

Dear School Board Members of the Brea-Olinda Unified School District:

It was a very challenging 2018 for all of us, but the blood, sweat, tears, and sacrifices that we have endured has led us to this point:

The Brea-Olinda School Board Meeting this Monday, January 14<sup>th</sup>

At December's board meeting, you finally directed Superintendent Brad Mason to bring three (3) new names that do not include the W. E. Fanning namesake to the upcoming board meeting, after a year and 4 months of organizing, advocating, examining and uncovering the truth about William E. Fanning's involvement with the KKK in the 1920's along with Brea's unwritten sundown rules, when Black folks had to leave by 6 pm.

And we're now asking you once again: Please stay vigilant and change the name of William E. Fanning Elementary School.

This has nothing to do with the Fanning family today. They are a respected part of the community. The history and endeavors of William E. Fanning are a part of Brea's history but should not be memorialized on the marquee of a Brea school. Instead, teach about the history of Brea from all perspectives. Teach the Native American, African American, Chicanx/Latinx, Asian American, and White working-class history of Brea. The days of limiting history to a White elitist perspective are over. If past and present generations of students in Brea schools learned all of these historical perspectives, then the Brea residents that have come out of the woodwork this past month to keep Fanning's name might better understand the problem of naming a school after W. E. Fanning.

We know that this Monday's board meeting will be highly contested, we have read the comments on social media since you directed Dr. Mason last month to bring three new names to Monday's board meeting. Members of the Rename Fanning campaign have been called "cyber-bullies," "outsiders," "right wing unionists" (whatever that means), and "Un-American" for advocating for the name change. Mike Rodriguez was even called a "La Habra gadfly," and even worse, a "La Habra cockroach" (an ethnic slur long used to describe Mexican Americans and immigrant communities around the world in general). This is unacceptable. And truth be told, we are simply residents and parents from Brea, La Habra, Fullerton and Yorba Linda who have donated countless hours during the past year and a half because we want to address the injustices of our county's past. The winds of change have arrived, and this history can no longer be concealed.

One of the biggest disagreements in this debate has been centered on the List, or should I say the Lists, at the Anaheim Heritage Center. The Lists can be found in the KKK file, and you will find William E. Fanning's name on List II. The credibility of List II has been endlessly attacked throughout this whole campaign. Linda Shay and the Brea Historical Society have declared that List II has no provenance, or origin. The "Brea Matters" blog has described it as a list "scribbled down" on a piece of paper, which I assume they have since deleted because I can no longer find it on their site, thankfully. Here is what we do know about List II of the KKK members in Orange County:

- We know that a letter in the KKK file authored by Leo Friis states that he donated a KKK List in 1972. Friis is Anaheim's Historian Laureate. He also worked in the Orange County District Attorney's Office from 1929-35, and he later served as Anaheim City Attorney from 1941-49.
- There are over a thousand names on List II which contains names of individuals from the 1920's.
- It is typed on legal pleading paper, which is used in law offices throughout the country.
- According to Chris Cocolchos in his dissertation "The Invisible Empire and the Search for the Orderly Community: The Ku Klux Klan in Anaheim, California," Lafayette Lewis, who was a member of the USA Club, stated that he bought List II from a statewide KKK "Kleagle" for \$700, a hefty sum during the 1920's. Anti-Klan Anaheim residents had formed the USA Club, which stood for Unison, Service, and Americanism.
- List II was transferred from the USA Club into the hands of Alexander Nelson, the Orange County District Attorney during the 1920's, who used it to fight the Klan tooth-and-nail in Anaheim.
- A recall election of five (5) Anaheim Trustees was held in February 1925. Four (4) of them were Klan members whose names appear on List II, the same list where we find W. E. Fanning's name. Five (5) total councilmen were up for recall, but only the four Klansmen were recalled, and the councilman that was not recalled WAS NOT on List II.

Once again, this is the same List where we find W.E. Fanning's name. Coupled with the facts that he was documented attending a Klan rally with his family in Anaheim, Brea was a sundown town during his tenure as superintendent of Brea schools, and these schools had no Black children in their classrooms until after he retired from the superintendent position in 1940, it is clear that he participated in a racial system of oppression that the KKK espoused and that, in the words of Alexander Nelson, was "absolutely un-American." W. E. Fanning was a cog in this KKK machine of early Brea.

This is the early history of Orange County. This is the early history of Brea. It is time to come to terms with that. So, we urge you to stay vigilant in your decision to change the name of William E. Fanning Elementary School on January 14<sup>th</sup>. We understand that a board member of the Brea Historical Society/Brea Museum has threatened Board Members that a financially unfeasible "recall election at the least could be on the horizon if you fail to tell these bullies [supposedly the Rename Fanning campaign members] to go away." Do not let these folks bully you into a vote. They are not the majority of Brea. They have time and again tried to apologize for the KKK from the 1920's, but those days are done. It is time to also validate the history of people of color and the generations of their experiences in Brea, and a good way to start is removing the name.

Sincerely,

Betsy Cruz  
Brea

Mike Rodriguez  
La Habra

Members of the North Orange County Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Project (NOCTJRP)

