

JROTC must go now!

San Francisco Bayview, National Black Newspaper (May 28, 2008)

http://www.SFBayview.com/News/Thiswk_nopics/Our_Readers_Write.html

*San Francisco made history in November 2006 when the school board voted to make this the first big city in the nation to ban JROTC (Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps), one of the military's prime recruiting tools, in June 2008. Unfortunately, the board – except for **Mark Sanchez** and **Eric Mar** – reversed itself, **extending JROTC**. In the next vote, two progressives on the board – **Kim-Shree Maufas** and Green Party member **Jane Kim** – will be critical to send the military packing.*

An open letter to Jane Kim and Kim-Shree Maufas:

My name is **Mara Kubrin**.

I am a graduate of Lowell High School in San Francisco.

Last school year I presented the **student petition to the school board in support of the resolution to phase out JROTC** in the San Francisco Unified School District.

I was thrilled when the resolution passed; I had made one final contribution before heading off to college. Unfortunately, my impression did not last. The same issue has resurfaced just in time for me to come home and urge—no demand—that you finish what I thought we had already finished last year. **JROTC must go now**.

To me the issue seems so clear that I have trouble understanding your hesitation.

San Franciscans have voted to prohibit recruitment in our schools.

Case should be closed, but I will continue.

The **anti-JROTC coalition** has many concrete reasons, any of which is grounds to immediately pull JROTC out of the schools. Let me re-state them.

* **The SFUSD has an anti-discrimination hiring policy.** In order to be a JROTC instructor, one must have served in the military. In order to successfully serve in the military, one **may not be openly homosexual**. Therefore, in order to be an SFUSD JROTC teacher, one may not be openly gay. Strike one.

* **State law requires that Physical Education credit only be given by properly credentialed teachers.** JROTC instructors do not have these credentials, **yet students get credit**. Strike two.

* International law prohibits the military from trying to recruit anyone under the age of 17. Most JROTC students are well under the age of 17. Strike three.

JROTC should have been outa here a long time ago based on any one of those reasons.

So why is JROTC still here?

I have listened to supporters and I will admit that many students like JROTC. However, if schools offered a class on video games, kids would also love it. Students would rush to sign up for a class on celebrity gossip. Have we forgotten that sometimes kids are not the ones to make these decisions? The school board is here to determine the best curriculum for students.

Despite students' enjoyment, this "*class*" is not beneficial to them.
What are we trying to teach here?

We are **cutting music and arts**, but somehow we think that **learning how to salute is a good use of educational time?**

Others argue that JROTC provides discipline and leadership, that it turns kids around in ways other programs can't. In my mind, any extra-curricular activity that requires attendance and focus, and encourages growth and maturity, will do the exact same thing. There are plenty of available sports leagues, leadership groups, community service organizations, and clubs available to high school students. They do not need one that is explicitly a military recruitment device.

Politicians are afraid of openly opposing JROTC because of the visible student support for the program. The support is more clearly visible than the opposition because the "*support*" is bused in to meetings, while **the opposition has been intimidated and physically threatened**, myself included. Clearly, the cadets' discipline and leadership only go so far.

So here is my suggestion:

JROTC can stay in San Francisco but not on school campuses.
JROTC is a recruitment tool, so have the program at recruitment centers.

If students are so insistent that this and only this program will provide the discipline, leadership, and family element that they want, then they can seek it out **in their own time, using the military's own funding, and on its own recruitment grounds.**

The military does not belong in our schools simply based on an understanding of what is right and what is wrong, let alone the legal evidence.

Vote to make it happen.

Be the progressive you claim to be.

Kick JROTC out of our schools once and for all.

Thank you,

Mara Kubrin