

Candidate's statement for the Berkeley Tenants Convention, 2020

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I want to talk about the difference between a politics of liberation, and a politics of fake progressivism.

My wife and I are low income renters who live in South West Berkeley in a majority renter neighborhood, a majority low income neighborhood, and a so-called majority minority neighborhood. I am blessed to live in this alive, kid-friendly, truly multi-cultural, beloved local community.

I am quite unhappy with the rent board slates this convention has produced.

Why am I angry at these slates? Here's a few highlights.

For one, we've seen no outreach to our area, no questions from the slate about what problems face our community, no interaction, no engagement. The alleged progressivism of the slate rings false to me because it is a progressivism that excludes our neighbors and us.

And I'm angry that in 2018, the convention slate went to the ballot with an amendment to the rent control ordinance, and for the first time in almost 40 years of rent control history, removed housing units from rent stabilization protection! That's right, this slate who is literally sworn to defend and extend rent control, instead voluntarily weakened and contracted it.

In the same ballot measure they ensured that if Costa Hawkins ever actually is repealed that buildings will be excluded from protection for a full first 20 years of their life. That's absurd. That's far too long.

In 2016 the slate-elected board helped to pass a regressive tax on rents, deceiving

the public *to this day* into believing the tax would create a corresponding increase in spending on affordable housing programs. The tax doesn't do that. It mainly allows City Council to cut housing spending from other revenue sources. And as the City's revenue crisis deepens, just watch how Measure U1 revenue will be used increasingly for non-housing purposes.

So I'm very dissatisfied with the so-called progressive slates this convention has produced. So what *do I stand for*?

1. I stand for a better relation between the rent stabilization board and the rent stabilization board staff. The board has somehow allowed expensive difficulties to develop with its senior management. This places the whole system at risk and suggests a long-standing pattern of neglect by the board.
2. I stand for yes, endorsing a clean repeal of Costa-Hawkins but perhaps more importantly for developing a "plan b" for the quite unsurprising outcome that repeal continues to never pass. 24 years of failure is enough. Plan B should be publicly owned, democratically controlled, decommodified, socialized housing.
3. The board and, frankly, this convention needs to get out on the ground and actually engage with the lower income, largely Black, indigenous, persons of color neighborhoods they claim to so staunchly defend because if they are doing so now it's a pretty well kept secret from the very people they boast about protecting.
4. The climate emergency is now at a state of urgency that guarantees many Berkeley residences will lose significant elements of habitability. We have blown it. We have missed hard, material deadlines. The board needs to step up to begin working on adaptation to the mess we've made.

I'll conclude by noting that the reviewer statements about me contain a number of malicious falsehoods about what I said during the slate interviews and about events at the Housing Advisory Commission. Shame on you.