

Women's March 2019

Essay

My name is Anna Chouteau and I am Saint Helena's newest City Council member.

I ran for local politics because I, like millions of women, had my heart broken in 2016. It felt like it broke into a million tiny pieces, stomped on by the horrible language, behavior and actions of our country's new leadership. With time, my heart really broke open as I declared that I will no longer be held back by my own fears and limiting beliefs of all the reasons I am not enough or not ready to step up and into being a leader in my own part of the world. I am tired of reading and talking about women not being represented enough in government and top leadership roles. It is time for action – positive, clear, and loving action. I'm doing this for my future, our kids' future and their kids' future. As we have seen every single day since election night 2016, women everywhere are stepping up, coming together and supporting each other in taking positive action that really helps people. I am proud to be a part of that.

Going to the first Women's March in Washington DC opened my eyes to the power and incredible energy of hundreds of thousands coming together. All of our beautiful signs were like a road map for the country I want to live in. Those signs and voices speaking in unison called to me. I stood in the freezing cold that January day, terrified and thrilled to be in the sea of people demanding that our voices not be ignored and silenced. And yet our voices have been ignored and dismissed again and again since that day. I have a sign up on my wall from November 2016 that says "resist fear, assist love." I look at that sign every day and one day I woke up and said, "Enough." I committed to pursuing every leadership position available to me and putting all my energy and heart into creating the world I want. I committed to saying, "Yes," to pursuing a position where I can solve problems that will help people and our communities. I committed to choosing love even while I feel fear every day in some form or thought. The "not smart enough," "not clear enough," "not brave enough to speak up in conflict and in front of crowds of people,"...that's over! My voice and body might shake; I will speak up any way. I might say too many or too little or the wrong words; I will speak up any way. My experience is my own and is as valuable as each and every one of yours is. It's time for us to have a seat at the decision-making table! I am grateful I got here and commit to using these beautiful signs and voices as inspiration in contributing toward making the kind of community I want to live in – for all of us.

Thank
you.