

Why I Want To Be A Board Member

All I know is Lincoln Heights. I grew up here, I went to school at Hillside, LA Leadership [and still do], and learned my first musical instrument in Lincoln Heights. It goes without saying that my neighborhood is very important to me. It really opened my eyes how vulnerable my community was though, when Avenue 34 came about. I hadn't really known much about gentrification other than about how bad it was. There were off-hand comments from my classmates at times about how they had to move because the rent got too high or their landlord kicked them out. I had been hearing these comments since middle school, so of course I got desensitized to them. The gravity of the situation didn't hit me until I did a project on the history of Chinatown and realized the similarities between what I was seeing here, in Lincoln Heights, and what happened [and is still happening to] Chinatown. People were being kicked out of their homes, their homes bought up and changed into more "modern" [read: gentrified] buildings. I read the testimonies of some people who went through it as children and I *understood*. Unlike those kids who lived in white picket fenced homes, my neighborhood is changing right before my eyes. I have so many memories of places that are now gone. I thought I was dreaming of the Lincoln Heights Mall [where I had my ears pierced] until I saw a historic Instagram post about it! There are buildings and shops I remember from pre-COVID that are just... gone now.

I participated in the Avenue 34 protests. Well, as well as I could have from my house, as it was COVID times. I spoke out at the Zoom Neighborhood Council Meetings [I don't remember what exactly it was called]. I forwarded all the information to my school and even bugged my principal about what was happening! Heck, it got to the point where my teacher was having us listen to the Zoom meeting in class!! [I didn't get to speak during the second one, though I tried :(] We got really invested, and for good reason.

So yes, I'm attached to my neighborhood. I want to give back to it. I want to be a board member, a voice of the youth-- by the way, the youth DO care, they're just trapped within pits of helplessness. It's hard to be proactive when all you know is being changed around you. Add into the stress of family issues at home that you can't control, school, and even work, and it's a perfect storm for political apathy. I can be the voice for the youth. I can be the person they talk through, their mouthpiece so they have some form of participation, some semblance of control in their lives. I have experience with student leadership. I am on the LAUSD Board District 2's Student Empowerment Council, so believe me when I say I have leadership experience. Not only that, I was also a part of CASC [California Association of Student Councils] and I was in the region that represented the Los Angeles area. For more local leadership experiences, I have been a part of my school's student council for two years, first as grade representative and then secretary. I'll be representing my entire student body next school year as student council president! I understand that the position I am applying for, Youth Representative, means that I am not just

speaking for myself, but for the youth of Lincoln Heights, though I am providing my perspective. I've been doing so via my various leadership positions already. I know I have what it takes to handle such a position.

I know that for college, I want to go out-of-state. It means I'll have to leave my neighborhood, I'd have to leave Lincoln Heights. So for now, while I'm here, I want to give back in what way I can, and to me, that is by representing the youth and continuing my activism and leadership work within my community. Of course, I have other ideas for when I'm in college, but I'm focusing on the here and now. Now, I'd like to represent and serve my community.