

PERALTA BOARD DISTRICT 3 Questionnaire

**GREEN PARTY OF ALAMEDA COUNTY
2018 ENDORSEMENT DECISION**

Please email your responses to GPAC-VoterGuide@yahoogroups.com. In the subject line, please include "Peralta Board D3".

We prefer that you convert your answered questionnaire into a .pdf document, so we can post it directly to our website. Or simply include your responses in the body of an email, and we will do the conversion.

If it is not possible for you to email, please snailmail your responses so we receive them by 8/23/18, to:

Peralta Board D3 Questionnaire
c/o Green Party of Alameda County
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Current occupation: Affordable Housing Coordinator

1. Why did you decide to run for this office? What skills/strengths would you bring to the Board?

After many years of advocating for my community as community, labor, and family activist I decided to run when asked to step up to this position. As a single mother raising children I completed programs in early childhood education at Merritt College and in American Sign Language at Berkeley City College before transferring to JFK to study business management. I know from first-hand experience how valuable a community college education can be. But current faculty, staff and students tell me that cronyism, backward priorities, disrespect for workers and students and lack of accountability have resulted in reductions in classes and services, facilities in desperate need of repair, and millions of dollars in wasteful spending. In

the meanwhile, the board majority has been asleep at the wheel. This has to stop. We need student-centered priorities, respect and inclusion for faculty and staff, and an insistence that public dollars benefit our community and its students.

I have served as a child care subsidy counselor and affordable housing coordinator. For over 10 years I served as the Oakland Chapter president of the statewide family advocacy group Parent Voices. As a union steward with the Teamsters Union at UC Berkeley and with the Communications Workers of America in Oakland, I have continually stood up for worker rights and protections.

I have made numerous lobbying trips to fight for working families in Sacramento and Washington, DC and have also worked on many community and electoral campaigns, walking precincts, knocking on doors, making phone calls, cooking for potlucks, changing diapers, driving people to the polls, arranging for Spanish language translation, pulling together community meetings, arranging childcare, picking up trash on community clean-up days, and doing the many other small and large tasks needed to organize people to fight for and care for our communities.

2. Describe your relevant employment experience, particularly in community colleges. If employed in community colleges, what length of service?

- Affordable Housing coordination and other support for low income families seeking housing- Berkeley Housing Authority and various private sector settings
- Chapter President- Parent Voices, Oakland Chapter
- Teamsters Union (Local 2010) UC Berkeley chapter- union steward
- Stand for Children Annual Sacramento Conference, Master of Ceremonies and keynote speaker
- Child Care Council of Contra Costa County, counselor
- Volunteer- Alameda County Measure A for Early Childhood Education and Affordable Child Care
- Communication Workers of America (Local 9415) – union steward and Area Representative

3. What are three major issues in Peralta that need to be addressed? How would you address those issues?

Peralta's four (4) colleges (Laney College, Merritt College, Berkeley City College and College of Alameda) provide essential opportunities for education and growth. From first-hand experience, I understand the needs of our students and community and the way that the Peralta Colleges can help. While raising children, I completed programs at both Merritt College (Early Childhood Education) and Berkeley City College (American Sign Language) before transferring to JFK University for studies in Business Management.

While Peralta's faculty and staff work hard to support their students, unfortunately, that work is being undermined by District administrators and a majority on the Board of Trustees who have taken the District in the wrong direction. Peralta's first priority must be students. This means offering classes and student support services as a first priority. Each expenditure that does not DIRECTLY serve this purpose must be scrutinized very carefully to see how it serves this first priority.

As I see it there are three priority issues for this campaign.

1. **Accountability-** As noted in numerous articles in the East Bay Times, financial chaos along with poor spending priorities and weak enrollment management has led to reduced course offerings, low enrollment, hiring freezes, [downgraded financial ratings](#) and [budget cuts](#). The District administration made a \$10 million accounting error that led to months of worry and chaos, and then the very same administrator who oversaw much of this chaos was hired as a private consultant making over \$20K per month! Other private consultants are milking the District dry. The District has \$8 million in generous supplementary parcel tax funding from our voters, which should allow the colleges to offer many classes. Sadly, [again reported in the East Bay Times](#), the Administration for two years in a row failed to follow its own budget plans and spent barely anything on class offerings or faculty— putting at risk the vital parcel tax and bond measures on the November ballot. And, again, the Board failed to hold the Administration accountable. But this is just the tip of the iceberg. Peralta has wasted literally millions of dollars as a result of cronyism, poor financial planning, bad investment decisions, and failure to collect student fees. This must end.

As a member of the Board of Trustees I will work with other board members to transform the board into an inclusive, open and transparent body in which important and hard questions are asked and board approval is no longer just a rubber stamp of administrative actions. Board meetings should be a place where discussion is respectful of differences, where values and priorities are made clear, and decisions are made based on clear information provided by the administration and informed and shaped by a process of shared governance. The important issues of the day should be aired in a thoughtful and open manner; and where the District falls short of expectations, the Board must be prepared to acknowledge its own failings and the shortcomings of the Administration instead of covering them up and allowing ineffective administration and governance to continue. Finally, the Chancellor must be fully accountable to the Board for the shortcomings of his or her staff. As it is, the Administration at present often seems to manipulate the Board into bad decisions by withholding information vital to this process. This too must end.

2. **Inclusion-** The community colleges are intended to be just that—**community** colleges. Further, the State education code requires that key decisions be made with the inclusion of faculty, staff and students. The principle, known as “shared governance”

must be the bedrock of how Peralta operates. The administration must be streamlined and wherever possible, existing faculty and staff should be provided with the support and training needed to accomplish functions that are now routinely delegated to costly administrators and high-priced consultants. This would not only keep administrative decisions grounded in the daily realities of Peralta's classroom and direct services, but this model would also reduce administrative turnover and greatly reduce administrative costs.

Including students in decision-making means that we must also meaningfully empower our students with the tools for citizen advocacy. Unless students are supported in the process of our internal decision-making, the single most important voice informing our decisions will be left out.

Finally, supporting inclusive decision-making in our District is a vital part of creating a broader community that is empowered. It is not enough to raise workers wages if workers then go home to communities in which rents are unaffordable. Similarly, it will not be enough for students to study hard, transfer and then get a job if these jobs do not pay enough to support their families. Only a fully empowered community capable of advocating for itself can fulfill the promises of a democratic society and an educated citizenry.

3. Facilities-

Walk onto the campus of most of Peralta's campuses and it is almost immediately apparent that something is wrong. Broken sidewalks, water damage, mold in classrooms, bathrooms in disrepair, outdated classrooms that are nowhere near the facilities needed to train students for jobs and education in a technological age. But why? Voters supported a \$390 million facilities bond in 2006. Here we are 12 years later and one would hardly know it. At the College of Alameda not a single new building was constructed, though the Administration had promised TWO new state of the art facilities. At Laney College, we got a new athletic facility and a new Culinary Arts structure, but the rest of the campus is falling apart. One structure that was originally scheduled to open in 2015 (The "Best Center" for sustainable construction) still remains unfinished. A promised health center, library, student center... all evaporated. Why? Poor planning, lack of adequate oversight, cronyism, and ineffective bond management are part of the answer. This must end.

We have an opportunity to make substantial progress if voters approve the \$800 million Peralta facilities bond on the November ballot. But, to be successful, the Board must demand open, transparent, and inclusive facilities management that is accountable to the college-level community. No more cronyism. No more sole-source contracting. Facilities managers must perform, or be let go. And, of course, any bond expenditures must include a strong Project Labor Agreement so that workers on our construction projects make union-scale wages and help build our union movement while

apprenticeship programs and other provisions make sure that jobs are available to all members of our local communities, especially those who have historically been locked out of high-skill trades jobs.

4. What would you do as Trustee to ensure that Peralta is accountable to the community in use of public funds, including bond money, and the parcel tax (Measure B) passed in June 2012?

As noted above, the community colleges are intended to be just that—**community** colleges. Further, the State education code requires that key decisions be made with the inclusion of faculty, staff and students. The principle, known as “shared governance” must be the bedrock of how Peralta operates. The administration must be streamlined and wherever possible, existing faculty and staff should be provided with the support and training needed to accomplish functions that are now routinely delegated to costly administrators and high-priced consultants. This would not only keep administrative decisions grounded in the daily realities of Peralta’s classroom and direct services, but this model would also reduce administrative turnover and greatly reduce administrative costs.

These principles are especially important when it comes to budgeting. Budgets should be developed with the full inclusion of shared governance participants—faculty, staff and students. A shared governance budgeting process should also include expenditures at the Peralta District office. In the past, District expenditures have gone with little or no oversight by or accountability to the College level community. This has meant that if a Chancellor wants to spend precious funds on a new administrator or a private consultant, there was not check from the campus level.

Budget “actuals” must also align with approved budgets. For the past two years, Peralta’s Measure B Parcel Tax spending diverged sharply from what was promised and approved by the Board of Trustees. So, instead of spending money on classrooms, the District Administration diverted these funds for other non-instructional purposes—with no oversight or approval from the Board. This must end. The Board must insist that budgets, including Bond and Parcel Tax budgeting, must originate in a shared governance process; and that budget “actuals” may only diverge from approved budgets with Board approval after a process of shared governance review.

5. What are you prepared to do to advocate for increased state funding?

For over a decade I served as the Oakland Chapter president of *Parent Voices*, a statewide advocacy group fighting for affordable child care, early childhood education and other support services for working families. This work was not abstract for me. As the mother of two sons, I understand first-hand the struggles of working families to get ahead.

So, whether knocking doors in Oakland or lobbying in the halls of Sacramento, I have been a consistent and powerful voice for our communities. I have also worked professionally in both the fields of subsidized child care placements (Oakland Licensed Day Care Operators' Association, the Contra Costa Childcare Council) and affordable housing (Berkeley Housing Authority). My perspective and passion to help others arise from a lifetime of experience and years of real work on the ground. I know what it is like to struggle. And I also know how much it means to get a hand up that allows one to break the cycle of poverty, to be independent, and to then to help one's children get ahead too. So, you can count on me to be a voice for increased state funding for community college education. BUT, more important than my one voice is the empowered voices of ALL people in our community. As a labor activist and as a community organizer I have spent my life lifting up the voices in our community. This is the only way we will ever be successful in increasing state funding for our colleges.

6. What creative ideas do you have to develop alternative funding sources for the Peralta District?

First off, we should not have to fund "alternative" funding sources. The whole purpose of state and local government is to fund schools and services that benefit our community. If we are not receiving adequate public dollars to support our mission, we must organize and fight to change this. As a union steward and as a community activist with Parent Voices I have made countless trips to lobby on behalf of working families. For example, when I was a working mother trying to support my family I discovered that receiving a \$1.00 increase in my hourly wage made me entirely ineligible for any child care assistance—effectively making it impossible for me both to work and to insure that my kids were safe. It wasn't just me, however, it was a lot of struggling families who were being disqualified from benefits. So, instead of simply accepting my bad luck, I worked with Parent Voices, organized others, went to the capital to make our case—and we won! We got the state to revise their guidelines to make more parents eligible for childcare subsidies, thereby enabling more working parents to get ahead.

I will continue this work as a trustee, especially to push not just for reduced tuition fees, but FREE higher education for every member of our community who can benefit from access. I will also fight for free or low-cost text books, affordable housing access, food security and all of the other things that will allow our students and families to be successful.

That said, our Peralta Colleges Foundation could be much stronger. For years the Foundation has limped along, occasionally finding large grants and individual donors but for the most part not meeting its potential. This must change. And, one starting place is tapping into the large network of Peralta College alums. We have many successful members of our community who owe much of their success to their start at one of our colleges. We have invested in our community and if given the chance, our community will invest back in us.

7. How would you define the role of trustee in relation to the chancellor and administration?

Trustees represent the community in the community college system. Our job is oversight and policy guidance and not the day-to-day management of the institution. To represent our communities effectively, we must be solidly grounded in our communities and in close contact with the most affected community college constituents—students, faculty, and staff. We will hear a lot of information from the Administration, and we must be able to check this perspective with the voices of those who may not be represented in the Administrative view point.

Rather than managing the day to day affairs of the District, we must insure that this management is done in a way that meaningfully engages all key stakeholders. Fortunately, within the community college system state law requires a process of “shared governance,” in which key stakeholders must be included in most of the important decisions of the colleges and district. Through this process, the District Administration through the Chancellor should bring recommendations for our approval. If the Chancellor’s recommendations have not included a process of shared governance or if the Chancellor’s recommendations go against the consensus arrived at through the shared governance process, then there must be a compelling reason for this. Absent this, a Board should be highly skeptical of any recommendation brought for their approval.

8. Describe your understanding of shared governance. What is the role of faculty, classified staff, and students in shared governance?

See the above.

9A. What is your opinion about selling/leasing college land for commercial development?

Public institutions and public land must benefit the public. The Peralta Community College District owns land on and near 4 campuses. Sadly, some of this land has been given away or sold at rock-bottom prices. Developers have had their eyes on various Peralta parcels for years, especially around Laney College and the District offices. Especially in times of District hardship, developers are somehow seen as saviors who will rescue Peralta from its financial woes. But this perspective should be viewed with a very high degree of skepticism. As a general principle, we know that once public lands and public institutions are privatized, they rarely or never return to public ownership. And, while we do not know what the future holds, but we DO know that unlike other commodities, there will never be more land. So, I believe that Peralta’s land should stay in Peralta’s hands.

9B. What was your position in 2017 when the Oakland Athletics wanted to build a stadium on Peralta/Laney land?

I was against the siting of a new A's stadium near Laney College. The A's have a perfectly good site at the Oakland Coliseum that the public has already invested in heavily. There is also a well-developed plan for that site that might benefit the surrounding community. If the A's are truly committed to Oakland, then let them build there.

Further, the land near Laney college is in the core of our downtown area. Any stadium development there would put intense pressure on these marginal communities, forcing out low-income housing and displacing a very vulnerable Oakland Chinatown. Not to mention the intense disruption of the learning environment at Laney College such a development would have posed.

I could say much more about this, but let me also add that the land in this area is part of a very delicate ecosystem that includes delicate bird habitat and other fragile ecosystems. The residents and voters of Oakland have invested heavily to make this area through taxpayer dollars to make this area accessible to residents while also enhancing the ecosystem. Any future development along the estuary path must be done through a very careful process that includes both the Peralta constituents as well as surrounding community.

10. What is your view on parity for part-time faculty?

The community college system, as a whole, has only been able to operate by exploiting large numbers of part-time faculty who not only receive less pay per class but also do not have access to full medical and other benefits. This is not fair. Peralta must not only move towards a system of "pay equity" for part-time faculty but also provide more job stability for these dedicated educators. This means that Board members must make it a priority both at the local level and at the state level, to advocate for stronger funding and more equitable treatment of these important members of our community.

11. What is your experience with collective bargaining? What is your approach to conflict resolution?

The first time I sat across from corporate managers to support a fellow worker in a grievance process, I learned very quickly that our power to advocate for workers was completely grounded in our collective ability to organize and act together. That, along with a good contract, completely leveled the playing field against those with more money. I became a life-long advocate for worker's rights and collective bargaining.

12. What do you think about charter schools and privatization in education?

This is a complicated issue because the welfare of children and families is at stake. There is no doubt that many of our public schools are failing our children. It is natural that parents in this

situation will go to the best available schools and if this is a charter school, one can understand why an individual parent might make this choice.

That said, charter schools are not the answer. The data regarding student success within charter schools does not at all demonstrate that they are on the whole better. Further, the “best” charter schools sometimes have artificial barriers set up to exclude those children most in need, effectively making them publically funded private schools for already entitled families.

We must find ways to support the involvement of more parents in public schools and to find more public dollars to support public schools. Educational administrators and public officials who oversee public schools must be firmly grounded in and accountable to an informed and empowered public.

Creating stronger pathways between our k-12 schools and our community colleges will also help. Recently the Peralta colleges have improved in this area, but there is still more to do.

13 . If you are an *incumbent*, what are the three most important accomplishments that you achieved during your time on the Peralta Board? If you are a *challenger*, what are the three most important accomplishments that you have achieved in the last four years that improved the quality of life in your community?

As the chapter president of Parent Voices in Oakland for over a decade I organized my community to fight for better and more affordable child care and other family support services. I have knocked on doors, made phone calls, arranged for Spanish language translation, organized community meetings, and walked the halls of Sacramento to recruit and join with those legislators who have partnered with us to improve our communities. Whether it was suing the department of education or fighting for more money for our families, I have done whatever I could to help the working families in my community.

Within 6 months of beginning my job in the UC Berkeley Students Services office I became a union steward with Teamsters Local 2010. This is was challenging time for unions and working people— not just because of the rising cost of living in this area and the housing crisis, but especially because of impending outcome of the Supreme Court *Janus* decision. As a union steward I engaged in weekly planning meetings and outreach sessions with workers. We talked one-on-one with rank and file members to talk with them about the importance of being in a union. For many of these members, this was the first time anyone from the union had reached out to them or had a conversation. So while the attacks on working people through this court case is horrible, it also gave me and us as a union to reconnect with our organizing roots as a labor movement.

14. Who has endorsed you so far? What labor support do you have?

I began my campaign literally at the last minute after being recruited by concerned members of the Peralta and Fruitvale/Laurel community. My campaign right now is literally two weeks old. But in this short time we have already build momentum and put into place a campaign structure.

Key endorsements I have received in this two week period:

- Doug Bloch, Political Director, Teamsters Joint Council 7
- Jeff Sanceri, Chair, Peralta Federation of Teachers Committee on Political Education
- Richard Thoele, President, SEIU 1021 Peralta Chapter
- Donald Moore, President, Academic Senate of the Peralta Community College District
- Nicky Gonzalez Yuen, Trustee, Peralta Community College Board
- Karen Weinstein, Trustee, Peralta Community College Board
- **Clarissa** Doutherd, Executive Director of Parent Voices, Oakland

15. How much money do you currently have for this race? How much money do you plan to raise? Where will the money come from?

My campaign is just beginning. I plan to raise from \$50K- \$80 from my community and labor supporters.