You mentioned feeling unsafe during the board meeting. What was it that made you feel that way?

I felt that the room was pretty hostile when we entered the room. It felt like the audience in the room had already made up their minds about the different board members before we began to speak. It was really difficult to establish an atmosphere of genuine intellectual inquiry and open dialogue. For instance, at various points during that really long meeting I tried to say, "I'm also a human being, I also make mistakes. I'm very new to being a board member." I would really have liked to be able to ask the teachers some open-ended questions.

And I think that free speech is a tenet of US democracy and must be protected. So obviously anyone should feel free to be in the room and anyone should feel free to hold up signs in support of things they believe in. But one of the things that I really struggled with in this particular meeting is that the room felt very one-sided. It was really hard to identify people who had diverse views. In fact, it felt entirely that the room was united around one view, and if that view is against what you are trying to say, then it's really hard to proceed.

You said that the people in the boardroom had made up their minds. Was that more about the Ethnic Studies or about you and your opinion?

I'm definitely referring to Ethnic Studies. Specifically what concerned me about the room is that it felt that people were there to demonstrate a show of strength against people who wanted to have Ethnic Studies either cut or eliminated; the word cut used by a student who spoke.

In my view, I did not see any of the five board members arguing against having Ethnic Studies at all. I think each of the five of us reiterated how desperately important we felt it was to have this course at PAUSD and we all affirmed support for Ethnic Studies.

Now, there is a difference of opinion, of course. Some people have some concerns about this particular course that's being proposed, and other people are very keen to have this course mandated as soon as possible for all 9th graders entering in the fall. That is a difference of opinion, no question.

There isn't anyone on the board that opposes having Ethnic Studies in the district, we all recognize how important it is to understand the history of ethnic minorities and particularly these affinity groups that have moved to California through California's history. Honestly, nobody is denying that. But there was certainly an atmosphere in the room that felt extremely hostile to people who had come to either cut or eliminate Ethnic Studies, and that was really concerning to me. It felt like the protest in the room came from a place of misinformation, that we were no longer in the room to discuss if we should pause this course briefly to consider community concerns, or should we go ahead with it in the fall.

I think there were people genuinely on the board who were struggling with this decision. Speaking for myself, I absolutely struggled with it for days, weeks, and even months because of course it was a huge issue in my campaign.

One of the things I attempted to say, which was not at all heard in the room, is "As a person of an Asian American Affinity group, as someone who has studied many degrees in the field of Asian American studies and as someone that gives this class at Berkeley, — I'm going to return to this point because there's been much controversy about the issue of do I teach a class at Berkeley, but for now, instead of saying I teach a class at Berkeley, I'll say I give this class at Berkeley, which is about Ethnic Studies — I'm trying to make the point that Ethnic Studies is very important to me as a person and it is very important to me in terms of my position as a board member. I think it's really important."

The fact that I think it's really important means I want to be careful about exactly what content we're implementing, and I do want to understand better why the community is so concerned. There are many, many ways of having an Ethnic Studies course, and I think some ways are more constructive than other ways. I'll reiterate what I said at that meeting, which is, "It desperately important to have it, but it must be done well, and I think opinions differ on what a constructive Ethnic Studies class looks like,"

Are your main concerns about an Ethnic Studies course is that it isn't fully fleshed out? What would be the reason you disagree with adding one at this time?

I don't feel as new board members, we were given sufficient information about the course in a timely enough fashion to make an informed decision. I think there's been much talk of how this special board meeting was rushed. The vote was originally meant to be on Tuesday along with Bio H, and then it was moved and then put back on the agenda as a Friday special board meeting. We were given these documents about 48 hours before to study. I had been asking to see a copy of the instructional materials as per Californian Ed code for a long time and that it felt unreasonably difficult to be able to see these instructional materials.

Mainly my concern is I know that there are several affinity groups in the community that are very concerned about the curriculum for this proposed Ethnic Studies. While there is fear in the room from a certain part of the population, it is irresponsible to say 'What are you so scared of?' And to dismiss other people's fears.

This relates directly to the controversy around the tweet. There's a macro question of should we dismiss the concerns of a particular affinity group which is afraid of the content of this proposed course? Should we dismiss the concerns of the Asian community who are fearful? Or even just myself as an individual, when I say that I am afraid to be in that room, I feel that room is unsafe for me, are my fears as an Asian, as a representative of the Asian community be dismissed?

Was it the intensity in the room that made you feel afraid and uncomfortable?

No, I don't mind tense situations at all. I've been in many tense situations. Many people in PAUSD are aware of my background as a Weinstein survivor, I have had many experiences with the Me Too movement. I've been in some very tense situations. I've worked in South Sudan, which is a very tense place to work. I don't mind intensity, I don't think it's that. One thing that

was pretty terrifying about that [at the special board meeting] situation was the one-sidedness of what was happening in the group.

In order for there to be true democracy and true representation, we have to represent all sides of the debate, even if we don't agree with the other side of the debate. In that room, it very much felt that the hostility was coming from teachers, from students who had taken the Ethnic Studies course, from the gathered observers in the audience section of the group. It's really clear that there were ropes and there was security, therefore there was already a pre-thought out concern as to how that meeting would go.

I'm concerned that there wasn't a balance in the room between people who spoke for one position, and people who would have wanted to speak for another position. The process of organizing the speakers was pretty chaotic, and many people felt that their perspective wasn't at all represented.

Do you know people who specifically feel like their opinion wasn't represented simply because you believe there was an overwhelming one sidedness?

Yes, a lot. This is not 1 or 2, this is a pretty long list.

In your X post comment, you compared the issue with Harvey Weinstein with the, I'm assuming the unsafe feeling at the board meeting. Were you comparing them because they were similar or because they were different? What was the reasoning behind including that?

I attempted to draw a parallel between a suppression of my voice, as I wasn't able to speak out in 1998, and I also wasn't able to speak out in 2025. The link that I drew was really about suppression of my voice specifically, but also the suppression of Asian voices in general. I was responding directly to Ms. Reynolds' comments on feeling unsafe.

I think that I was addressing the validity of my personal safety. If I say in a public board meeting as a public official that I don't feel safe, I would love to think that that would be taken more seriously. Instead, my interpretation of Ms. Reynolds' comments were that, 'As a person of My affinity group, I didn't have the right to say, to claim the word unsafe, I only had the right to feel uncomfortable,' and I found that to be a very difficult perspective.

Eventually took down the reposting of the Asians Against Wokeness post, why did you decide to do this?

I was asked to do so by PAEA, and so I took it down. I was directly asked to do that, and I responded immediately because they asked me to.

PAEA revoked their endorsement. Do you have any thoughts or comments on that?

I'm obviously extremely upset about the statement that PAEA released. I think it was couched in extremely strong language. I think that the response to the retweet, even if I say that it was an

error of judgment on my part to have retweeted an activism group's position on Ms. Reynolds' comments, I think that this was a disproportionate response because I said this specifically in my tweets. I was careful to say factual things about my own lived experience. I didn't comment on anyone else's lived experience.

In addition, the actual post from Asians Against Wokeness represented a position that was in line with my own interpretation of Ms. Reynolds's comments, which were that they were directed at Asian people and the validity of Asian people to feel unsafe. Although there were comments on the post that were incredibly offensive and racist, which I don't condone at all.

I made a post that was factual, I then retweeted something, a position that Asians Against Wokeness took. I only agree with the post's comments on their interpretation of what happened in our board meeting. That doesn't mean I broadly endorse Asians Against Wokeness, nor do I condone any form of racism or hate speech that took place underneath that repost.

Now, it is absolutely fair to say it would, it would have been, it was an error of judgment to repost someone else's post under which there were racist comments. But at this juncture, I do want to say there is racism all over social media and I in no way condone it. At the same time, I cannot be responsible for racism as a whole on social media. I can only be responsible for my own words and the words of. The post that I reposted.

The reason why I took the post down is because PAEA pointed out that it was risky to have the face, the name and face of a district employee amplified in that way, and I agreed with that, so I took it down immediately. The argument that I felt was valid is that one can't have her [Reynolds] name and photo exposed elevated in that way because it puts her at risk. As somebody who is also a woman of color, who has also very much been at risk — I've been racially abused, racially attacked, I've been spat at in the street, and I've had death threats — so I understand what it is to be a woman of color who feels under at risk and and under threat.

I would never wish that on another human being, and that would be the reason why I took it down. But it doesn't mean I don't agree with what I said in my original tweets. My original tweet said, in 1998, my voice was suppressed. In 2025, my voice was suppressed. I think that is true.

Additionally, I feel it is true that Ms. Reynolds' comments were directed at an Asian woman who said during the school board meeting that she felt unsafe. Some people are attempting to argue that Ms. Reynolds meant something else and that she was only talking about students who felt unsafe. I'm willing to say if my interpretation of her speech is inaccurate, then I apologize if I have misinterpreted her comments. But I think to me her comments were quite clear and a number of community members have called to express deep concern about anti-Asian hate incidents in our district and how they may be highlighted by this position. She expressed that Asians don't get to say they feel unsafe. So that's really concerning to me.

I'm sorry, I'm not directly answering your question about how I feel about the PAEA. I think this is a very long way of saying I feel it's disproportionate. I do think they have absolutely every right to ask me to remove the tweet, and I did that immediately. However, I feel that I'm being

censored in a very harsh way for placing a district employee under risk. I would like to say that it was never my intention to place another woman of color under risk. I would never do that because I literally speak publicly about women of color who feel unsafe and are under risk. Thirdly, I would point out that I myself have been enormously under risk due to this episode. The hate incidents against me have spiked dramatically. I also have experienced a lot of abuse online and I feel that was not highlighted. The suppression of my voice, with the withdrawal of their endorsement and so on, implied that the hate was directed in one direction towards Ms. Reynolds, but it didn't give a complete picture that there is racial hate being directed both at Ms. Chiu and Ms. Reynolds.

I got sent screenshots of hateful things being said about Ms. Reynolds, which I abhor and I entirely condemn, but there are of course also hateful things being said both about me and about Asian people. I don't think any of this is right, but it is really important that we present a balanced view that there is race hate on many different ethnic groups and that all of that is deeply, deeply problematic.

Have you discussed anything with Ms. Reynolds since the post?

No, but not due to my unwillingness to do so. No, nobody has reached out to me to propose discussing anything with Ms. Reynolds, but I will say that I personally feel extremely unsafe, and it would be really difficult for me to feel that I could enter any space around third party mediation, and it's frankly really terrifying.

PAMA is calling for your resignation and the PAUSD condoned your actions, have you responded to that or do you have comments on what they've said in their letter?

One thing that is really interesting is I did get a response from one person who signed the former board of trustees letter asking for my resignation, I'm not going to identify either their gender or their name, but that person commented to me that they did not have an opportunity to view the footage of the school board meeting, and that after they had viewed the footage of the school board meeting, they retracted their support for the position that I should resign.

I think this tells you several things. I'm concerned that the person signed a letter asking for my resignation, without watching the footage of the school board meeting to genuinely see what my position is on Ethnic Studies. I hope that the former board trustees who are able to spend that time reviewing the footage of the meeting or maybe were actually present at that time either in person or online, that they will take away the fact that as a new board member I did work very hard to try to see both sides of a very, very contentious and difficult issue.

I spent a long time studying the materials because truthfully, my position was, I think Ethnic Studies is so desperately important, and I want to be able to say, 'Yes. We should have this course mandatory for 9th graders.' I do think we should have a mandatory 9th grader course, and it breaks my heart to think that there is content in this course that might make any student of any ethnicity feel unsafe.

I would really love to constructively work with, The Ethnic Studies teachers to come to a place where we can reassure members of our community that this content is safe for all children within our district and unfortunately that just wasn't the case. It did not at all feel to me as I went into that boardroom that this was an environment where we could foster an open dialogue about the content. In fact, every time I mentioned the idea that certain parts of the community had deep concerns about the Ethnic Studies curriculum, I don't think those concerns were treated with any even basic courtesy. They were dismissed. They were mocked. There was cheering.

I'm really concerned that a number of people in the room — parents, students and teachers — felt that it was acceptable to dismiss the fears of an affinity group that isn't even my own, but that I'm advocating for.
And, this is a a bit of a process of shoot the messenger, I'm not part of this affinity group that's afraid of this particular curriculum, and I think it's really important that the fears of a substantial part of the community are not dismissed because, as I said during the meeting, whether or not you consider other people's fears to be real or imagined, their fears should be taken seriously.

Similarly, the parallel is, as an Asian American woman — who has publicly come forward about a very unsafe situation where I was sexually assaulted by my boss at work — I feel that when I express fear myself, by using the word unsafe, that I should have a right to express my fear and to have that fear taken seriously.

I'm assuming you are aware of the Palo Alto school's curriculum for Ethnic Studies. What opinions do you have about it?

I only really entered this discussion [about Ethnic Studies] when I started running for public office, but prior to that, I think various members of the community were working on this issue for years. This is not a new issue. When I talk about how aware I was of the curriculum, I reviewed the documents [about the curriculum] but there was concern that the curriculum materials were given to us [other board members] with only a very short time frame to look at them.

It's a complicated issue and I did my best to stay up till 5 a.m. for a couple of nights in a row to make sure that I read every single slide and every single document. I think that was part of my duty as a new board member. They were also incomplete, and there was some confusion about the certain documents given to us, because it never said any place in the board documents which of these materials were working documents and which were complete.

In any case, I feel that we weren't particularly given a concrete and complete set of lesson plans. I noticed in the slideshow, that was subsequently removed, that there were many slides where some of the content had been removed before being uploaded to the board documents. So I really just had questions around a complete set of documents for full transparency and can they be given to us in a timely fashion?

I'm really asking for a space to review these documents and a reassurance that these documents are the correct and complete set of documents so that we know what we're talking about when we go and approve a mandatory course for every single 9th grader coming into the

district. That's a pretty big decision. So you want to make sure that the documents are both clear and complete and that we've had sufficient time to review them properly. That's really what the pause is about. Can we take the time to make sure that we've got the right set of documents? That they are complete, clear, transparent, and that we've taken some time to look over them and to communicate with the members of this community that are concerned.

Do you see parallels in the curriculum at Berkeley, from your experience teaching an Ethnic Studies class there, and the one that's being offered in Palo Alto or do you see gaps missing? What is your concern or comparison between the two?

That's an interesting question. Ethnic Studies is a really broad issue. It's a really broad field. It's really fascinating to me. Obviously, I've spent a lot of time in this field. It's a really fascinating study. In the class I taught at Berkeley on Wednesday night — I should make it really clear, this is not a regular class. I am a guest speaker at classes up and down the country. I've previously taught a similar class at Princeton, Santa Cruz, London, Cambridge, Oxford, to mention a few academic institutions. — The material for what I teach is always based around the Asian American experience, but it might alter slightly according to the audience that's in the group.

I'm talking about the Asian American experience, and I might be talking about the Asian American experience, to business school students, law school students, gender studies students, ethnicity studies students, you know, there are a number of different backgrounds. I do think that teaching at a college level is different. But nonetheless, there are certain things that remain the same. For instance, I will have a slide deck, I will have a structure to my talk.

One thing that I have drawn from teaching this class about the Asian American experience is I personally feel it's really important to set context.

For instance, because I am an Asian American woman and I'm talking about my lived experience in the Me Too movement, it's really easy to take an erroneous, draw an erroneous conclusion from my class that all white men are rapists, and I'm in no way saying that of course that would be misinformation and a misrepresentation of what I teach.

Instead, I share my lived experience as a Harvey Weinstein survivor. And then I say I think there's a framework around power and privilege and oppression and the oppressor and the oppressed. I think that there are power imbalances around gender, race, and money, which is another form of power. In my case: the dynamic between a very junior person in a company and the CEO of that same company.

I do talk about power dynamics and privilege dynamics. I talk about the oppressor and the oppressed, but I situate it in these four power dynamics that were illustrated by my story. I hope that I am not making the white men in the room feel uncomfortable. Harvey Weinstein was a white male with a great deal of power, but I'm not for a second implying that everybody, every white male in the room is or could be a rapist. Instead, I'm shining a light on the structural and systemic imbalances that led to my being in a very vulnerable position when I was an assistant of 24.

Context is everything. We can't shine a light on these very complicated issues of Ethnic Studies by pinning them on the individual and being too ideological about where that individual sits in the power privilege. In the wheel of power and privilege, we can't say that somebody — simply because they are white — would sit in a certain place and — simply because they're Asian — would sit in a different place.

We need to understand the context, we need to understand it's a system. We need to understand the context and place ideology within that context. We need to understand that it's about a system, not the individual. Moreover, that there is intersectionality; that the balance of power may differ in different situations, and that is all very complicated and nuanced.

Whilst it is an incredibly fascinating field, Ethnic Studies, I would say it's really hard to teach. I would say it's really nuanced. I would say it's hard to get a balance.

I think somebody said in the board meeting, it's not like teaching Algebra. Algebra, there's a right and a wrong. It's pretty clear what is being taught when you go into an Algebra class, maybe one could even argue that 8th grade Algebra classes across the state might look quite similar. But I would argue that Ethnic Studies classes — especially the ones I've either attended as a student or attended as someone who's speaking within those classes — are quite different. That is at once what makes it quite fascinating, but also makes it difficult too. When it comes to the area of curriculum approval, I think that we do need to take that seriously and proceed with caution about how Ethnic Studies is implemented.

In the proposed Palo Alto school's Ethnic Studies course, were there concerns regarding the context? Was there something specific in the course proposal that made you flag it as something that wasn't fleshed out completely or ready for the freshmen?

I think that there were several things in the curriculum that were brought up by a number of members of the community which caused concern. I think people in public comment [during the board meeting] got into specifics more than the board members felt comfortable doing. But there was of course an individual that raised the illustration of young boys in Papua New Guinea, it's pretty unsavory. There's an example of parental concern about illustrations like that where people are raising questions about if it's appropriate to teach that content to 13 year olds. I am aware of those community concerns.

As someone who's worked in many different cultures, I think that there should be respect for different cultures and, and, and the different traditions and different traditions within those cultures.

On a personal level, I might have absolutely no objection to that anthropological illustration being offered to my 13 year old. But I think that's not really the point.

As a board member, I'm elected to represent the community, and if the community is very concerned about that being used as an illustration in the 9th grade classroom, I have to consider that seriously. It might not ultimately impact anything. But I'm just asking to take some time for us to look at that.

There's a somewhat extremist perspective where I'm typified as someone who might look at that bit of the curriculum and say, 'Oh no, that's abhorrent, we can't have it.' That's not what I'm trying to say actually. I'm trying to say that I think there's a lot of community.

Caution and concern about certain parts of the curriculum and that we should take our time to do it properly and ensure that — if I quote my fellow board member Mr. Salzman — Curriculum is safe for everybody.

Are there any like last comments you want to say to that you want people to know that we didn't mention?

I want to make a statement that I do acknowledge that the teachers have put a lot of time and effort into building a rich course. I hope that the students, parents, and teachers can really unite around Ethnic Studies. It's a really important course. It will lend much richness to the PAUSD curriculum more broadly. I acknowledge that the teachers have put a lot of effort into the work they've done before and they're clearly very passionate about it and that's what we want for the students in the district. We want teachers who are very passionate about the subject that they teach. They've gone above and beyond to work on Ethnic Studies, which I think is really important.

It is tragic that the district has been ripped apart by controversy over this as I said earlier. I think that it's a huge shame that the response to the tweet is disproportionate but also a distraction from the main issue that's being discussed here, which is the richness of this wonderful course. We should take our time to consider this course and to make sure that everybody gets to benefit from learning Ethnic Studies, which is a really important thing for a young person to do.

In the context of Ethnic Studies, it's important that we confront race and we confront who we are, and we have those hard conversations about racism because the only way that we can eradicate bigotry and hate speech is to shine a light on it and say that this is condemn it and say that this is abhorrent.