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**WEST LAKE MIDDLE SCHOOL CELEBRATES
ITS AFRICAN AMERICAN HONOR ROLL STUDENTS
with *The Griots of Oakland* Traveling Exhibition**

May 8, 2015 (Oakland, CA) – On May 11, West Lake Middle School will honor 31 African American students in the African American Honors Celebration. The event will recognize their academic accomplishments in being listed on the prestigious honor roll. They will be celebrated in an evening ceremony by school administrators, staff, parents, and counselors.

The celebration will be complimented by a week-long showing of the traveling exhibition, *The Griots of Oakland – Voices from the African American Oral History Project* in the school’s library from May 11-14, 2015 during school hours (9 a.m. – 3 p.m.). “The Center for Healthy Schools and Communities embarked on *The Griots of Oakland* art exhibit and book as a way to memorialize the voice of determination, hope, and promise as told by our community’s often disenfranchised and under-represented youth. We applaud West Lake Middle Schools recognition of the academic achievements of its African American students through this Honors Celebration,” said Tracey Schear, Director of the Center for Healthy Schools and Communities.

“The intent of having *The Griots* on display in conjunction with this celebration is to inspire and give youth their power back in telling their own stories. By putting them back in charge of their narrative, they can find meaning and direction at an impressionable juncture of their development. May is also Mental Health Awareness month, so celebrating the diversity of the school’s student body, which is predominantly African American, will highlight aspects of their realities that are often misunderstood and ignored by mainstream media, and to change the discourse on how they are perceived while uplifting their brilliance and humanity,” said Santi Soumpholphakdy, a Clinical Case Manager with the Center for Healthy Schools and Communities’ Our Kids Our Families program.

The African American Honors Celebration will take place at West Lake Middle School (2629 Harrison St, Oakland, CA 94612) from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. The event is free, food will be served, and media are invited to interview student recipients. *The Griots of Oakland* traveling exhibition will also be on display for viewing.

The main *Griots* exhibit is currently on display at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco.

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The Center for Healthy Schools and Communities fosters the academic success, health, and well-being of Alameda County youth by building universal access to high quality supports and opportunities in schools and neighborhoods. The Center’s overarching objective is that healthy youth graduate from high-school, college and career ready.