Berkeley PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Jefferson School Renaming Recommendation

December 9, 2020

Brent Stephens, Superintendent
Natasha Beery, Director of BSEP & Community Relations
grace kong, Naming Advisory Committee Facilitator

This Evening's Agenda

1. **Brief Review** of Renaming Timeline & Process
2. **Summary of Input** on Top Seven Names
3. **Committee Recommendation:** Ruth Acty Elementary School
4. **Implementation Steps** and Carrying the Learning Forward
5. **Board Discussion** and Decision

Berkeley PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Berkeley Unified School District

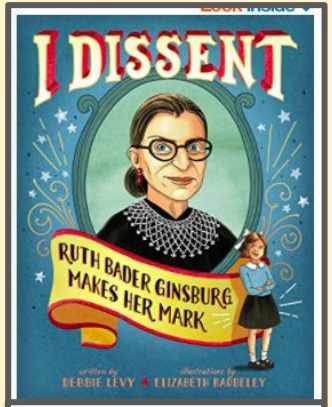
Facilities Naming Process BP/AR 7310

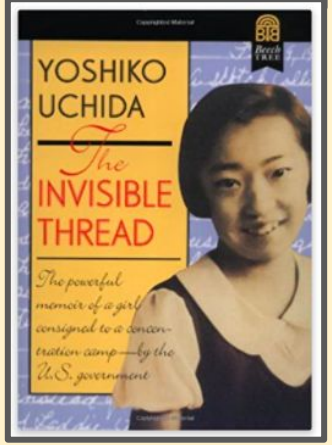
	Steps		Timeline
1.	Resolution to Begin Renaming Process		June 10, 2020
2.	Town Halls with Staff and Parent/Guardians		June 22/23 2020
3.	Board Action to Discontinue Jefferson & Washington		July 1, 2020
4.	*Jefferson*	Advisory Committee Groundwork	Aug 2020
5.	*Jefferson*	School Community Meetings	Sept-Nov 2020
6.	*Jefferson*	Engagement on Top Choices	Oct-Nov 2020
7.	*Jefferson*	Recommendation to Board	Dec 9, 2020
8.	*Jefferson*	Name Change and Celebration	2021
9.	*Washington*	Renaming Process Begins	2021

Seven Names for Inspiring Classroom Learning

Muwekma Ohlone

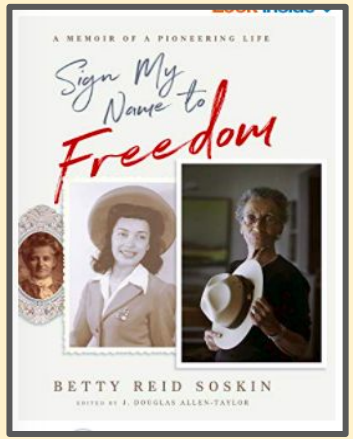
Ruth Bader Ginsburg





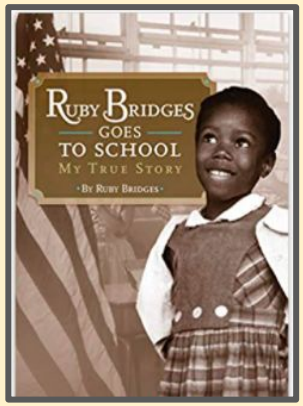
Yoshiko Uchida

Ruth Acty



Betty Reid Soskin

Ruby Bridges



Maya Angelou

Excitement about Choices

group	1st	2nd	3rd
TK-3	Acty	Bridges	Muwekma
4-5	Muwekma	RBG	Acty
Staff	Acty - Angelou -Muwekma		
Parents overall	Muwekma	Acty	Bridges
BIPOC+2 Races	Muwekma	Acty - Bridges	
White Parents	Muwekma	RBG	Acty

my kids had a hard time choosing, as they learned more they were **inspired!**

Yoshiko Uchida - makes visible a part of US history that is often ignored

Ruth Acty - local, breaking barriers, educator, inspirational!

I love all the choices, but in the spirit of Black Joy and as an antidote to Jefferson I think **Ruby Bridges or Ruth Acty** would be really powerful

Kudos to process - don't want to lose what we've learned, especially the **local history**

Whether its named **Ohlone** or not, I hope we continue learning from them, and continuing relations

Superintendent's
Naming Advisory Committee
Recommendation:

Ruth Acty

Elementary School

Ruth Acty always wanted to be a teacher

Born in 1913 in Oakland, Ruth Acty earned a BA in English, Minor in Music from SF State in 1937. She studied early childhood development and speech at UC Berkeley. Despite earning multiple teaching credentials, she could not find a teaching job in 1939. Her parents had both died, she had two younger sisters to worry about, but she persevered, taking a starring role in a play in San Francisco while continuing to search for a teaching job.

ACTIVITIES AMONG NEGROES

By LENA M. WYSINGER

The Professional and Business Girls Club of the Linden Branch, Y.W.C.A., will hold its Twelfth Annual Easter Breakfast at the Linden Branch Y.W.C.A., 638 Linden Street, this morning. A large number of members and friends have made their reservations. Miss Lulu C. Chapman is executive secretary.

Miss Henrietta Bell, business and industrial secretary of Linden Branch Y.W.C.A., returned to her office Wednesday after a month's absence owing to illness.

CHURCH SERVICES

Today marks the close of Passion Week, which as usual has been observed by the churches and fraternal groups of the Bay area.

Special programs, pageants, song services and church school programs are prepared for the day's worship, together with public services, where many share a part. On Good Friday union services of the churches found worshipers at the chapels in large numbers. Special daily prayer services led up to the Friday union service. The Palm Sunday services were well attended.

The Masonic Order of the O.E.S. held their annual service of Alameda County at St. Paul A.M.E. Church, Berkeley. Rev. A. W. Johnson, of Parks Chapel, delivered the sermon. The Junior Girls choir, Mrs. Pointer Thomas at the piano, and Mrs. Zilica Williams, accompanied by Miss Maxine Blackburn, furnished the singing. Mrs. Williams sang the "Palms."

This afternoon, from 2 to 6 o'clock, Mrs. Ruth Larche, State chairman of Arts and Crafts of Federated Clubs, will direct a fashion review at the Masonic Hall, 30th and Myrtle Streets. The public is invited.

PLAY ACTRESS

Miss Ruth Acty, who plays the role of Ella, Jim's wife, and daugh- [illegible] of the leading stars in "Run Lil Chillun," now playing at the Alcazar in San Francisco.

In an interview with Miss Acty recently she told her own story:

ACTRESS

Miss Ruth Acty, a star in "Run Lil' Chillun," now playing in San Francisco. —Joseph photo.

"I majored in speech arts and music while attending the San Francisco State College, with the idea of teaching these subjects in Junior High School. I received an elementary teaching certificate and an A.B. degree from the State on my [illegible]

"Since then I have done post-graduate work, both at the State and the University of California, and have received in addition my elementary certificate, a nursery school and kindergarten, primary certificate and Junior High School teaching certificate.

"I had set my heart on teaching for I feel that it is my real calling, but my father passed away suddenly last September, leaving my two younger sisters and myself.

"I had been expecting a call to teach in El Centro that Fall but somehow it didn't come. I realized I had to find something permanent immediately, but it seemed that every door was closed. The play came along as a Godsend.

"I've always been interested in the theater but never dreamed I'd have an opportunity to perform.

"Well, just about the time the play had gotten into full swing I received a sudden call from El Centro to teach. I was thrilled but didn't know which way to turn. There were matters concerning the home that had to be considered, and my sisters' welfare. So I remained at home, rather disappointed, yet feeling that I had a definite obligation to fulfill.

"I have enjoyed my work in this play and I know that I have gained a wealth of knowledge and practical experience from my participation in 'Run Lil Chillun.'

"The role of Ella, which I portray, is a real inspiration. I feel it has helped me to meet situations with more confidence and hope, and with a greater faith."

FORESTRY PROGRAM

The Federated Art and Industrial Club, of which Mrs. Lillian Wilkerson is president, held its forestry program at the home of Mrs. Rosina Banks, 647 40th Street, at its last meeting in March.

Mrs. Gertrude Jackson, acting chairman, presented the following program:

"What Do We Plant When We Plant a Tree?", poem by the chairman; "On Trees," reading by Mrs. A. Scurlock; "The Heart of a Tree," [illegible] "Lilies," reading by Mrs. L. Gibbons. The program was closed with singing the National Negro anthem, "Lift Every Heart and Sing" by the late James Weldon Johnson.

1939 article in which Acty talked about trying to find a teaching job

BOARD GIVES POLICY ON NEGRO TEACHERS

The threatened bombshell over the controversal question of whether Negro teachers shall be employed in the Berkeley public schools failed to explode last night when the Board of Education met and quickly decided the issue.

In a brief statement to the crowd of more than 250 persons who filled the meeting room, Dr. Louise Hector, president of the Board, announced the past policy of the school directors concerning color and creed in the selection of teachers will continue in effect. Following disposal of a number of routine matters, Dr. Hector asserted:

"A number of our citizens and the Superintendent of Schools having requested a definition of policy concerning the employment of persons in the public school system of Berkeley, this Board hereby affirms the right guaranteed all people under the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and instructs the superintendent to recommend employes solely with respect to their fitness for the tasks to be performed and without reference to race r creed."

September 28, 1939, the BUSD Board of Education, under the leadership of Dr. Louise Hector, affirmed teacher hiring without regard to race or creed.

Ruth Acty applied in 1939, placed on sub list in 1941-42

As Berkeley become an increasingly diverse city, and with organized pressure from Black leaders, including Frances Albrier, the School Board was confronted with its hiring practices which so far yielded an all-white teaching force.

***Ruth Acty** was among the highly qualified teachers of color who had applied but were not hired.*

In 1943, Ruth Acty was hired as the first teacher of color.

She was assigned to teach Kindergarten at Longfellow School, where 30% of students were Black.

Acty's 1943 Kindergarten class with visiting Chinese-American teacher

1943 Kindergarten Teacher - Longfellow/Lincoln - until 1955

1948 Masters from Northwestern (Speech, Arts, Theater)

1955 First Black teacher in BUSD Jr. HIgh (French, Drama, English)

1969 French diploma from Université de Poitiers

1973 Teaches at Berkeley Adult School; UC Extension

1982 Board of Education issues a Resolution of Appreciation

1984 *Looking Back At Berkeley - A Pictorial History of a Diverse City*

1985 Profile in East Bay Times and Berkeley Alumni Association

1986 City of Berkeley proclaims October 5, 1986 “Ruth Acty Day.”

1991 CSU-Hayward historian’s video entitled “Born to Teach.”

1994 Berkeley Historical Society records her oral history

1998 Board of Education posthumous Recognition Resolution

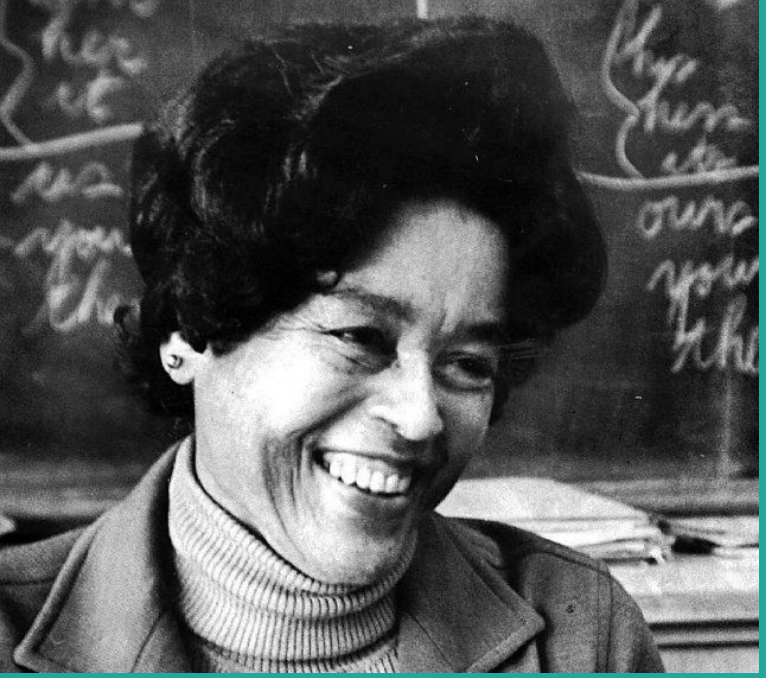
2001 Berkeley Historical Society publishes book about Ruth Acty

Ruth Acty retired from Berkeley Adult School in 1991 at the age of 78.

(photos: Berkeley Historical Society)

Criteria for Name Selection and Discussions

- ❏ **INSPIRING:** meaningful, especially to school children
- ❏ **ENDURING:** likely to stand the test of time
- ❏ **LOCAL CONNECTION:** ties to our community, history, or BUSD
- ❏ **OUR VALUES:** community, inclusion, social justice, diversity, etc.
- ❏ **UNDER-REPRESENTED:** not a common type of BUSD school name
- ❏ **UNIQUE:** not already widely known or used elsewhere
- ❏ **EDUCATIONAL:** exemplifies right to excellent public education.



Naming Advisory Committee Recommendation:

Ruth Acty Elementary School

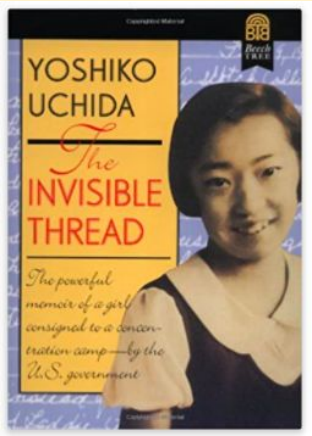
"A tenacious, committed, dedicated, caring and loving educator, trailblazer and history maker."

- *Celebrating and Appreciating Miss Ruth Acty, a Model of Excellence, 1998*

“Miss Ruth Acty’s significance in the history of the Bay Area is unparalleled… She represents the best in excellence, elegance, refinement, commitment, determination, perseverance and persistence. She was a superior mentor and role model for planning and reaching goals, despite the odds.”

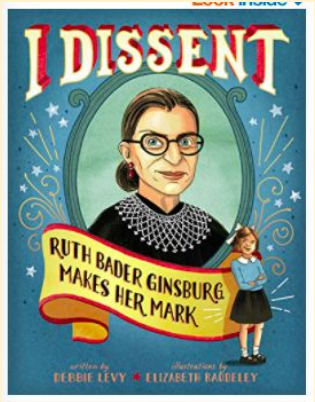
-Robert Haynes, senior curator for the African American Museum and Library, Oakland

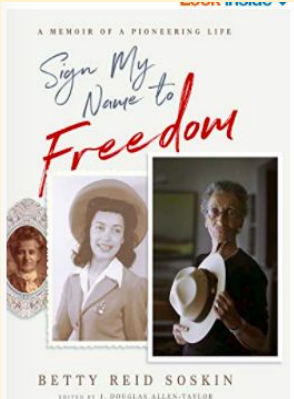
Carrying the Learning Forward

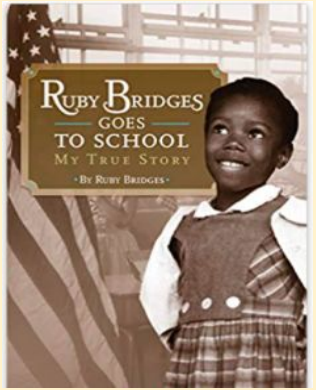


- ★ **Local Heroes** Curriculum & Displays
- ★ **Mural** at the School?
- ★ **Sequoia** Hall
- ★ Engage with **Tribal Representatives**

We can expand narratives in our school...we can ***integrate these histories!***







Implementation Steps

- **Official Change:** California Department of Education
- **Facilities:** New Signage
- **BUSD Departments and Systems**
- **District and School Media**
- **Berkeley City and Community Notification**
- **Celebration!**

Thank You!

Naming Advisory Committee:

Angela Reed, Arun Khanna, Deminika Spears, Joy Chua, Nick Williams, Orville Jackson, Rick Kleine

Top Name Slideshow Teachers:

Angela Reed, Ariel Wittman, Barb Wenger, Elaine Wang, Lisa Rossi, Nick Williams, Rachel Kadner, Rick Kleine

All the students who participated; everyone who attended PTA and Village meetings, town halls, webinars and board meetings in 2020; everyone who suggested names for consideration; Advocates for name change from 2003-2005 and from 2018; the Sylvia Mendez community.

To quote Ruth Acty: "There Will be a Way, Keep Going, Do Not Give Up!

Questions for Board Discussion

1. Does the Board approve the recommendation of the name **“Ruth Acty Elementary School”?**

2. Does the Board approve the recommendation of the name **“Sequoia Hall”** at the school to honor the 2003-05 history?

3. Should Staff eventually continue engagement with tribal representatives regarding **indigenous representation** in curriculum and our schools?

BUSD School Names 1878-2020

1920

Berkeley High, *Burbank*, *Columbus*, *Edison*, Emerson, Franklin, *Garfield*, *Hawthorne*, *Hillside*, Jefferson, John Muir, *Le Conte*, Lincoln, Longfellow, *McKinley*, Oxford, *University*. Washington, Whittier, Willard

2020

Berkeley Adult School, Berkeley Technology Academy, Berkeley High, Berkeley Arts Magnet at Whittier, Cragmont, Emerson, Franklin-King-Hopkins CDC, *Jefferson*, John Muir, ML King, Longfellow, Malcolm X, Oxford, Rosa Parks, Sylvia Mendez, Thousand Oaks, *Washington*, Willard

In **1920**, many **location-based school names** (Dwight Way, San Pablo, Rose Street, Seventh Street) gave way to names honoring Americans of note, as Berkeley established itself as a university town and as possible state capital (1908), with names honoring **historical figures, intellectuals, poets, inventors, naturalists, abolitionists. presidents.** Shortly after the first woman was elected to the school board in 1909, a school was first named for a woman (Frances E. Willard).

In 2020, of the 21 school names, 7 are place names, 13 honor people, of whom 3 are women (Mendez, Parks, Willard) and 4 are people of color, and the names of two assassinated presidents (Garfield, Lincoln) were eventually replaced by two assassinated civil rights leaders (ML King, Malcolm X).

Berkeley Public Schools History

	1870-1880	1890's	1900's	1910's	1920's
Schools Opened	Kellogg, San Pablo, Seventh Street	Columbus, LeConte, Longfellow, Whittier, Berkeley High Dwight, Rose Street	Hillside, Emerson, Jefferson, Washington	Oxford, Garfield, Willard, Edison, Luther Burbank, John Muir	Thousand Oaks, Cragmont
Schools Renamed, Repurposed, Closed		~~Kellogg~~ Lorin > Lincoln	Dwight > McKinley, Rose St >Jefferson San Pablo > Franklin Grayson >Hawthorne Seventh Street closed	Evening (adult) schools open	Hillside school burns/rebuilt
Berkeley Events; Educational Milestones	UC moves to Berkeley; Berkeley Post Office; Berkeley Branch Line	Women's Congress; Berkeley Prohibition	Charter amendment > women vote/run for school board; 1909 Eleanor Carlisle first woman elected to board	WWI	19th amendment 1923 Fire
Berkeley census		5,101	13,214	40,434	56,036

Berkeley Public Schools History

	1930's	1940's	1950's	1960's	1970's
Schools Renamed, Repurposed, Closed	~~Edison~~ ~~Hawthorne~~		McKinley > Continuation School	~~Burbank~~ Garfield > MLK King Jr	~~Tilden~~ Lincoln > Malcolm X
Berkeley Events; Educational Milestones	Great Depression	Ruth Acty, first AA school teacher; WWII; Kaiser shipyards; Japanese imprisonment	School Board votes 3-2 to allow Paul Robeson to perform at Berkeley Community Theatre; Berkeley Report on Segregation	Rev. Roy Nichols, first AA elected to school board; BUSD integration bussing; Free Speech movement; Vietnam War	Gene Roh, first Korean-American to board; now majority non-white; Jeanne Rucker first AA woman president; Prop 13
Demographics		94% white 4% black 2% other	85% white 12% black 4% other	74% white 20% black 7% other	68% white 24% black 10% other
Berkeley census	82,109	85,947	113,805	111,268	116,716

Berkeley Public Schools History

	1980's	1990's	2000's	2010's
Schools Renamed, Repurposed, Closed	~~Hillside~~ East Campus > Berkeley Alternative; Whittier > Arts Magnet	Berkeley Alternative > Berkeley Technology Academy; *Le Conte, Washington, MX, Longfellow are Magnets*	Columbus > Rosa Parks Magnet Board votes against renaming Jefferson	Le Conte petition to review school name begins process which leads to Sylvia Mendez
Berkeley Events; Educational Milestones	Population decreases rising housing costs, loss of industries; Rent control; First BSEP Measure 1986.	Bonds funds improve facilities; School zones and lottery system to improve diversity; Second BSEP passes, Gentrification of historically black neighborhoods	BSEP measures 2004 and 2006, Great recession 2007; decreased school funding; UC admits more out of state, international students	Two-Way Immersion (Spanish/English) at Le Conte; LCFF funding, BSEP Measure E1; 2016 election followed by demonstrations
Demographics	67% white 20% black 13% other	62% white 19% black 19% other	59% white 14% black 27% other [includes 2+ races]	60% white 10% black 31% other [includes 2+ races]
Berkeley census	103,328	102,724	102,743	112,580