

Kate O'Hara Venceremos Speech 2023

Hello everyone and welcome to EBASE's annual Venceremos event. Venceremos means "we will win."

For those of you who know me - you know I have a LOVE to win!

I look around at all of you and — all of you have been a part of amazing wins these last few years: passing landmark policies, having organizing breakthroughs, and electing incredible leaders.

We are winning - WE ARE.

But it doesn't feel that way, does it?

With each victory - it feels like our opposition pushes us two steps back. Across the country the Right is advancing a politics of hate, while locally, the same people are attacking Black women, API women, queer people, workers, and our movements.

Our communities are facing interlocking crises: Our jobs, our housing, our city services, our safety, our climate, are all being impacted by the same forces rooted in systems of oppression, corporate greed, and the consolidation of power into the hands of the few.

It's easy to look around and feel like our victories are dwarfed by these systemic challenges, like our backs are up against the wall.

The more power we have, the harder the opposition fights to take us down. As EBASE founder Amaha Kassa told us, "They wouldn't be chasing us down the field if we didn't have the ball."

Haters are gonna hate.

But we. cannot. Let them. Steal our wins! Steal our joy!! Steal our power!

When they try to do that, we start to falsely believe that we aren't winning. That's when we lose focus, we turn on each other, and we give up a little bit.

THAT's Not us!

We all know there is more than enough wealth and abundance to go around. Our vision for what we want to see - dignified jobs, housing for all, and the services we need to thrive - is NOT some pipe dream.

Pieces of our vision becoming a reality every day. Never in my lifetime have so many workers been rising up, forming unions and fighting back. Tenants are organizing and gaining power. And we are electing leaders who work with us to change the system.

We ARE winning!

And you know what? We have something the opposition is never going to have - we have each other. We have our hearts. In these hard moments, we must care for each other and see each others' humanity. We lead our movement with mutual care and solidarity. We understand that our fights are interlocked. We stand with our people and we have each others' backs.

And we must remind each other that WE've got YOUR BACK

Turn to the person next to you and tell them, I've got your back!

When tenants are organizing for stable rents and secure homes, we stand up and shout:

WE've got YOUR BACK

When workers - healthcare workers, hotel workers, city workers and more are fighting for dignity at work, we stand up and shout:

WE've got YOUR BACK

When teachers are fighting for fair pay and student services, we stand up and shout:

WE've got YOUR BACK

When our elected allies Nikki Fortunato Bas, Carroll Fife, Mayor Sheng Thao, Tamisha Torres Walker are fighting for our people, we stand up and shout:

WE've got YOUR BACK

When our community - Black people, queer and trans people, immigrants, people of color, women - are under attack for just existing, we stand up and shout:

WE've got YOUR BACK

We get up every day to fight for our futures and tell each other - We've got your back!

We stand together and shout:

WE've got YOUR BACK

Thank you for being here tonight and, more importantly, for being our allies and supporters in this work every day. We can't do this without you.

Thank you to the EBASE Board, Please stand or wave your hand. An outstanding group of leaders guiding this organization.

Deep appreciation to the EBASE staff - brilliant, tenacious, collaborative, compassionate people - Betty, Gillian, Hannah, Isaiah, Jeremy, Kelly, Kristi, Laura, Lupe, Maria Elena, Millie, Noelle, Rachita, Saabir, Uma, Vanessa - thank you for all you do every day at EBASE.

Thank you to CWA 9415, staff union, for being a partner in creating a strong organization.

All of us who do this work know it is not easy. Special thank you to our families and loved ones. You support us and surround us with love as we do this work every day. A special and personal thank you to Matthew, my spouse and husband, for being a strong support to me and being in it with me through all the highs and lows.

We have a powerful and inspiring group of honorees -

Before we get to them, I want to introduce Suguey Hernandez, a strategist and a creator who is guiding EBASE in developing our long term vision - and she's going to tell how you can be a part of it.

Kate O'Hara Venceremos Speech 2023

Hello everyone and welcome to Venceremos. For those of you who don't know - Venceremos means "we will win."

I've been thinking a lot about winning lately - and for those of you who know me - you know I have a profound love of winning.

I look around at all of you and all the work we've been doing these last few years - all of you have been a part of passing landmark policies, having organizing breakthroughs, and electing bold elected officials.

We are winning - WE ARE.

But it doesn't feel that way. We feel tired. With each victory - it feels like our opposition pushes us two steps back. On the federal level MAGA is advancing the politics of hate, while locally, a Right-wing backlash is attacking Black women, API women, queer people and against our work to create healthy communities and a just economy.

Our communities are facing interlocking crises: Our jobs, our housing, our city services, our safety, our climate, are all being impacted by the same forces rooted in systems of oppression, corporate greed, and the consolidation of power into the hands of the few.

It's easy to look around and feel like our victories are dwarfed by these systemic challenges, like our backs are up against the wall.

But we are not. The news might give the opposition more air time, but that doesn't mean they have more power. Amaha Kassa told us, "They wouldn't be chasing you down the field if you didn't have the ball."

The more power we have, the harder the opposition fights to take us down.

Haters are gonna hate.

But we. cannot. Let them. Steal our wins! Steal our joy!! Steal our power!

When they do, we start to falsely believe that we aren't winning. And when this happens, we lose focus, we turn on each other, and we believe that it's not worth trying.

THAT'S BULL!

I am here today to remind all of us that there is more than enough wealth and abundance to go around. Our vision of economic system that honors human dignity and exists in harmony with the natural world where everyone has loving, safe communities, with secure beautiful homes, surrounded by access to nature, culture, and services we need to thrive is NOT some pipe dream.

There are little pieces of that vision that are becoming a reality on a day-to-day basis. Never before have we elected so many kick ass leaders to pass progressive policies. Never in my lifetime have so many workers been rising up, forming unions and fighting back. Tenants, workers, and community leaders are gaining power.

Collectively - with everyone in this room - we have fought and won so many positive changes!. These are the wins that are the building blocks of long-term transformation. The wins that the right is fighting so hard against.

We're winning and they know it. We have governing power, and the more power we have, the bigger the targets on our backs.

And these moments, we must care for each others' deepest humanity and lead our movement with mutual care. We have to stand with our people and have each others' backs.

And we must remind ourselves that WE ARE WINNING!

So when Oakland City Council members Nikki Fortunato Bas, Carroll Fife, and our majority is under attack for passing progressive policies XYZ, we stand up and shout:

WE ARE WINNING!

When Mayor Sheng Thao is under attack for doing XX, we stand up and shout:

WE ARE WINNING!

When tenants are under attack for XYZ, we stand up and shout:

WE ARE WINNING!

When teachers are under attack for XYZ, we stand up and shout:

WE ARE WINNING!

When unions are under attack for XYZ, we stand up and shout:

WE ARE WINNING!

When community is under attack for XYZ, we stand up and shout:

WE ARE WINNING!

And finally - when the haters hate and try to steal our joy, we must pick ourselves up, care for each other - and remind each other when we are down - that

WE ARE WINNING!