

**Ladies of the Nighties**

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**EXTRA**  
**Central City**

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**The vote go-getters**

**7 Tenderloin party-hardy activists on ballot**

**M**any names appear on the March 5 ballot that are familiar to central city residents, if not from the impression made by the candidates' years of public service then from the ubiquitous plastering of their day-glo placards on lampposts. Marquee March 5 matchups of local interest include the race for Assembly District 13 (Harry Britt, Steve Phillips, Holli Thier, Mark Leno), public defender (Kimiko Burton, Jeff Adachi), and assessor-recorder (Ronald Chun, Mabel Teng, Jim Rodriguez, Richard Hongisto, John Farrell, Doris Ward).

But what about the slew of names at the bottom of the ballot, the 90 candidates running for Green, Republican and Democratic county central committees in Assembly District 13? Soft money is hardly an issue for these folks. They spend little or nothing on their campaigns, and the positions they're running for aren't paid.

The job title has a Soviet ring to it, and people often confuse them with delegates. But central committee members are not aligned with specific candidates, only with their respective parties. Their primary function is to maximize voter registration and turnout and to educate voters on issues of importance.

The *Extra* met with the committee candidates who have backgrounds in Tenderloin community activism. If there's one thing these office-seekers all agreed upon, it's that voter turnout in the neighborhood is poor and that improving it will be no small task.

We gave each the opportunity to describe themselves for voters and explain why they should be elected.

**DEMOCRATIC COUNTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE, AD 13**



**GARRETT JENKINS, 38, community relations officer**

I first came to San Francisco in 1983, but I've come and gone as part of the military. I moved here, to the Tenderloin, for good in 1995. I'm semi-retired and spend most of my time volunteering. I'm president of the North of Market Planning Coalition. I've also been part of the Lower Eddy Task Force, Tenderloin Community on Patrol, and Adopt-A-Block. I keep active.

I want to focus on the fact that very few of the central committee members attend meetings of local community and political groups. I would like to see the central committee build a close relationship with some of these groups. The best way to do that would be to establish a policy where elected members have to go to at least two community meetings every year, just to hear what the public is concerned about.

Voter turnout in the Tenderloin and in District 6 is pathetic. Traditionally, we have the lowest voter turnout in the city. The biggest challenge to increasing turnout is communication. There are more than 10 different languages here in the Tenderloin. There are also a lot of low-income folks who are more concerned about getting by day to day than about politics. We need to communicate to those folks how important it is for them to vote, how their vote can change the conditions that surround them. If you elect people that support your issues, hopefully you'll see an improvement in the quality of life. Billboards, newspapers, all that stuff will help, but it's actually the one-on-one, face-to-face contact that works the most, to say, "Hey, this is why this issue is important." It takes a few minutes of your time, but in the end, it's going to improve the neighborhood for everybody.

I'm committed to public service, and I've got broad support. I think that's because people know I stand up for what I believe is right, with total disregard to the political impact it might have on me. I'm more concerned about making sure that residents that need representation get it.



**HOUSTON ZHENG, 54, Senior Action Network**

I've been a San Franciscan for 20 years. I work for the Senior Action Network. We advocate for affordable housing, universal health care and neighborhood safety. We also give leadership training to seniors. We teach them how to speak in public, how to talk to elected officials, and how to organize meetings.

This is my first run for elected office. I want to recruit more voters to be registered as Democrats, that's the No.1 thing. No. 2, I want to retain them. I got started with politics by volunteering in the campaigns of district supervisors, first in District 3, then 6 and 4.

The Tenderloin has an interesting history. Way back, it had good things: theater, the best food in town—that's why they call it the Tenderloin, the best part of the beef.

Now everything is moving out and away, but we can still do something by bringing more people out to vote.

District 6 has the lowest turnout in the city. We need to get more funding for neighborhood safety, affordable housing and health care.

I want people to know that I'm accessible. I have a Web site ([connect.to/houstonzheng](http://connect.to/houstonzheng)), and I keep my cell phone running 24 hours a day. Especially for people who have a question about voting. I know quite a bit about the ins and outs of the Department of Elections.



**GILBERT CRISWELL, 39, freelance journalist**

I've lived in San Francisco for 15 years and in District 6 going on seven years. In addition to freelance writing, I volunteer for a show on Community Access Television called "Electric City" (Saturday night, Ch. 29, 11 p.m.). I'm a member of the Alliance for a Better District 6 and the Harvey Milk Democratic Club.

The diverse people with different languages in the Tenderloin make voter registration a challenge. I've been an advocate for the Sunshine Ordinance as well as translation services for the disabled. I'm living on Social Security Disability because I have disabling HIV, and so I feel a connection with the people of the Tenderloin.

I want to be a voice for the Tenderloin regarding homelessness, poverty, affordable housing, and a living wage. We need more drug treatment and mental health services. We need to stop cutting those services. We need clear representation so that we have the proper funding and the proper job training.

ILLUSTRATIONS: CARL ANGEL

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