schooling students will receive, K-12 is ideal for educating students on race and identity. This duty can no longer be deflected to higher education, which not all students can access and where the pursuit of an anti-racist education is largely self-selecting. Additionally, multiple studies show that children [develop racial biases by the age of 5](#). K-12 education provides the opportunity to address these biases early on and to continuously build on students' anti-racist understanding and skills as they mature. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced educators to reimagine K-12 education, especially as low-income students and students of color face resource and health disparities. In this reimagining is the opportunity--and responsibility--to create an educational environment that is actively anti-racist.

This responsibility is no less important for predominantly white school districts like LBUSD. In fact, it is *because* LBUSD is a predominantly white school district that this responsibility is actually *more important*. Racism is a white people problem, and it must be dismantled by white people. The onus is on LBUSD as a mostly white community to use its platform, power, and privilege to be anti-racist, rather than shifting the burden onto less privileged districts. (On that note, the onus is on white community members, not people of color within LBUSD, to make change happen.)

Additionally, we must remember that LBUSD does not exist in a vacuum. The vast whiteness of LBUSD reflects the vast [\(90.8%\)](#) whiteness of Laguna Beach. In a city where the median gross monthly rent is \$2,230 and a house may cost as much as \$44M, and in a county where the [KKK had a major influence](#) in the 1900s, the demographics of our city are no accident. Discrimination is alive in Laguna Beach's structures, but we should find hope in the options to progress past our exclusionary history. LBUSD has the opportunity to lead by example and influence broader structural change in the city, county, and beyond.

We therefore urge LBUSD to take the following **10 Actions**, at whatever level of staff is appropriate for implementation. This list is lengthy because we sought to provide multiple suggestions for how the district might carry out these Actions. Some of these suggestions are not immediately actionable, some may be imperfect for our district, and some may already be underway. (We are also glad to see some of them, including a consideration of curriculum, staffing, and professional trainings, reflected in the Board's current draft resolution.) Still, we hope that the variety of options listed here will help spark further ideas, research, and outreach.

1. Acknowledge past inaction and commit to future action.

- a. Publicly acknowledge that LBUSD has not been actively anti-racist, as shown through the district's lack of curriculum on race and identity, lack of support for marginalized students (and therefore support of [white privilege](#)), incidents of racism and discrimination, and silence. In your statement, clearly condemn white supremacy and its systemic and everyday manifestations, and affirm that Black Lives Matter. This could be done through the resolution that the Board is currently considering for adoption.
- b. Commit the school district to taking anti-racist action, and create an Action Plan for these efforts. The Action Plan should result from community feedback and the district's own examination of its infrastructure. It should include short-, medium-, and long-term plans for addressing the following Actions and others.

2. Review and revise protocol for addressing incidents of hate, racism, bias, and discrimination against students from marginalized communities.

- a. Establish clear and effective repercussions for students and staff who engage in aggression, harassment, and discrimination on the basis of race or any other protected characteristic.
 - i. These policies should be more specific and comprehensive than those currently outlined in the [2019-2020 LBHS Student Handbook](#) (p. 55).
 - ii. Differentiate between "bullying" and instances of racial aggression and violence.
 - iii. Discipline should be based on [restorative justice](#) practices, such as those modeled by [Oakland Unified School District](#). For example, some of these incidents may arise from a lack of education on race, and repercussions may take the form of educational programs and counseling rather than traditionally punitive measures. Additionally, repercussions may vary depending on age.
 - iv. If possible, apply these policies to incidents that occur not only on campus or at off-campus school events, but also in contexts unrelated to school and during school breaks.
 - v. Include these policies in the schools' handbooks, the district's [employee code of conduct](#), and wherever else is appropriate.
- b. Strengthen and expand mechanisms for reporting these incidents. Suggestions for doing so include:
 - i. Create an accessible channel not connected to campus SROs for anonymously reporting incidents without fear of retaliation. This channel could be an app, online platform, or form alongside the [complaint forms](#) currently on LBUSD's website. Educate students on when, how, and what to report through this channel. Monitor, respond to, and address all reported incidents in a timely and sensitive manner. If there is already an existing channel, such as Text a Tip, make sure all students have access and are thoroughly and continuously educated on its use.
 - ii. Create a means of reporting for teachers/staff as well as students

3. Reform curricula to amplify BIPOC voices and educate students on race, privilege, and identity.

While math, science, history, and English are traditionally considered integral academic pursuits, so is learning to be anti-racist. LBUSD should therefore establish mandatory K-12 curricular requirements that

include diversifying curricula to amplify BIPOC narratives and perspectives, fostering in-class examination of and conversations about race and identity, and empowering students as anti-racist actors. We have compiled an [Anti-Racism Resource List](#) as a starting point to this work, in addition to the following suggestions:

- a. Examine existing curricula for whitewashing, color-blindness, and prejudice, and identify specific areas for improvement. A voluntary committee composed of teachers and students--like the Advisory Committee described in Action #9c--could assist in this examination and issue guidelines for reform.
- b. Diversify and incorporate anti-racist perspectives and pedagogies into the lesson plans, readings, and other educational content of existing curricula.
 - i. General
 1. Create a unit in classes devoted to the intersection of that subject matter and race.
 2. Incorporate education on systemic racism, and specifically anti-Black racism, in the United States.
 3. Incorporate education on the intersectionality of racial justice and other forms of justice, including socioeconomic, environmental, religious, ethnic, and gender- and sexuality-based.
 4. Incorporate experiential learning (like field trips) about BIPOC experiences.
 5. Ensure curricula are always taught with a critical, anti-bias lens, even if the content does not deal explicitly with race.
 - ii. English/Language Arts
 1. In every English class, include at least one book that is by a person of color *and* about the experiences of a person or people of color. Make sure that books by Black authors are included. Also include books and other works that highlight non-Western societies, histories, and cultures.
 2. We acknowledge and appreciate that several works by BIPOC authors are already taught in LUSD English/Language Arts classes. However, we suggest that, in addition to increasing the number of works by BIPOC authors in English classes, the lessons surrounding existing BIPOC-authored literature be reframed to more specifically address anti-racist goals and the history of systemic racism in the United States. Additionally, these texts should be analyzed to the same extent as any traditional text would be analyzed in the classroom.
 - iii. History/Social Studies
 1. Connect the present to the past. In US history education, address the historical struggles of marginalized people (especially Black and Indigenous people) in the United States and their modern manifestations through systemic racism. In California-specific education, include Latinx and Chicanx studies. In global history education, address colonialism, the United States' role as an imperial power, and the modern impacts of colonialism. These issues are relevant to economics and government courses as well.
 2. Integrate studies of non-white, non-Western societies more thoroughly into historical curricula. Include other nations' and cultures' perspectives on United States history and values (e.g. through including textbook materials from other nations) to show multiple sides of international and intercultural history.
 3. Consider modifying or eliminating the elementary school Mission Project and field trips. Also consider how historical reenactments and performances in

elementary and middle schools may be insensitive to BIPOC community members.

iv. Math and Science

1. STEM classes may seem disconnected from race, but there is room for creativity here. The role of BIPOC luminaries in these fields, like the role of Black women in the NASA shuttle launch, could be a starting point.

v. Health

1. Health classes already provide opportunities for students and educators to discuss more “sensitive” issues surrounding students’ identities. Integrating discussions of race, racial identity, and anti-racism into these health classes would create a space to demonstrate how race intersects with experiences of gender, sexuality, and other identities.
2. Discuss racial disparities in public health and healthcare, and provide resources for students to advocate for themselves in a healthcare setting.

vi. Arts

1. Incorporate the expressive forms of BIPOC artists into curricula, and acknowledge and educate on the contributions of BIPOC artists to their respective fields.

c. Create new mandatory and optional curricula, such as:

- i. A mandatory ethnic studies/social justice course--or courses--that focuses on BIPOC experiences and covers systemic racism, postcolonialism, civic responsibility, and multicultural understanding. The [California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum](#) that is currently under development may serve as a model.
 - ii. Non-Western foreign language classes and other electives that do not center European or white narratives
 - iii. AP and honors classes that include multicultural understanding, so that conventional success does not require learning in a white Western silo
- d. In these reformed curricula, facilitate in-class reflection on and discussions about students’ personal identities and experiences, as well as their roles in upholding and combating racism. Understanding the systems behind Laguna Beach and Orange County’s demographics and culture should be part of this discussion.

4. Expand extracurricular opportunities for students to engage in anti-racist action.

- a. Support the creation and existence of student groups and clubs that promote racial and identity-based community, justice, and education, such as:
 - i. Affinity groups and other formal or informal spaces created by and for BIPOC students, teachers, and/or staff.
 - ii. New and existing student groups that seek to work with justice organizations
 - iii. Groups that promote multicultural awareness, like Model United Nations
 - iv. Embedding considerations of race in existing student clubs/groups and evaluating the intention of clubs/groups to ensure against [white saviorism](#).
- b. Connect students with community service and internship opportunities related to anti-racism, such as: [OC Human Relations](#), [Orange County Congregation Community Organizations \(OCCCO\)](#), [Youth Justice Coalition LA](#), [Youth Liberty Squad of ACLU SoCal](#), [NAACP Orange County Branch](#)
- c. Consider developing educational scholarships specifically for anti-racist work by students

5. Foster broader anti-racist awareness, dialogue, and culture. Beyond formal curricula and extracurricular activities, all LBUSD community members should continuously improve their knowledge

and skills in combating racism and discrimination through efforts including trainings, conversations, and cultural change.

- a. **Training:** Require that all Board members, administration, teachers, staff, and students undergo training on diversity, equity, implicit bias, and privilege around race and other forms of identity. Though student training will obviously differ by grade level, it is still crucial for students of all ages. This training should include an anti-racist lens and cover both overt and covert forms of racism. This training should be mandatory, annual, and led by a professional educator or organization.
 - i. The 2019-2020 LBHS Student Handbook states: “The Superintendent or designee shall provide age-appropriate training and information to students, parents/guardians, and employees regarding discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying, including, but not limited to, the district’s non-discrimination policy, what constitutes prohibited behavior, how to report incidents, and to whom such reports should be made” (p. 55). However, this is only in response to cases of reported discrimination, and there is no listed training or information.
 - ii. Teachers should be trained specifically on fostering conversations about race and identity and supporting BIPOC students in the classroom, including how to teach the new curricula advanced in Action #2
 - iii. All Board members, administration, staff, faculty, and students would also benefit from [Upstander Intervention Training](#), so that everyone feels confident standing up when they see discrimination occur
 - iv. *Organizations include:* [Orange County Human Relations](#), which conducts anti-racist trainings and fosters inter-community relationships through efforts such as the [kNOwHate Campaign](#), [Hate Crime Prevention](#), and [Community Building](#). Additionally, [The Center for Racial Justice in Education](#) provides a resource network for [talking about race and racialized violence](#), as well as advice for [teaching race to primarily white students](#).
 - v. *Online courses include:* [MIT Race and Racism](#), [Nova Reid Anti-Racism & White Privilege](#), [Point Made Learning Looking Deeper: Race](#)
- b. **Conversations:** Host spaces and events for community members to engage in conversations about race and identity, including their personal experiences. Suggestions include:
 - i. Curate an online database for community members to learn about racial history and anti-racist activism. All community members could contribute resources to this database. This database might include materials from the trainings detailed in Action 5a, as well as resources for students and parents to have family conversations about race and identity
 - ii. Create platforms for BIPOC students to discuss their experiences (with options for anonymity)
 - iii. Invite speakers to present on issues of racial injustice & white privilege at events, student assemblies, etc. These could function similarly to anti-drug assemblies
 - iv. Discuss current events related to race within and outside classrooms, including but not limited to racism in Orange County and the national protests this summer
- c. **Culture:** In addition to the previous suggestions that also promote cultural change, embed anti-racist awareness and action in students’ daily lives. Suggestions include:
 - i. Explicitly include the celebration of diversity and identity in the school district’s [Mission Statement](#), Core Values, and/or wherever else is appropriate
 - ii. Recognize and teach Black History Month and Juneteenth in classrooms
 - iii. State [Native American land acknowledgements](#) at appropriate times
 - iv. Seek organizational programs beyond No Place for Hate to guide cultural change

6. Support student welfare and success, esp. for students of color, ESL students, and low-income students.

- a. Implement restorative rather than punitive practices in disciplinary policy, which traditionally [disproportionately impacts students of color](#). LBUSD is not exempt: in 2015, [CRDC data](#) showed that 21.2% of out-of-school suspensions in LBUSD were Hispanic students even though there was only 10.5% enrollment of Hispanic students. Suggested policies for review include:
 - i. The disciplinary policy for instances of aggression and harassment, including but not limited to the instances covered in Action #2
 - ii. The attendance/tardy policy and associated demerits that bar students from social events and milestones. Some students may have personal reasons for consistent tardiness (e.g. living far from school without reliable transportation, fulfilling familial obligations, or grappling with family dynamics that preclude a reliable ride to school).
 - iii. The detention policy
 - iv. The [suspension and expulsion policy](#), including provisions that deny enrollment to students who have been expelled from another school district (pp. 9-10).
- b. Support students' mental health. Suggestions for doing so include:
 - i. Reinforce emotional/mental health resources as spaces for discussing identity-based struggles and participating in restorative justice. Suggestions for doing so include: incorporating racial diversity and cultural competency in hiring and retention practices for school counselors; [increasing the number of mental health counselors](#) on LBUSD campuses; and continuously communicating the value and accessibility of these counselors and other mental health resources to students.
 - ii. Provide accommodations to students affected by racism in current events
- c. Improve the accessibility of academic success. Suggestions for doing so include:
 - i. Pursue equity in "gifted" programs (like GATE) and ACT/SAT/other standardized testing preparation
 - ii. Assess ESL classes and the Juntos program for opportunities to improve, and explore additional methods of providing academic support to ESL students
 - iii. Promote equitable access to LBUSD announcements, applications, and processes for students and families, such as by distributing translated documents and assessing the efficacy of these translations and other outreach.
 - iv. Ensure equitable access to quality technology and tutoring, especially in light of the remote learning environment of a COVID-19 world and its disproportionate impacts on marginalized populations
 - v. Develop and/or advocate for educational scholarship funds for students of color, to be awarded at Honors Convocation alongside other community scholarships offered through the Laguna Beach High School Scholarship Foundation

7. Increase teacher and staff diversity and support. Most students in LBUSD had almost no teachers of color throughout their district education. Teachers of color tend to [provide more culturally relevant teaching](#) and can help [close achievement gaps](#). It is therefore crucial for LBUSD to incorporate racial diversity and cultural competency in hiring and retention practices for teachers and staff at all levels of the district, including district administration. Suggestions for doing so include:

- a. Expand outreach channels for hiring (e.g. advertising, information sessions, recruitment fairs) to historically/majority BIPOC universities and other key BIPOC recruitment spaces.
- b. Utilize the [Diverse Slates approach](#): Require that 2 candidates from underrepresented backgrounds reach the onsite stage of the recruitment process, or otherwise prove why they couldn't
- c. List cultural competency and concern with equity as qualifications in job postings
- d. Create support structures to prevent burnout and promote retention of BIPOC teachers and staff

- e. Review tenure practices for greater equity opportunities
- 8. **Evaluate the work of campus School Resource Officers.** We are aware that LBUSD employs some SROs who are admired and who have been helpful in opening up conversations about identity on LBUSD campuses, along with other positive contributions to campus culture. However, given [systemic issues with policing](#), as well as the [disproportionate impacts](#) that students of color traditionally face from campus police, we ask that the district at least evaluate the role of these officers on campus and collect and implement suggestions for improvement. Suggestions for doing so include:
 - a. Survey students, staff, and families about experiences/perspectives on SROs. Publish results. Take action based on suggestions for improvement.
 - b. Conduct anti-racist bias training and de-escalation training specifically for SROs
 - c. Evaluate the district's long-term plan for SROs
- 9. **Implement robust processes for accountability, tracking, and transparency.**
 - a. Action Plan
 - i. As part of the district's anti-racist Action Plan, include transparent goals, metrics, and timelines for all actions and policies.
 - ii. Present the Action Plan at a community meeting for feedback
 - iii. Continuously re-evaluate and expand upon the school district's Action Plan based on progress, feedback, and new needs and resources. The Action Plan should be a living document that goes through multiple iterations over time.
 - b. Transparency and Accountability Report
 - i. Provide a publicly accessible annual or biannual Transparency and Accountability Report detailing progress. Hold public meetings for each report, and provide opportunities for community input
 - ii. Collect and make publicly available data (in individual schools and the district as a whole) that pertain to anti-racist work, including:
 - 1. Incidents of identity-based aggression, profiling, bias, discrimination, and other misconduct, and the steps taken to address these incidents.
 - 2. Demographics of student bodies, teachers, and staff (including levels of seniority and tenure)
 - 3. Demographics of student behavior reports (detentions, suspensions, etc.)
 - 4. Demographics of students in advanced vs. standard classes and programs
 - c. Create new fora for community engagement and feedback, centering BIPOC community members. Suggestions include:
 - i. Open lines of communication between BIPOC students, teachers, staff, families, and alumni and the administration of individual schools and the district. Seriously amplify, listen to, and act on their suggestions.
 - ii. Establish an LBUSD Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion/Anti-Racist Advisory Committee with students, teachers, and staff, including representatives of color who wish to join. This group could advise on discipline, staff diversification, curriculum, and other issues covered in this letter.
 - iii. Host regular town halls and/or other spaces for community members to discuss school-related issues of race and identity and give feedback to the district
 - iv. Keep alumni and community members informed of the school district's efforts through channels such as community fora, social media, and emails
 - d. Other suggestions include:
 - i. Hire/appoint a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion/Anti-Racist Lead to oversee this work across the district. Establish an adequate team to support the Lead.

- ii. Include independent reviews where possible of curricula, hiring process, administrative policy, racist incidents, etc. for improvement in anti-racist practices

10. Lead and connect with the broader Laguna Beach community, Orange County community, and beyond.

- a. Support anti-racist and anti-discrimination work in the broader Laguna Beach community
- b. Encourage and collaborate with surrounding school districts to pursue anti-racist action
- c. Seek to reduce inequities among school districts in Orange County and beyond, such as Board Clerk Carol Normandin's suggestion that LBUSD demand equitable funding for other school districts
- d. Consider long-term means of diversifying the student body, including evaluating the proof of residency policy
- e. Connect with advocacy groups and other organizations that do anti-racist work within educational environments and within the Laguna Beach/Orange County community to implement many of the above actions (see Action #5 for examples)

As a first step, **we recommend that the School Board convene an open meeting with the LBUSD community** for the sole purpose of discussing this letter and informing the district's anti-racist Action Plan. A well-advertised meeting would be an opportunity to hear from more voices including community members of color, to gather more testimonials and ideas, to expand upon the Actions listed in this letter, and to begin identifying resources, partners, and next steps.

LBUSD is one of the communities we hold dear, and this letter is coming from a place of respect and appreciation for the outstanding education we received and close bonds we formed as LBUSD students. It is also in this community that we were taught to speak up against inequality, and we honor that lesson by speaking up now. The truth is that LBUSD, despite its resources and well-deserved reputation in the county and state, did not prepare us to discuss our racial and socioeconomic identity and privilege, to grapple with the beauties and challenges of a diverse world, to understand the historical and ongoing systems that create injustice, and to fight that injustice. We must now reflect on how the district can improve.

We acknowledge that we ourselves have been complicit in racist behavior and systems as LBUSD students and afterward. For example, while this is not the first time many of us have discussed our lack of education about racism and privilege in LBUSD, it's the first time we are speaking up in this way. Our silence was wrong. We are acting now, and we want the LBUSD Board to act with us.

It is important to note that many of us are not experts on issues of racism and privilege. Nor are we experts on education policy; we do not know what power LBUSD has to implement all of these changes, especially given that this is a public school district. We understand that some of the Actions are in the hands of individual teachers, and that others, on the opposite end of the spectrum, may require much larger changes, perhaps even at the state level. We still expect the school district to foster a culture of anti-racism internally and to initiate and participate in external activism.

We also know that there are community members who will label this letter, and our intentions overall, as biased or overly political. Perhaps you fear backlash from these voices. While we do not pretend that taking action is simple or straightforward, or that everyone will always agree on the right way to do it, we know that inaction is not an option.

It is for these reasons that we have listed multiple suggestions for carrying out the above Actions. If there is an Action or suggestion that is not feasible to carry out or that the school district does not agree with, that is no excuse

to dismiss the intention behind the suggestion and not find an alternative means of fulfilling it, much less to dismiss the list as a whole. School districts across the nation, including in Orange County, are adopting many of the Actions proposed in this letter; we can too.

This letter is necessarily incomplete, because being anti-racist is a process, not an end, and because we do not have all the solutions. Our proposed actions are just a starting point in a long and evolving journey. We hope that this letter is a catalyst for not only anti-racist action, but also for combating other forms of bigotry and discrimination that are embedded in our school district, city, and county. This includes discrimination on the basis of sexuality, gender identity, religion, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, disability, and more. Indeed, LBUSD must take an [intersectional perspective](#) in its action and consider how these different identities overlap.

We recognize that the changes we are asking for require great effort and resources. But we are a well-resourced school district--not just in financial terms, but also in terms of spirit, innovation, care, and sense of community. We are positive that change can happen.

As alumni, we commit to continuously learning and acting despite uncertainty. We commit to staying involved in this effort and contributing our time, energy, and resources where possible to work with the school district. Though we are not experts, we do bring different experiences and knowledge sets to the table. We can also help identify resources and engage our own connections, including a wide network of LBUSD alumni. That said, the school district cannot rely on us to thoroughly inform every step of this journey; the district, with its resources and power, must take responsibility and lead the way.

With appreciation for the past and hope for the future, we call on the Board, administration, teachers, and staff of LBUSD to start this journey now.

Sincerely,

LBUSD Alumni and Community Members (Full list of signatories below)

SIGNATORIES:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Aviva Meyers, '15 | 14. Alex Rounaghi, '16 | 26. Olivia Vera, '17 |
| 2. Emma Barker, '14 | 15. Natalie Shutts, '16 | 27. Chloe Jackson, '15 |
| 3. Kara Dunne-Dombrink, '16 | 16. Nathaniel Colburn, '14 | 28. Luke Colburn, '18 |
| 4. Elle Mahdavi, '16 | 17. Annie Brown, '15 | 29. Isabella Peterson, '20 |
| 5. Hana Gallego, '15 | 18. Aaron Alcouloumre, '15 | 30. Claire Black, '17 |
| 6. Alina Pontius, '14 | 19. Sabrina Flagstad, '17 | 31. Bethany Houalla, '15 |
| 7. Kayla Baskevitch, '14 | 20. Traci Snow, Family of Student | 32. Jessica Rollins, '16 |
| 8. Zachary Korecki, Community Member | 21. Karin Klein, Family of Student | 33. Shelby Clark, '16 |
| 9. Caspian Brock, '15 | 22. Molly Cohn, '19 | 34. Camille Arredondo, '18 |
| 10. Hailey Ferguson, '15 | 23. Ellie Glade, '17 | 35. Josie Goson, '14 |
| 11. Maddy Kristensen, '16 | 24. Izzy Saunders, Current Student | 36. Morgan Falkowski, '20 |
| 12. Cameron Andersen, '16 | 25. Liam Duncan, '17 | 37. Katie Rollins, '19 |
| 13. Charlotte McManus, '15 | | 38. Lisa Rollins, '86 |
| | | 39. Charlie Hoffs, '18 |
| | | 40. Katie McCombs, '16 |
| | | 41. Danielle Conklin, '17 |

42. Liam Christiansen, '16
43. Heather Hanson,
Community Member
44. Michael Hutson,
Community Member
45. Hailey Sophia
Castuera, '13
46. Katie Hynson, '15
47. Zoe Bowman, '18
48. Ava Pacheco, '17
49. Eduardo Barraza, '16
50. Hannali Greene, '21
51. Juliet Runyon,
Community Member
52. Noah Patillo, '14
53. Audrey Curits, '14
54. Sereena Hoso, '21
55. Alessi Ayvaz, '21
56. Nicholas Barker,
Family of Student
57. Shelby Wolff, '21
58. Shylee Roohian, '22
59. Hannah Stalker, '14
60. Fatima Blanco, '21
61. Cloe Goria, '18
62. Elise Waldow, '15
63. Sophia Anderson, '14
64. Maya Dunne, Family
of Student
65. Andrew Landsiedel,
'14
66. Camerson Tipton, '16
67. Noah Schucking, '17
68. James Alonso, '17
69. Alison Mikkor, Family
of Student
70. Barrett Thornton, '14
71. Allie Ricci-Fisher, '15
72. Adrian Ricci-Fisher,
'21
73. Orin Neufeld, Family
of Student
74. Tatum Moore, '14
75. Megan McBean, '15
76. Dylan Rouda, '15
77. Makenna Pitz, '14
78. Kaitlan Armstrong, '16
79. Tyler Levine, Alum
80. Faron Stalker, '13
81. Zane Fair, '15
82. Victoria Bush, '15
83. John Fast, '16
84. Dylan Bush, '13
85. Ben Kieswetter, '16
86. Bella Mullin, '21
87. Riley Gough, '19
88. Kate Snyder, Family of
Student
89. Cassidy Morgan, '22
90. Kaela Parker, '21
91. Brooklyn Bryan, '21
92. Johanna Legault, '21
93. Flynn Wheaton, '22
94. Zoe Duncan, '24
95. Nikki Wagner, '24
96. Madison Duong, '23
97. Elleni Solomon, '20
98. Sydney Schaefgen, '21
99. Jesus Limon, '22
100. Victoria Gunell, '15
101. Catherine Yindfa, '13
102. Axl Dominguez, '13
103. James Fast, '15
104. Alex Megarit, '19
105. Sarah Basic, '12
106. Karina Torbensen, '17
107. Colette Reed, '20
108. Sevana Dvorak, '13
109. Samer Alkateb, '12
110. Joseph Hovanesian, '21
111. Rachel Basic, '09
112. Jade Hamilton, '19
113. Johnathon Sanchez, '13
114. Griffin Kristensen,
Current Student
115. Cindy Basic, Family of
Student
116. Mike Basic, Family of
Student
117. Kenji Lee, '15
118. Dana Armstrong, '14
119. Natalie Selin, '16
120. Rachel Macdonald, '10
121. Sarah E. Vogel, Family
of Student
122. Eva Smith, '15
123. Melanie Moore, '21
124. Madeline Shirley, '13
125. Brisa Campos, '23
126. Isabela Reichel, '23
127. Lynea Rodriguez,
Family of Student
128. Analisa Gaff, '22
129. Kelly Smith, '19
130. Fernando Barraza, '19
131. Maya Gallego, '21
132. Taylor Cunningham,
'16
133. Sophie Black, '21
134. Jacob Kuiper, '21
135. Keegan Cooper, '24
136. Tiffany Shafstall,
Community Member
137. Antonia Saturday,
Community Member
138. Alexandra Keyser, '22
139. Alex Gascoine, '15
140. Tori Bachmann, '24
141. Nadia
Demilly-Otteson, '14
142. Nicole Doiron, '14
143. Brooke Werleman,
Alum
144. Chrissie Fisher, Family
of Student
145. Kiki Hatch, '11
146. Robyn Freeman,
Family of Student
147. Myles Freeman, '23
148. Amy Neufeld, Family
of Student
149. Laura Silver, Teacher
150. Kathleen Smith Barker,
Family of Student
151. Barbara Odanaka,
Community Member
152. Donald Freeman,
Family of Student
153. Elizabeth Borkowski,
Family of Student
154. Ruby Amodeo, '19
155. Julia Henry, '20
156. Dee Perry, Staff

157. Kristin Fast, Family of Student
158. Juan Carlos Gallego, Family of Student
159. Patty Tacklind, Family of Student
160. Stephanie Quarles, Family of Student
161. Talya Meyers, '01
162. Diego Lapayese-Calderón, '21
163. Carlo Lapayese-Calderón, '23
164. Marco Lapayese-Calderón, Current Student
165. Yvette Lapayese, Family of Student
166. Candace Kristensen, Family of Student
167. Olivia Roberts, '15
168. Lila Boschet, '15
169. Kendall Clark, '82
170. Katyn Ott, '15
171. Paul-Michel Donahie, '14
172. Evan Barker, '16
173. Sydney Sanders, Alum
174. Jeffrey Rosenthal, Alum
175. Gregory James Tornquist, Family of Student
176. Aaron Tornquist, Family of Student
177. Amy Anne Tornquist, Family of Student
178. Eva Fast, '22
179. Jamie Duncan, '14
180. Brenna Merchant, '15
181. Bianca Brock, '18
182. Sofia Airey, '18
183. Eilidh Stalker, '18
184. Christine Edit, '16
185. Jillian Goson, '20
186. Ben Neufeld, '23
187. Tamara Wong, Teacher
188. Julia Cox-Kruger, '16
189. Peirce Ramirez, Community Member
190. Daisy Jeffers, '18
191. Delaney Basile, '18
192. Olivia Eidt, '18
193. George Basile, '79
194. Katherine Basile-Fero, '76
195. Shanta Chevli, '76
196. Denise Erdag Meena, '76
197. Trigg Garner, '93
198. Tara Thompson, '97
199. Kelly Smith, '19
200. Leslie Christen, '96
201. Natti Nunn, '21
202. Stacey Harrington, '24
203. Danna Wright, Family of Student
204. Reggie Schlatter, Family of Student
205. Rachel Gandin Mark, '96
206. Ethan Schlatter, '15
207. Connor Basile, '16
208. Jeff Spurlock, '81
209. Ashley Englander, '96
210. Monica Silva-McCusker, Family of Student
211. Eric Silva, '21
212. Julianne Silva, '24
213. Celine Macmillan, Family of Student
214. Kate Motherway, '23
215. Emilie Judd, Family of Student
216. Coleman Judd, '23
217. Jo Allen, Family of Student
218. Megan Williams, '16
219. Samantha Savage Breit, Family of Student
220. Chris Tebbutt, Family of Student
221. Lauren Manthripagada, Community Member
222. Estella G LoFranco, '18
223. Dominique Willette, '13
224. Albert Sarabia, Family of Student
225. Rhian Williams, '18
226. Mimi Fong Andringa, Family of Student
227. Lori Levine, Family of Student
228. Barbara Tang, Family of Student
229. Lisa Reyes, Community Member
230. Armando Barraza, '13
231. Chloe Mansour, '13
232. Lisa Mansour, Family of Student
233. Isabel Mansour, Family of Student
234. Aubrey McMichael, Community Member
235. Tyrone Borelli, Community Member
236. Sally Sanders, Community Member
237. Andrea Spero, Community Member
238. Jennifer Nudleman, Family of Student
239. Edward Spencer, Family of Student
240. Robert Ardell, Family of Student
241. Sheri Morgan, Family of Student
242. Bror Andringa, Family of Student
243. Kelly Smith, '19
244. Eliyah Dawson, '21
245. Amanda Walker, '96
246. Jean Ardell, Community Member
247. Carmen Jorgenson, Family of Student

248. Vicki Karr, Former LBUSD Teacher	253. Harpal Sadhal, Family of Student	258. Alison Crowley, '08
249. Kelly Osborne, Family of Student	254. Peggy Wolff, Board Member & Family of Student	259. Julie Silva, '24
250. Louise Cain, Family of Student	255. Brooke Bunn, '17	260. Kierny Gittins, '24
251. Caroline Schneider, Family of Student	256. Melissa Brunicardi, Family of Student	261. Morgan Falkowski, '20
252. Shaheen Sheik-Sadhal, Family of Student	257. Barbara Baird Crowley, Family of Student	262. Anne Duncan, Family of Student

TESTIMONIALS:

1. "2012-13 School Year Pep Rally: At the time I was a Junior at LBHS. Pep Rallies were a place to have fun and share school spirit. Instead, a Student showed up with KKK looking attire and chants began yelling "white is right." Now, I am sure many others will share this in their testimonial. I thought it would be important to share once more. This event was disgusting and the High School didn't step up and speak about this horrible racist action and chant. Okay... maybe for one day. Changed the color structure of the pep rallies, maybe suspended the student for 2 days and that is about it. The lack of acknowledgement and action on this matter by Laguna Beach High School is just a small percentage of what is wrong with the lack of educating this district/students about cultures and teaching the acceptance of all humans." - **Audrey Curtis, LBHS '14**
2. "Before I went to the high school there was a racial slur act that involved watermelons and I thought it was the most disgusting thing I have ever heard of. Other than that I believe the school is welcoming and a safe place to be." - **Taylor Halvorson, LBHS '21**
3. "It's always difficult for me to write about racism in LBUSD. On the one hand, I believe that our school culture is kind and welcoming, especially in comparison to the stories I've heard from many other school districts. As a student, I did not view bullying or social hierarchies as major problems in LBUSD schools. I was also fortunate to have many wonderful teachers who not only gifted me with a meaningful education, but also fostered positive and caring classroom communities. On the other hand, I know that racism, misogyny, homophobia, and other forms of bigotry were part of the daily interactions of community members. I make no claim about which of these sides of LBUSD culture outweighs the other; I have no data to support the relative pervasiveness of everyday racism in the district. I can only tell you what I witnessed.

I witnessed classmates on several occasions use the n-word with each other at Thurston and LBHS. I witnessed, again on multiple occasions, people call the non-Western food that a classmate of color brought to school "gross", sometimes to this classmate's face, sometimes behind their back. I witnessed people making jokes that an Asian student was academically successful "because...you know" and pulling the outer corners of their eyes with their fingertips. It may be that these incidents were borne of ignorance rather than malice; but we should all know by now that ignorance is precisely what we need to fight, and that ignorance also breeds malice.

I witnessed the KKK robes at the LBHS pep assembly in 2012 like many others. I also witnessed several people after the assembly say that they "didn't see why it was a big deal" and "it was pretty funny." I myself said I didn't think it deserved serious repercussions, that it was clearly a stupid joke meant to provoke ire, and it would only feed the perpetrator's narrative if it was seriously dealt with. I was ignorant. For 2 years at LBHS I witnessed a teacher make racist comments. He called the one East Asian student in the class "Ching Chong Chang" and made stereotypical comments about Hispanic people. (He also said "All you white girls look the same to me" and "Hispanic girls put so much more effort into their appearances and look so much nicer than white girls".) A student in class who perpetrated one of the racist

incidents described above egged him on; the teacher and this student fed off of each other. When I directly challenged the things he said—though the truth is my reaction (and others’) was far more commonly to shake my head and say nothing—he told me that I had an attitude that would get me in trouble someday. I always thought that he said these things just to push our buttons, and it seemed that other students and teachers also believed he “didn’t really mean it.” And maybe he didn’t, but is that ANY kind of excuse?? Years later I saw on his social media page that he posted anti-Black content, e.g. on Susan Rice: “This woman [is] uneducated to the hilt! She needs to realize that she was not in the hood or in her crib and therefore speak English correctly[...]This is just another example of the people with whom Obama surrounded himself; Blacks who were off the streets and tried to pretend they were sufficiently intelligent enough for their positions.” So maybe he did really mean it. Complaints were brought to the LBHS principal/administration against this teacher multiple times, but he never faced repercussions; he continued his same behavior until he retired, after a total of 40 years in the district.

I’m sure I witnessed other incidents, but these are the ones I clearly remember. There are also incidents that I did not witness but have heard about: over the years, including in recent months, classmates have directly told me or posted on social media about racism in LBUSD that they were the victims of or that they perpetrated. It is not my place to tell their stories, and it is not their duty to submit their stories to this letter. But just because they choose not to share these stories here, does not mean they didn’t happen.” - **Aviva Meyers, LBHS ’15**

4. “Racism, antisemitism, and homophobia were some of the most blatant forms of white supremacist culture that I witnessed during my years at Thurston and LBHS. I remember kids gathering at lunch in middle school chanting “no on 8, keep it straight” in reference to the 2008 proposition 8 bill on gay marriage. I remember hearing the n-word constantly in jokes at school. Being Jewish I was constantly targeted. For all of middle school and the beginning years of high school I was referred to as Jew or Jew boy every single day on multiple times a day. When we had to take our shoes off and leave them in a pile in the gym in PE, people would point and say looks it’s like your ancestors. When we baked cinnamon rolls in home ec, jokes were made about putting jews in the ovens. If you look at my year books back then, they’re covered in swastikas, jokes about hitler, and the word Jew, few and far between were there even references to my actual name. I denied for years that this had any impact on me, trying to believe these were just jokes kids made and I shouldn’t take them personally. It hasn’t been until very recently that I’ve started to unravel and trace the root of unhealthy coping mechanisms I’ve developed in my daily life as a result of having to learn to compartmentalize the experiences I had day after day throughout some of the most formative years of my life. (I can also add photos of my yearbook if that helps, just would like to redact people’s names from it.)” - **Aaron Alcouloumre, LBHS ’15**
5. “One of my best friends throughout elementary to high school was of middle-eastern heritage, and I remember them telling me that people would make comments to them about terrorism and would even mistake them for other kids of middle-eastern descent. I think we often played it off as ignorance, but looking back, it truly was an instance of racism that should have been addressed openly. Additionally, having played sports throughout high school, there were multiple instances of racism in name-calling and rivalry that were unacceptable.. I usually only heard about the comments from other sports players, but they should have been addressed directly by our coaches, and I regret not coming forward about hearing about it myself. For example, I know one player had told an opposing team member to go back to the border or one of my coaches called an opposing player an “Amazonian woman.” I also remember hearing that the men’s water polo team had thrown spare change at an opposing team they knew to be from a lower-income area, saying something like they should take a bus back home. Of course, this problem is larger than just our school as other teams would also use discriminatory words to us — I remember another team calling my fellow player something racially discriminatory for her looking Asian. Because sports are so competitive, especially in high school, I think this often becomes an area where racism is present, and we must change that. We must address these biases and racist notions in our district and others in OC.” - **Alum, LBHS ’16**

6. "Others have mentioned this, but the pep assembly chants and the student who wore the KKK outfit to the pep assembly stands out as the most blatantly racist incidents that I witnessed while in LBUSD. As other commenters have said, I too was ignorant: I was sheltered by the immense privileges that I had as a white student growing up in Laguna Beach, and these privileges allowed me to be unaware of the immense histories of racism and racial violence perpetuated in the United States. For example, when my classmates started chanting "white is right!" and "white power" during our junior year pep rallies, my ignorance and sheltered upbringing allowed me to think that they were purely referring to our junior class spirit color (white), and not at all referencing race. As an adult, it feels unfathomable that I was this sheltered and ignorant of racism, but it's true- at the time, I had no idea these chants were related to race, until a friend pointed it out to me. Indeed, it was only when one of our classmates came to school dressed in a KKK outfit that I on my own became aware that there was a racial context to these "jokes", but even then, my privileges and ignorance allowed me to dismiss these events as "cries for attention" and the "actions of a stupid teenager who wants to be edgy" rather than instances of blatant racism. I dismissed other racist incidents that I witnessed with this same logic: students mimicking a South Asian student with an exaggerated accent, students using a modified racial slur as a nickname for a Latinx student, students using anti-Semitic language and nicknames for a Jewish student... during my time as an LBUSD student, I wrote all of these incidents off as jokes, perhaps in poor taste, but ultimately just jokes. Even as I witnessed these things, I remember thinking that racism was mostly a thing of the past. While I feel ashamed to admit these thoughts and reactions that I had as a teenager, I feel that is important to tell my story so that others can understand how the sheltering environment at LBUSD perpetuated my ignorance, and how this needs to change. While I can understand the impulse to shelter students, especially young children, from the "harsh realities" of our country and our world, ultimately, we are doing our community a disservice by not having these important discussions. Simply not talking about racism doesn't prevent racism at LBUSD- in fact, it perpetuates it. We need to integrate discussions of race, racial privilege, racism, and social justice into every level of education so that as a community we can become actively anti-racist, and so that incidents like the ones that I and other signatories have described, do not happen again. I wish that I could go back in time with the knowledge that I now have and stand against the racist incidents that occurred while I was a student. Since I can't, I am urging LBUSD that, going forward, we need to do much better." - **Kayla Baskevitch, LBHS '14**
7. "As a person of Middle Eastern descent, in many respects I have experienced white privilege, but my experience in LBUSD had made me feel distinctly Middle Eastern and different from my majority white peers. This feeling of being an "other" was felt as early as my first day at TOW. I was told by boys in my class that, due to my European sounding name, they were expecting a pretty blonde girl to arrive, but instead I did. As early as elementary school, I was told many times by my peers to straighten my frizzy, curly hair and tend to my facial hair in order to appear prettier. This was not something I experienced in the elementary school that I transferred from, and that may be due to the fact that LBUSD was less diverse than my previous school district. At Thurston, when I was in sixth grade, a group of seventh graders on my bus who never talked to me before suddenly approached me to make jokes about my racial background, as they were learning about ancient Middle Eastern societies in history class. When I was in that seventh grade history class, another student made a joke about Islam, and the teacher scolded the student for making such a joke while "[I] was right there". Although the teacher's comment was made with good intentions, it was micro-aggressive in that the teacher assumed my religious affiliation (ignoring the diversity of religions in the Middle East) and implied that these jokes are offensive when they are said in front of the people who are the joke's subjects.
On two occasions since graduating LBHS, I have been mistaken for the only two other Middle Eastern, curly-haired girls from my grade. Both times, a white alumnus had insisted I was the person they mistook me for, and even after correcting them, they kept talking as if I was the other person. I had gone to school for at least 5-6 years with both of these alumni and had consistent classes throughout that time with at least

one of them. These instances showed to me how the lack of diversity in the school district fostered in students an inability to distinguish non-white people apart, even years after graduation.” - **Alum, LBHS '16**

8. “Growing up in Laguna Beach has been a great privilege but it has also been a place where nobody cares about anyone but themselves. There has always been constant racism and horrible bullying on campus, everyday. Many peers of mine still to this day think it is a funny joke to use racist words and remarks in their everyday life. The bullying I was put through while attending LBUSD schools was atrocious, and the racism towards our peers who weren’t white was even more disgusting. The trauma that this leaves people with is life threatening, and still to this day nothing has ever been done about it. I won’t go in detail about the things I have been through and the things I have witnessed because truthfully I don’t think I can stomach those times. If these things weren’t a true problem in the LBUSD schools, we wouldn’t be here today writing about them. There needs to be some change so that future generations don’t have to endure the same things we have. Nobody deserves this type of trauma.” - **Alum, LBHS '18**
9. “At TOW, I remember a mini-assembly (I think for fourth-graders) where a Native American woman presented about her tribe's culture, history, and customs. Students laughed at her when she explained certain customs. I remember she grew upset and told the students that their behavior was not ok, but I don't recall any teachers stepping in to support her, nor do I recall my teacher addressing what had happened when we returned to the classroom.” - **Alum**
10. “Although I left LBHS sophomore year to go to private school across the country, I still would hear about things going on back home. During 10 years in the LBUSD racism and bullying was almost an every day thing that nobody thought twice about. I think most of us can say we have made an immature mistake in our years of school, but for a lot of people acts of racism weren’t just innocent mistakes. When I was at school on the east coast I heard about an act of racism, or what you would call a hate crime. This was committed by several boys in my grade to another boy of color in my grade. The disgust and shame that came with this story was truly unbearable. I believe that racists jokes and racist words being used on a daily basis without any form of discipline or awareness being brought to the issue is what leads people to think hate crimes like this are nothing. Growing up in this bubble of Laguna Beach, a majority white town in my opinion can be a curse. We are so privileged, but the privilege is what makes beyond think they are untouchable and can do whatever they please. This is a very common theme among my peers. For me leaving LBHS and experiencing culture and diversity at an international boarding school on the opposite coast has prepared and shaped me for many different things in life that LBUSD schools have not done for their students. School is supposed to be a safe place for learning and growing, but I believe LBUSD schools do not provide that for the students. I believe this is a major flaw that with the many resources we are blessed to have need to be addressed and fixed ASAP. There are many great things that come with being in the LBUSD school system, but that also comes with flaws.” - **Estella G. LoFranco, Alum**
11. “When discussing art instructional minutes class offerings at TOW, a teacher addressed the room by saying that she wanted to maintain the Art Masters program because she thought it was important that the students learn about "The Masters," unaware that her implicit bias equated Masters with, by and large, artists of European descent. What about, for example, African or Asian art masters?” - **Family of Student**

SUGGESTIONS