



THE

Highlander

May/June 2022

The Rural Bonny Doon Association Newsletter

RBDA Public Meeting: **Meet the 3rd District Supervisor Candidates**

Wednesday May 11, 7:30 p.m.

Bonny Doon School Multipurpose Room (In Person!) *Pine Flat Road & Ice Cream Grade*



Justin Cummings

I grew up on the South Side of Chicago. My father was a criminal defense attorney who had previously worked on the administration of Mayor Harold Washington. My mother was a nutritionist who worked in public health teaching families in low income communities how to buy nutritious food on food stamps and cook nutritious meals. My parents instilled in me values to uplift those who are suffering, protect our environment, and fight for social and racial justice. Although my parents cared deeply for my brother and I, they were separate for most of my childhood and I was primarily raised by a single mother. Growing up in a lower middle class household, I benefited from many social programs which helped inspire my appreciation for nature, earn an education, and ultimately pursue a career in environmental sciences.

As a college student at Eastern Illinois University, I got involved in student activism. I worked on a Fair Trade Coffee campaign and got 90% of our campus to serve fair trade coffee, helped organize and led a volunteer group provide relief work after hurricane Katrina, and served as Biological Sciences Representative and Student Dean of the College of Sciences Student Advisory Board. I majored in both Spanish and Biology and participated in numerous professional development opportunities including studying abroad in Bilbao, Spain, community gardening throughout Chicago and at Cook County Jail, and researching the impacts of climate change on tropical trees in Costa Rica.

After graduating with a BA in Spanish and a BS in Biology in 2006, I moved to Santa Cruz in fall of 2007 to pursue a M.Ph.D. in Ecology and

continued on page 2



Ami Chen Mills

I remember the night of lightning. Later, I remember our skies were red, and ashes fell from the sky endlessly. My husband ran out to keep sweeping up the ashes, or washing them away, time and time again, until I finally told him: Just stop. There is nothing we can do. Just stop.

It was his very human response to a dystopian time we all lived through here. But in Bonny Doon, and all CZU fire areas, all this became an inferno and disaster—a threat to beloved homes and lives, gardens, pets and animals. Eventually, my family retreated from our home near UCSC to Palo Alto, where my mother lives, so I could see blue skies again and because word was that parts of campus were already being evacuated.

From our base “over the hill,” I stayed in touch with my friend Lynda, who had evacuated from her home on Smith Grade. But her husband was running back and forth, joining other neighbors trying to save their homes by cutting and maintaining fire lines. Not everyone was successful. A former climate activist colleague saw her new home burn to the ground.

Two years later, only a handful of permits have been issued for rebuilds. We lost 911 homes in these fires, countywide, during a time when we have no housing to spare in these parts. We lost a life in Last Chance and nearly every home out there.

During this campaign, I have been in Bonny Doon quite a lot, gathering stories and perspectives on the CZU fires, re-building, permitting, and insurance deadlines. I prefer to listen and do some research first before I make any high-falootin’ campaign promises. I seek to

continued on page 2



Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson

My name is Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson, I currently serve on the Santa Cruz City Council and I am running for Santa Cruz County District 3 Supervisor.

My life experiences, educational background, and professional career have prepared me to serve our community as your Supervisor. My family immigrated from Iran and moved to the United States when I was 8. It was a long and arduous, year-long journey and my family was separated for much of that time. Immigrating and watching my parents start from scratch ingrained in me the important values of community, family, and working hard.

I have a Bachelor’s in Psychology and a Master’s in Social Work. My psychology training has taught me to listen and understand the experience of the individual while my social work training has taught me to place that in the greater societal system context that effects every individual’s life.

For the last two decades, I’ve dedicated my work to building strong, healthy and safe communities. I worked in San Francisco’s Tenderloin District providing housing and employment stability support to formerly homeless adults living in subsidized housing. I also worked at the county jail serving inmates suffering from behavioral health challenges.

After receiving my Master’s in Social Work, I worked with United Way of Santa Cruz County as the Director of Community Organizing. In this role, I worked across the county facilitating collaboratives to address issues that impact

continued on page 3

Justin Cummings *cummingsforsupervisor.com*

Evolutionary Biology with a Designated Emphasis in Environmental Studies. My dissertation work focused on understanding how trees used for forest restoration suppressed the regeneration of invasive grasses in Panama. After graduating with my Ph.D. in 2013, I worked as a postdoctoral researcher studying the impacts of climate change on the Florida Everglades. In 2015, I moved back to Santa Cruz and have helped create two workforce development non profits at UCSC focused on increasing diversity in conservation and tech around drones.

In 2018, I ran for Santa Cruz City Council and was the highest vote recipient during that election. I ran then because as a renter and a young working professional with numerous degrees, I could barely afford to live in this community. This was the story I shared then, and continue to share, with many small business owners, teachers, nurses, city and county workers, scientists, union members, retirees, service industry workers, and today is still one of the major reasons why I have decided to run for the seat of Third District County Supervisor. Santa Cruz is at a critical tipping point and we need elected officials who will work to ensure that we are retaining our workforce, providing housing in areas of greatest need, making smart and environmentally conscious land use decisions, coming up with creative solutions to address homelessness, and working to protect our environment from pollution and the impacts of climate change to ensure Santa Cruz is an affordable community where everyone can thrive and prosper.

During the four years I have served on the Santa Cruz City Council, I have served two years as a City Councilperson, one year as Vice Mayor, and served as Mayor of Santa Cruz during 2020; one of the most challenging years in our community's recent history. As Mayor of Santa Cruz in 2020, and during my time on council, I have worked effectively to unite our community around difficult issues: land use, public safety, social, racial, and environmental justice; and COVID-19 response. As Mayor, I worked with UCSC professors to expand COVID-19 testing capacity in our community. After the murder of George Floyd, I worked with the African American community and the Santa Cruz police to bring about 23 changes to police policy related to use of force, accountability, transparency, and surveillance technology. During the CZU fires,

Ami Chen Mills *AmiChenMills.com*

get a full picture of the reality on the ground. Stories often contradict—and it takes time to sort out the truth.

What I have learned so far: There is frustration, emotion, anxiety, and trauma—even as there is resilience, creativity and great strength and such a deep love for the mountains. There is HUGE concern about the next fire—and this is true or should be, for the entire County. All districts, actually, need to be learning soberly from our burn areas.

I have to say that of all the areas I have visited in my district, Bonny Doon is where I have felt most engaged with and perhaps closest to people. Maybe it is the feeling of empathy and concern for those who have been through our most traumatic, recent community crisis.

So, here are the promises I can make so far:

The burn areas will be my primary, immediate focus if I win the Supervisor race. We must ensure all fire stations are fully staffed and equipped across the County and pull every lever to ensure CAL FIRE has adequate staffing at the State level.

I will tirelessly encourage CAL FIRE to address the grave concerns of residents who had to struggle with the agency to save their homes. Where there is responsibility to be taken, CAL FIRE and County Fire need to do that as a first step to righting wrongs and planning future responses. Taking responsibility builds trust. We must allow locals to help guide plans for future fire responses, and communication between residents and CAL FIRE must be improved. The county's oversight of the Fire Department must be energetic and responsive to community concerns.

I will work hard to secure state and federal funds—for fire prevention and fire fighting and to reduce fuel loads throughout the area. The half-cent disposable cup tax will also help with fire prevention and recovery. I will support Planning Department streamlining, currently in process, and reductions of red tape wherever possible including customer service training for staff and more user-friendly assistance from Planning. The insurance clock is ticking on rebuilds!

I will also support ecologically-sound alternatives to hugely expensive

I prioritized communicating accurate information to residents and evacuees on fire spread, evacuation orders, volunteer opportunities, resources for evacuees, and communicating these issues to our state and federal representatives. I also spearheaded an emergency ordinance to prohibit price gouging in the City of Santa Cruz during the fire emergency. I have served on over 22 subcommittees, commissions and boards, many of which have focused on land use, climate change, environment, and public safety. I have worked extensively with community members, city staff, and elected officials, and have been effective at getting things done.

As County Supervisor, working with you, I will use my lived, political, and educational experience to help us as we tackle the many major issues before our community. With a staff member dedicated to focusing on rural and north coast issues I will prioritize:

- Expediting rebuilding from the CZU fires;
- Policies to expedite re-buildings after natural disasters;
- Improving disaster communication systems;
- Working to establish microgrids to help provide power during outages;
- Working to expand volunteer fire fighting opportunities;
- Creating effective solutions to address homelessness;
- Affordable housing construction and tenant assistance;
- Working with state agencies and community members to advocate for funding to create infrastructure to address issues around trash, traffic, and human waste near our beaches along highway 1;
- Working to address the impacts of Cotoni Coast Dairies Monument;
- Continue working to hold the University accountable for its growth and impacts;

Climate change is the biggest threat to our community. If elected, I would be the first environmental scientist elected to the County Board of Supervisors. I believe that I have the skills and experience we need to address the issues we face right now, especially those issues particular to the rural parts of the third district. I am asking for your vote to serve as the next Third District County Supervisor. With your support and on your behalf, I'll work to preserve the values that make Santa Cruz a community for everyone.

Thank you!

septic systems, such as greywater systems integrated into Permaculture gardening (or any kind of gardening) and composting toilets.

Necessity is the mother of invention! We lost 911 homes and possibly more "dwelling units" in the fires. In a time of crisis, we need to think out of the box and harness solutions not previously in our and our government's fields of vision.

You will find that I take a lot of time to listen, and when I see a way forward, I am very, very persistent. I believe in establishing rapport with people at all "levels" of power, and then influencing by sheer tenacity, by floating an idea (maybe getting a "No") and then leaving it alone for a bit. People often need space to change their minds. Then they need to be asked again.

I also want to be meeting with you often, asking for your ideas and connecting with folks we might not know about yet, who might find a use for all these dead trees, for example.

I served for nine months on the City Homelessness Committee and have worked extensively with city and county governments. My experience has been in lobbying politicians—and all kinds of people—trying to influence them to get things done for the sake of livable solutions. I know I'll still be doing this as Supervisor.

I have also worked extensively in county systems, throughout departments, as an "innate resiliency" educator. I've worked for years in jails, juvenile halls, work furlough programs, sober living environments, homeless shelters and drop-in centers and trained staff of all of these with great results. I co-founded a national nonprofit to take this work into communities across the US, including the Mississippi Delta, at risk communities in Charlotte, NC and with migrant communities, schools and hospital systems in Des Moines. I have no doubt I can do the work of Supervisor effectively and compassionately, with heart and soul.

Many years ago, Mardi Wormhoudt was your supervisor. I cannot be Mardi, but I know I am a woman who you will feel proud to call your Supervisor and who you will know cares about you.

Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson *shebreh.org*

youth – especially decreasing access and availability of harmful substances.

I worked with many Bonny Doon neighbors and RBDA members as an appointed member of the County's Cannabis Cultivation Committee (C4). While on the C4, I pushed for cannabis regulations that would set strong parameters around size and location of cultivation, keeping the impacts on the environment and youth at the forefront of our policy decisions. I co-authored the minority report with Bonny Doon resident, Eric Hoffman. The Board of Supervisors used and incorporated our minority report into its cannabis cultivation policies. While serving on this commission, I learned so much about the unique needs and opportunities of the Bonny Doon community.

Bonny Doon residents care deeply about the environment and their community. Yet the community faces significant challenges. These challenges have existed for a long time but the events of CZU Lightening Complex Fires exacerbated them. Road safety/infrastructure, water, communication accessibility, fire rebuild, recovery and resiliency. These are substantial challenges. My social work has prepared me to listen to the problems you face and my years of work with county departments across multiple sectors have prepared me to implement policies that will address those challenges.

In the aftermath of the CZU Lightening Complex Fire, we took in a family who had lost their home. It was heartbreaking and I learned so much in the process about how difficult it has been for people to recover and rebuild.

My work over the last decade has prepared me to serve as your Supervisor. Through my work, I have accomplished the following:

- Secured over \$30 millions in grant funding for Santa Cruz to address mental health and substance use, and youth homelessness.
- Led strategic plans for early childcare and education, youth homelessness, and substance use prevention.
- Co-founded Impact Launch, a social enterprise focused on collaborative and leadership capacity building, project design, and strategic planning.
- Co-led an emergency response team to support young adults experiencing homelessness secure a safe space to shelter in

place.
I've served on the Santa Cruz City Council since December 2020. Some highlights of my work include:

- Addressing homelessness through accountable and responsive policies and actions, including a measure to move RVs off the streets by providing safe parking facilities and moving individuals off streets and into transitional shelters.
- Supporting workforce housing.
- Investing in our youth through increased resources.
- Pursuing responsive climate action goals.

I'm honored and humbled to receive the endorsement of North Coast and Bonny Doon leaders including: Superintendents Mike Heffner and Eric Gross; Pacific Elementary Board of Trustees Don Croll (former), Cari Napolis, and Gwyan Rhabyt; Cabrillo Board Trustee and North Coast resident Rachael Spencer; and Bonny Doon community members Steve Homan, Eric Hoffman.

As a public health professional, I know first-hand how important it is for local governments to provide leadership and resources to address our most serious challenges. The work includes a focus on issues such as housing, critical analysis of the bureaucracy and red tape that keeps our community members from rebuilding, wildfire preparedness, recovery and response, addressing unmet mental health and substance abuse needs that often translates to street homelessness, economic recovery for small businesses and their employees, and much more. This is work I have experience with, am passionate about and ready to take to scale.

On a personal note, I'm a mom of two boys Darioush (14) and Shyon (12) and married to my husband Brian Johnson. My boys give me insight into our community that I wouldn't otherwise have. I've learned so much about the health and safety needs of our community through volunteering at their schools, and being a mom in this community. It is important not just for my boys but so many families that I talk to, to ensure that the decisions we make at the City and Supervisor level create healthy and safe communities. It is these everyday stories and experiences that inspire me to do my work and to serve.

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Memberships expire on Jan. 31 of the next year. *

Number of Members _____ Number of years you are joining or renewing for _____

Multiply years times number of memberships. Checks only, please, made out to RBDA.

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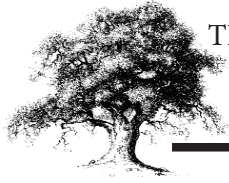
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Clip out and mail to RBDA, P.O. Box 551, Felton, CA 95018.

Dues mostly go for printing and mailing *The Highlander*, your voice for keeping Bonny Doon rural and natural.

Additional contributions are gladly accepted and greatly appreciated!

*Dues paid after Nov. 30 count toward the next year.



THE Highlander

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Bonny Doon's voice in preserving our special quality of life, The Highlander, is mailed free 6 times a year. RBDA Public Meetings are usually held the second Wednesdays of January, March, May, September and November. We encourage you to participate. Send correspondence to The Highlander at the above address.

Access the RBDA on the Internet at:

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E-mail us at:

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Facebook (RBDA Members Only):

RBDA, Rural Bonny Doon Association

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**Bonny Doon Resident
Santa Cruz, CA 95060**

May 11 Public Meeting (In Person): 3rd District Supervisor Candidate Forum

RBDA Public Meeting: Meet the 3rd District Supervisor Candidates

Please read the candidate statements in this issue of *The Highlander* and join us for a lively discussion on Wednesday May 11, 7:30 p.m. in the Multipurpose Room at Bonny Doon Elementary.



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