

OPINION: COALITION FOR POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY CALLS TOWN HALL TO ADDRESS OAKLAND'S COMMITMENT TO MACRO

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The Coalition for Police Accountability (CPA) is calling a virtual Town Hall on Saturday, April 29, 2023, to address concerns that the Mobile Assistance Community Responders of Oakland (MACRO), an alternative to the armed response of police to emergency calls, is not meeting the goals set by the community. This MACRO town hall is timely as a progress report is due to be made public within the next few weeks and CPA has called the community meeting to address structural problems needed to bring MACRO back to its original mission. The post OPINION: Coalition for Police Accountability Calls Town Hall to Address Oakland's Commitment to MACRO first appeared on Post News Group.

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By Ken Epstein

Several hundred people attended a rally last Sunday on the steps of the Alameda County Court House by Lake Merritt and live on social media to rally in support of newly elected Alameda County District Attorney Price, who already faces blistering establishment attacks for carrying out her campaign pledge to end mass incarceration and to meet the desperate needs of both crime victims and victims of the criminal justice system.

District Attorney Price shared her vision and determination to fulfill the goals of the historic civil rights movement, to work with the community to end violence, support victims of crime and end the institutionalized injustice that plagues criminal justice in Alameda County and this country.

"I stand before you as the first non-appointed, non-anointed district attorney of Alameda County in over 100 years," said Price, who began her remarks by underscoring her determination by singing one of the anthems of the Civil Rights Movement the 1950s and 1960s, "I Ain't Going to Let Nobody Turn Me Around."

Among the speakers were diverse Alameda County residents and leaders who support Price, including Berkeley resident Paola Laverde, a member of the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee, District 15.

"Like the 228,721 people who voted for her in November, I believe she is the right person to be Alameda County's top prosecutor," said Laverde, who has worked as a translator for the courts.



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"I support Pamela Price because she's a Black woman who had the audacity ... to challenge and stand up against the status quo in Alameda County, where the district attorney has been handpicked by politicians and not by the people (for decades).

"For over 30 years she has fought for the victims of sexual assault and harassment, victims of retaliation, victims of discrimination, regular people like you and me, nurses, doctors, electricians, teachers, office workers, security guards and police officers, working class people, victims of unscrupulous employers and systems that depend on maintaining the status quo," Laverde continued.

"She is a trailblazer (who) ran a people-powered campaign for district attorney," she said. "She refused to take money from corporations – she returned the donation from the biggest landlord in Berkeley."

Norman Birkenstock, who described himself as a senior leader in the Asian American and Philippine-American community, introduced Price.

"I stand beside our minister of justice, Pamela Price," Birkenstock said. "We stand strong, resolute, unwavering, for social justice, and public safety for all Asian Americans, all African Americans, all Hispanic Americans, (and) for all white Americans."

Ron Curtis, Oakland firefighter and paramedic for 19 years, focused on some of the attacks on Price.

"All the negative things that have been said about Pamela Price and the negative press have been a lot of lies, a lot of misinformation," Curtis said. "We're having a war on injustice, and they're having a war on us. They've been having a war on us for how many past generations. And Pamela Price gets into office for four months, and they've already started."

The rally was chaired by civil rights attorney Walter Riley, who has a long history of working for justice in Oakland.

"(Pamela Price) has the tenacity, the toughness and the experience to bring equity and justice to a badly broken system," said Riley.

"She has the mandate to carry out the reforms she has been talking about (and campaigned on), and our community supports that," he said. "Now, for the first time, we have someone right here (in the district attorney's office) who we can support and fight for."

Speaking to the crowd from the courthouse steps, DA Price said she had just returned from a civil rights tour of the South.

"I had the privilege of standing in places, like Montgomery, (Alabama) where the modern civil rights movement for this country was born in 1955. (Today,) there is triumph in Montgomery, just like there is triumph in Alameda County."

Many Black people in those days died fighting for their rights, but they were not deterred because they understood the vote meant they could change who ran the country, she said. "Just like in November 2022, we knew that if we vote we can change who runs Alameda County."

Less than a month after the historic March on Washington, where Dr. King spoke of his dream, racists blew up a bomb, murdering four Black children in Birmingham.

She said, there is a lesson in that: "When you show up for freedom and justice, you have to be ready for the backlash."

She presented some statistics of racial injustice in Alameda County:

- A Black person in Alameda County is 20 times more likely to be incarcerated than a white person;
- 50% of the people on probation in the county are Black;
- 66% of the people in Santa Rita County jail are Black;
- 86% of juvenile arrests in Alameda are Black or Brown children;
- Of those in the county sentenced to life without parole under the age of 21, over 82% are Black.

Price said that when she took over the DA's office, she found "an organization in chaos."

"There was no transition plan," she said. "This is (former DA) Nancy O'Malley's shame, leaving an organization totally unprepared for change. We entered an environment filled with employees either traumatized or toxic."

In her first 75 days, Price has put many changes in place.

Her office started with improving victim services. Only 40% of the victims in this county receive services they are entitled to, she said.

Her office is rebuilding "collaborative courts," providing mental health units. "We listened to the families of the seriously mentally ill for the first time," she said.

She successfully found places for almost three dozen people with serious mental illnesses, "who were languishing in Santa Rita County jail," she said.

She created a public accountability bureau with more lawyers, paralegals, and investigators to investigate in-custody deaths, "to enforce the constitutional rights of every resident of Alameda County."

She seeks to reform "racialized justice mechanisms," establishing new guidelines and procedures for charging, sentencing and plea disposition.

Her office is creating community-based commissions to advise on "how to transform this broken system," a mental health commission, a re-entry commission, a victim-witness advocacy commission and a gun violence task force.

Concluding her remarks, District Attorney Price said, "I'm not fearing the backlash that they call a recall, because I believe in the engagement and the activism of this community. In Alameda County, we know what democracy looks like."

For a copy of the report produced by her volunteer transition team, go to <https://bit.ly/41l5ld>

There are no comments yet.