For all WDRC Oakland Members,

The mayoral campaign scene is upon us whether we are ready for it or not. Tonight I attended a meeting to which I was invited by Oakland's Neighborhood Services' Division as a Neighborhood Watch meeting with the new chief. I received a card explicitly from the City and it was organized by city staff. At it, new police Chief Batts held forth ably for close to an hour. He then took about 2 questions and left quickly. I was disappointed to find myself not at a reception but at a talk at which I heard the chief attack Measure Y, among other things. As soon as he left, the OPOA's (police officers' union) President Arotzarena started a speech in which he denounced the leadership of our city, talked about the low morale of the department and complained about the extension of the Negotiated Settlement Agreement (Consent Decree based on police misconduct), and how we now have a chance "to turn [the city] around." Then he announced that OPOA would be endorsing Don Perata for mayor and asked him to speak (he was sitting in the front). A number of folks sitting in the back got up and left as soon as Perata was introduced. Jean Quan, who had come in at the same time as I entered, also made her way to the front.She was allowed a brief chance to speak and asked if she could leave cards for people to take. That was refused. I later learned that a leader of Neighborhood Watch, who had also been blindsided by this campaign stop for Perata, had demanded that she be allowed to speak once he discovered that this was designed as an endorsement event. He was very apologetic about how it came to be.

After leaving I checked the card that I had received in the mail inviting me to this event. It was sent by the City of Oakland's Neighborhood Services Division at Frank Ogawa Plaza. A number of Dellums' staffers were there including his Public Safety Policy staff who had also expected this to be a city/community meeting to introduce the chief. No mention had been made of Dellums as mayor nor as the person who hired the new chief. We told the OPOA President that we thought this was not only disrespectful to our present mayor, whatever you may think of him, but an illegal event as city tax dollars were used to put it on. He told us that it was in their "house." The fact that the chief, who is not in the union, was used to promote the union's endorsement meeting is also very problematic.

I hope that Oaklanders who are also active in this club will be vigilant about how this campaign is unfolding while carefully formulating your own vision for what type of person, what type of experience, and what type of background is needed to be the mayor of a city like ours.

Pamela