

AMPS Student Statement Regarding the Yearbook Incident - 06.08.15

To those who lack an understanding of the importance and severity of this yearbook situation, allow us to explain. To begin, we would like to start with the history of how the name AMPS came to be. The original name of this academy was CPA, which stands for Community Partnership Academy. The academy was commonly referred to as Colored People Academy by some students due to the academy being 86% students of color. In response to the negative stereotype associated with the Academy's acronym ("Colored People Academy"), the BHS administration changed the academy's name to Academy of Medicine and Public Service (AMPS). The name change was crucial because it is an appropriate representation of what the school focuses on, which is medicine and public service. This latest representation of AMPS in the yearbook illustrates that discrimination against small schools is alive and well. The slanderous comment about AMPS students being referred to as "future trash collators" or "collectors" is extremely disrespectful to the staff and students and does not recognize their hard work and achievements.

Many people do not understand why the AMPS community is so offended. We hear outsiders ask: "What's wrong with being a trash collector? It's an honest job." The occupation of trash collector is not offensive by itself, but using it in connection with AMPS was a malicious attempt to attack students who fight so hard to prove themselves. And this act is another reminder that no matter how much we achieve, we will still be reminded of the color of our skin and our place in the world. In all honesty, it is very saddening that we will spend our lives proving our worth, but it's an even harder blow that we must prove ourselves in the institution that is supposed to protect us. This is not an isolated issue; people who cannot relate must come to the realization that racism and classism are large factors that exist on Berkeley High's campus. Although we are a small learning community within Berkeley High school, we should not have to prove ourselves any more than AC or BIHS students. Regardless of the stereotypes revolving around this academy, last year 96% of AMPS students went on to college. Furthermore, this year's sophomores scored higher than other learning communities, and tied with those of AC, on the California High School Exit Exam. While we appreciate the attention and action of the Black Student Union, this issue is bigger than one organization can handle and now AMPS is going to take initiative to address the issue of discrimination surrounding all small schools. We will continue to combat this issue for current and future students.

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