

October 29, 2021

Mr. Ron Nocetti
Executive Director
California Interscholastic Federation
4658 Duckhorn Drive
Sacramento, CA 95834



Sent via email

Dear Mr. Nocetti:

The Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism (FAIR) is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to advancing civil rights, tolerance, and recognition of our shared humanity. We have tens of thousands of members nationwide and more than 70 chapters from coast to coast, including in San Diego, Sacramento, and four other metropolitan areas of California. Our website, fairforall.org, can give you a fuller sense of our identity and activities.

We write regarding the California Interscholastic Federation's (CIF) upcoming November 1 board meeting, during which it will discuss the appeal of sanctions imposed on Coronado High School in June. We urge the CIF to grant the appeal and reverse the sanctions.

As you know, two boys threw tortillas onto the court after the June 19 varsity championship basketball game between Coronado High School and Orange Glen High School. As a result of that incident, on June 30 the CIF imposed substantial sanctions on Coronado, including vacating the championship, prohibiting all Coronado sports programs from hosting postseason contests for two years, and requiring all Coronado administrators, athletic directors, coaches, and student athletes to complete racial sensitivity training. As we understand it, the sanctions were imposed before the Coronado players had been interviewed and before either school had completed its own investigation.

In light of how the facts have developed, the sanctions should be reversed. Shortly after the incident, various national news outlets and popular social media accounts loudly proclaimed the Coronado team had brought the tortillas to the game as a premeditated act of white-on-Latino racism. That assumption is now confirmed as false. The tortillas were brought by Luke Serna, a 40-year-old Latino man with no present connection to Coronado High School. Mr. Serna not only brought the tortillas, but distributed them among the crowd of impressionable and hyped-up young teenagers, and encouraged the kids to throw them after the game as an act of "celebration" and "tradition." Of all those in the crowd, only two threw the tortillas: a pair of 14-year-old junior varsity boys who were not even players on the Coronado varsity championship team. Additionally, Mr. Serna insisted that the purpose of the tortilla-throwing was not to harass or insult, but to celebrate in accordance with the tradition of his collegiate alma mater. In fact, Mr. Serna himself is Latino and Coronado's varsity team is ethnically diverse, with members who are black (including the team captain), Latino, Asian, Creole, and white. Thus, rather than being an act of white-on-Latino racism, the tortilla incident was the result of a Latino adult's misguided attempt to celebrate -- and for which the Coronado kids are now paying the price.

We implore the CIF to put an end to the unjust penalization of the Coronado varsity team. These kids should not be punished and branded "racists" -- as they will continue to be if the sanctions are upheld -- for actions committed by an adult, and in which they took no part.

Very truly yours,

The Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism