

Primal Scream - We need a 'greener' California -- 5/12/14

We need a 'greener'California

By Alex Shantz and Ruscal Cayangyang
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We encourage you and the public to support two candidates seeking to bring a green vision to Sacramento. Luis Rodriguez, candidate for governor, and Jena Goodman, candidate for lieutenant governor, will appear on the June primary ballot. They are both Green Party candidates.

As current and former student trustees of the Napa Valley College board, we are passionate about public higher education. We believe California's public colleges and universities hold the keys to solving many of California's largest problems. Rodriguez and Goodman are the only candidates running for governor and lieutenant governor who are proposing the bold green ideas California needs and the credibility to implement them. California is facing several simultaneous crises:

- California has the highest poverty rate in the nation with more than 6 million Californians below the poverty line, according to the Public Policy Institute of California.
- California also has the second largest prison system in the world, with 80 percent of the prison population consisting of Latino(a)s and blacks, many for non-violent, drug-related offenses, according to the Public Policy Institute of California.
- California is enduring the impacts of climate change as coastal towns develop policies to address rising sea levels, large cities are polluting the air at deadly levels, and the entire state responds to drought.
- California, once a beacon for the rest of the nation, has been ranked 49th in education funding, according to EdSource, which pushes our public colleges and universities closer toward privatization.

Despite the fact that Democrats started 2012 with a supermajority in the legislature, California has been unable to pass the legislation and increase the revenue needed to solve these problems. It's time to build a political alternative and a political party that will implement holistic green solutions.

Jena Goodman served more than 7,000 students as president of the Associated Students of Napa Valley College from 2012-2013. She is also former chair of the Solano County Green Party. She is a student at UC Davis studying biodiversity and ecology. She serves as a liaison to the Student Regent of the UC Board of Regents. Goodman will be the youngest person and the only woman on the ballot.

Serving as president of the Associated Students of Napa Valley College exposed her to the issues faced by students within the California Community College, UC and CSU systems. Goodman said she believes California's public schools, colleges and universities hold the key to fixing many of the problems facing the state.

Luis Rodriguez wrote the world-renowned memoir 'Always Running, La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.'; At age 19, Rodriguez removed himself from gangs, crime and drugs. He dedicated his life to radically transforming and healing his community.

For 40 years, Rodriguez has worked on urban peace projects, including prevention/intervention and workshops for youth in Los Angeles and Chicago. Rodriguez co-founded Chicago's Youth Struggling for Survival, a gang and non-gang youth empowerment project. He conducts visits to and workshops in prisons, juvenile lockups, homeless shelters, migrant camps, and Native American reservations.

A Rodriguez and Goodman administration would take bold steps to solve the crises working class and poor people in California are suffering by doing the following:

- tackling climate change while pulling people out of poverty by investing in tens of thousands of green jobs that pay living wages to build the sustainable infrastructure that will transition California from fossil fuel dependency to a new green economy;
- keeping our youth out of prison and training workers for the future green economy by using the California Community College, UC and CSU systems to provide students and workers with necessary vocational training, research and technical skills to enter the green workforce;
- returning to the historic policy of providing free public college education to all California students, to provide everyone with the opportunity to achieve their academic goals, revitalize California's economy, and contribute back to society;
- investing in the future of California by closing corporate tax loopholes in Proposition 13, taxing oil extraction, and levying other progressive taxes to fully fund public colleges, health and human services, parks, and environmental restoration;
- reinvesting money spent to lock people in prison to instead heal communities through rehabilitation programs and by legalizing marijuana and ending the war on drugs in California; and
- protecting California's water supplies and atmosphere from pollution by banning fracking, and investing in renewable energy sources and public transit systems in local communities.

Once again, we encourage everyone to vote Luis Rodriguez for governor and Jena Goodman for lieutenant governor in the June primary.

Alex Shantz is a student trustee and Ruscal Cayangyang is a former student trustee on the Napa Valley College Board of Trustees.

Note: All opinions expressed in the "Primal Scream" column are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Vallejo Independent Bulletin.