

To: The Oregon State Board of Education

March 24, 2015

Samuel Henry, Miranda Summer, Charles R. Martinez, Jr.,
Jerome Colonna, Angela Bowen and Anthony Veliz

Ladies and gentlemen of the board,

I am a retired reporter for *The Oregonian*, now a freelance writer and citizen activist, who previously testified before your board on the subject of your ban on school mascots that caricature and insult tribal peoples. I'd like to enter this written testimony into the official record of your continuing proceedings in this matter.

I've just watched and listened to a video and audio recording of the tribal-mascot discussion that took place during a recent Board of Education meeting. I was -- and am -- profoundly moved by what I heard, both from those who testified and those of you on the board who commented.

I very much appreciate the comments made by your chairman, vice-chairpersons and, especially, board member Angela Bowen. As an Oregonian, I'm fortunate and grateful to be served by such good, kind and intelligent people in our state government. I use that word, "government," deliberately because I think it's vital to remind ourselves from time to time that, in our democracy, governing doesn't mean exercising control so much as it means leading. The board's clear-minded, thoughtful, informed and wholly appropriate decision in aid of eliminating institutionalized racism in our public schools by banning from them all team-mascot words and images that demean tribal peoples and damage every child who attends those schools, is not merely to be commended, but celebrated as exemplary leadership.

The fact that the Oregon Legislature chose to override that decision makes me greatly ashamed of those legislators. It ought to shame them, as well -- at least enough to revisit their despicable action and reverse it. That's what should happen in the Oregon I'm proud to live and vote in, though I doubt that it will happen. What absolutely should not happen is for you to accede to the legislature's demand that you abet it in its cruelty. Creating any "workaround" aimed at putting this bad law into effect would make each of you complicit in the furtherance of racism and ineradicably stain your record of public service. I know you are struggling with the dilemma that the conflict between your decision and the legislature's action has put you in. I know you are striving both to do what's best for public education in our state and, at the same time, to obey the law its legislature has enacted. I also know, because I listened carefully to what you've said, that you understand the impossibility of doing both and the immorality of even attempting to do both.

So don't. Please. There comes a time in each of our lives when we have an opportunity to take a stand, put our principles to work and actively oppose evil. Racism is evil. However challenging it may be for you to oppose this racist law, it must be firmly, openly and publicly opposed. For the sake of Oregon's tribal peoples and their children, for *all* children, for Oregon, for America and for the sake of your own self-respect and the high public regard you've achieved and deserve, I urge and trust you, as leaders, to do what you know is right.

Sincerely,

Steven Amick

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