

15 February 1990

Dear Family and Friends,

I'm asking for your help. Over the years we've worked together on behalf of Asian Americans, civil rights, peace, health care, women, and economic justice. **This spring I'm entering a new phase of community involvement: I'm running for school board in Oakland's District 4.** If I win I'll be the first Asian on the Oakland School Board. 18% of the 50,000 public school kids are Asian.

I have come full circle: My first political act was circulating a petition protesting then Gov. Reagan's cuts in education as a high school student. The Third World student movement and the fight for Asian American / Ethnic studies was my first campaign for educational reform. Today at 40, as the mother of two children in the public schools, I'm taking on the educational system at a new level.

Oakland recently made headlines as the first district to be put in state-ordered trusteeship. We suffer from the problems facing all urban districts: aging structures, wasteful bureaucracy, underfunding, crack wars, large numbers of immigrant students, middle class flight, and high drop-out rates. In addition, we have gross mismanagement, corruption, racial polarization, and highly politicized board politics. 25-30% of all children have left the system for private schools.

My dream is to build a grassroots organization that will turn Oakland into a model for educational reform. This last year, I led a citywide coalition of 600 parents--the first multi-ethnic parent organization to span our city from hills to flatlands. In 2 weeks we collected over 8,000 signatures and mobilized 500 parents to a board meeting in protest of massive cuts in music, arts, science, computer, vocational arts, and athletic programs. We successfully lobbied for \$1.2 million in city funds for the schools and the restoration of over 90 laid-off teachers.

I believe parent involvement and organization is key to turning the schools around. I hope to help implement democratic decision making at school sites, giving councils of parents, teachers, and local principals more say over their programs. I will build a community-parent-teacher advisory council that brings people together to share resources and turns schools into real community centers. California is 46th in spending per capita per student. I will help build a statewide parent movement.

As you know, I've always been interested in politics, but never considered being a "politician" or candidate. I've had to overcome my own self-image as a woman and organizer. I've made the leap because I believe that public schools are the glue of democracy...that glue is coming apart. Floyd, already busy with national health care battles, is working a double shift on the campaign. William, 12, a seventh grader in junior high school, delivers campaign literature on his bike. Lailan, 8, assembles mailings such as this.

I'm turning to you as part of my larger "family." I'm told that it will cost over \$30,000 to win this race. Unfortunately, many of these costs come early in the campaign. I know many of you are supporting important local issues of your own, but I would like you to consider sending a small donation as part of my national "barn-raising" strategy. A hundred small donations would be a crucial boost at this stage. Many thanks and please drop a note anyway. I promise to write after the June 5th election.

Love



sent 2/9/90
\$2500

friendship

By
Lailan

Mary + Bill -
I know you've
a lot of responsibilities
now, but please pass
this on to others.

Jan