

October 22, 2021

Superintendent Renee Hill & the Board of Education
Riverside Unified School District
3380 14th Street
Riverside, CA 92501

In the Matter of: Mandating Indigenous Cultural Competency Training

Dear Superintendent Hill,

We write to you on behalf of OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates (“OCA”), a national social justice nonprofit dedicated to empowering Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. Our organization echoes the National Urban Indian Family Coalition, the Resurgence Practitioner Network, Illuminatives, as well as leaders of our Orange County chapter on the urgent need for Indigenous cultural competency trainings for staff at the Riverside Unified School District.

As you know well, John W. North High School teacher Candace Reed was filmed “war hooping and tomahawk chopping” around her classroom while wearing a fake headdress on October 20, 2021. We applaud your district’s quick decision to suspend Ms. Reed, your denunciation of her unacceptable conduct, and the announcement that you will investigate the incident. We also urge you to take proactive measures to prevent future occurrences, such as by taking this opportunity to educate your students about Indigenous histories and culture, in addition to mandating Indigenous cultural competency trainings across your administrative and educator levels.

Riverside’s population is comprised of 7.6% Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, 1.9% American Indian or Alaska Native, 7.3% Black or African American, and 50% Hispanic or Latino (US Census Bureau 2019). It is critical that your district commits to upholding its values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This further implies a commitment to creating a learning environment in which students, and faculty, of marginalized identities do not experience hate incidents. We hope that you will set an example for districts across the country in combating racism and discrimination in all their forms.

Sincerely,



Linda Ng
OCA National President



Thu Nguyen
OCA Deputy Executive Director