



Date: August 23, 2020

To: SDUSD Name Change Committee and Board of Education  
From: Dr. Erica Renfree—Principal, Junipero Serra High School

Dear Name Change Committee and Board of Education:

“Ordinary people with extraordinary vision can redeem the soul of America by getting in what I call **good trouble, necessary trouble**,” the late Rep. John Lewis once spoke. He reminded the nation that we are capable of creating the sort of “good trouble” necessary to move our country forward. It is in that spirit that I bring this petition forward to you for consideration to change the name, mascot, and school colors of Junipero Serra High School.

This road has been taxing, not only on the young women who started inquiring with the community about wanting a change, but for myself as the leader of the community. However, we are pleased with the outcome and deem it “good trouble.”

Many actions were taken throughout the last three months in order to engage the community. This list is not exhaustive:

1. Town Hall Meeting presenting information and resources for the community to do their own research which totaled over 20 hours.
2. Unofficial polling supporting a name, mascot, and color change.
3. A petition garnering well over 1200 signature in favor of change.
4. A comprehensive website of resources.
5. Items on the ballots generated from the town halls and suggestions predominantly from students.
6. Ballots that included not only current staff, students, and parents, but also alumni as old as the original graduating class as seen by 1979 graduate Artie Ojeda who featured us on NBC 7.
7. Nationwide coverage causing people from all over the country to weigh in.
8. Post on Nextdoor App allowing for anyone in the community to comment.

We have met the criteria for screening a school and facility name according to Administrative Procedure 3300 of the San Diego Unified School District. We are putting forward all the names/suggestions in the data per the procedure section D (a-b). The community overwhelmingly signed a petition to change the name, mascot and colors of our school; while the mascot and colors is not specifically called out in the procedure, we believe this committee should be the governing body over those issues and implore you to ask the district to take that responsibility so as not to have conflicts of interest occur with any school or community when making these types of decisions. The names the data reflects show four options; and according to Procedure 3300 in order of sections, the choices are as follows:

- Section 4 (a) Schools and facilities may be named after a location or after a person or persons. The community of Junipero Serra High School (based on the data) have chosen

two names which you can see were options based on location. In order of votes and feedback, they are the following:

- **Canyon Hills High School.** This name was community generated due to the location of the school and is a combination of several factors:
  - Canyon: the geographical landscape of Tierrasanta and Murphy Canyon neighborhoods and;
  - Hills: Tierrasanta as a whole is known as "The Island in the Hills." This name was widely chosen because not only does it unite the two neighborhoods in Tierrasanta it also doesn't hold one above another while paying tribute to the geographical landscape.
- **Tierra Canyon High School:** This name came from the community as well as there are youth sports teams with this name and it combines the similar variables as the previous suggested name in that it unites the two communities and also the geographical landscape.
- **Junipero Serra High School (keep the name the same):** Though it came in last, I decided to add it for data and it was the fourth choice of the community. The reason for this name is explained below (as that is called out very specifically according to the procedure) as required since we would be switching from a person name to a location name.
- Section 4 (b) In naming a school after a person, primary consideration should be given to individuals who have made significant contribution to education in the community, the state, or the nation. In addition to societal contribution, the moral character of the individual must be considered.
  - The community has chosen dropping Junipero Serra High School and changing the name to only "Serra High School." While in the naming committee's opinion this may not qualify as a name change it does in the eyes of the community and we leave the decision up for you to decide per procedure. Data is included for evidence of such choice. It must also be noted that the section 4(c) states the following: recognizing that the ethnic and cultural composition of a local school community will change, and that names will be permanent, the name selected should have broad acceptance in a multicultural society.
  - Junipero Serra's contribution to the State of California is widely viewed and publicized but has recently come under controversy as Spanish colonialism has been studied; he is also a controversial figure amongst LatinX citizens. Nonetheless he has been canonized as a saint only recently in the Christian religion based on his missions, with a prominent focus on bringing Christianity to the new world. Those that were converted include those that lived in Southern California along with Native Americans the primary group of citizens that were impacted. We ask the board do its own research on the topic and decide if just dropping "Junipero" from the name is enough to qualify for a name change noting that over the years as a San Diego School and district our ethnic and cultural composition of Junipero Serra High has changed and become one of the most diverse schools in the district. Our school is comprised of a third Tierrasanta residents (where we are located) which is predominantly Caucasian, a third-

Murphy Canyon residences which is the largest military housing installation in the world bringing a very diverse population from all over the country, and a third City Heights residents composed predominantly of LatinX students. Some may argue that Junipero Serra High School is not a Christian school but a public school and therefore should not be named after a religious person as there is a separation of church and state in this country. Let it also be noted that the Board of Education in Daly City is also investigating whether or not to change the name of the Junipero Serra High School there as well.

I leave the decision to drop the "Junipero" from the Junipero Serra High School name in the hands of the Board for consideration based on its recent board initiatives and to decide if it is enough to stop the correlation as the community per the petition said they wanted a name change.

In this packet you will see that we have met also all the requirements on the single page "Approval Process for Facility Naming" document. In order:

1. The petition stating the interest in a name change.
2. This letter serves as the requestor (myself) stating approval for name change based on the data and work lead by the students.
3. Not applicable as name is not of a present person deceased in need of descendant requirement of approval.
4. Not applicable as we have agreed to not name the school Junipero Serra High School therefore a biography on him is not needed though in only dropping "Junipero" due to the controversy; we ask the Board do their own research so as not to bias the board on his legacy with biased interpretations.
5. Junipero Serra is currently undergoing Prop M "whole site modernization" and in that a full repainting and construction of the school is to take place thus serving as almost no cost to the district in regards to facilities. The lettering/signage upon approval will go to SDUSD for design concept and signage as that has already been agreed upon per SDUSD project manager Saya Hadid and Kenneth Walker as it was already scheduled to happen with the Prop M project anyways so it will not be an additional private or public funding.
6. Please see the attached staff survey which shows the results of their opinions regarding the name.

In regards to the mascots and colors which is not currently spelled out in Admin Procedure 3300 the results are included but the choices deserve explanation.

**Mascots:** The mascots were generated over time as conversations developed with students. Many expressed interests in animals common to San Diego and it was encouraged that the mascot not be person based so as not having to repeat this process in future years as society changes. The mascots that ended up becoming ballot choices were also mascots that did not compete with other schools in athletics so as not to cause confusion during athletic contests. The choices are listed in order as chosen by the community for your consideration. Please see attached data as well.

They are:

- Rattlers (Rattlesnakes—San Diego based;
- Bobcats (San Diego Based).
- Bulldogs.
- Keep the mascot the same—Conquistadors.

**Colors:** Junipero Serra High School's colors has since its inception been brown and gold. This was chosen because in the 1970's brown and gold were Padres colors. Marketing brown and gold for the Padres at the time in the 1970's was not cost positive and in order to bring in more revenue the Padres subsequently switched colors. However, in a society that has come full circle, what is old is "new" and you can see what the Padres call "throwback jerseys" currently back in style. There has been constant dialog over the years and witnessed by those who have worked at Junipero Serra High School for 20 plus that the colors have been a topic of conversation. It was decided that if we were going to engage the community in the name and mascot conversation, we should have the same conversation about the colors not due to any negative connotation but to validate that the conversation had already been happening. The following color combinations for school colors came from the students and were generated and suggested based on the mascots coming forward. They are in order with the mascot list above and were voted on as a combination.

Rattlers—Red and black; grey and white complimentary colors

Bobcats—Blue and black, white and grey complimentary colors

Bulldogs—Red, gray and black; white complimentary color

Conquistadors—Brown and gold; black and white complimentary colors (current colors)

The above is listed in order of choice. Junipero Serra also brings forward that just as the Padres were unable at the time to sell merchandise that was brown and gold and generate revenue, Junipero Serra under several Administrators for a decade have been unable to generate any revenue in spirit gear, further showing the consensus that the colors we have are not widely approved for the student body and therefore showing school spirit in the community and throughout San Diego as other schools do is nonexistent. This is a significant revenue stream that Junipero Serra High School has no access to and would like to attempt to change per data attached.

San Diego Unified recently approved a board initiative that was groundbreaking on anti-racism. The goal was listed as the following "to build anti-racist and restorative communities where we collectively eliminate inequities, barriers, and disproportionalities that prevent students from receiving equitable access, experiences, and outcomes." I ask you refer to this initiative because our petition is for just that.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Erica Renfree, Ed.D.  
Principal  
Junipero Serra High School  
San Diego Unified School District



# Change Serra High School Name and Mascot!



1,231 have signed. Let's get to 1,500!



**Samer Naji** United States

I'm signing because... (optional)

Display my name and comment on this petition

[Sign this petition](#)

[Erica Renfree](#) started this petition to [Students](#) and [3 others](#)

This is the official petition (meaning the one I was told to put out) to change the name of Serra High School and School Mascot. I know students have one too and thats great! This one was created by me, Dr. Renfree based on conversations with others and students interest. As a public servant it is my duty to make sure schools stay relevant and serve ALL students. This is a very important step in the process. Please sign and show your support. Your signatures will be submitted with my application and the other petition to rename Serra to Tierrasanta High School. The mascot change we want your support too, so your signature is a sign of support for both. Details of mascot and school colors comes in a separate google form. Please take time to talk as families and participate. The time has come! I want to thank Charlotte for advocating for the student voices at Serra.



 [Charlotte Tails](#) started this petition to San Diego Unified School District and [2 others](#)

In light of movements toward racial justice, with many organizations and corporations changing the face of the brands, we demand the Serra High School's mascot be changed from the Conquistador.

This mascot is tied to violence and oppression of native populations, something the students and staff of Serra High in San Diego do not tolerate. We no longer wish to be represented by a figure as part of a colonialist group that has committed murder, torture, and rape, destroyed indigenous landmarks, cultures, and people in acts of physical and cultural genocide, and enslaved indigenous populations. In fact, the Spanish colonization of the Americas is recognized as "the first large-scale act of genocide of the modern era (1)."

By having the Conquistador as our mascot, our school glorifies these abuses and hides the true history of Spanish colonization, and the devastating impact it had on the native peoples of the Americas in the name of white supremacy and financial gain. Celebrating the image of a Conquistador at our school is ignorant, contributes to a culture of racism at our diverse school and city, and it is well past time for a change.

If approved by local school officials, we will choose to conduct a school-wide survey, in which all students will have the chance to nominate new mascot ideas that truly represent who we are and who we strive to be at Serra: accepting, strong, curious, and anti-racist.

2,101 have signed. Let's get to 2,500!




 [Grace Sesma](#) signed this petition

 [Shelby Staats](#) signed this petition

Oak Park, 91377  
United States



Display my name and comment on this petition

 [Sign this petition](#)

By signing, you accept Change.org's [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#), and agree to receive occasional emails about campaigns on Change.org. You can unsubscribe at any time.

# Change Junipero Serra High School to Tierrasanta High School



28 have signed. Let's get to 100!




 **Samer Naji** United States 

I'm signing because... (optional)



Display my name and comment on this petition

 **Sign this petition**

 **Senior Student** started this petition to [San Diego Unified School District](#) and [1 other](#)

This topic has been dragged out for too long. It should be a very simple change. Little discussion should have been made about the school name change. The name must be changed that was made clear and the majority agree with this. The option to keep the name should not be available anymore.

The school is located in Tierrasanta. The simplest and safest name to change to so there will never be any controversy about this again would be Tierrasanta High School. What is the issue with just going with the location of where the high school is based in. Examples of other schools that just use their location for the name - University City High School; La Jolla High School; Scripps Ranch High School, Otay Ranch High School, Sweetwater High School; Grossmont High School; Torrey Pines High School; Carlsbad High School; San Ysidro High School; etc. An admin said an issue with changing the name of the school to the location of where it is, is that it would not be including all the students because not all students live around the area. I think this is a very weak argument to not change the name to Tierrasanta. The most common way of naming a school is after its location. It doesn't have to do with where the students come from.

The school has already made some "official" options of names that the school may change to and those options weren't ever brought up before being made more public. The majority of people wanted the school to simply change to Tierrasanta High School. Where did Canyon Hills and Tierra Canyon come from? Why would we change to just Serra if the problem was the entire name? There shouldn't even be a voting process to change the name. It's a simple fix. Tierrasanta High School should be the new name of the school.

**From:** [Grace Sesma](#)  
**To:** [Naji Samer](#)  
**Cc:** [Kanap Kuahan](#); [Marten Cynthia](#)  
**Subject:** Renaming Junipero Serra High School  
**Date:** Thursday, January 28, 2021 5:35:46 PM

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<!--[if !vml]-->

**KANAP KUAHAN (TELL THE TRUTH) COALITION**

**E: [KanapKuahan@gmail.com](mailto:KanapKuahan@gmail.com)**

**FB & IG: Kanap Kuahan Coalition // Tell The Truth**

San Diego Unified School District

4100 Normal Street, Room 2231

San Diego, CA 92103

VIA EMAIL

Esteemed Board of Education,

It has come to the attention of the Kanap Kuahan Coalition that Junipero Serra High School is undergoing the process of a name change. Kanap Kuahan Coalition is a grassroots organizational collaborative, comprised of the Kumeyaay and Original Peoples Alliance, Union del Barrio, Tipey Joa Native Warriors, and American Indian Movement, Southern California.

Kanap Kuahan is a Kumeyaay phrase that translates to “Tell the Truth”, describing our collaborative effort to speak out in the absence of truthful representation of indigenous



history.

We appreciate the efforts of Emma and Charlotte Taila to initiate a process of restorative justice by promoting a campaign to change the school mascot. In Emma's own words, "[The mascot] represents Spanish colonialism and the brutal impact it had on Native Americans". We at Kanap Kuahan Coalition acknowledge the brutal impact it continues to have on the original peoples of this territory, one that is viscerally felt in the erasure of their voices from the very sensitive and pertinent discussion around the entire rebranding of Junipero Serra High School.

San Diego County is home to 19 federally recognized tribes, all of whom have suffered death, enslavement, rape, forced relocation, and dissociation from their linguistic and cultural practices at the hands of the Spanish military and the Mission system. It is an affront to the original stewards and caretakers of this land that we all live on and benefit from to name an educational institution after their oppressor, and furthermore the mascot of that institution after their murderer. After having carried this offense for so many years, it is imperative that the school board fully engage in restorative justice through the inclusion of Kumeyaay, Cupeño, Luiseño, and Payomkawichum voices. We encourage the school board, as representatives of the second largest school district in the State of California, to demonstrate ethical responsibility and goodwill towards indigenous nations by collaborating with tribal educational institutions such as the Kumeyaay Community College, Cupa Cultural Center, Barona Cultural Museum, and the Sycuan Cultural Center & Museum to provide input and perspective on the rebranding process of Junipero Serra High School.

Indigenous culture is a living entity, that thrives within San Diego County. Despite the great historical trauma experienced by local tribes, they continue to maintain language, ceremony and cultural practices with pride and excellence.

The rebranding of Junipero Serra High School is a teaching moment, and who better than the first teachers of this area to guide this process with honor and respect.

We at Kanap Kuahan Coalition can think of none more fitting, and submit our strong recommendation to collaborate with tribal leaders and educators moving forward.

Respectfully,

Grace Alvarez Sesma

on behalf of

Kanap Kuahan Coalition

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Grace Alvarez Sesma

P: (720) 363-6034

Indigenous Land of Birth: Kumiai

Indigenous Land of Residence: Kumeyaay

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers



# Human Relations Commission

September 14, 2020

Cindy Marten, Superintendent, San Diego Unified School District  
[cmarten@sandi.net](mailto:cmarten@sandi.net)

John Lee Evans, Board President, District A, San Diego Unified School District  
[johnleeevans@sandi.net](mailto:johnleeevans@sandi.net)

## **Re: Serra High School Name Change Request**

Dear Superintendent Marten and Board President Evans,

While these times have been challenging for our country in many ways, they also have illuminated the inequities that exist right at home in our San Diego community – especially as a result of our history as the historical site of the first missions of San Diego created by Father Junipero Serra.

Previously, amidst local and national protests of police brutality and systemic racism in America, the Human Relations Commission supported the removal of the school name Robert E. Lee from an elementary school in Paradise Hills. The San Diego Unified School District Board of Education unanimously voted to change the name and the school name was changed to Pacific View Leadership Elementary School on May 23, 2016.

We come to you with a similar request today. Like the statues we see displayed across San Diego, in California and across the United States, the names of public places, streets, and schools send messages to our children about what we value most as a society. When those names reflect our broken and racist past, they also perpetuate the hurt intimately woven into this past. When our public schools are named after individuals who advanced slavery, systemic racism, and genocide and we allow those names to remain on school property, we implicitly endorse their values as our own. This is no longer acceptable.

It is time to change school names and mascots that memorialize religious and confederate leaders or sympathizers and all whose names supported and stained our history. As with the confederate names, using the name of Father Junipero Serra for school names and symbols has a traumatizing impact on students, families, teachers, and staff of all backgrounds.

The financial costs of changing school names are minimal compared to the generations that suffered through, the slavery and genocide of our Native Americans, American slavery, the Confederacy, the Jim Crow era, massive resistance, and contemporary manifestation of systemic racism, like the school to prison pipeline.

Recognizing the harmful impact these school names have on our children, we are in support of those concerned citizens of San Diego who are requesting the name change of Serra High School and its mascot, the conquistadors, which also symbolizes a negative and hurtful history.

We are calling on school boards to evaluate the history behind school names. Now is the time to change them to reflect the inclusive, diverse, and welcoming school community every child deserves, and that we, as leaders of San Diego, have a civic duty to foster. We look forward to working with each of you to create a San Diego, that is reflective of the values California now holds most true.

On behalf of the City of San Diego Human Relations Commissions, we ask for your support in the name change of Serra High School and its mascot.

Sincerely,

Shana Hazan  
Chair, San Diego Human Relations Commission

Godwin Hilga  
Commissioner, San Diego Human Relations Commission

Cc: Ann O'Leary, Chief of Staff, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom  
Mayor Kevin Faulconer  
Council President Georgette Gomez and Members of City Council



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Date: August 26, 2020

To: SDUSD Name Change Committee and Board of Education  
From:

Dear Name Change Committee and Board of Education,

My name is Kristina Hepburn and I am the current Serra High School Foundation President. My youngest child is a student at Junipero Serra High School as a part of the 2023 class. I also have a child who was part of the 2018 graduating class. My family and I have lived in the community of Tierrasanta since 1999. While my children were attending Tierrasanta schools I also served as president of the Tierrasanta Elementary School Foundation and DePortola Middle School Foundation.

Many actions were taken throughout the last three months in order to engage the community. This list is not exhaustive:

1. Town Hall Meeting presenting information and resources for the community to do their own research which totaled over 20 hours.
2. Unofficial polling supporting a name, mascot, and color change.
3. A petition garnering well over 1200 signature in favor of change.
4. A comprehensive website of resources
5. Items on the ballots generated from the town halls and suggestions predominantly from students
6. Ballots that included not only current staff, students, and parents but alumni as old as the original graduating class as seen by 1979 graduate Artie Ojeda who featured us on NBC 7.
7. Nationwide coverage as well causing people from all over the country to weigh in.
8. Post on Next Door App allowing for anyone in the community to comment.

As a parent of a current student and graduate of Junipero Serra High School, I witnessed an outreach for both of their input regarding the above items as well as my input as a current parent. As a community member I also was very impressed with the outreach to the alumni from graduating classes in the 1980's all the way to the graduating of 2020. I spoke to many alumni who live in the community and outside of the community who had the ability to submit a ballot/vote on the name, mascot and school color change. I feel a huge effort was made by the current administration of Junipero Serra High School to include all interested parties on this topic and submit a ballot.

Thank you,  
Kristina Hepburn  
Serra High School Foundation - President





Date: August 26, 2020

To: SDUSD Name Change Committee and Board of Education  
From:

Dear Name Change Committee and Board of Education,

My name is Joe Schmidt. I am a Serra High School alumni and I've been the ASB Advisor at Serra for 15 years.

Many actions were taken throughout the last three months in order to engage the community. This list is not exhaustive:

1. Town Hall Meeting presenting information and resources for the community to do their own research which totaled over 20 hours.
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3. A petition garnering well over 1200 signature in favor of change.
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5. Items on the ballots generated from the town halls and suggestions predominantly from students
6. Ballots that included not only current staff, students, and parents but alumni as old as the original graduating class as seen by 1979 graduate Artie Ojeda who featured us on NBC 7.
7. Nationwide coverage as well causing people from all over the country to weigh in.
8. Post on Next Door App allowing for anyone in the community to comment.

I witnessed the process and can confirm that it was conducted fairly and transparently. The process was handled in a professional manner from start to end with input from all stakeholders.



Joe Schmidt  
ASB Advisor

**From:** [William Swank](#)  
**To:** [Naji Samer](#); [CARLOS BATTLE](#); [johnaa](#); [Carlee Battle](#)  
**Subject:** Johnny Ritchey, The Jackie Robinson of the Pacific Coast League"  
**Date:** Sunday, August 30, 2020 11:41:02 AM

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Hi Naji,

I hope you are well during this seemingly endless pandemic. The school district is dealing with important issues, so I know you are very busy...

Last Thursday, the San Diego Padres hosted a group of African-American community members to watch a baseball game from 15-stories above Petco Park in the "Ultimate Sky Box."

Laila Williams from San Diego High School, who received the 2020 \$5,000 Johnny Ritchey Padres Scholarship, was able to meet and visit with members of Johnny's family including his granddaughter, Carlee Battle, and her father, Carlos Battle.

During our time together, Carlos mentioned the controversy about renaming Serra High School.

He explained that along with his wife, Johnaa, and their daughter, Carlee, they would like the school board to consider re-naming Serra High School after Johnaa's father, hometown hero and African-American baseball pioneer Johnny Ritchey.

For more information about Johnny, please read these articles written by MLB writer A.J. Cassavell and MiBL writer Josh Jackson.

[Johnny Ritchey the Jackie Robinson of PCL | MLB.com](https://www.mlb.com/news/johnny-ritchey-the-jackie-robinson-of-pcl)[https://www.mlb.com > news > johnny-ritchey-the-jackie-robinson-of-pcl](https://www.mlb.com/news/johnny-ritchey-the-jackie-robinson-of-pcl)

[John Ritchey broke PCL color barrier with hometown ... - MiLB.com](https://www.milb.com/news/john-ritchey-broke-pcl-color-barrier-with-hometown-...)[https://www.milb.com > news > john-ritchey-broke-pcl-color-barrier-with-...](https://www.milb.com/news/john-ritchey-broke-pcl-color-barrier-with-...)

You can click on the link below for additional information about Johnny on Ken Kramer's TV show, "About San Diego." The segment about Johnny begins approximately 11 minutes into the video.

[Ken Kramer's About San Diego | Season 1 | Episode 13 - Thursday ...](https://www.pbs.org/ken-kramers-about-san-diego-thursday-apr-22-2010)[https://www.pbs.org > ken-kramers-about-san-diego-thursday-apr-22-2010](https://www.pbs.org/ken-kramers-about-san-diego-thursday-apr-22-2010)

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Bill Swank  
Baseball Historian

**From:** [CARLOS BATTLE](#)  
**To:** [Naji Samer](#); [William Swank](#); [johnaa](#); [Carlee Battle](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Johnny Ritchey, The Jackie Robinson of the Pacific Coast League"  
**Date:** Tuesday, September 1, 2020 11:43:00 AM

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Bill, I could not have said it better. Just Monday I was on the computer doing research I read about the two young ladies that spear headed this quest and the Principals comments were all on point. Thank you for cutting to the chase and thank you Mr.Naji for passing Mr.Swanks email up the proper channels.

Best Regards

Carlos Battle

On August 31, 2020 at 6:38 PM Naji Samer <[snaji@sandi.net](mailto:snaji@sandi.net)> wrote:

Hi Bill,

Very interesting idea! I understand a community process is currently underway, led by Serra HS Principal, but a formal proposal has not been submitted yet. I'll submit this to Serra's principal for her consideration, and to the district's Name Change Committee for their consideration, if a formal proposal to rename Serra is received.

Kind regards,

Samer Naji

Facilities Communication Supervisor

San Diego Unified School District

O: (619) 725-7747

C: (619) 548-3388

[SNaji@sandi.net](mailto:SNaji@sandi.net)

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**From:** William Swank <[wgsawk@gmail.com](mailto:wgsawk@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Sunday, August 30, 2020 11:41 AM

**To:** Naji Samer <[snaji@sandi.net](mailto:snaji@sandi.net)>; CARLOS BATTLE <[Cbattle5@cox.net](mailto:Cbattle5@cox.net)>; johnaa <[Jbattle95@cox.net](mailto:Jbattle95@cox.net)>; Carlee Battle <[carlee\\_battle@yahoo.com](mailto:carlee_battle@yahoo.com)>

**Subject:** Johnny Ritchey, The Jackie Robinson of the Pacific Coast League"

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[Johnny Ritchey the Jackie Robinson of PCL | MLB.com](https://www.mlb.com/news/johnny-ritchey-the-jackie-robinson-of-pcl)[https://www.mlb.com > news > johnny-ritchey-the-jackie-robinson-of-pcl](https://www.mlb.com/news/johnny-ritchey-the-jackie-robinson-of-pcl)

[John Ritchey broke PCL color barrier with hometown ... - MiLB.com](https://www.milb.com/news/john-ritchey-broke-pcl-color-barrier-with-hometown)[https://www.milb.com > news > john-ritchey-broke-pcl-color-barrier-with-...](https://www.milb.com/news/john-ritchey-broke-pcl-color-barrier-with-hometown)

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[...https://www.pbs.org > ken-kramers-about-san-diego-thursday-apr-22-2010](https://www.pbs.org/ken-kramers-about-san-diego-thursday-apr-22-2010)

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Bill Swank  
Baseball Historian



**JUNIPERO SERRA  
PRESENTATION**

*Conversations around name, mascot, and school colors*



# How can I become educated on the subject to make an informed decision?

- Requires your own research. Look at reliable websites, peer review articles, and webpages of those that support the cause and those opposed to it.
- Example: What does the mission say about Junipero Serra? What do the people who were deemed his victims say about him (indigenous and Kumeyaay)? What does the news say is happening right now? The same questions apply to our mascot.
- At the end of this presentation there will be several pages of links you can read; start there but please don't stop there as the list is not exhaustive.

# Recently in the News



CNA

Spanish mayor offers to take down St. Junipero Serra statue

1 day ago



ABC7.com

OC scholars say removal of Father Junipero Serra statues could start healing process for...

1 day ago



KSBY.com

Junipero Serra statue removed from San Luis Obispo Mission

2 days ago



Junipero Serra

Follow

Show

Junipero Serra statues to be removed in Ventura  
Los Angeles Times · Jul 16



L.A. Archdiocese: Salvang-based statue of Junipero Serra will stay; petition for removal gains strength  
Syracuse.com · Jul 31



Angry mob attack on St. Junipero Serra statue exposes vandals' ignorance  
Washington Times · Jul 26



St. Junipero Serra could soon be removed from California county seal  
TheDailySignal.com · Jul 24



In life, was Father Junipero Serra a saint or a sinner?  
StateSociety.com · Jul 22



Op-Ed: Serra's fall may further 'whiten' America's already too-white history



# Who is Junipero Serra and who are the Conquistadors?

- Where do we begin...
- Lets watch a few videos --

Serra

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmEK8rx1\\_gA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmEK8rx1_gA)

Conquistadors

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bByjEdv6Z14>

# Arguments against Conquistador Mascot:

- Embarrassment over the name (and the need to simplify it) has already resulted in most fans of Serra sports simply calling us the “Qs” instead
- Our conquistador mascot is specifically clad in the armor of the Spanish soldiers who destroyed multiple indigenous settlements
- Multiple families have issued complaints about the racist connotations of the name
- One of the arguments for seeing Junipero Serra in a positive light is that his mission system protected the indigenous people from even more brutal oppression inflicted by the colonial Spanish military. Conquistadors are emblematic of that very same military.

## Arguments Against the “Serra” Name

- The mission system that he pioneered was inhumane and cruel to the indigenous population – good intentions or no. This suffering is still felt in the indigenous community and Serra is a symbol of that suffering.
- He is a religious symbol and does not transcend Christianity. We are not a religious school.
- Serra is also a symbol of European empire and colonization, the negative effects of which are still felt worldwide. It doesn't matter what his intentions were, it's the practice and outcome that matter. Both are atrocious.
- One of our feeder elementary schools is Kumeyaay Elementary – the fact that these specific people suffered most under Serra's mission system is a cruel bit of trivia for students who start at Kumeyaay Elementary, then move on to De Portola Middle School (named after the Spanish governor who empowered Serra to create the missions) and then Serra High. If the elementary school's name is meant to honor these original Californians, then why do those students go on to attend a school named after their oppressors?



## Arguments for Keeping Either Name

- Tradition – it's what the school has always been called and people have emotions and history invested in it
- Expense – it means renaming several physical items and coming up with new designs, all of which cost money. We are lucky in that we are going through a whole remodel anyways.
- One of the missions Serra built is near Tierrasanta, so he has some local relevance although not located in Tierrasanta
- Serra and DePortola are complimentary names because of their relevance to each other
- Regardless of his methods, the indigenous population would have been treated much worse by the invading conquistadors if Serra had not developed the mission system to protect the local people from Spanish military oppression.

# Data Collected in the Last Few Days

## Student Petition

**764 have signed.** Let's get to 1,000!



Thanks to your support this petition has a chance at winning! We only need 219 more signatures to reach the next goal - can you help?

Take the next step!

## Principal Petition

**1,003**  
Supporters

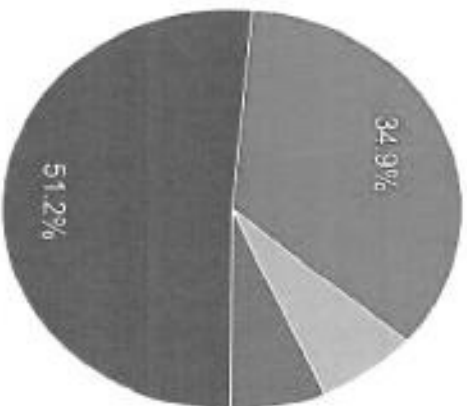


Only **497** more supporters to the next goal!

# Poll Results so far!

What group do you represent?

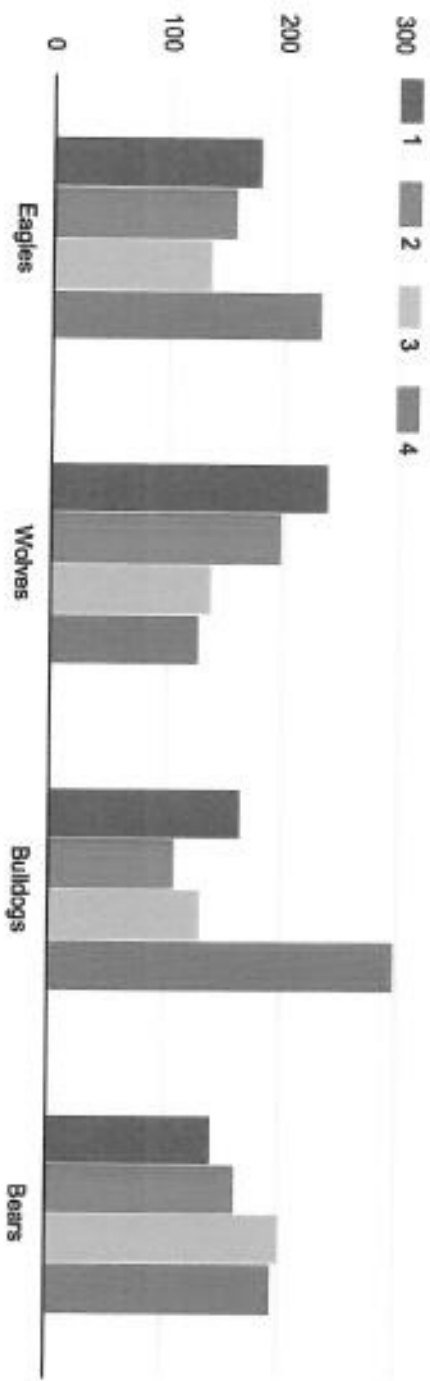
699 responses



- Student
- Parent
- Staff
- Other

# Data

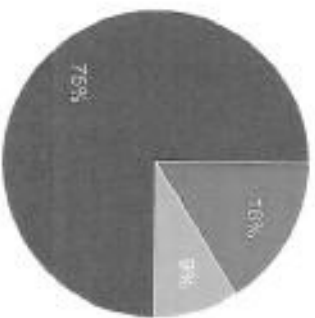
Understanding that the mascot needs to be an animal so as not to run into the same issue again please RANK your opinions of possible mascots. Checking #1 means your MOST favorite and check #4 means LEAST.



# Data

Would you be interested in changing the school colors? If there is a solid yes we will move forward after consultation with cost from the district and also with options of colors.

676 responses

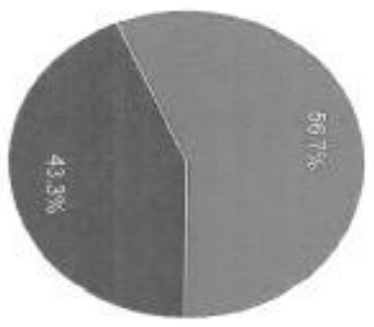


- Yes
- No
- No opinion.

# Data

Would you like to see a name change at Serra High School?

496 responses



- Yes-I would like to engage in a conversation about it.
- No-I think the name is fine the way it is.





# Want to know more???

Non objective (religious) source, but a pretty objective point of view

<https://www.nctonline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/junipero-serra-saint-or-not>

A description of the brutalization he inflicted on the indigenous population

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/23/pope-francis-junipero-serra-sainthood-washington-california>

Example of justification another educational institution used for removing his name

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/09/18/to-catholics-junipero-serra-is-a-saint-to-stanford-university-hes-a-malting-address-worth-eliminating/>

An article (unfavorably) viewing his mission policy through modern eyes

<https://www.independent.com/2015/09/21/serra-aint-no-saint/>

A local perspective (SD UT) on Serra's legacy

<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-junipero-serra-canonization-protests-opposition-2015sep23-story.html>

Is Serra a oppressor or a saint?

<https://www.ocregister.com/2015/09/23/inspirational-leader-or-indigenous-oppressor-the-pros-and-cons-of-pope-franciscus-making-junipero-serra-a-saint/>

# Even more!!!

## Sainthood of Junipero Serra Reopens Wounds of Colonialism in California

<https://www.nvtimes.com/2015/09/30/us/attack-on-statue-of-new-saint-junipero-serra-digs-up-old-conflicts.html>

**To Catholics, Junipero Serra is a saint. To Stanford University, he's a mailing address worth eliminating**

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/09/18/ho-catholics-junipero-serra-is-a-saint-to-stanford-university-hes-a-mailing-address-worth-eliminating/>

## A plaque honoring Spanish Colonization in the Kumeeyaay Nation Territory

<https://sandiegohistory.org/press/plaque-honoring-spanish-colonization-kumeeyaay-nation-territory/>

## Attack on Statue digs up old conflicts

<https://www.nvtimes.com/2015/09/30/us/attack-on-statue-of-new-saint-junipero-serra-digs-up-old-conflicts.html>

**Do your own research!!!! Very Important!**

# **Thank you so much for being informed citizens**

- We ask that you fill out a poll or survey so we may use it towards our petition.
- This is very short and is anonymous

**Lastly, we will be advertising any updates and timelines on our website as they happen.**

**Your voice matters and we appreciate you for it!**

# Quick Poll

<https://tinyurl.com/quickpollshs>

## Post Information Meeting Quick Poll

Are you in support of changing the name of Serra High School?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Are you in support of changing the Congregator mascot?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Are you in support of changing the school's colors?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

2/27/21



# Name, Mascot, & Colors

Dear Community,

We are done with our process and have gone above and beyond the requirements, however, it still comes down to a ballot! Student ballots come with their packets and need to be dropped off at packet drop off. (Click [HERE](#) for packet pickup and drop off schedule.) Unfortunately, we cannot take late submissions.

Parents and Alumni: you can access your ballots online by clicking below.

**All voting closes on FRIDAY AUGUST 21 at 8PM**

Want to know more about your mascot and color choices? No problem! Just click below to access a short presentation on each.



Bulldog

Red, Gray, & White



Tiger

Black & Periwinkle



Rattler

Red, Black, & White

## So, what about the school's name?

We want to hear from students, alumni, and parents! Here are the choices and rationales.

### CANYON HILLS High School

This is a combination of Tierrasanta's nickname "The Island in the Hills" and the canyons that surround the school.

### SERRA High School

(Junipero would be removed from the official name)

### TIERRA CANYON High School

(This combines the names Tierrasanta and Murphy Canyon)

### JUNIPERO SERRA High School

(No Change)

### **Why the change?**

Click [HERE](#) to see what was presented in town hall meetings with parents, staff, and students this summer.

### What year did you graduate from Serra?

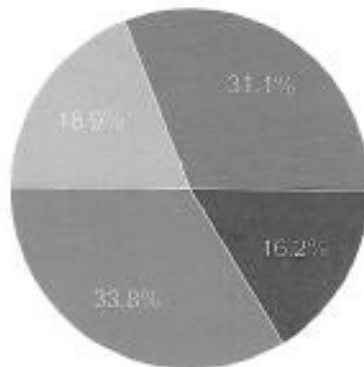
1,243 responses

- 2018
- 2016
- 2017
- 2014
- 1987
- 2019
- 2012
- 2001
- 1992

### Official Ballot

### Item 1: School Name Change

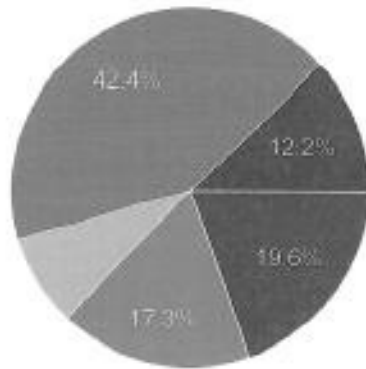
1,243 responses



- Yes, change the name to CANYON HILLS High School (This is a combination of Tierrasanta's nicknam...
- Yes, change the name to SERRA High School. (Junipero would be removed from the official name)
- Yes, change the name to TIERRA CANYON High School. (This combine...
- No, keep the school name JUNIPERO SERRA High School

### Item 2: School Mascot & Color Change

1,242 responses



- Yes, change the mascot to the BOBCATS and the colors to BLACK A...
- Yes, change the mascot to the RATTLESNAKES and the colors to B...
- Yes, change the mascot to the BULLDOGS and the colors to GREY,...
- No, keep the CONQUISTADOR mascot and the colors BROWN and GOLD
- Yes, change the mascot to the BOBCATS and the colors to BLACK A...





28 responses



Accepting responses

Summary

Question

Individual

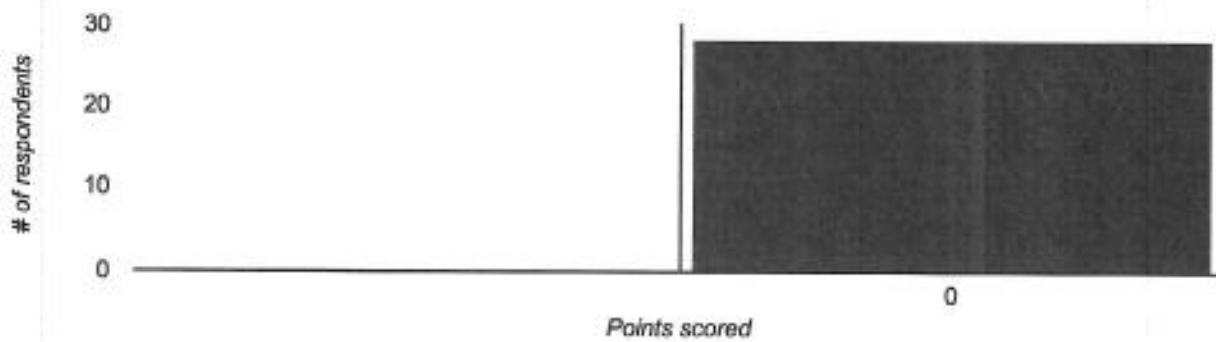
### Insights

**Average**  
0 / 0 points

**Median**  
0 / 0 points

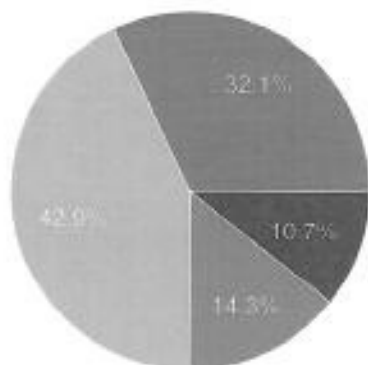
**Range**  
0 - 0 points

Total points distribution



### School Mascot and Color Change

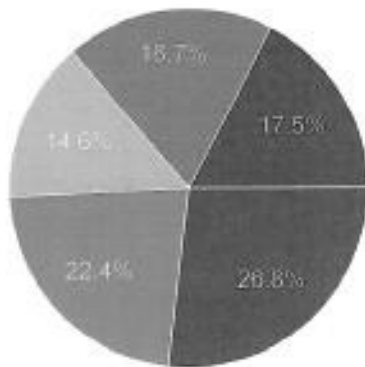
28 responses



- Yes, change the mascot to the BOBCATS and the colors to BLACK AND PERIWINKLE.
- Yes, change the mascot to the RATTLERS and the colors to BLACK, RED(primary), WHITE(secondary)
- Yes, change the mascot to the BULLDOGS and the colors to GREY,...
- No, keep the mascot CONQUISTADORS and the colors BR...

### Item 2: School Mascot & Color Change

246 responses



- Yes, change the mascot to the BOBCATS and the colors to BLACK A...
- Yes, change the mascot to the RATTLESNAKES and the colors to B...
- Yes, change the mascot to the BULLDOGS and the colors to GREY,...
- No, keep the CONQUISTADOR mascot and the colors BROWN and GOLD
- Yes, change the mascot to the RATTLE...



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August 26, 2020

## VIA U.S. MAIL & ELECTRONIC MAIL

Ms. Cindy Marten, Superintendent of Public Education  
Dr. Sofia Freira, Chief of Leadership & Learning, High Schools  
Mr. Bruce R. Bivins, Area Superintendent for Serra Cluster  
Ms. Andra Greene, General Counsel  
Dr. John Lee Evans, Board President  
Mr. Kevin Beiser, Board Trustee – District B  
San Diego Unified School District  
4100 Normal Street  
San Diego, CA 92103

### **Re: Anti-Catholic Removal of St. Junipero Serra from High School Name**

Dear Ms. Marten, Dr. Freira, Mr. Bivins, Ms. Greene, Dr. Evans, and Mr. Beiser:

This year, there has been an alarming amount of anti-Catholicism in this country—in a manner perhaps not truly seen since the passage of the mini-Blaine Amendments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Earlier this year, the Supreme Court struck these anti-Catholic amendments down, with Justice Alito explaining their invidious origins in his concurring opinion.<sup>2</sup> But it seems that as soon as one movement of anti-Catholic animus is struck down, another raises its head.

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<sup>1</sup> The “Blaine Amendment of the 1870s...which Congress nearly passed—would have added to the Federal Constitution a provision...prohibiting States from aiding ‘sectarian’ schools.... [I]t was an open secret that ‘sectarian’ was code for ‘Catholic.’...The Blaine Amendment was ‘born of bigotry’ and ‘arose at a time of pervasive hostility to the Catholic Church and to Catholics in general’; many of its state counterparts have a similarly ‘shameful pedigree.’” *Espinoza v. Montana Dep’t of Revenue*, 140 S. Ct. 2246, 2259 (2020) (citations omitted).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 2267–74 (Alito, J., concurring) (“[The Blaine Amendment] was prompted by virulent prejudice against immigrants, particularly Catholic immigrants.”).

We are greatly troubled by Junipero Serra High School's recent anti-Catholic efforts to eliminate from their official school name all references to the great Catholic and Hispanic Saint Junipero Serra. From an historical perspective, Fr. Serra is one of the greatest men that California has ever known, a founding father who represents California in the U.S. capital's National Statuary Hall Collection. From a religious perspective, Fr. Serra is beloved by the Catholic (and especially Hispanic Catholic) communities as the Apostle to California. Efforts to remove his patronage from Junipero Serra High School's name can only be perceived by reasonable observers as unconstitutional "hostility toward religion that has no place in" our modern, pluralistic society.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the recent surge of anti-Catholicism in this country only affirms this position.

In light of the foregoing, we write to inform you that should Junipero Serra High School remove "Junipero Serra" from its official school name, we will immediately file a lawsuit seeking to enjoin such conduct under the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution and to recover our attorneys' fees. Our firm has tremendous experience and success defending against anti-Catholic and anti-Christian bigotry and attacks. For example, we successfully defended the famous Mt. Soledad Cross in San Diego for twelve years—which proudly still stands tall today. We also have extensive experience in recovering our attorneys' fees when prevailing against anti-Catholic and anti-Christian attacks.

Below is a brief summary of the recent shocking and disturbing attacks against Catholics and a legal analysis of why the San Diego Unified School District (the "District") will be exposed to liability if it eliminates "Junipero Serra" from Junipero Serra High School's name.

### **The History of the 2020 Anti-Catholic Attacks**

The specific history of the anti-Catholic attacks and bigotry in 2020 is relevant in analyzing whether government action evinces unconstitutional hostility or favoritism towards religion. Under this analysis, courts look to the specific, factual situation.<sup>4</sup>

The Catholic Church has suffered numerous attacks and forms of intolerance and bigotry in connection to the violent riots and protests that have emerged from the Black Lives Matter movement. As you are likely aware, on Monday, May 25, 2020, a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota killed an African American man in his custody named George Floyd, and the next day, on May 26, a video-recording of the interaction went viral on social media. The day after that, on May 27, protests and violent riots erupted in Minneapolis and across the nation.<sup>5</sup> It took only one more day for the anti-Catholic attacks to begin.

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<sup>3</sup> *Van Orden v. Perry*, 545 U.S. 677, 704 (2005) (Breyer, J., concurring).

<sup>4</sup> To prevent "religious gerrymanders," *Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. City of Hialeah*, 508 U.S. 520, 534 (1993), courts must not "turn a blind eye to the context in which [a] policy" arises. *McCreary Cty., Ky. v. Am. Civil Liberties Union of Ky.*, 545 U.S. 844, 866 (2005); see also *Davies v. Los Angeles Cty. Bd. of Supervisors*, 177 F. Supp. 3d 1194, 1212 (C.D. Cal. 2016) ("[T]he relevant government act here is not merely the 'depiction of the San Gabriel Mission with a cross as one part of the County Seal,' but rather the County's specific effort to add a Latin cross, at significant expense, to an otherwise unchanged version of the seal.").

<sup>5</sup> Derrick B. Taylor, *George Floyd Protests: A Timeline*, N.Y. TIMES (June 22, 2020, 12:07 PM), [nyti.ms/2XvFfBg](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/22/us/politics/george-floyd-protests-timeline.html).

On May 28, the oldest Catholic basilica in the U.S. was vandalized in Minneapolis.<sup>6</sup> On May 29, St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City was vandalized.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, a man set a Catholic church in Florida aflame while “parishioners were inside preparing for Mass.”<sup>8</sup>

A prime target of the anti-Catholic attacks has been Catholic saints—men and women of great faith that the Catholic Church has officially recognized as examples to emulate. Outside of California, at least four statues of Jesus have been vandalized and destroyed,<sup>9</sup> as well as three statues of Mary, the Mother of God.<sup>10</sup> Within the state of California, a statue of Jesus was beheaded,<sup>11</sup> the Mt. Rubidoux Cross dedicated to Fr. Serra was vandalized with the message “Serra was a pedophile murderer,”<sup>12</sup> an arsonist set flame to the San Gabriel Mission,<sup>13</sup> and rioters destroyed statues of Fr. Serra in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Sacramento.<sup>14</sup>

### **Junipero Serra High School’s Anti-Catholic Attacks against “Junipero Serra”**

In mid-June of 2020, two very anti-Catholic and intolerant students called on Junipero Serra High School to remove “Junipero Serra” from its high school name, which has had its name since 1976. They created an online “Change.org” petition drive.<sup>15</sup> Instead of pushing back against this anti-Catholic bigotry, a few days later in June, the principal of Junipero Serra High School—Dr. Erica Renfree—created another petition calling for Junipero Serra to be removed from the

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<sup>6</sup> Judah Torgerud, *Oldest Basilica in the US Damaged in Minneapolis Riots*, ALPHA NEWS (June 1, 2020), <https://bit.ly/39EqWyT>.

<sup>7</sup> Khristina Narizhnaya, et al., *Two Protesters Arrested for St. Patrick’s Cathedral Vandalism*, N.Y. POST (June 18, 2020), <https://bit.ly/3jUW8hQ>.

<sup>8</sup> Travis Fedschun, *Florida Man Crashes into Church, Sets it on Fire With Parishioners Inside, Sheriff Says*, FOX NEWS (July 12, 2020), <https://fxn.ws/3fdCtX8>.

<sup>9</sup> Jake Bacon, *‘Our Church Deserves Better’: Families Gather to Clean Our Lady Chapel After Vandalism*, ARIZONA DAILY SUN (Jun. 20, 2020), <https://bit.ly/2DkLWyB>; Daniel McKay, *Jesus statue at Whitefish Mountain Resort vandalized*, WHITEFISH PILOT (Jul. 14, 2020), <https://bit.ly/30dmV15>; Christian De La Rosa, *Church members searching for answers after statue of Jesus Christ is decapitated*, WPLG LOCAL 10 (Jul. 15, 2020), <https://bit.ly/3hVVi2v>; Amanda Hudson, *St. Bernadette Parishioners Pray for Crucifix Vandal*, THE OBSERVER (Jul. 17, 2020), <https://bit.ly/2P9na79>.

<sup>10</sup> Denise M. Baran-Unland, *Mary Statue at St. Pat’s in Joliet Ripped Apart*, THE HERALD-NEWS (Jun. 25, 2020), <https://bit.ly/30eh6jX>; Kale Wilk, *Virgin Mary Statue Vandalized, Church Leaders Say*, THE TIMES (Jul. 12, 2020), <https://bit.ly/33ah5j1>; *Statue of Virgin Mary Beheaded at Tennessee Parish*, CATHOLIC NEWS AGENCY (Jul. 15, 2020), <https://bit.ly/3fcBiqL>.

<sup>11</sup> *Vandal hits Wasco church*, THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN (Jun. 4, 2020), <https://bit.ly/2DnLWhm>.

<sup>12</sup> Brian Rokos & Ryan Hagan, *Mount Rubidoux cross in Riverside is vandalized in latest rebuke of St. Serra legacy*, THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE (Jun. 27, 2020), <https://bit.ly/336RasB>.

<sup>13</sup> Josie Huang, *Fire Official Says San Gabriel Mission Fire Apparently Started In Choir Loft. Arson Is A Possible Cause*, LAIST (Jul. 12, 2020), <https://bit.ly/2PaIPvD>.

<sup>14</sup> Alex Wigglesworth & Andrew J. Campa, *Junipero Serra statue toppled in downtown L.A.*, L.A. TIMES (Jun. 20, 2020), <https://lat.ms/2D3m4HE>; Nico Savidge, et al., *Statues of Junipero Serra, Ulysses S. Grant toppled at Golden Gate Park*, THE MERCURY NEWS (Jun. 20, 2020), <https://bayareane.ws/3hU15YS>; Vincent Moleski, *Protesters tear down statue of Spanish missionary and saint Junipero Serra in Sacramento*, THE SACRAMENTO BEE (Jul. 6, 2020), <https://bit.ly/2Exh9Pv>.

<sup>15</sup> Change Colonialist Serra High Mascot, <https://www.change.org/p/san-diego-unified-school-district-change-colonialist-serra-high-mascot-a49d12d0-7d30-4304-a629-e0e0dad61d49> (last visited on August 22, 2020).

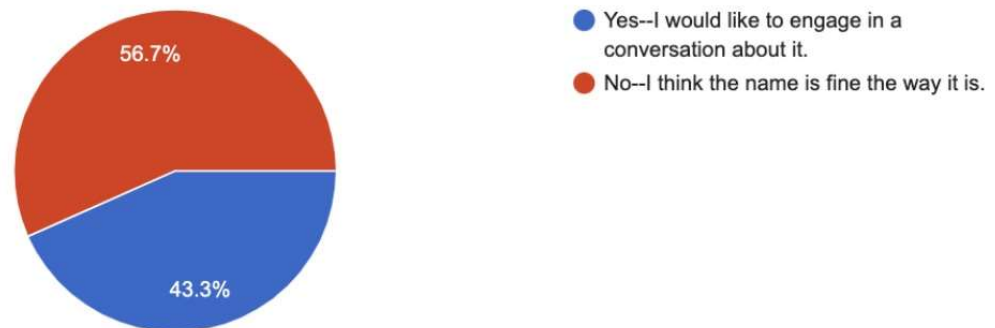
school name.<sup>16</sup> Despite Fr. Serra’s status as a Catholic saint and a faithful, loving follower of God, Dr. Renfree maliciously and falsely stated to the local press that Fr. Serra’s “mission was to colonize [Natives], which was to strip them of their culture and force them into Christianity.”<sup>17</sup>

Subsequently, the San Diego Unified School District shared on its website Junipero Serra High School’s anti-Catholic name changing campaign.<sup>18</sup> The link on the District’s website takes you to Junipero Serra High School’s webpage, which contains information about the name-changing process, what other names are being considered, and a document that contains malicious and false anti-Catholic statements about Fr. Serra.<sup>19</sup> This anti-Catholic presentation and document “was presented at town hall meetings with parents, staff, and students this summer.”<sup>20</sup>

The presentation and document state, in relevant part, that “Serra is a symbol of [indigenous] suffering” and that “Serra is also a symbol of European empire colonization. . . . It doesn’t matter what his intentions were, it’s the practice and outcome that matter. Both are atrocious.”<sup>21</sup> Junipero Serra High School then asked students, parents, and alumni to respond to a poll regarding erasing Fr. Serra’s name from Junipero Serra High School. A majority of students, parents, and alumni voted to keep Fr. Serra’s name.<sup>22</sup>

Would you like to see a name change at Serra High School?

496 responses



And more importantly, no one voted to remove it. Some students, parents, and alumni merely voted to “engage in a conversation about it.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Change Serra High School Name and Mascot!, <https://www.change.org/p/students-change-serra-high-school-name-and-mascot> (last visited on August 22, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> Artie Ojeda, *Sisters Behind Drive to Change Name of Serra High School*, NBC SAN DIEGO (August 21, 2020, 10:34 PM), <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/sisters-behind-drive-to-change-name-of-serra-high-school/2390571>.

<sup>18</sup> San Diego Unified School District, *Junipero Serra High School*, <https://www.sandiegounified.org/schools/serra>.

<sup>19</sup> Junipero Serra High School, *Name, Mascot, & Colors*, <https://serrahighschool.wixsite.com/wellness/name-mascot-colors> (last visited on August 22, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> Junipero Serra High School, *Junipero Serra Presentation*, [https://2c35240a-3555-416f-bd77-417522a1b012.filesusr.com/ugd/4a2277\\_e8018ca14ad14500ace532ae93d81fd1.pdf](https://2c35240a-3555-416f-bd77-417522a1b012.filesusr.com/ugd/4a2277_e8018ca14ad14500ace532ae93d81fd1.pdf) (last visited on August 22, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> *See id.* at 11.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*



Nonetheless, Junipero Serra High School then put the decision to erase the name of a great Catholic saint and beloved champion of indigenous people in the hands of 14 to 18-year-old students, their parents, and alumni. Junipero Serra High School required that the voting be completed on paper or online ballots, to be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, August 21, 2020.<sup>24</sup>

These results and a proposal by Junipero Serra High School will be submitted to the San Diego Unified School District's naming committee. The full school board apparently has the final say on any changes. No formal decision has been announced by Junipero Serra High School or the San Diego Unified School District yet. But it is indisputable that Junipero Serra High School and its principal inappropriately influenced students with their anti-Catholic rhetoric and misrepresentations about Catholicism and Fr. Serra. These anti-Catholic statements about a Catholic saint are completely inappropriate for a principal to make.

If anything, the principal should have just expressed that students had brought the name-changing proposal to her attention and that the students, parents, and alumni could help in the decision-making process regarding a change of the school's name. However, Junipero Serra High School's principal took a hostile and anti-Catholic position against the Catholic Church's views about Fr. Serra. The principal's viewpoint criticizing Catholic history and a beloved Catholic saint not only gravely offends numerous Catholics in the community but also inappropriately influenced students, parents, and alumni to vote in accordance with her anti-Catholic viewpoint.

Additionally, instead of pushing back against the anti-Catholic animus, the San Diego Unified School District has done nothing—instead facilitating and participating in these anti-Catholic attacks by sharing the anti-Catholic name-changing campaign on its website.<sup>25</sup>

“[T]he historical truth is that Serra repeatedly pressed the Spanish authorities for better treatment of Native American communities.”<sup>26</sup> As will be explained below, the removal of Fr. Serra's name from Junipero Serra High School's name is unconstitutional and exposes the San Diego Unified School District to significant civil liability.

### **Legal Analysis**

The First Amendment prohibits any “law respecting an establishment of religion.”<sup>27</sup> Elucidating the full requirements of this clause has presented challenges to the Supreme Court over the years, but a principle of neutrality has always emerged. Thus, “[t]he clearest command of the Establishment Clause is that one religious denomination cannot be officially preferred over

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<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> San Diego Unified School District, *Junipero Serra High School*, <https://www.sandiegounified.org/schools/serra> (last visited on August 22, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> *California Catholic Conference Issues Statement on Removal of St. Serra Statues in the State*, CAL. CATHOLIC CONFERENCE (June 22, 2020), <https://cacatholic.org/article/california-catholic-conference-issues-statement-removal-st-serra-statues-state>.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Const. amend. I.

another.”<sup>28</sup> “The fullest realization of true religious liberty requires that government neither engage in nor compel religious practices, that it effect no favoritism among sects or between religion and nonreligion, and that it work deterrence of no religious belief.”<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the First Amendment “affirmatively mandates accommodation, not merely tolerance, of all religions, and forbids hostility toward any.”<sup>30</sup> And the government must “neither abdicate [its] responsibility to maintain a division between church and state nor evince a hostility to religion by disabling the government from in some ways recognizing our religious heritage.”<sup>31</sup> This is because, “[e]ndorsement sends a message to nonadherents that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community, and an accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the political community. Disapproval sends the opposite message.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, “[w]hen the government chooses sides on religious issues, the ‘inevitable result’ is ‘hatred, disrespect and even contempt’ towards those who fall on the wrong side of the line.”<sup>33</sup>

“When the government acts with the ostensible and predominant purpose” of disfavoring a particular religion, “it violates that central Establishment Clause value of official religious neutrality, there being no neutrality when the government’s ostensible object is to take sides.” To determine whether plaintiffs have proved an Establishment Clause violation, the Court asks whether a reasonable observer would view the government action as enacted for the purpose of disfavoring a religion.<sup>34</sup>

In determining whether the government is “taking sides,” religious imagery on municipal displays that has a historical pedigree has “a strong presumption of constitutionality,”<sup>35</sup> and the **removal of such imagery evinces unconstitutional hostility to religion.**<sup>36</sup> In this respect, the Supreme Court’s discussion in *American Legion v. American Humanist Association* is instructive.<sup>37</sup> As stated by the U.S. Supreme Court:

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<sup>28</sup> *Larson v. Valente*, 456 U.S. 228, 244 (1982).

<sup>29</sup> *Sch. Dist. of Abington Twp. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203, 305 (1963) (Goldberg, J. concurring).

<sup>30</sup> *Lynch v. Donnelly*, 465 U.S. 668, 673 (1984).

<sup>31</sup> *Van Orden*, 545 U.S. at 683–84.

<sup>32</sup> *Catholic League for Religious & Civil Rights v. City & Cty. of San Francisco*, 624 F.3d 1043, 1049 (9th Cir. 2010) (quoting *Lynch*, 465 U.S. at 688 (O’Connor, J., concurring)); see also *Washington v. Trump*, 847 F.3d 1151, 1167 (9th Cir. 2017) (quoting *Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290, 310 (2000)).

<sup>33</sup> *Int’l Refugee Assistance Project v. Trump*, 857 F.3d 554, 604 (4th Cir. 2017), *vacated as moot*, 138 S. Ct. 353 (2017) (quoting *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421, 431 (1962)).

<sup>34</sup> *Trump v. Hawaii*, 138 S. Ct. 2392, 2434 (2018) (Sotomayor, J., dissenting) (citation omitted) (quoting *McCreary*, 545 U.S. at 860).

<sup>35</sup> *Freedom From Religion Found., Inc. v. Cty. of Lehigh*, 933 F.3d 275, 281 (3d Cir. 2019) (quoting *Am. Legion v. Am. Humanist Ass’n*, 139 S. Ct. 2067, 2085 (2019)); *Weinbaum v. City of Las Cruces, N.M.*, 541 F.3d 1017, 1030 (10th Cir. 2008); *Murray v. City of Austin, Tex.*, 947 F.2d 147, 154 (5th Cir. 1991).

<sup>36</sup> *Am. Legion*, 139 S. Ct. at 2074, 2084–85, 2086–87, 2090.

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

For nearly a century, the Bladensburg Cross has expressed the community’s grief at the loss of the young men who perished [in WWI] . . . . [I]ts removal or radical alteration at this date would be seen by many not as a neutral act but as the manifestation of “a hostility toward religion that has no place in our Establishment Clause traditions.” . . . .<sup>38</sup>

[W]hen time’s passage imbues a religiously expressive monument, symbol, or practice with this kind of familiarity and historical significance, removing it may no longer appear neutral, especially to the local community for which it has taken on particular meaning. A government that roams the land, tearing down monuments with religious symbolism and scrubbing away any reference to the divine will strike many as aggressively hostile to religion. Militantly secular regimes have carried out such projects in the past, and for those with a knowledge of history, the image of monuments being taken down will be evocative, disturbing, and divisive. . . .<sup>39</sup>

[A]s World War I monuments have endured through the years and become a familiar part of the physical and cultural landscape, requiring their removal would not be viewed by many as a neutral act. And an alteration like the one entertained by the Fourth Circuit—amputating the arms of the Cross [citation]—would be seen by many as profoundly disrespectful. . . . A monument may express many purposes and convey many different messages, both secular and religious. [citation]. Thus, a campaign to obliterate items with religious associations may evidence hostility to religion even if those religious associations are no longer in the forefront. . . .<sup>40</sup>

For many of these people, destroying or defacing the Cross that has stood undisturbed for nearly a century would not be neutral and would not further the ideals of respect and tolerance embodied in the First Amendment.<sup>41</sup>

Here, the analysis is clear cut. Fr. Serra is a beloved Catholic figure whose pedigree is not subject to justiciable resolution. The issue is not whether Catholics are *right* to view him as a moral exemplar and Apostle to California—or whether they are wrong and he is “Father Genocide”—but simply that they *do* view him as a beloved Catholic Saint. The Supreme Court has made clear that “First Amendment values are plainly jeopardized when litigation is made to turn on the resolution by civil courts of controversies over religious doctrine and practice.”<sup>42</sup> Because such values are jeopardized, the Supreme Court has made clear that courts are forbidden from issuing legal opinions that have the effect of “resolving underlying controversies over

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<sup>38</sup> *Id.* at 2074 (quoting *Van Orden*, 545 U.S. at 704 (Breyer, J., concurring)).

<sup>39</sup> *Id.* at 2084–85.

<sup>40</sup> *Id.* at 2086–87.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.* at 2090.

<sup>42</sup> *Our Lady of Guadalupe Sch. v. Morrissey-Berru*, 140 S. Ct. 2049, 2063 n.10 (2020) (quoting *Presbyterian Church in U.S. v. Mary Elizabeth Blue Hull Mem’l Presbyterian Church*, 393 U.S. 440, 449 (1969)).

religious doctrine,”<sup>43</sup> and “[a] religious institution’s explanation of . . . the life of the religion in question is important.”<sup>44</sup> Neither the government nor the courts may “tell the plaintiffs that their beliefs are flawed,” but “must accept the sincerely held [ ]objections.”<sup>45</sup> Courts may not issue orders that effect “an internal church decision that affects the faith and mission of the church itself.”<sup>46</sup>

This prohibition on resolving religious questions means, for example, that courts may not determine in fraud cases whether certain foods satisfy “Kosher” requirements—since this would involve taking sides in religious debates<sup>47</sup>—and they may not adjudicate whether an individual satisfied his contract to “perform all normal rabbinical duties incumbent upon a Rabbi of a traditional Jewish Congregation.”<sup>48</sup> The entanglement with religions is just too severe.<sup>49</sup>

Here, of course, Catholics do revere Junipero Serra as a beloved saint.<sup>50</sup> No more analysis is needed. Removing his name and images of him is the same as tearing down crosses or statues of Jesus, Mary, and other Catholic Saints—all are symbols of Catholic identity and reverence. In this respect, it is notable the Supreme Court has already foreseen that the intolerance shown toward people of faith in *American Legion* would likely soon come to California with a vengeance. The Supreme Court thus noted that “few would say that the State of California is attempting to convey a religious message by retaining the names given to many of the State’s cities by their original Spanish settlers—San Diego, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Jose, San Francisco, etc. But it would be something else entirely if the State undertook to change all those names.”<sup>51</sup>

The Supreme Court’s guidance is especially true since Catholics view Junipero Serra as a *Saint*. “The Catholic Church canonizes or beatifies only those whose lives have been marked by the exercise of heroic virtue, and only after this has been proved by common repute for sanctity and by conclusive arguments.”<sup>52</sup> And under the “heckler’s veto” doctrine, the courts will certainly look to the anti-Catholic motivations and statements of Junipero Serra High School and its principal, which inappropriately influenced students and parents with anti-Catholic rhetoric and misrepresentations about Catholicism and Saint Junipero Serra. These anti-Catholic statements about a Catholic saint are completely inappropriate for a principal to make. By taking an

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<sup>43</sup> *Id.* (quoting *Presbyterian Church*, 393 U.S. at 449).

<sup>44</sup> *Id.* at 2066.

<sup>45</sup> *Little Sisters of the Poor Saints Peter & Paul Home v. Pennsylvania*, 140 S. Ct. 2367, 2383 (2020).

<sup>46</sup> *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church & Sch. v. EEOC*, 565 U.S. 171, 190 (2012).

<sup>47</sup> *Commack Self-Serv. Kosher Meats, Inc. v. Weiss*, 294 F.3d 415, 425–27 (2d Cir. 2002).

<sup>48</sup> *Elmora Hebrew Ctr., Inc. v. Fishman*, 125 N.J. 404, 409 (1991).

<sup>49</sup> *Commack*, 294 F.3d at 425–30; *Elmora*, 125 N.J. at 420–21; see also *NLRB v. Catholic Bishop of Chi.*, 440 U.S. 490, 502 (1979) (“It is not only the conclusions that may be reached by the Board which may impinge on rights guaranteed by the Religion Clauses, but also the very process of inquiry leading to findings and conclusions.”).

<sup>50</sup> *Pope to Canonize ‘Evangelizer of the West’ During U.S. Trip*, NATIONAL CATHOLIC REGISTER (Jan. 15, 2015), <https://bit.ly/33ctVNN>.

<sup>51</sup> *Am. Legion*, 139 S. Ct. at 2087.

<sup>52</sup> See Camillo Beccari, *Beatification and Canonization*, in 2 THE CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA (1907) <https://bit.ly/318Eezx>.

affirmative position against Catholicism, Catholic history, and Saint Junipero Serra, and by making public comments criticizing the Catholic religion's decision to venerate Saint Junipero Serra, Junipero Serra High School, its principal, and its staff improperly influenced students, parents, and alumni to vote in an anti-Catholic way. Removal of Fr. Serra's name discriminates against the Catholic religion.

Further, Dr. Renfree's malicious and false statements criticize a religious figure and what he represents to millions of Catholics in San Diego County. Dr. Renfree's gross mischaracterization of Fr. Serra's mission—"to strip [Natives] of their culture and force them into Christianity"—is a clear example of inappropriate and reprehensible conduct.

Notably, disagreement about whether Fr. Serra exercised "heroic virtue" is not a clean disagreement between indigenous peoples and Catholics. "20% of all Native Americans residing in the United States consider themselves Roman Catholics."<sup>53</sup> This includes 580,000 Native American Catholics, and 780,000 Catholics claiming Native American ancestry.<sup>54</sup> And Native Americans are represented at all levels of the Catholic Church. Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia is a member of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation,<sup>55</sup> and the late Bishop Donald Pelotte was part of the Abenaki tribe within the Algonquin Nation.<sup>56</sup> There are also Catholic prelates descended from the indigenous peoples of California—including prelates who trace their ancestral faith directly to Fr. Serra.<sup>57</sup>

Further, unlike English colonialism, Spanish colonialism involved extensive intermarriage. Thus, many Hispanic Catholic Americans also identify themselves as indigenous: "We don't believe we have to [identify as Hispanic and not Indian] just because we speak Spanish."<sup>58</sup> For them, Fr. Serra is "this country's first Hispanic saint." (Ex. 1, Letter from Archbishop José Gomez.)<sup>59</sup> Attacks on him are a direct attack on the idea that one can be both Catholic, indigenous, and Hispanic.

For Catholics of European descent, the attacks on Fr. Serra "call[] to mind very similar activities at earlier stages of American history. In the mid to late nineteenth century, anti-Catholicism was rampant in the United States, due in part to prejudices inherited from

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<sup>53</sup> *Native American Demographics*, U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS (as of Jul. 31, 2020), <https://bit.ly/2EDO1zz>; U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *TWO RIVERS: A REPORT ON CATHOLIC NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE AND MINISTRY* (2019), <https://bit.ly/2Dpglvo>.

<sup>54</sup> *Id.*

<sup>55</sup> *PBPN Member Archbishop Charles Chaput Appointed to Philadelphia Archdiocese*, PRAIRIE BAND POTAWATOMI NATION (Jul. 26, 2011), <https://bit.ly/2D10VZe>.

<sup>56</sup> *First Native American bishop ordained*, UPI (May 7, 1986), <https://bit.ly/3ghmdpp>

<sup>57</sup> *Diocese makes strong showing at Native American ministry conference*, INLAND CATHOLIC BYTE (as of Jul. 31, 2020), <https://bit.ly/2Xfo6LG> (referencing to Native American deacons).

<sup>58</sup> Geoffrey Decker, *More Hispanics in U.S. Calling Themselves Indian*, N.Y. TIMES (Jul. 3, 2011), <https://nyti.ms/3f1S5rj>.

<sup>59</sup> Archbishop José H. Gomez, *Letter to the faithful for the memorial of St. Junipero Serra*, ANGELUS NEWS (Jun. 29, 2020), <https://bit.ly/2XfZvGr>.

Protestantism but also due to the arrival of large groups of immigrants from Catholic countries, who were considered inferior.” (Ex. 2, Article by Bishop Robert Barron.)<sup>60</sup> For them, “how can [they] not see the ugly specter of anti-Catholicism raising its head” again? Catholics see the attacks on Fr. Serra as attacks on a “convenient scapegoat and whipping boy”<sup>61</sup> by those who hate Catholics and who hate that they evangelized Native peoples.

Based on the foregoing reasons, the removal of the name of “Junipero Serra” from “Junipero Serra High School” is clearly unconstitutional. Indeed, a recent instance where a Junipero Serra statue was removed from in front of Ventura’s City Hall has already resulted in litigation, which will undoubtedly conclude with the statue being returned to its rightful public place, pursuant to the aforementioned legal authority.

In accordance with the foregoing, we hereby demand that the District and Junipero Serra High School, and its principal, staff, and administrators, immediately cease and desist from taking any actions to remove the name of this heroic historic figure, Junipero Serra, from the “Junipero Serra High School” name and from making any further anti-Catholic public comments and statements, which, as explained above, improperly influence students, parents, and alumni.

Please be advised that if further steps are taken to wrongfully erase the name of Junipero Serra from “Junipero Serra High School,” we will immediately file a lawsuit against the District. Should the District have any questions regarding this important matter, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Very truly yours,



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*Special Counsel for the  
Thomas More Society*



Jeffrey M. Trissell  
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<sup>60</sup> Bishop Robert Barron, *Canceling Padre Serra*, WORD ON FIRE (Jul. 20, 2020), <https://bit.ly/3fgVqIg>; *see also* Bishop Robert Barron, *Bishop Barron on Canceling Padre Serra*, YOUTUBE (Jul. 21, 2020), <https://youtu.be/Q0A4uMkYPrM>.

<sup>61</sup> *Id.*

Ms. Marten, Dr. Freira, Mr. Bivins, Ms. Greene, Dr. Evans, and Mr. Beiser  
**Re: Anti-Catholic Removal of St. Junipero Serra from High School Name**  
August 26, 2020  
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Enclosures

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**EXHIBIT 1**



## VOICES

## Letter to the faithful for the memorial of St. Junípero Serra

Archbishop José H. Gomez | New World of Faith

Jun 29, 2020 • 8 Min Read



"Fray Junípero Serra," Palma, Mallorca, Spain. (Album/Alamy)

*In the following letter, Archbishop José H. Gomez addresses recent controversies surrounding public monuments to St. Junípero Serra and asks the faithful of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to invoke the saint's "intercession for this nation that he helped to found." Ahead of the saint's July 1 feast day, he urges prayers especially for "an end to racial prejudice and a new awareness of what it means that all men and women are created equal as children of God." Archbishop Gomez also offers an original spiritual meditation that he composed almost entirely from words drawn from St.*

*Junípero's sermons and letters.*

*For an audio version of the Archbishop's letter, click [here](https://www.discerninghearts.com/catholic-podcasts/letter-to-the-faithful-for-the-memorial-of-st-junipero-serra-by-archbishop-jose-h-gomez-discerning-hearts-podcast/) (<https://www.discerninghearts.com/catholic-podcasts/letter-to-the-faithful-for-the-memorial-of-st-junipero-serra-by-archbishop-jose-h-gomez-discerning-hearts-podcast/>), with thanks to our friends, Discerning Hearts. For the Spanish translation of this letter, click [here](https://angelusnews.com/archbishops-esp/carta-a-los-fieles-para-el-memorial-de-san-junipero-serra/) (<https://angelusnews.com/archbishops-esp/carta-a-los-fieles-para-el-memorial-de-san-junipero-serra/>).*

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Recently, statues to the Apostle of California, St. Junípero Serra, were torn down in San Francisco and in the plaza outside our first church, Nuestra Señora Reina de los Ángeles, in downtown Los Angeles. Up and down the state, there is growing debate about removing St. Junípero memorials from public lands. Ventura officials have announced that they will hold a public hearing (<https://www.cityofventura.ca.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/07072020-2214>), July 7 to debate whether to take down his statue from in front of Ventura City Hall.

Faced with the possibility of vandalism, we are taking increased security precautions at the historic missions located in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Unfortunately, we will probably have to relocate some statues to our beloved saint or risk their desecration.

These developments sadden me. I have been thinking and writing about St. Junípero (<https://angelusnews.com/voices/archbishop-gomez-everyone-realizes-we-love-them/>) for many years now.

I understand the deep pain being expressed by some native peoples in California. But I also believe Fray Junípero is a saint for our times, the spiritual founder (<http://www.archbishopgomez.org/article/236?name=Our+Lady+Queen+of+the+Angels+2015>) of Los Angeles, a champion of human rights (<https://angelusnews.com/news/us-world/americas-next-saint-st-junipero-serra/>), and this country's first Hispanic saint (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/immigration-and-the-pope-from-the-new-world-1442775601>). I was privileged to celebrate his canonization Mass with Pope Francis (<http://www.archbishopgomez.org/article/473?name=The+Spiritual+Discovery+of+the+New+World%3A+Jun%C3%ADpero+Serra%27s+Mission+and+America%27s+Religious+Foundations+and+Future>) in 2015. I rely on his intercession in my ministry, and I am inspired by his desire to bring God's tender mercy to every person.

The exploitation of America's first peoples, the destruction of their ancient civilizations, is a historic tragedy. Crimes committed against their ancestors continue to shape the lives and futures of native peoples today. Generations have passed and our country still has not done enough to make things right.

In the family of God here in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, we have worked hard to atone for past errors and wrongs and to find the path forward together. We honor the contributions that native peoples made to building the Church in Southern California (<https://angelusnews.com/local/la-catholics/archbishop-gomez-recognizes-first-peoples-in-archdiocese-of-los-angeles/>), and we cherish their gifts in the mission of the Church today.

Over the years, I have come to understand how the image of Father Serra and the missions evokes painful memories (<https://angelusnews.com/voices/archbishop-gomez-everyone-realizes-we-love-them/>) for some people. For that reason, I believe the protests over our history in California, and the broader protests that have started elsewhere in the country over historical monuments, are important.

Historical memory is the soul of every nation. What we remember about our past and how we remember it defines our national identity — the kind of people we want to be, the values and principles we want to live by.

But history is complicated. The facts matter, distinctions need to be made, and the truth counts. We cannot learn history's lessons or heal old wounds unless we understand what really happened, how it happened, and why.

Our society may reach a consensus not to honor St. Junípero or various other figures from our past. But elected officials cannot abdicate their responsibilities by turning these decisions over to small groups of protesters, allowing them to vandalize public monuments. This is not how a great democracy should function.

Allowing the free expression of public opinion is important. So is upholding the rule of law and ensuring that decisions we reach as a society are based on genuine dialogue and the search for truth and the common good.

In this regard, how the City of Ventura (<https://www.cityofventura.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/21850/A-peaceful-resolution-on-Father-Junipero-Serra-statue>), is handling the debate over its Serra monument can be a model for thoughtful and respectful public discourse that includes civil authorities, indigenous leaders, representatives of the Church, and the community at large.

In other cases, it is clear that those attacking St. Junípero's good name and vandalizing his memorials do not know his true character or the actual historical record.

The sad truth is that, beginning decades ago, activists started "revising" history to make St. Junípero the focus of all the abuses committed against California's indigenous peoples.

But the crimes and abuses that our saint is blamed for — slanders that are spread widely today over the internet and sometimes repeated by public figures — actually happened long after his death.

It was California's first governor who called for "a war of extermination" ([http://governors.library.ca.gov/addresses/s\\_01-Burnett2.html](http://governors.library.ca.gov/addresses/s_01-Burnett2.html)) against the Indians and called in the U.S. Cavalry to help carry out his genocidal plans. That was in 1851. St. Junípero died in 1784.

The real St. Junípero fought a colonial system where natives were regarded as "barbarians" and "savages," whose only value was to serve the appetites of the white man. For St. Junípero, this colonial ideology was a blasphemy against the God who has "created (all men and women) and redeemed them with the most precious blood of his Son."

He lived and worked alongside native peoples and spent his whole career defending their humanity and protesting crimes and indignities committed against them. Among the injustices he struggled against, we find heartbreaking passages in his letters where he decries the daily sexual abuse of indigenous women by

colonial soldiers.

For St. Junípero, the natives were not just powerless victims of colonial brutality. In his letters, he describes their “gentleness and peaceful dispositions,” he celebrates their creativity and knowledge; he remembers little acts of kindness and generosity, even the sweet sound of their voices as they sang.

He learned their languages and their ancient customs and ways. St. Junípero came not to conquer, he came to be a brother. “We have all come here and remained here for the sole purpose of their well-being and salvation,” he once wrote. “And I believe everyone realizes we love them.”

I like to think that his deep reverence for creation was influenced by his conversations and observations among this land’s first peoples.

St. Junípero became one of America’s first environmentalists, documenting California’s diverse habitats in diary entries and letters where he described mountains and plains, the blazing sun and the effects of drought, the overflow of brooks and rivers, cottonwood and willow trees, roses in bloom, the roar of a mountain lion that kept the missionaries awake at night.

St. Junípero also understood that the souls of indigenous Americans had been darkened with bitterness and rage at their historic mistreatment and the atrocities committed against them.

In 1775, when Kumeyaay attackers burned down the mission in San Diego, torturing and murdering his dear friend, Father Luís Jayme, California’s first martyr, St. Junípero was not outraged. He was concerned for the killers’ souls. He pleaded with authorities to have mercy.

“As for the culprits, their offense should be forgiven after some slight punishment,” he said. “By doing so they would see we were putting into practice the rule we teach them — to return good for evil and to pardon our enemies.”

This may be the first moral argument against the use of the death penalty in American history. And St. Junípero was arguing against its imposition on an oppressed minority.

St. Junípero was 60 years old when he traveled 2,000 miles from Carmel to Mexico City to protest the injustices of the colonial system and demand that authorities adopt a “bill of rights” that he had written for the native peoples.

That was in 1773, three years before America’s founders declared this nation’s independence with those beautiful words: “all men are created equal (<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>) ... endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.”

Pope Francis called St. Junípero “one of the founding fathers of the United States ([http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150502\\_omelia-pontifical-north-american-college.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150502_omelia-pontifical-north-american-college.html)).” He recognized that the saint’s witness anticipated the great spirit of human equality and liberty under God that has come to define the American project.

Yet in online petitions (<https://www.change.org/p/ventura-city-council-removal-of-father-serra-statue-name-change-of-schools>), today we find St. Junípero compared to Adolf Hitler, his missions compared to concentration camps. No serious historian would accept this, and we should not allow these libels to be made in public arguments about our great saint.

Despite their many flaws, the California missions were similar to some of the other communes and “communitarian” societies we find in early American history.

The missions were multicultural communities of worship and work, with their own governments and a self-sustaining economy based on agriculture and handicrafts. Living and working together, Natives and Spaniards created a new, *mestizo* (“mixed”) culture reflected in the distinctive art, architecture, music, poetry, and prayers that came out of the missions.

It is sadly true that corporal punishment (<https://angelusnews.com/news/us-world/decapitating-history-the-case-of-st-junipero-serra/>) was sometimes used in the missions, as it was practiced throughout late 18th-century society. It is also true that some natives died of diseases in the missions.

But the tragic ruin of native populations occurred long after St. Junípero was gone and the missions were closed or “secularized.” Serious scholars conclude that St. Junípero himself was a gentle man and there were no physical abuses or forced conversions while he was president of the mission system.

St. Junípero did not impose Christianity, he proposed it. For him, the greatest gift he could offer was to bring people to the encounter with Jesus Christ. Living in the missions was always voluntary, and in the end just 10-20% (<https://angelusnews.com/local/la-catholics/the-real-story-of-how-faith-came-to-california/>) of California’s native population ever joined him.

My brothers and sisters, this is the truth about St. Junípero.

In this hour of trial in our nation, when once again we are confronting America’s shameful legacy of racism, I invite you to join me in observing St. Junípero’s feast day, July 1, as a day of prayer, fasting, and charity.

Let us ask St. Junípero’s intercession for this nation that he helped to found. Let us pray with him for healing, reconciliation, an increase in empathy and understanding, an end to racial prejudice, and a new awareness of what it means that all men and women are created equal as children of God.

Every true reform begins in the human heart, and St. Junípero would tell us that only mercy and pardon and true contrition can move us forward at this moment in our history.

I have spent these recent days praying and reflecting on his life and writings and I have prepared a spiritual meditation composed almost entirely of words from St. Junípero's sermons and letters.

I offer this meditation, along with this letter, for your prayer and reflection as we work together to promote the healing of memories and an end to the racism that still plagues our nation's systems and institutions.

Pray for me and I will pray for you. May God grant peace to you and your families. I entrust all of us to the Immaculate Heart of Mary our Blessed Mother.

Most Reverend José H. Gomez

Archbishop of Los Angeles

## **On the mercy of God** (<https://lacatholics.org/saint-junipero-serra/>)

*A spiritual meditation from the writings of St. Junípero Serra*

O Lord, You are complete mercy, complete love,  
and complete tenderness toward all men and women,  
even toward the most ungrateful sinners.

You wish all people to attain the ends  
for which You compassionately created us.

You yearn that we might believe  
that You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life,  
and advance toward the salvation You will for us.

You are sweet and gentle,  
and You call us in the gentleness of Your divine voice,

in the sweet and gentle tones of a Father

addressing his favorite child.

You extend the golden bonds of Your goodwill and love,

You pardon us in your mercy.

Father of all mercy and consolation,

pour forth the abundance of Your love with mercy.

By your mercy, conquer every type of malice.

Help us to leave not only our faults,

but the bad habits and situations in our lives which lead to these faults,

that we might love You alone.

Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening with a contrite heart.

Help us to begin right now to realize the truth!

To be entirely animated by love of You,

Help us begin to live a holy life,

with a burning love and zeal for the salvation of our neighbors.

Make us more gentle, more calm,

more nurturing and strong.

Remind us of Your gentle goodwill, O Lord.

May we never be severe or harsh.



May we see in everyone, a child whom You have created and  
redeemed with the most precious blood of Your Son.

Teach us to know that You value kindness,  
that love is the best way to attract people to You.

May we always help others to taste and see  
the sweetness and gentleness of Your love.

Let us bear every hardship  
for the love of You and the salvation of souls.

In our trials, may we know that we are loved as Your own children.

To a willing heart all is sweet,  
so grant us love and patience, and  
conform us always to Your will, O God.

We entrust ourselves to the  
Ever-Immaculate Queen Mary  
and say with the Angel, “Hail Mary.”

— *Compiled by Most Reverend José H. Gomez,*

*Archbishop of Los Angeles*

*July 1, 2020*

## ARTICLE TAGS

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[California Missions](https://angelusnews.com/tag/california-missions/) (<https://angelusnews.com/tag/california-missions/>), [Racism](https://angelusnews.com/tag/racism/) (<https://angelusnews.com/tag/racism/>), [St. Junípero Serra](https://angelusnews.com/tag/st-junipero-serra/) (<https://angelusnews.com/tag/st-junipero-serra/>).

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## ARCHBISHOP JOSÉ H. GOMEZ

### New World of Faith

Most Reverend José H. Gomez (<http://www.archbishopgomez.org/>) is the Archbishop of Los Angeles, the nation's largest Catholic community. He also serves as President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

You can follow Archbishop Gomez daily via [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/archbishopgomez/) (<https://www.facebook.com/archbishopgomez/>), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ArchbishopGomez) (<https://twitter.com/ArchbishopGomez>), and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/archbishopgomez/) (<https://www.instagram.com/archbishopgomez/>).

**EXHIBIT 2**

The Washington Post

Opinions

## Statues of Saint Junípero Serra deserve to stay

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Opinion by Salvatore Joseph Cordileone

June 30

*Salvatore Joseph Cordileone is the archbishop of San Francisco.*

To the protesters who tore down his statue in Los Angeles this month, the priest, friar and saint Junípero Serra represents “hate, bigotry and colonization,” as [one activist put it](#).

Nothing would have made Serra sadder, for the real man was a profound lover of all people and especially of the indigenous peoples he came to serve.

Seen through the lens of the present, many heroes of history may seem unworthy of their pedestals. But some, such as Serra, still deserve our esteem.

Who, then, is Junípero Serra after all?

First and foremost, Serra represents the true spirit of a church identified with the poor and outcast. He left his home, his family, his sinecure as a philosophy professor to offer the very best thing he had to the California people: the news that God Himself loved them enough to send His only Son to die on a cross to redeem them. Saint Junípero Serra is “the Apostle of California.”

Serra repeatedly intervened for mercy on behalf of indigenous rebels against Spanish authorities. He famously walked to Mexico City with a painful ulcerated leg to obtain the authority to discipline the military who were abusing the indigenous people. Then he walked back.

And his legacy lives on. The 21 missions founded by Serra and his brother Franciscans are the state’s oldest structures and among its most visited historic monuments. The churches are a physical sign of the Catholic Church’s respect for local cultures, enriched and transformed by the love of Jesus Christ. Mission architecture is widely copied precisely because its innovation speaks so strikingly to Southwestern culture.

There is no denying that Native Americans in California endured grave human rights abuses. They suffered wrongs during all three eras: the Spanish colonization (known as the Mission era), the Mexican secularization and the American era.

But Serra should not bear the weight of all that went wrong and all who did wrong. If we looked at him with clear eyes, we would see Serra as one of the first American champions of the human rights of indigenous peoples, a man who protested abusive police powers by government authorities.

The deaths that occurred during the Mission era were [primarily from disease](#). The greater, more deliberate devastation happened later, when secular governments took control. As UCLA historian Benjamin Madley writes in his book "[American Genocide](#)": "Murders and massacres filled the archives."

As Santa Clara University historian [Robert Senkewicz told the National Catholic Reporter](#), "We do know what did happen when religious groups were not present to try to protect native peoples." The genocide of native peoples happened primarily during the gold rush, he points out, "when Americans offered bounties for Indian scalps and the native peoples of Northern California were brutally decimated and oppressed."

History is often not kind to heroes. George Washington sacrificed to found a great country. He also owned slaves. Leland Stanford, founder of a great university, was an abolitionist but also continued genocidal policies against the Indians. Haight-Ashbury, the San Francisco symbol of free love, is named after Henry Haight, who in 1867 [called the Chinese](#) a "servile, effeminate and inferior race" that would "pollute and desecrate" Americans' democratic heritage. He was elected governor of California in a landslide.

We are not yet a nation that lives up to our founding creed of liberty and justice for all. We can and must do better. That is precisely why we ought to look to Serra as an inspiration to heroic virtue and as an emblem of American diversity. His is the path to peace, equality and racial justice.

The first Hispanic American saint, he is also the first saint to be canonized on U.S. soil and by the first pope from the Americas. At the canonization ceremony, [Pope Francis said](#) Serra represents a fearless willingness to engage with the other with the love of Christ: "He learned how to bring to birth and nurture God's life in the faces of everyone he met; he made them his brothers and sisters."

Father Junípero Serra died a beloved figure, mourned by indigenous people and Spaniards alike: a symbol of reconciliation, of hope and of the profound love he bore toward the people he strove to serve. His life reminds us of a core tenet of the Catholic faith: that the spirit of poverty, service and simplicity is the way to peace.

### **CORRECTION**

An earlier version of this op-ed incorrectly reported that George Washington freed his enslaved people on his death. This version has been updated.

### **Read more:**

[Ken Burns: Our monuments are representations of myth, not fact](#)

[David Von Drehle: What tearing down statues reveals about revolutionary movements](#)

[Megan McArdle: Where do we draw the line in tearing down statues?](#)

[Henry Olsen: The anti-statue movement has taken a turn into absurdity](#)

[Eugene Robinson: There is no earthly reason this nation should be defiled by Confederate statues](#)

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**EXHIBIT 3**



## CANCELING PADRE SERRA

by [Bishop Robert Barron](#) · July 20, 2020

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I have just received word that, after voting to remove a large statue of St. Junípero Serra that stands in front of their City Hall, the government of Ventura, California (which is in my pastoral region) is now considering removing the image of Padre Serra from the county seal. This entire effort to erase the memory of Serra is from a historical standpoint ridiculous and from a moral standpoint more than a little frightening.

Let me address the ridiculous side first. To state it bluntly, Junípero Serra is being used as a convenient scapegoat and whipping boy for certain abuses inherent to eighteenth-century Spanish colonialism. Were such abuses real? Of course. But was Fr. Serra personally responsible for them? Of course not. I won't deny for a moment that Serra probably engaged in certain disciplinary practices that we would rightfully regard as morally questionable, but the overwhelming evidence suggests that he was a great friend to the native peoples; that he sought, time and again, to protect them from mistreatment by civil authorities; and that he presided over missions where the indigenous were taught useful skills and were introduced to the Christian faith. To suggest, as did some of those who were petitioning for the removal of his statue, that Serra was the moral equivalent of Hitler and his missions the moral equivalent of concentration camps is nothing short of defamatory.

It is no exaggeration to affirm that from the missions established by Junípero Serra came much of the political and cultural life of the state of California. Many of our greatest cities—San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, and yes, Ventura—were built on the



foundation of the missions. And I won't hesitate to say it: the spread of the Christian faith in this part of the world took place largely because of the work of Junípero Serra and his colleagues—and this is a good thing! Jesus told his first followers to go into all the world and preach the Good News, not as a message of oppression but of spiritual liberation. It was precisely in response to that apostolic summons that Fray Junípero left Majorca, crossed the ocean, and spent the remainder of his life proclaiming Christ to those who did not know him. Though it is politically incorrect to say it today, this kind of enthusiastic evangelism is to be celebrated, not excoriated. The majority of Catholics in California today have the faith that they cherish because Padre Serra first brought it here.

And this brings me to the morally dangerous side of this issue. When I saw the videos of Serra statues being torn down, burned, spat upon, trampled, and desecrated in San Francisco and Los Angeles, I shuddered—not only because such behavior was boorish and unjustified, but also because it called to mind very similar activities at earlier stages of American history. In the mid to late nineteenth century, anti-Catholicism was rampant in the United States, due in part to prejudices inherited from Protestantism but also due to the arrival of large groups of immigrants from Catholic countries, who were considered inferior. A powerful political party, the Know-Nothings, was organized precisely around the theme of opposing Catholicism, and in many of the major cities of our country, Catholic convents, parishes, cathedrals, statues, and churches were burned to the ground by unruly mobs. Moreover, in that same period, the Ku Klux Klan, which was active not just in the South but in many northern cities as well, endeavored to terrorize blacks and Jews, of course, but also, it is easy to forget, Catholics. If you doubt that this sort of knee-jerk opposition to Catholicism endured well into the twentieth century, I would recommend you consult some of the histrionic rhetoric used by the opponents of John F. Kennedy during the presidential campaign of 1960. The dean of American historians, Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., summed up this trend in his oft-repeated remark that prejudice against Catholics is “the deepest bias in the history of the American people.”

So when I see mobs of people tearing down and desecrating statues of a great Catholic saint, canonized just five years ago by Pope Francis, how can I not see the ugly specter of anti-Catholicism raising its head? We are passing through a Jacobin moment in our cultural history, and such periods are dangerous indeed, for there is no clear indication what can stop their momentum. So in this case, what's next? Shall we tear down the missions themselves, the moral equivalents of death camps? Shall we call into question the Catholic faith and institutions that Junípero Serra brought to these shores? One can only hope that cooler heads will prevail

and that responsible people might bring to an end this ridiculous and dangerous attempt to erase Padre Serra.

*UPDATE: A previous version of this article asserted that the city of Ventura was changing its seal and the badges of its police officers to remove the image of Serra. It's been corrected to note the changes are being made only to the county of Ventura seal.*

## **COMMENTS**

Comments are turned off.

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** timsam <>  
**Date:** August 6, 2020 at 11:04:02 AM PDT  
**To:** Beiser Kevin <[KevinBeiser@sandi.net](mailto:KevinBeiser@sandi.net)>  
**Subject: Serra High**

Kevin,  
Hope things are well.

I was inquiring about the authority regarding the titling/naming etc that is occurring at Serra.

I've seen that there is some information to change.

Has the board reviewed this situation, given direction to the site or got independent consultation to evaluate this process?

btw, I am a Serra alumni and parent.

Thanks for your response,

Tim Samuelson

<Administrative Procedure 3300\_Naming of Schools and School Facilities.pdf>

<SDUSD Process to request facility naming 102716 rev.pdf>

**From:** [Tim Samuelson](#)  
**To:** [Naji Samer](#)  
**Cc:** [Stultz Martha](#); [Beiser Kevin](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Serra High  
**Date:** Thursday, August 6, 2020 5:15:29 PM

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Thank you Samir

Currently I am not in favor of name-mascot-color change.

Specifically regarding name change I would request the district or board to get an independent evaluation of existing status helping to guide the board and others for possible requests.

Tim Samuelson

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 6, 2020, at 2:39 PM, Naji Samer <[snaji@sandi.net](mailto:snaji@sandi.net)> wrote:

Hi Tim,

Your inquiry was forwarded to me as I assist with name change processes. We have a policy/procedure in place that guides stakeholders along a process to change a school or facility name. I have attached the district's policy and a 1-pager that summarizes the process.

Broadly speaking, a stakeholder will require the support of the school principal and the school community to change a name. If they are proposing a new name after an individual, a letter of support from the individual's family would also be required. Stakeholders interested in a new name would need to submit to me a letter from the principal supporting the name change, and documentation of community support, which could include petitions, letters of support, or meeting agenda/minutes that show discussion and support, etc. These items would make up a name change proposal which will be reviewed by our Facilities Naming Committee. With committee support, a proposal moves on to the Board of Education for final consideration.

While I am aware of a name change process taking place at Serra, I have not received a formal proposal yet. I have reviewed the district's process and procedure with the school principal and I understand community dialogue continues to take place.

Kind regards,

Samer Naji  
Facilities Communication Supervisor  
San Diego Unified School District  
O: (619) 725-7747  
C: (619) 548-3388