CAMPAIGN SPEECH

FOR

LEELA COLEMAN

The American historian John Kenneth Galbraith is known to have said, “All of the great leaders have had one characteristic in common: it was the willingness to confront unequivocally the major anxiety of their people in their time. This, and not much else, is the essence of leadership." Hello. I am LeeLa Coleman and it would be an honor, a privilege and a demonstration of support and solidarity to serve you as the next President of this fine Union. The total membership of 503, SEIU and OPEU represents the heart and the backbone of a tremendous segment of the labor force in Oregon-a labor force that cares for and about people on all levels. We are a community and as such, our combined and cohesive voice must work together to show strength, commitment and connection.

What is a labor union at its most essential root definition? It is a **context** for people to share strengths and concerns, and find the means to take effective and organized action in support of the collective well-being. As a individuals in this increasingly chaotic and pressure filled society, each one of us has adequate cause to feel anxious. As dedicated workers who spend our time, strength and resources in the pursuit of supporting our communities at so many levels, this union needs to function as an oasis for its members… a “safe haven” in which to discuss issues, solve problems, and advance ideas of our own security on professional and personal levels.

There are those who may challenge me with whom I disagree. The “old” way of thinking is misleading and ineffective. Some say, “Members elect a president to make the decisions for them.” Sorry-that is not my experience nor is it my platform. Let’s face it. I am **YOU**. I know what you go through and I know where a voice is needed. I know how to speak up and I know how to listen and then act effectively. I started as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, worked my way up through the ranks to become a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and through it all; I relied on my union to represent me. Because I wanted to honor that support that I had received, I found my way through different vantage points within the structure of organized labor. I discovered the power and the true strength that is available as a part of a unified and committed organization. Not everyone is a leader, but it is the person who is willing to serve and confront the anxieties of the membership and work to alleviate the conditions causing the issues that is the true leader. I have had the privilege to observe and learn what “works” in the many statewide and local positions I am proud to have held throughout my participation. (**Pick out highlights of what you** **learned at each post**) As Sub-Local President, I learned \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, in the position as Steward in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I witnessed first hand the power of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. My tenure at the Statewide Finance Committee taught me \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and on the executive team of the Political committee, I sharpened my skills while \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Each and every step of the way I held the purpose of the union close to my heart-to work to enable a better life for **all of us**.

There is no union without each one of you. It is not the President’s job to tell you what to do or how to vote or when to walk. It is the President’s job to inspire and advocate for all of you for the collective good for **everyone**. It’s time to be proud of who we are, what we do, and how we function as workers as well as within the union. It’s time for open and honest communication that is not colored by covert suggestions or threats to the contrary of what most of us work for. It’s time to have productive conversation about equality, solidarity and rights for all.

It’s time to rebuild, educate, and inform through meetings, forums, and more consistent flow of information and idea exchange. It’s time to learn and to teach each other so that we all are stronger as a result. There is an expression, “I don’t know what I don’t know.” That no longer works in this day and age. Ignorance is NOT bliss. We need to set up lines of communication and action. The world is moving very quickly. Information spreads in a nano-second. It’s time for this union to participate and benefit from the collective modern conversation so we can see our path to the future.

You inspire me to want to serve you. As your President, I will maintain open channels and the essential conversation that needs to take place on all levels in order to support a healthy, productive and positive work environment for all Oregonians in this amazing network. We will work on rebuilding **together.** Thank you all!