

'A force for change': Prominent activist Wayne Hsiung runs for mayor

Daily Californian: University of California - Berkeley

June 3, 2020 Wednesday

University Wire

Copyright 2020 UWIRE via U-Wire All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 564 words

Body

Prominent activist Wayne Hsiung is running for mayor with a pledge to only receive funding from citizens as well as bold plans to eradicate homelessness and carbon from the city within five years.

Hsiung's campaign's first event was at the Gilman homeless encampment; he said he saw the spot as a "jarring metaphor" that represents why he is running for mayor. The camp sits next to Golden Gate Fields, much of which, he said, sits empty as developers wait for the perfect buyer. Hsiung said single mothers are living in tents next to garbage.

If elected mayor, Hsiung promised to end homelessness by 2025 through a wealth tax that funds affordable housing. He also aims to make Berkeley the first "Green New City" with a five-year plan to only allow carbon neutral businesses. Hsiung said he sees the "climate crisis" as a large threat to human civilization.

Cassie King, spokesperson for Direct Action Everywhere, or DxE, an international grassroots organization for animal rights activists, called Hsiung "a force for change." King said Hsiung is genuinely committed to bettering the world, even though he has faced arrests, prosecutions and violence.

Hsiung said he is proud "to be prosecuted for exposing the cruelties and diseases spreading from factory farms" and confident that the trials will be resolved before election day.

King said she believes that the current state of the world requires leaders who will empower their people, rather than cater to business interests or try to uphold an unjust status quo.

Hsiung aims to break the cycle of corruption he believes "subtly exists" and currently plagues local politics.

"If you donate more money to campaigns, you get more access, and the larger the donation, the more access," Hsiung said. "It's corrupting our institutions and changing the way they are supposed to operate."

Hsiung's campaign is entirely funded by donations, and he has promised not to receive any money from corporations or political action committees.

King said Hsiung is an organizer, rather than a politician.

"Wayne has decades of experience as an organizer in movements for animals, the environment, and racial justice," King said in an email. "He has spent countless sleepless nights investigating factory farm cruelty, sacrificed his own freedom to challenge injustice and political corruption, and perhaps most importantly, worked tirelessly to bring people together in times of crisis."

'A force for change': Prominent activist Wayne Hsiung runs for mayor

Growing up as a Chinese American, Hsiung said he experienced injustice and was bullied in school. Mostly, however, he credited the 13 years he spent at the University of Chicago as an undergraduate and law student for teaching him the larger forces of structural inequities as well as the importance of activism and societal change.

He worked in environmental advocacy as a lawyer, through which he observed the devastating effects that climate change has on animals.

Hsiung then co-founded DxE in 2013 and led many of its biggest projects, such as advocating for the ban of fur sales in Berkeley and San Francisco, according to King.

Alice Cherry, co-founder of the Climate Defense Project, said she is supporting Hsiung because he has a five-year timeline for climate neutrality, which distinguishes him from incumbent Mayor Jesse Arreguín.

"Berkeley is arguably the most progressive city in the country, and the residents need and want a new green plan now," Hsiung said.

Load-Date: June 4, 2020

End of Document