

Strike to Save Public Education!

All Out to Teacher Picket Lines February 21 in Front of All Oakland Schools

No More Separate and Unequal Education for the Youth of Oakland

Stop the School Closings - No More Charter Schools - Defend Special Education Programs and the Rights of Special Education Students – Smaller Class Sizes For All!

“Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments... It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.” —**excerpt from the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education, 1954***

The Oakland teachers strike is the best opportunity we have now to fight for the equal quality integrated education that all Oakland students deserve. There's enormous public support for a strike in Oakland. Everyone knows Oakland does not get what it needs for teachers or its youth to succeed. Students, parents, and the community must join the teachers on their picket lines to have the best chance of winning. In some ways this strike is way overdue - we have endured separate and unequal, second-class education for too long. Students must use this opportunity to make this fight our own and win lasting gains for our schools. Teachers must ensure that no settlement is signed prior to realizing these gains. This strike must be made into a civil rights struggle to save public education.

What is At Stake

For over a decade politicians in our Democratic Party majority state have adopted, in fundamental ways, the Republican Party understanding that government funding of public education is too expensive and that schools should be treated like any business that can be bought and sold. The democratic principle of the right to a public school for every young person has been pushed aside. State funding for public schools in our state, which

is over 70% Latina/o, black, other minority and immigrant has been depleted, despite the fact that today state politicians are sitting on a \$21 billion budget surplus. The various schemes and bad ideas pushed on us by our states' politicians have only deepened the segregation and inequality in our schools. This makes California a national home for a new Jim Crow racist segregated educational system. Our strike has to be made to save public education and to defeat the new Jim Crow in California.

This profound depletion of public school resources has been the backdrop to cynical local and state politicians pushing charter schools, masquerading as “engines for innovation”, particularly in majority Latina/o and black districts, like Oakland and Los Angeles as “alternatives” to the public school system, that they themselves have helped to underfund or stood aside and accepted.

Charter schools, through no fault of the students who attend them, have helped to seriously undermine the public education system in our state, taking away more money from public schools and putting them in the hands of private charter school operators who do not have to admit special education students or immigrants or follow

state mandated guidelines to in reality provide a quality education. The same lack of public money for our schools is the excuse given for why schools have to be closed and handed over to charter school operators. This business model for education in Oakland has become so absurd that in many Oakland schools, middle schools students who have to take remedial courses are denied the opportunity to take art, music, computer, foreign language, or other elective classes.

The cold, calculating games of the politicians have harmed our most vulnerable students and the students with the most need. Latina/o, black, and in particular immigrant and special education students have endured the worst of our states de-prioritization of our public schools.

Oakland can lead our state. Winning, means charter schools must be stopped. School closings must stop. Special Education students and programs must be defended by any means necessary.

We Must Shut Our Schools Down To Win

Teachers have numerous competing pressures that they feel everyday, even when they are not in school, that will make them vulnerable to accepting less than they should. They need the independent force of students to give them courage and accountability to fight to win. It will not be enough for teachers to walk picket lines and students to stay home. Sometimes we as students feel like other people are taking care of things so it's not necessary for us to get involved, this is not one of those times.

When the teachers go out on strike they will walk picket lines in front of their schools. These pickets must become the gathering place for all those who are fighting for our schools to get what they need. They will be the place to fight for our demands. If students are on the picket lines that will be so. Instead of our schools being the center of racist unequal degraded education for our communities, it must become the center of the fightback for our futures.

There must be no business as usual during the strike. Pickets mean don't cross. All schools must be closed during the strike. When we try to take action for ourselves there will be those, any number of whom will be directly or indirectly tied to the Democratic Party, who will attempt to tell us in nice "well meaning" sounding ways - or not so nice ways, that we should fight in a more "respectable" way. These are strike to lose ideas. It is not surprising that some have become far too comfortable with second class education, but we cannot allow ourselves to be lead by, or distracted by them. During the strike, district officials, politicians, media and various self-appointed, self-important people, will be inclined to tell us to return to school and not fight for ourselves.

They must be met, not only with empty schools, but with streets, and sidewalks crowded with students and our communities joining teachers on the picket lines. They will be met with our determined effort to fight for ourselves and each other. We have to leave no doubt, that if the Latina/o, black, other minority, and immigrant communities of Oakland don't get what we should we can shut this city down. We don't have to wait for any authority to win what we want. We have power too.

Building a Leadership for the Strike and Fighting to Win - Expect a Key Turning Point

At some point OUSD and members of the OEA Executive Board will propose a joint tentative agreement to end the strike. There will be an inclination on the part of some teachers' union leaders to drop stopping charter schools, defending special education, substantially reducing class-size, stopping school closings, and winning greatly increased staffing levels for counselors, nurses, psychologists, newcomers, and other support services from the deal. We can't let that happen. The strength of the fight we make at our schools can prevent this.

Any deal that makes Oakland's under-resourced majority minority schools accept less than what is necessary to significantly improve their quality of education must be rejected by the teachers. There must be full and open discussion by about any temporary agreement between the teachers' union and the school board. Teachers must reject anything less. Everyone must have adequate time to read any Tentative Agreement (TA) before a vote. Mass meetings for debate and discussion need to happen with adequate time before voting on any TA. Voting on a TA must be done at a citywide mass meeting. Building a student-teacher-community alliance is the key to winning a strike. BAMN (the Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action Integration Immigrant Rights and Fight for Equality By Any Means Necessary) is dedicated to doing this. EON/BAMN members Mark Airgood, Tania Kappner and Adarene Hoag are long time BAMN activists and part of the Equal Opportunity Now/By Any Means Necessary Caucus in the OEA (Oakland Educators Association), the Oakland teachers union. Adarene is a site representative for the OEA at East Oakland Pride Elementary in East Oakland. Mark is a special education teacher at Edna Brewer Middle School, and Tania a teacher at Oakland Tech. Mark is Secretary of the OEA and Tania is a member of the OEA Executive Board. They will do everything in their power to lead the union in fighting the attacks on our schools. But they need a growing leadership of students and teachers developing their understanding of what is necessary to fight and win, to do it.

Join BAMN! Join the Equal Opportunity Now (EON/BAMN) OEA Caucus, to fight to win!

Lessons from the Recent Teachers Strike in Los Angeles

The Los Angeles teachers showed that a teachers' strike can win. It also showed what it can't win without students in the lead. In LA teachers struck for nine days and won a substantial decrease in class sizes (as a part of the reduction, the district can no longer force teachers take on additional students --extra teachers must be hired). The district must also hire more school nurses, counselors, and librarians. This is an important departure from the typical pattern of teachers' strikes which raise class-size reduction and staffing demands, but then sacrifice them in settlements that focus on wages. However, anything meaningful on stopping charter schools was left out of the agreement between the district and teachers and nothing was done for special education.

Beware of the Methods of Striking to Lose

Beware the various ways that our struggle can get outmaneuvered and sold-out. We cannot have a repeat of what happened at the school board meeting protest on January 23rd to keep Roots Academy - a popular community public school -- open. After a spirited march of students and teachers and 40 minutes of rallying, marching, and shutting-down the meeting inside the board room, the administration—in the form of self-appointed misleaders—regained control over the meeting

by forming a “restorative justice circle” with the School Board, and diverting the discussion into one that tried to pit individual students against individual teachers. Within minutes, the Superintendent controlled the mic. For most people in the meeting, including most students, this was obviously ridiculous and achieved nothing except getting in the way of keeping Roots Academy open. The only way to “restore justice” to the situation was to not close Roots Academy or any Oakland public school. This kind of sabotage only signals to the board that they can get away with their attacks on our schools, students, and teachers, because the students' power was contained by adult “allies.”

Fight for Ourselves and Our Futures

This is when the best of Oakland can shine, we can all put forward our best selves fighting to win and fighting for each other. We can do this, and we can make every minority and immigrant community across the country feel the same. Oakland has a very strong sense of sister and brotherhood and standing with the national struggles for the rights of immigrants, and against bigotry and racism - and we definitely know Trump needs to go now - by winning this strike we can send him a loud and clear message: GET OUT NOW! We will not be treated as second-class! This teachers' strike can be the vehicle to put Oakland on the map once again as the city to look to for leadership of a new powerful civil rights and immigrant rights movement.

Join BAMN and the Equal Opportunity/By Any Means Necessary Caucus!

**To Organize Actions at your school or Sign and circulate the pledge to strike to save public education
contact: california@bamn.com or 510-817-2617**

- ❖ Stop the School Closings! No More Charter Schools!
- ❖ Defend Special Education programs and the rights of Special Education students, our most vulnerable students. Limit and reduce Special Education class sizes and special education teacher caseloads - No wholesale “full-inclusion.”
- ❖ Smaller class-sizes for all.
- ❖ Hire more Teachers Counselors, Nurses, Psychologists, Social Workers, and other Support Staff.
- ❖ Adequate text books and supplies, up-to-date technology, more field trips and other hands on experiences, creative arts and music programs.
- ❖ Significantly raise Teacher Pay. Teachers deserve equal pay and benefits to surrounding districts.
- ❖ More resources for Newcomer immigrant student programs: smaller class-sizes, legal services, para-professionals, translators, and classroom materials.
- ❖ Cancel the State Debt! Fully Fund Public Education
- ❖ More AP, Honors, Art, Music, and Theater classes in all our schools. Increase Latina/o, black, Native American, and immigrant student enrollment at UC-Berkeley and all University of California campuses.
- ❖ Free lunch for all students

Equal Opportunity Now / By Any Means Necessary (EON/BAMN) Caucus

Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, Integration, Immigrant Rights and Fight for Equality By Any Means Necessary (BAMN) www.bamn.com (510) 817-2617 email@bamn.com Follow BAMN on Facebook [02/18/19]