

July 20, 2008

*Received
Friday
Evening
9/21/09
Faad
Steve B.*

Board of Education
Pasadena Unified School District
351 South Hudson Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91109

Re: Behavior of your fellow Board member - Mr. Ramon Miramontes

Dear Board Members:

This letter is written to draw your attention to a matter of great concern to me and my fellow employees, especially those in my department. This is not something that will be new to most, if not all, Board members. Because the Board has either chosen to ignore this destructive behavior, or has been ineffective in dealing with it, the behavior continues. As recently as Friday morning at 12:15 a.m., Mr. Ramon Miramontes sent the attached email to a wide audience including the Superintendent, four Board members, and three senior staff members, including myself. I forwarded the email to the remaining Board members who were not copied, Mr. Ed Honowitz, and Ms. Elizabeth Pomeroy. In this email, as documented in the following excerpts, Mr. Miramontes asserted the Superintendent's immediate staff lacks diversity, but then went on to allege that they didn't relate well to people of color and I quote Mr. Miramontes; "Let me be blunt and frank, your executive team is not diverse. It has created communication issues...." and "...I have severe reservations, as to how your immediate staff relates to this underserved population (for that matter people of color)."

This email and the statements made are unacceptable at any level. But when they come on the heels of three instances in his short tenure on the Board, when he has chosen to embarrass and humiliate me in public, they represent a pattern of unacceptable behavior that the Board has so far had no impact in arresting. There have been many witnesses, including my entire staff, and members of the Board and public, many of whom have expressed their embarrassment of his treatment of me. In a short period of time, Mr. Miramontes has created a hostile work place. My staff and I have great trepidation when we go to the Facilities Subcommittee meetings, which he now heads. We are unsure how he will behave at the meeting. Since I head the Facilities area and every item we work on that becomes a Board item has to go to that Subcommittee, this has a tremendous effect on how we function. I worked very hard to put together an excellent team. This team is threatened because of the atmosphere we have to work in. They are concerned about their future and the future of the group, because their leader is perceived to be under attack by the Chairman of the Subcommittee they must address.

The latest example, his email allegations, which have strong racial overtones, deserves a response. It is unfortunate that I feel it necessary to cite examples of my ability to relate to people of color, but I feel they will clearly expose these irresponsible hurtful allegations for what they are - hogwash. Below are a few citations:

- I have been working since I was 12; I worked three summers and a winter period in the grapes in the San Joaquin Valley; I was the one of two or three non-Hispanics on the crews; I had no issues. I spoke passable Spanish.

- I fought fires with a group who called themselves aguilas negras. I was the lone white fire fighter that summer. When I went back to college that fall, I will never forget the foreman, Cecil Salas, coming to the intersquad football game I was in the midst of playing, and insisting I leave and accompany them to fight a fire. Apparently, they liked my work.
- One of my best friends growing up was named Roger Gibson. We played baseball together and later in Junior College, we played football together. In our team football picture we are standing side by side. He was my friend, he happened to be African American. Many years passed and I came to know a Board member in Gilroy by the name of TJ Owens. We became good friends and were discussing our college days. It turned out we had gone to the same Junior College and he lived with the Gibsons. This deepened our friendship. When Mr. Owens passed unexpectedly, I attended his funeral and looked for Roger. He was not there but I was able to catch up with his brother Cleo.
- During my Gilroy days, I volunteered for five years with the Gilroy Hispanic Festival. I was co-chair of Finance the last four years.
- I received two special recognitions from the Mexican American Community Services Agency, the lead community agency for the Gilroy MACSA El Portal Leadership Academy. This was for my part in achieving their dream of building a new charter school facility. I attended their first graduation ceremony. The population of that high school was 98% Hispanic.
- I was the Gilroy Unified School District's liaison to the Hispanic Services Interagency Commission ("HSIAC") and assisted them in realizing their dream of a classroom/computer lab complex on the campus of one of the District's middle schools. That complex is still serving the needs of the Hispanic population in teaching English, and computer and life skills
- I followed a great leader to Pasadena; he happens to be Hispanic
- I recently added two staff members, a Senior Administrative Assistant, and a Construction Accountant. Both competed for and earned their positions because they were clearly the best candidate. As a coincidence, they are both African American.

Lastly, my wife is Hispanic and we have a daughter, which would make her half-Hispanic, but all American, and that is all that matters.

I have contacted an attorney. I will be carefully observing your response to this unfortunate situation.

Sincerely,

Stephen L. Brinkman
Chief, Facilities Planning, Construction, Maintenance and Operations