**General Council Speech 2014**

**Members run this union!**

**Opening**

I am LeeLa Coleman and I am running to be your next President.

Our union is at a crossroads and in a few weeks you will be asked choose who you want to lead. You should know where I stand, so let me get to the point – I represent you!

**Platform**

Members run this union. “Member-run union” is not just a slogan, it is the bedrock foundation of our strength. It is the core of our union that gives us the courage to dream big, aim high and demand more. When the going gets rough, members will defend what they build and own.

Why member-run is better

To survive, we must connect our struggles with the struggles of all. Members are the pulse of our communities.

We are a large, diverse union that reaches into every corner of Oregon. Our members know best how to connect the struggles we all face to neighbors and community and engage them.

**Indictment**

At a time that we are under unprecedented attack, our union is taking us down the wrong path. A few at the top have pursued a top-down strategy that is disconnected from our members.

What they have done wrong

* Unification – created a dishonest campaign to get us to vote to dissolve our union and put more power at the top.
* Meddled in our elections
* Fail to listen to all ideas (impose their direction)
* Failed to represent
* Response to crises – dissolve our union, consolidate power and spend more at the top, leaving our members behind.
* Changed the terms of membership without telling us
* Control and parse information, only telling us what supports our message.
* It makes it difficult for us buy into what they are telling us.

The attacks are mounting, we are down for the count and the wealthy don’t like us. But to quote Elizabeth Warren, “we can whimper about it and we can whine about it or we can fight back!” I say let’s fight back - this is not the end of our union, it is the start of a revolution.

**Solution**

To rebuild, we start by improving our communication, rebuilding our sub- locals and connecting to our communities. Members run this union.

**Communication** must be honest, transparent and candid. Our members must have the opportunity to network with workers in other worksites –that I why I support Regional meetings. We should explore ways in which technology could bring us together. We may not always want to publically publish our internal deliberations and strategy, but the information must be readily available to member-leaders to discuss with their members.

**Education** To rebuild our sub-locals, we must give our members the information, resources and training to fix the problems that plague our work lives. Our members should be encouraged to use the skills they learn to organize the unorganized and make our cause the cause of all workers. It doesn’t matter if we are standing up to the boss down the hall or to Wall Street – it takes the same solid dose of courage.

**Engagement** To connect with our communities – and to enhance union democracy – I strongly support the creation of member associations and grass-roots caucuses. This is crucial. We have the organically Committee for a Strong Union and now Committee for an Honest Union. We should have a conservative caucus and a socialist committee as well. There are three reasons why this is crucial

1. Members are engaged when they are working on issues that are near and dear.
2. Workers come together from different locals, backgrounds and communities.
3. We are a very large, diverse union that reaches into every corner of the state.

Our union must find a way to include these groups in a meaningful way.

**Conclusion**

Whether you work in a home or in a high-rise, as your President, I will deliver the leadership we need to harness the power of our great union. I will restore the power inherent in a member-run union. I will communicate openly and honestly – that is my rock solid promise to you. I have the experience and passion to lead.