

Dear Madison Community,

In 2012, I was encouraged to represent the voice of Latinx, immigrant families and families with English Learner students on the Madison School Board. At that time, MMSD had never had a Latina on the board, and after my organizing role at Nuestro Mundo Community School and the expansion of the Restorative Justice program, I felt it was the next right step as an advocate and parent organizer.

I was the first candidate announcing a run for office followed by two white individuals who have historically held and maintained Madison's social and political power. I began dreaming of an immigrant single-mom and resident of the south side walking into a room of decision makers with limitless possibilities for positive change. I wanted to interrupt deficit conversations about our students of color, propose and vote yes on policies and practices that would eliminate the institutional racism experienced by many families, and change the course of my daughter's educational fate.

White Madison had other plans. Covert racism and white-centrist tactics tainted my character and by the turn of the new year in 2013, I went from being a social justice advocate to a public school enemy. The late Pat Schneider [covered the debacle months](#) later in the news. What was not covered by the news was the mental and physical health challenges I experienced from the aftermath of a public mischaracterization.

Fast forward to this decade. Our community is facing the greatest threat of our lives, a lingering global pandemic. Educators across the country are facing the consequences of public health decisions, including strong community sentiments that are often in opposition. Work, home life and teaching blend together making professional boundary setting and promoting educator well being very difficult. Disparities and inequities are more evident than ever before and the pandemic has left survivors with grief and additional complex challenges.

This pandemic, that continues to impact all of us, took a devastating personal turn that left me to grieve in public. My daughter lost her father last year and I lost my mother six months ago. This

relentless virus has challenged my ability to be the mother I want to be for my daughter, and the board member I dreamed I would be 10 years ago.

Madison is a place of contradictions for me. This city has witnessed my growth and failures; it has rooted my passions and delusions; it has instigated and held my tears; and ultimately gave wings to my daughter's dreams.

The opportunity to serve this community and a school board that made history in the state of Wisconsin for its diversity has been a great honor. My heart aches with the decision to not seek re-election to the Madison School Board. At this time I must focus on balancing my wellness and continue to focus on restoration for my daughter, Breana, and for myself. Please trust that I am still dreaming for justice and co-liberation for all of us.

I will end this letter by sharing immense gratitude for this community and restating my commitment to continue disrupting the pervasive status quo that continues to marginalize many in our community. Expanding learning opportunities, promoting belonging and dignity for our students, families and staff will continue to be my work.

I believe that Madison and Wisconsin's political landscape has changed significantly and there is still so much more to be done in our pursuit of justice and freedom.

ananda mirilli

Madison School Board Seat 5