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## Confusion Over Moraga Campaign Signs -and then some

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AUHSD Superintendent Jim Negri

As November approaches, political signs are starting to grace every significant crossroad and sidewalk of our fair cities. Campaign managers, hoping to get name recognition and ultimately votes, invest a lot of money in these items and much consideration goes into their design (see sidebar). The recent debut of one sign in particular brought an immediate reaction from the Superintendent of the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD). Throw in some "fringe Berkeley extremists" and the debate grows even more interesting.

The Measure J campaign has designed one of its signs to include, below the line reading "Yes on J," the phrase "Go Cougars." The red, white and blue signs are printed in the colors of Campolindo High School, and the cougar is the school mascot.

Superintendent Jim Negri was quick to send a message to the press and to his constituency rebuking any suggestion that the AUHSD was supporting Measure J.

"Once the signs appeared, I started receiving emails asking why AUHSD was endorsing a local ballot issue," said the Superintendent. "Some people confused it with our Measure E. I want to be clear that the district does not support or oppose local issues like Measure J."

Negri added that the district does not plan to take further action. "The District has contacted the 'Yes on Measure J' campaign and the Town of Moraga regarding the signs, but neither the Town of Moraga nor the District has any legal authority to remove the signs."

The use of the high school slogan was sure to raise more than one eyebrow, so why do it? George Lakoff, Professor of cognitive linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley, where he has taught since 1972, suggests that, "the use of 'Go Cougars' on Measure J serves two functions. First, it suggests that the supporters of Measure J are the real locals, while the supporters of Measure K are not and hence are interlopers. Second, since the proposals are about which is better for open space, 'Go Cougars' suggests (without overtly claiming it) that measure J would allow animals more open space

to roam."

Moraga resident Frank Comprelli goes even further, "I think that the Measure J campaign people... are misleading voters by trying to piggyback on a school measure on the same ballot. This sort of confusion can only hurt the school bond measure."

Mary Jo Rossi, spokesperson for Measure J, said, "In a democracy, there is nothing wrong with painting signs red, white and blue - those are American colors - even our candidates for president have red, white and blue signs. Measure J advocates are mainstream Moraga residents who are youth sports leaders, parents, firefighters, and educators who take great pride in Moraga - not fringe Berkeley extremists like the individuals supporting Measure K."

Fringe Berkeley extremists? At a public meeting held on September 25th, Dave Bruzzone explained to what the Measure J campaign is alluding: "Many supporters of Measure K are County residents with Moraga addresses, they are not Moraga residents," he explained, referring to the folks who live in the unincorporated part of Bollinger Canyon. He suggested that a look at the 460 report, which lists financial supporters of the Measure, would show a significant number of groups that are not from Moraga.

Renata Sos responded on behalf of Measure K. "Those assertions are incorrect," she said. "Residents of Bollinger Canyon are part of this community, they send their children to Rheem school, shop in town, and coach the sports groups." She added that the backers of Measure K are a cross-section of residents and that 80% of the contributors are Moraga families. According to Sos, the Sierra Club gave \$2000 in 2007 to the campaign, which represented 10.6% of the total dollars raised. "For the next quarter the 460 report will show an even lower percentage," adds Sos, who wishes to dispel the rumors that measure K supporters are outsiders: "Nine out of ten of our volunteers are Moraga residents, a few come from the Bollinger unincorporated area and one is an Orinda resident."



The Color of Politics The design of campaign signs is a whole field in its own right, incorporating elements of human perception and psychology. A survey by the University of Florida claimed that a yellow background with black lettering was the best color combination for a sign to attract attention; the second best combination is white on blue, followed by yellow on blue. Besides plain visibility, colors carry emotions and have historically been associated with ideas. The color white evokes images of purity; politically, white is often associated with pacifism. Orange has been identified in the past as one of the colors of royalty, and has since evolved in politics to represent religious political interests. The color black is alternately associated with fascism and anarchism, and can be used to great effect in small amounts to provide shading and detail on print designs but is traditionally the color choice of extreme politics that fall outside the realm of democracy.

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