**High Time for Millennials to Run**

Growing up, my life was one of poverty and domestic abuse. My first memory is of my father in handcuffs. School was tough. I was involved in at least a dozen schoolyard fights by the time I was 13. But I loved to read, and one book in particular – Dick Couch’s “Warrior Elite: The Forging of SEAL Class 228” – changed my life. After narrowly graduating from high school, I joined the Navy. I was top of my class in technical schools and became an expert in Electronic Warfare, and decided to go to college following my two deployments to combat zones.

I got my first taste of politics as student president of Fullerton College in Fullerton, California. With a $40,000 Cooke Scholarship, I was able to transfer to UC Berkeley to study political economy. Now I’m running for Congress.

My story is not unique. Millions of Americans come from or live in poverty, and many families are caught in cycles of abuse. College campuses are full of low-income and first-generation students who are just as bright and driven as their peers. Yet, rarely do we see these kinds of experiences and backgrounds reflected in politics.

More than half of Congress are now millionaires. And they are decidedly on the older side. The average member of the House is about 55 years old, and the average senator is around 60.

It’s time for young people across the nation – the most diverse and open-minded generation in U.S. history – to change that. It’s time for us to take our place in the halls of power, and to serve with respect, goodwill toward all, and an energy not seen since the 1960’s.

The rules of politics have been turned on their head. It’s now clear that the two-party system is broken. Money no longer wins elections like it used to. Social media and viral engagement have made possible revolutions against dictatorships and helped make a Democratic Socialist septuagenarian a top contender for the highest office in the land.

Here’s the plan: This year, 10 to 15 of us step up and run for Congress. Many will lose, but some of us will win. Perhaps only two or three, but that’s a start. And it’s a foothold from which to pull the rest of us upwards.

We can then pool our resources, lessons learned, and strategies that work. We immediately begin recruiting candidates for the next election cycle. In 2020, we run 60 to 70 qualified young people, and 30 or more can win. If this sounds crazy, don’t forget that, at its height, the Tea Party had 60 members of the House. They toppled the Speaker.

An independent caucus in the house has real voting power.

If we are able to do this, we can establish a firm, Liberal Independent voting caucus – the Young Persons Caucus – and have real sway to fight for the issues most important to us. We will finally have claimed political real estate that represents the future. We will be able to combat environmental problems that no one else seems to have the same sense of urgency about. We can make educational opportunities a reality for people who never dreamed they would earn a college diploma.

Across party lines, across age groups, across demographics like race, gender, educational status, and class, it seems as though nobody enjoys democracy these days. A Greatest Hits of the discontent would include these refrains: people just buy elections, democracy is a business now, politicians don’t care about regular people, and America’s best days are behind us.

Young people fed up with both parties, emboldened by energy and newfound optimism, are now running for state and local offices across the country. Jon Ossoff and Alexander Hernandez, ages 29 and 30, ran for Georgia’s 6th Congressional District special election in 2017, and 24-year-old Ryan Khojasteh is currently running against Nancy Pelosi in San Francisco. Add my name – Sophia Alexander – to that list, in Orange County, California.

It’s time to turn this moment into a movement. If you – yes, you reading this right now in your sweatpants with Netflix on in the background – are a compassionate, levelheaded, hardworking person under the age of 30, seriously consider running for the House of Representatives for your home district.

Together we can form an unshakable support network that gives us the strength we need to take on this challenge together. This can be the next shot heard around the world – but only if you rise up and run.

I believe in this country. I believe in this generation. I believe in you.

--

*Sophia Alexander is a Navy veteran with two deployments under her belt. She studied Political Economy at UC Berkeley, and was named one of America’s 75 2016 Jack Kent Cooke Scholars. She is also the former Associated Students president of Fullerton College, in Fullerton, CA.*

*If you’re interested in running for office, or want more information before you take the icy plunge, visit www.IndependentSophia.org, or send an email to*[*SophiaFrankenstein@gmail.com*](mailto:SophiaFrankenstein@gmail.com)*.*