

Hello amazing San Gabriel Valley NOW! Thank you so much for the invitation. I am so honored to be here and I am such a huge fan of Camerina. And all of you for caring about lifting women's voices.

My name is Sarah Jakle, I am a social worker who in 2016 became a social worker for our country, going on to be the National Outreach Director for Field Team 6 doing voter registration and the Get Out The Vote Director for California NOW -

Because of my experiences with these organizations working both with women candidates and young women aspiring to leadership, after 2020, I founded DemocraShe to be a long-term strategy: training **intersectional high school female-identifying students** to be our **youngest bench of future transformational female legislators**. For America to be the country she has never been but absolutely could be, we need strategic intentional investment in our candidates for elected office from communities that have historically been left out and we need it early.

I think everyone here agrees: Representation matters. One in four women have been victims of severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime, if 50% of all legislators were women, I have to believe they would be more on top of this. Hundreds of thousands of rape kits currently sit untested in this country - do you think they would stand for that? Black maternal health outcomes continue to be abysmal despite having it pointed out over and over, imagine if there were enough black women legislators to demand accountability.

And as we watch with horror the supreme court set to eviscerate Roe v Wade and reproductive justice for women in this country- Imagine the reproductive rights conversation if 50% of all legislators in office were women.

Yet after 100 years of women having the right to vote, we remain much too far from our goals of parity and equity. In celebrating the most women ever to hold office, only 30% of state legislators are female and only 18% of governors are female. Only 27% of Congress is female and women of color make up only 8% of all elected officials in this country. The lived experience of the radiantly intersectional spectrum of women is woefully underrepresented in American government. According to a study that just came out, if we keep up our current trajectory we will reach parity in the year 2108. That's 88 years from now. Are we going to wait for that? No my friends, we are not!

And it shouldn't be this way. Statistics show when women run, women and men are elected at the same rate. So why are women so underrepresented in government? We keep hitting the same problem: Despite our achievements, the stubborn fact remains that simply not enough women run. In 2018, "The year of the woman," women candidates in California were outnumbered by men by a 4 to 1 margin. In 2020, fewer than 30% OF CANDIDATES for Congress were women.

We have to change this. And if we are to realize a country that we will be proud to call America, we have to be investing in building the infrastructure for what that looks like now.

Luckily, both of these problems have the same answer: ensure a **robust, diverse, freely flowing pipeline of young women into the public service of elected office in our democracy**. Research shows that when women are represented in government, not only are women's issues like sexual-harassment in the military, childcare vouchers, and even having menstrual supplies in women's prisons finally addressed, but also productivity increases, more collaborative work gets done, and leadership is approached not only powerfully and competently, but holistically. According to the New York Times, Who is passing the most bills protecting not only women's rights but civil rights as a whole? Women.

As the saying goes, "when women are at the table, everybody eats."

Our future of equity and parity looks like intentionally recruiting, incubating and mentoring our future diverse female candidates who will be social justice warriors. Yet to manifest these candidates, we can't simply focus on adult recruitment. It takes years to develop the skills, the knowledge, the resources, and most importantly, the confidence to run.

To truly set women up for success in holding elected office, we must invest in our young women early and embed that running for office is their birthright!

DemocraShe is that critical early investment.

DemocraShe works with amazing high school female-identifying students in a training curriculum and mentorship program which provides a unique set of skills -

I have a Master of Public Policy and a Master of Social Work Through my work both with young women and with women candidates, I strongly believe for young women to not only start BUT STAY in the candidacy pipeline, they must have access not only to public policy (tools to feel confident at the table), but social work (the tools to deal with the narratives, gaslighting and microaggressions that tell them they don't belong at the table).

And I can tell you, coping not only with outside forces but sometimes our own internal socialized voice is an actual skill set. Most of us have to learn through hard experience, but imagine if we could equip young women so they are already prepared.

It turns out it is not enough to just tell a woman she's a leader and give her the tools for leadership, to set her up for success you must also make her brain her ally so she has tools to keep going with those skills when she runs into the racism, misogyny, homophobia or basic socialization of being a woman that will come at her when she aspires to that leadership. When they tell her she's not "likable" or criticize her for always wearing pants suits.

High school represents the critical developmental stage for this preparation to really affect a life's trajectory.

However, HS programs can often recreate structures of privilege with whose parents or schools have the time, money and opportunity to put opportunities in front of high school girls. Opportunities that tend to reinforce class and race inequities.

- So DemocraShe is different.
- We decided to do something that no other candidacy program is doing: while our National applications and nominations will be open to all, our active recruitment will be through community partners already doing great work lifting up underserved communities.
- So excited to share that we already have recruiting partner commitments from organizations supporting high-achieving low-income students, foster students, homeless students, and students learning peer mediation skills...
- all populations with absolute gems of young women whose lived experience and leadership is critical to moving our country along the moral arc of justice we all want to see.
- We also want to start a pipeline of young female identifying social justice warriors in San Gabriel Valley, which is why later I will be dropping the DemocraShe applications in your dropbox to share with your own networks - which also might extend beyond the valley into our whole beautiful country. All young women grades 9 through 12 are welcome.

So much of politics is reactive. Reacting to the horror of the moment, reacting to a speech, reacting to a single election. All of those are important. But to invest in the America we have never been but we absolutely could be, we also have to be proactive. We have to actively build the pieces of the infrastructure to make a country we will be proud to call home.

We have to plant the seeds and incubate these incredible intersectional young women to soar in their lives and legislative halls. We have to teach them that simply by stepping up and saying they want to serve our country they have already won, it's just a question of what their victory looks like.

Will they inspire another young woman coming up behind them? Will they raise issues that desperately need to be talked about? Will they lift the voices of a whole community? Will they actually hold office? The question is not will you win, the question is how you will win. We want young intersectional women to simply flood our future with candidacies.

And since statistics show that men and women win at the same rate, if we incubate more brilliant, radiant young intersectional women to run, more brilliant, radiant young intersectional women will win.

And when they do, the future of our country simply cracks open with possibility. That is the dream and the hope of DemocraShe.

If that vision and hope speaks to you as well, there are so many ways to get involved:

- **DemocraShe applications are now open!** While we are so grateful for our male allies, we are also not waiting on them to legislate about our bodies, our rights, our equal pay, our child care, our equal rights amendment and our world.
 - we need to intentionally and consciously build a future where women hold at least half the seats at the table, if not more.
 - Please send applications out to young women who you think would benefit from this training and mentorship, especially those who might not typically have access to this type of program
 - Text this easy link with more information about the program and an application: <https://www.democrashe.org/apply>
- Suggest a community organization for DemocraShe to reach out to with applications, so we can lift the lived experience and leadership of these young women into elected office <https://www.democrashe.org/contact-us>
- I would be so grateful if you would consider supporting our work financially. We are raising money to keep DemocraShe completely free so that money will never be a barrier to a single woman who wants to realize her birthright. And we are raising money to provide each DemocraShe cohort member with a \$390 stipend, so young women who might not be able to access an unpaid opportunity are not denied their chance to lead our country. To truly make America the democracy she could be, all the spectrum of women's voices need to be represented at the table

As you may know, research shows people are less likely to fund women led organizations. We hit glass ceilings trying to help women break glass ceilings . **If each of you on the zoom today supported DemocraShe with a \$25 a month recurring donation, the price of a few coffees a month, we can support these young women to write the laws of our country!** And if you know anyone who believes that diverse young women legislators are our future, please ask them if they would consider contributing as well.

Support young women to run for office - we are not waiting until 2108 to reach parity in our government!

<https://www.democrashe.org/donate>

We can't make things like this happen without people like you

Also, I'm going to include my email in case you can think of people I should be speaking to or groups I should be presenting to, or you just have some ideas for me: sarah@democrashe.org.

Amazing women of San Gabriel Valley NOW, we do not plan on waiting 80 years for women to realize their roles as stewards of America. And neither do the young women coming up behind us. Join us at DemocraShe and let's fight for them together!