



Bernie Sanders - Hope Reignited  
By Amanda "Rusti" Burkman

When you live a life based on integrity, honesty, a passion for others and a deep appreciation for the gifts of nature, you easily recognize those that share your same dedication to making the world a better place. When I discovered Bernie Sanders back in 2015, I had no doubt his words were honest; and his fight was truly for the betterment of mankind and our planet. The idea of our country being led by someone of his level of integrity, knowledge and ambition evoked a passion for politics within me I never knew I had.

The system had not been in my favor, so I ducked out of it back in 2011 to find my own way. As an adult I had never received medical benefits because of my preexisting condition of epilepsy (grand mal seizures). I worked corporate for a while to get that coverage, but it was sucking my soul dry. Out-of-pocket medical expenses accumulated quickly. I spent several years paying them off only to have two more seizures and a collapsed lung. It was a never-ending accumulation of debt from emergency visits, on top of not being able to get proper help and answers for my condition.

Regardless, I'm grateful my experiences contributed to the path I'm on now.

A seed had been planted in my mind back in 2004 when my art had inadvertently found its way into the Phoenix Gallery in Sacramento, CA. This was shortly after a serendipitous moment that changed the whole course of my life and why I am an artist today. I met my musical hero, Mark Kozelek from Red House Painters because of a painting I had created of him. Meeting my heroes because of my art has been

an unexpected theme in my life and didn't stop after Bernie Sanders in 2016. It's as though the universe is rewarding me for being on the right path. My painting was presented to the gallery for print inquiries only. To my astonishment, the Phoenix Gallery invited me to display and sell my work. Which, in turn, caught the attention of another Sacramento gallery, Solomon Dubnik. I was a self-taught closet artist not realizing my potential. This changed everything.

My community in Monterey nurtured the artist seed within me and I continued to create while I worked. A solo bike trip from Portland, OR to Monterey, CA gave me the realization that I can live simply and develop my art. Why continue to work sixty hours a week just to be stressed and broke at the end of the day? The economy was tanking and the business I worked for was on the brink of going under. I wondered if my seizures would shorten my life span and now there was this urgency to dedicate my energy to creating art for society and for myself, my purpose.

I quit money for two years and bartered my way through life. Life blossomed as soon as I made this decision and opportunities were presented everywhere.

Fast-forward to 2016, my passion for Senator Sanders inspired me to create art in his honor. Not just any art, but he was to be included in my paint chip series. This is a collection of work that is created from recycled paint chips accumulated over the years during my art career. Each paint chip has its own unique beauty and story behind it, much like the

individuals and cultures that make up our country. These pieces come together and form an aggregate work of art.

Within the first hour of creating "Bernie Sanders", I learned that the Senator himself was coming to Monterey in four days. These compositions can take months to complete; but I worked from wake to sleep to get it done for his arrival. Sitting on the lawn at Colton Hall with my painting; I hoped for the opportunity to display it in show of my support. To my delightful bewilderment, my piece gifted me with an invitation to meet Senator Sanders.

His campaign invited me and my painting to San Francisco, CA for the last speech before the primaries. Serendipity was there to visit me again. Many supporters captured photos of me and my painting at his last rally. These images made it across the globe. Carmel magazine took notice and wrote a 6-page article about my work, my story and the connection with Senator Sanders. I was getting offers from as far away as London. However, he was not created for my own monetary benefit but rather, in support of Bernie Sanders, his fight for the greater good and the environment. As far away as 2020 seemed at the time, I wasn't giving up hope.

So here we are today. Hope reignited by Bernie Sanders and the progressive movement. That hope carrying and fueling me to create for the benefit of our society. I'm offering this painting to you and your team, Senator Sanders. May it go to the highest bidder and 100% of the funds raised go to your campaign and the ideals that this campaign represents.

Bio:

The passion driving Amanda “Rusti” Burkman flows from a love of music, a deep connection with community, and an intense desire to bring more beauty into the world through artwork. By infusing these aesthetics into a new style of painting, she developed her ongoing “Paint Chip Mosaic Series.” Each



painting in this series has its own allure, depth, and meaning but still is physically intertwined with the paintings that have come before. By reusing dried paint scraped off of her marble easel, Rusti creates a vivid palette that breathes new life into the colors. She captures the essence of her subjects as these fragments—each beautifully unique—come together and fuse to become whole. Paintings range from figurative to abstract and often portray landscapes, portraits of people she greatly admires or who have been major influences on her, and surrealism that reflects the human form within the exquisite patterns of nature.

To see and learn more about her “Paint Chip Mosaic Series,” visit [rustiwillow.wixsite.com/](http://rustiwillow.wixsite.com/).