

May 21, 2017 Team TO: RESIST & RISE!

Opening remarks – Torie Osborn

OK so there are moments that change our lives, that shine a light and clear a pathway forward....

I remember 1982 in San Francisco. I was ensconced in the lesbian-feminist community – working on women’s music with Holly Near – my friend was a nurse – I remember as yesterday her pacing back and forth in the living room of my small apartment in the Mission district – telling me about a horrific sickness that gay men were getting, dying quick horrible deaths and SF General couldn’t find nurses to help them because nobody knew how the disease was transmitted and people were frightened -- and she was organizing her circle of 11 lesbian nurse friends to all quit their jobs and go work at SF General. “It’s our brothers dying,” she said. “And nobody cares....” And I knew at that instant that I had to help too. It took a few years but I spent the better part of a decade at the front lines of fighting HIV/AIDS. That moment etched in memory changed my life....(and make no mistake about it, that plague led to the unity and determination that over time turned around American’s hearts and minds and won marriage equality as the law of the land in a conservative era....

Years later, in 1996, I was living in Washington, DC in the middle of the welfare reform debate during the Clinton years... Yes, little known secret I love the game of Bridge – I’d left NGLTF and was writing a book about the LGBT movement – and when she came to town I was lucky to regularly play bridge with former TX Gov Ann Richards....one day she slammed down her cards in the middle of a game and said, “Why doesn’t anyone care about poor people in America any more? What has happened to our hearts?” I’ll NEVER forget it....Her words were a wake-up jolt to me – I felt called to close the chapter on my two decades of work on women’s and LGBT rights and HIV/AIDS to work on poverty, on economic inequality – I went to Liberty Hill Foundation the following year and have focused on economic and racial justice ever since....And I’ve witnessed the rise of grassroots organizing in low income communities of color here in LA that have created a feisty environmental justice movement, a growing criminal justice reform movement, the epicenter of immigrants rights for the country since Prop 187, a living wage/minimum wage successful movement – all that have helped transform our state deep deep blue...

Well, recently there was another moment of clarity like that for me: Earlier this month time stopped for me as I watched that Rose Garden moment of popping champagne corks, that ugly, surreal gloating gleeful party of mostly old white Republican men CELEBRATING the slim passage in the House of what some call the WEALTHCARE bill – essentially another HUGE transfer of wealth from middle income and poor folks to the already rich -- that would cut 24 million from health insurance, slice \$1 TRILLION of Medicaid – Paul Ryan’s dream for 30 years – and give HUGE tax cuts to the rich. Elderly and disabled and POOR Americans would lose healthcare and Donald Trump and his billionaire friends would get \$2 million in tax cuts.

And as I watched it on TV, I felt a new fury rise in me (I didn’t know I had even more fury in me!) and that led to a pop of clarity about the path ahead.

I've been fighting the Right wing since the 80s and 90s on gay rights and HIV/AIDS. But Trump has united us! This is not just about Donald Trump. This crisis is an opportunity to TAKE OUR COUNTRY BACK FROM THE RADICAL RIGHT WING that has taken over the Republican Party over the past 30 years. YES, The Republican party has become a host body for radical extremists now. This is not a party of reasonable conservatives – they are “movement conservatives” -- ultra Right wingers with a rigid ideology of tax cuts for the rich ABOVE ALL ELSE. This is way more than about Trump. It's existential, it's about democracy, it's a struggle for the soul, for the fundamental vision of this country – for ME PERSONALLY it's about everything I've worked for 50 years activism for -- And here's the good news: WE CAN DO IT! It's within reach to throw the bums out – to REPEAL AND REPLACE! Remember 54% of voters DID NOT vote for him. 78% disagree with the Comey firing. The Resistance is growing....

A few days ago [Thomas Friedman wrote a New York Times column](#) (we sent out a link with your reminder email this week). The column says it better than I can. Its bland title belies the profound wisdom in it: “It's Chicken or Fish.” Here is some of that column:

QUOTE: “*With Democrats lacking any real governing power, are there a few good elected men or women in the Republican Party who will stand up to the president's abuse of power, as their predecessors did during Watergate?.... We already know the answer: NO..... Virtually all the good men and women in this party's leadership have been purged or silenced; those who are left have either been bought off by lobbies or have cynically decided to take a ride on Trump's Good Ship Lollipop to exploit it for any number of different agendas...*” (And don't look to Susan Collins or John McCain to save us – there simply aren't enough of them)

Friedman goes on: “***That's why the ONLY relevant questions is this: ARE THERE TENS OF MILLIONS OF GOOD MEN AND WOMEN IN AMERICA READY TO ... VOTE AS DEMOCRATS OR INDEPENDENTS IN THE 2018 CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS AND REPLACE THE CURRENT GOP MAJORITY IN THE HOUSE AND MAYBE THE SENATE? NOTHING ELSE MATTERS. THIS IS NOW A RAW CONTEST OF POWER...***”

REPEAT: “***NOTHING ELSE MATTERS...This is now a raw contest of power!***”

“*The morally bankrupt crowd running today's GOP are getting their way NOT because they have better arguments – polls show big majorities disagree with them on Comey and climate – BUT because they have power and are not afraid to use it, NO matter what the polls say. And they will use that power to cut taxes for wealthy people, strip health care from poor people and turn climate policy over to the fossil –fuel industry UNTIL SOMEBODY else checks that power by getting a majority in the House or Senate..... Their current power is a threat not just to my political preferences, but to the rule of law, freedom of the press, ethics in government and integrity of our institutions, the values our kids need to learn from their president... ”*

AND I would add any possibility of moving a progressive agenda of equity and justice forward!

He goes on to say: “*Democrats should not be deluded or distracted by marches on Washington, clever tweets or Saturday Night Live skits lampooning Trump. THEY NEED POWER. If you are*

appalled by what Trump is doing then get out of Facebook and into somebody's face, registering someone to vote, raising money" -- engaging with voters in a swing district!.... "NOTHING ELSE MATTERS. Either Democrats get a lever of power...or we're stuck Facebooking each other SNL skits...."

There you have it, folks!

Now -- POWER is NOT something that always make us liberals and progressives comfortable -- we've seen the abuse of it too often, and we like to pride ourselves in our values of equality and democracy.

But it's time to get over our ambivalence about POWER. And sometimes our addiction to the margins -- to being right or noble rather than winning! If we don't, the world goes to hell.... And by the way -- let's be clear:

Power is neutral -- it can be used for good as well as bad. (I work with Sup. Sheila Kuehl and I see the good use of political power daily....)

ALSO, Power compounds, multiplies -- once you get it, it attracts more power.... or as we used to say in early women's liberation: POWER is infinite -- If you give it away, it grows....

It's time for all of us to turn our fury or our fear into POWER. Our protest into politics.

OK, so last month we had my longtime friend Rep. Karen Bass here, and she brought alive the pathway to civic power to turn things around.

I want to reiterate 3 points she made:

1. **We need to focus on retaking the House, not converting Trump voters!** I know some of us want to engage in persuasion of our family and friends back in Ohio or Michigan. But remember this is about WINNING -- We need to focus like a laser beam on TAKING BACK THE HOUSE! Nothing else matters!
2. And to do that we need to reach out to Democrats because **Democrats have a mid term election turnout problem.** KB was elected to Congress in 2010 when 63 Democratic seats were lost to Tea Party folks because that Obama voter '08 surge stayed home. To reiterate the strategy: The Dems need only 24 seats to take the House. 7 of them are in CA.
3. As Rep. Bass said: **It's never too early to doorknock** and engage with voters. She said "*If folks walk every swing district 2x/month for the next 18 months, we win. Period.*" She's a community organizer. That's what we all need to become: community organizers! The way you get Democrats to the polls for midterms is EARLY VOTER ENGAGEMENT. **This is important: You don't need to wait until there's a candidate. That's a myth of the political-industrial complex!** Voter registration and engagement starts NOW. Citizen to citizen, American to American, listening, organizing...

YES, Organize, organize, organize!....

That's why TTRR has decided to join up with Karen Bass' PAC, SEA CHANGE, and target two of those 7 seats:

- CD 25, Steve Knight which HRC won by 6.5% and
- CD 49, Darrell Issa, which she won by 7.5%.

Two blue districts represented by radical ugly-variety Right wing Republicans totally out of touch with their districts where demographics have changed but their Congressional rep hasn't. YET!

Those of you who read Steve Phillips article in the April 27 Nation remember: if 84% of the people who voted Dem in 2016 come back out and vote in midterms, the Dems win.

He has a chart that shows that for Knight we need 73% Dem turnout to win in 2018; for the Issa district, 65%.

And if you don't like doorknocking – then help raise money! I want to spearhead a Team TO Resist and Rise grassroots fundraiser this summer to raise real money for Sea Change and our own efforts – in CD 25 or CD 49.....

...I'm envisioning a summer lawn party – cheap, low dollar – with hundreds of people there -- I have 5 people already on the committee WHO ELSE HERE MIGHT HELP ME???

Each and every one of us has a role!

SO TODAY IS ABOUT GETTING CLEAR OF ANY BARRIERS TO THE WORK WE MUST DO TO SAVE OUR COUNTRY

I don't know about you, but everywhere I go, at protests, on panels, in casual conversation, I'm still hearing folks say: BUT WHAT CAN I DO?

The answer is clear. Get out of Facebook. Get your friends to join us with Sea Change. Start doorknocking – in a coordinated and strategic fashion Dem Clubs or Sea Change are leading monthly trips – commit to walking at least every other month until the election. Register young voters. Recruit to local Dem Clubs. Build capacity for change in the district. And/Or RAISE MONEY from your friends

OK Just to finish up here....The FURY I felt watching that disgusting display of raw power in the Rose Garden celebrating trying to hurt millions of poor and sick Americans in favor of the already-wealthy –

That FURY is now turned into FOCUS on TAKING THE HOUSE in 2018. I think it's the moral imperative of all of us who care about democracy, who care about human rights, who care about the environment – to work from this moment on to seize control of the House of Representatives from the Republicans who are HELL BENT on destroying this planet and hurting most people in

it in favor of MORE wealth for the richest people in the richest country in the history of the world. The ABUSE STOPS HERE. IT STOPS NOW.

And the great news is: We can do it! We have the power – this uprising can WIN in 2018. 7 seats in CA. 2 of them we can help flip!

Are you in??