

OPINION: IN FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE, HARRIS EXPOSES TRUMP'S INADEQUACIES

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She's still calling herself the underdog, but the biracial woman from Oakland, half Black and half Asian American, just changed the race for the presidency of the United States. If you ever doubted Kamala Harris' ability to be our nation's leader, everyone who watched Tuesday's debate saw how fully capable she is of the job. She belongs in the White House. The post Opinion: In First Presidential Debate, Harris Exposes Trump's Inadequacies first appeared on Post News Group.

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By Ken Epstein

A recently organized coalition, "Respect Our Vote – No Recalls!," held a standing-room only mass meeting on Sept. 14, urging residents to vote 'No' on the two East Bay recalls funded by conservative billionaires and millionaires with the help of corporate media and instead to support the campaign to protect residents' democratic right to choose their representatives.

The mass meeting, attended mostly by members of local Asian American communities, was held in a large banquet room in a Chinese restaurant in Alameda.

The Respect Our Vote (ROV) coalition, consisting of concerned community members and groups, is organizing meetings in Oakland and around Alameda County leading up to the November election.

Speaking at the meeting, prominent East Bay leader Stewart Chen said that local leaders, like Alameda County D.A. Pamela Price and Oakland Mayor Sheng Thao, worked hard to get elected, and our system says they get four years to carry out their policies and campaign promises. But rich people have "broken" that system.

Within two months after they took office, they were facing recalls paid for by billionaires, he said. "(Billionaires') candidate did not get elected, so they want to change the system."

"(Our elected leaders) were elected through the process, and the people spoke," said Chen. "It's the entire system that the billionaires are trying to (overturn)."



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"If a candidate does something wrong or enacts a policy that we do not like, we let it play out, and in four years, we do not have to vote for them.

"The democratic system that we have had in place for a couple of hundred years, it needs our help," said Chen.

Pastor Servant B.K. Woodson, a leader of the coalition, emphasized the diversity and solidarity needed to defend democracy. "We need each other's wisdom to make our nation great, to make it safe. We are deliberately African American, English-speaking, Latino American, Spanish-speaking,

and all the wonderful dialects in the Asian communities. We want to be together, grow together, and have a good world together."

Mariano Contreras of the Latino Task Force said that people need to understand what is at stake now.

The recall leaders are connected to conservative forces that will undermine public education, and bilingual education, he said. "The people behind (the recalls) are being used by outside dark money," he said. The spokespeople of these recalls are themselves conservatives "who are wearing a mask that says they are progressives."

In 2017, Oakland passed an ordinance that gave teeth to its "Sanctuary City" policy, which was brought to the City Council and passed because it was supported by progressive members on the council.

"That would not be possible anymore if the progressive alliance – Sheng Thao, Nikki Fortunato Bas, and Carroll Fife – if they are pushed out," he said.

Elaine Peng, president of Asian Americans for Progressive America, said, "I strongly oppose the recalls of Oakland Mayor Sheng Thao and Alameda County District Attorney Pamela Price."

Citing statistics, she said Alameda County's murder rate was higher when Alameda County D.A. Nancy O'Malley was in office, before Pamela Price was elected to that position.

"The recall campaign has been misleading the public," said Peng.

She said Oakland is making progress under Thao. "Crime rates are falling in Oakland," and the City is building more affordable housing than ever before and is creating more jobs.

Attorney Victor Ochoa said, this recall is "not by accident in Oakland – it is a political strategy."

"There is a strategy that has been launched nationwide. What we're seeing is oligarchs, (such as Phillip Dreyfuss from Piedmont), right wingers, conservatives, who can write a check for \$400,000 like some of us can write a check for \$10."

"They aligned themselves with so-called moderate forces, but they're not moderates. They align themselves with the money, and that's what we have seen in Oakland."

Ochoa continued, "You got to put up signs, you've got to talk to your neighbors, volunteer whatever hours you can, have a house meeting. That's the way progressives win."

Pecolia Manigo of Oakland Rising Action spoke about what it will take to defeat the recalls. "This is the time when you are not only deputized to go out and do outreach, we need to make sure that people actually vote.

"We need everyone to vote not just for the president, but all the way down the ballot to where these

questions will be. Remind people to fill out their ballot, and mail it back.”

Former Oakland Mayor Jean Quan, who had herself faced a recall attempt, said, “In this recall, they used a lot of money, had paid signature gatherers, and they moved very fast. I talked to many of the people gathering signatures. They didn’t know what was going on. Many of them didn’t live in Oakland. It was just money for them.”

“Sam Singer, the guy who is their spokesperson, is a paid PR guy. He has media ties, so they’ve swamped the media against Sheng,” Quan said.

‘Oakland is... a city that implemented some of the first rent control protections in the country. So, developers and big apartment owners would love to get rid of rent control,” said Quan.

“We also established ranked-choice voting, which allows people with less money to coalesce and win elections,” she said. “That’s too democratic for people with big money. They would rather have elections the way they were.”



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There are no comments yet.