

Why: On behalf of 5 Madera County Local women who were targeted and deliberately named by Mark Reed's campaign for Eastern Madera County District 5 Supervisor on approximately 30,000 mailers sent to registered voters within the county. These women, as well as many residents of the district, are outraged by Reed's campaign attempts to intimidate vocal opponents of his behavior and troubling ideological associations.

SPEAKERS: Loralee Bergdall, Kritszi M., Sarah R., DHF Organizing Director

When: June 2, 2022, at 2:00 pm

Where: Hugh Burns State Building, Fresno, CA

General Statement:

Before we begin I would like to direct your attention to the packets you were given before we began. In this packet we have included photos of the mailers, as well as print copies of the statements you are about to hear. We may have additional speakers who will want to give statements on behalf of their respective organizations. However, the main concentration of this conference will be to speak on behalf and about those directly effected by these mailers.

On approximately May 29th and the 30th 2022, the campaign of Mark Reed, who is a candidate for Eastern Madera's 5th District supervisor, mailed thousands of mailers with inflammatory language, explicitly naming 5 local women, including their first and last names as supporters of the opposition. Reed's deliberate wording such as 'witch', 'democrat', 'socialist', 'LGBTQ', 'BLM,' and 'SEIU', while inherently are words some community members agree, and even identify with, in the context of a polarized local election, in the midst of proud white supremacists and ideological extremists, has created an unsafe environment for those outed on these mailers.

We are unsure at this time as to the justification for including the harmful language, and as to exactly why Reed's camp chose to specifically name these women. However, whatever the justification and reason yet to be given, we find it to be ethically and morally bankrupt to target private citizens on political mailers, and thus placing them into the spotlight without cause.

As you will hear from those affected, as a result of this intentional designation of these women as the 'opposition', they have been subjected to harassment and emotional distress at the hands of supporters and any person who deems those labels, such as LGBTQ+ and democrat as derogatory. Already members of vulnerable groups, these women have had to bear the brunt of Mark Reed's cold and calculated attempts to suppress their open defiance of his candidacy. Our community has a long and well-documented history of hateful groups infiltrating influential positions of authority. However, our community has an equally long and defined opposition to such blatant hatred. And that's why we are here today.

We are here today to send a loud and clear message, not only to Mark Reed, but to his campaign, his supporters, and any persons who believe it is acceptable to place the unfair burden of political strategy on women who have been beyond instrumental in the betterment of their communities, simply because they are outspoken.

We are here because we believe that no person deserves to unwittingly become a sacrificial lamb for political gain because they spoke up for what they believe in.

We will be taking questions, but I want to first take a moment to read a few statements from those who do not wish to be named, for fear of their personal safety. We understand that this is a unique situation-in that the circulation of the flyers already includes names, but would ask that you not include the full names in your publications to avoid further exposure to extremists looking to antagonize and harass those involved.

Before I read these statements I also want to emphasize that this situation, as much as it is a matter of political importance, it is of great personal importance, because this incident has effected each of these women, deeply. They have experienced harassment, accusations, and emotional distress as a result of political maneuvering; without their explicit consent, and without warning. These women are not here today because they fear for their safety, so I would like to ask that you keep that in mind as we read through these statements.

Firstly, from one individual she wished that this message be given on her behalf:

I am a Christian woman and I want to say...

We will not be oppressed.

We will not be intimidated.

To our Eastern Madera County community,

My sisters and I stand today on the shoulders of Emmeline Pankurst, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth and more.....

We invite and encourage our community residents, who feel marginalized, to stand on our shoulders and be lifted up to choose your vote without intimidation or suppression.

Eastern Madera County has ZERO tolerance for intimidation, oppression and hate.

From the second individual who could not be here:

I am a founder of Oakhurst LGBTQ+, a social media networking space for locals, since larger spaces were often filled with hate and attacks.

I am also a professor and an Associate Marriage and Family Therapist. Both my personal and professional code of ethics are to be accepting of all, and to call out instances of injustice that I observe.

This flier won't stop me from doing the work I do to create safety for marginalized folks in this community. I grew up here and both of my parents have dedicated significant amounts of charitable work here as well. To be attacked for my sexuality is nothing new, it's happened before. However, it hurts to be judged for something that I can't control, anymore than I can control my Jewish heritage, or my brown eyes. I have felt more fear when going out in public places and been experiencing panic attacks daily since I was made aware of this attack on me, as well as receiving messages of hate on social media.

As we celebrate Pride this month, I honor the strong women like Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P Johnson who also stood against hate or intolerance. I am proud to be following their example and fighting for what is right. I'm grateful for the love and support I've been shown, and I will continue to use my voice to challenge those who try to harm others.

Lastly, from the third individual:

As I am unable to take part in the the press conference due to recently undergoing surgery on Friday-and am not feeling up to it, I am writing my thoughts about being included with four other local women on Mark Reed's latest mailers.

I don't think Socialism means what Reed thinks it means. I am not ashamed of being a person who cares for others and wants the best for all. I encourage you to look up the platform for the Peace & Freedom Party to see if you don't agree with most things included in the platform.

That being said, all my actions and comments regarding Reed are because I am a social justice advocate wanting justice for all, not because I am a Socialist. I have called out his lies and discrepancies. I stood up to his accusations against me and others.

This flyer has all five of us feeling unsafe in our own communities with many of us being here for decades. This is known as a conservative community with many hateful and angry people. This makes some of us feel uncomfortable going out in public and wondering if someone might attack us after seeing our profile pictures on social media. Some are worried about their jobs and if they may lose them due to this. It comes across as sexist, homophobic, racist, and generally hateful.

Of many things Reed has done and said I want to just point out a couple of them. I am really unsure as to why Reed has 'BLM' on his flyer, saying his opponent is being supported by this movement. I have never seen the 'BLM' movement, locally or otherwise nationally, in openly expressing support for his opponents. Is Reed referring to Black Lives Matter, or Bureau of Land Management? As an organizer for many years of the Uprooting Racism organization in Fresno,

and former admin of the Black Lives Matter: Fresno Facebook page, I find this mention abhorrent, especially since it is not true. It is just a dog whistle to local racists.

To go along, I find it strange that Reed almost always states “my opponent”, singular, never “my opponents”, as it is actually. He acts as if Campbell doesn’t exist. He almost never mentions Campbell in any of his posts or comments. Why is this? I can only guess. Perhaps he doesn’t see Campbell as a threat in the election, or something much more sinister.

And with that, I would like to give Sarah and Kritszi an opportunity to speak on their own behalf.

Kriszti M. Statement:

Hi, I’m Kriszti. I’m a business owner, community volunteer and ran an education foundation for kids in the Oakhurst Area for 10 years. I would find the association that was made between myself and the Halloween lake paddle laughable, if not for the fact that the candidate and campaign that produced the flier are endangering my family. I have a student in the local school district, as well as a young adult who is a teacher, both have my last name. This flier has put a target on the back of not only myself, but also my children.

I find it extremely disturbing that Reed is being advised by entities who are attempting to establish local chapters of the Salt and Light Council. This group actively promotes intolerance to their congregation as a Christian value. A member of this group was seen whispering to Reed, during the break at the last debate Coarsegold, notebook in hand, muttering about ‘CRT’. I find it very concerning that this is who Reed is getting advice from and that he has the blessings and endorsement of the Madera County Republican Party. It is astounding that his campaign also thought that attacking LGBTQ and BLM was a good idea. This makes me question the type of staff he would surround himself with if elected to any office anywhere.

Sarah R:

I am Sarah Roemer, a private citizen from the Oakhurst area. Last week Mark Reed, Republican candidate running for District 5 in Madera County retaliated against me for speaking out against him on social media by printing my first and last name on a campaign flyer, claiming I am affiliated with so-called 'witches and warlocks.' While I respect everyone's right to practice their religion of choice, I am not personally affiliated. I do, however, run the Oakhurst Area's meal and outreach program, Soup 4 Friends, a volunteer charity that provides resources to those who need them, and as such, am concerned by how Mr. Reed's divisive and libelous claims might affect our community efforts. I must also be cautious about how this might affect my job and personal life, I'm wondering if I need to fear extremists or zealots inspired to violence by his false claims. I've already been identified in public as 'the witch.'

Prior to this, most of the women targeted on his mailer didn't know each other. But we've discovered we have some things in common. Most notably, we are all very involved in community efforts: creating safe spaces, city beautification, outreach and meal programs, representation, and so much more. Secondly, we are all women.

This isn't a political attack on an organization over policy or beliefs, it's not a reference to known parties or groups. This is a twisted punishment for speaking out against Mr Reed's character and behavior. A personal attack, publicly leveled against private citizens, women specifically, meant to instill fear, cause stress, and coerce us in to silence, to make us obey. It's meant to make us think twice before feeling safe to speak up. It's meant to keep us quiet.

We will not be bullied in to silence.

I'd rather spend my time focusing on the programs and efforts that directly benefit our community, but since Mr Reed has offered us this opportunity to organize and stand up, and to speak up for ALL of us, I will seize it.

This isn't about politics, it's about character.