Black Lives Matter Seattle King County 2020 endorsement opportunity and process

Black Lives Matter Seattle King County and the Washington Black Lives Matter Alliance congratulate you on your primary election and advancing to the general election.

We are writing to invite you to complete our short candidate questionnaire for the 2020 general election. We will be encouraging our community and allies to be voting for candidates who are supportive of advancing Black Liberation, an equal justice system for all, and community prosperity.

We are asking candidates to complete an online questionnaire, and as a backup, the questions are below. Only candidates who complete the questions will be eligible for endorsement.

The deadline for submitting your answers is Saturday, October 10, at 5:00 PM. For any questions and if you encounter technical difficulties, please contact [EMAIL REMOVED]

Endorsements will be announced on Wednesday, October 15.

About Black Lives Matter Seattle King County

Black Lives Matter Seattle-King County is a social advocacy organization fighting for the protection and liberation of Black Life through advocacy and direct action.

We believe that all Black Lives matter, regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status, or location.

The Washington Black Lives Matter Alliance is a statewide collective of people and organizations using our voice, our vote, and our power to fight for Black Lives.

Black Lives Matter Seattle King County Political Demands

We demand that racism be declared a public health crisis in Washington state.
We demand a 50% defunding of the Seattle Police Department.
We demand some of the budget formerly devoted to policing be shifted to culturally responsive, community-centric mental health and wellness services.
We demand a justice system that delivers equal treatment under the law.
We demand King County fulfill its promise to, by 2025, transform into a community resource the youth jail unit at Judge Patricia H. Clark Children and Family Justice Center.
We demand fully funding education in Washington State with a capital gains tax by 2021.

Black Lives Matter Seattle King County Endorsement Questions

If elected, give examples of how your priorities will support the liberation and protection of Black Lives
locally and across the state?
Do you believe racism is a public health crisis? Explain your answer.
Do you support defunding the police? Explain your answer.
What is your position on charging officers with bodily harm-related crimes when excessive force is used?
   Explain your answer.
How does your racial identity shape your perspective of public policy? Explain your answer.
Do you support the restoration of voting rights for Washingtonians who are incarcerated or have been previously incarcerated or owe fees and fines? Explain your answer.

Non-responses to the questionnaire will be evaluated as responses to the questionnaire.
Thank you for your participation in our candidate endorsement process, and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Ebony Miranda, Chair
They | Them
Advocacy and Policy Committee
Black Lives Matter Seattle King County

Email address *

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If elected, give examples of how your priorities will support the liberation and protection of Black lives locally and across the state? *

I have four policy priorities as a candidate, and each of them (to varying degrees) will support the liberation and protection of Black lives locally and across the state.

First, I oppose the use of austerity to deal with the pending $4.2 billion revenue shortfall (over 3 years) in Olympia. We cannot afford to balance the budget by cutting social programs for vulnerable communities. This was the approach that was used -- with disastrous effect -- in the aftermath of the 2007-2009 Great Recession. The result was painful cuts to TANF, foster care and affordable housing, as well as large increases in college tuition. This damaged lower-income communities, and also prolonged the time required for economic recovery.

Second (and related), I support the introduction of a major new source of progressive taxation in Washington State (I support a capital gains tax). Washington State has the most regressive tax system in the entire country, with its lowest income residents paying 17.8% of their income in state and local taxes while its highest income individuals paying just 3%. This is backwards, and it is damaging to lower-income and minority communities. This glaring problem must be addressed.

Third, I support aggressively dealing with the imminent threat of climate change, and doing so in a manner that acknowledges the disproportionate impact of climate change on minority communities. (I am involved with three climate change advocacy organizations.)

Finally, I support meaningfully addressing the demands for racial justice. I believe that it is essential to restructure police departments (e.g., banning choke-holds and the use of tear gas on peaceful protestors, precluding the transfer of federal military equipment to local police departments, increased training on crisis intervention, de-escalation and bias, removing police officers from schools, utilizing community policing models, etc.). In addition, it is essential to reform the criminal justice system (e.g., increased use of diversion courts, emphasis on rehabilitation, work-release and re-entry programs, the restoration of ex-felon voting rights, etc.).

In addition to these endeavors, it is mandatory to address underlying inequities in society in order to make significant progress on the demands for racial justice. It is not viable to continue to operate a K-12 education system where low-income, largely minority communities are concentrated in South Seattle Schools while higher-income, largely Caucasian communities are concentrated in North Seattle. I favor, for example, increasing the per pupil funding levels of schools when they have a high level of students on free and reduced price lunches, while decreasing the per pupil funding level of schools with a low percentage of students on free and reduced lunch programs. This would make a statement that society is not going to tolerate perpetual differences in educational outcomes based on the affluence of the communities in which the public schools reside.
Do you believe racism is a public health crisis? Explain your answer.

Racism is both an individual sickness and a public health crisis. Racism is a worldview that maintains that some individuals and communities are superior to others due to their race. This is a false worldview that is damaging to a person who maintains it. And when a number of people in a community are racist, this racism represents a major threat to the community. Racism can express itself in myriad damaging ways. It can lead to the development of racially-biased policy (e.g., three-strikes laws and death penalty laws which are both racially-biased), the tolerance of unacceptable differences in social equity between races (e.g., in Seattle Public Schools, 83% of Black students are on free-and-reduced price lunch programs, whereas the figure for White students is 9%), as well as the perpetration of violence against individuals due to their race. Racism damages the fabric and operation of society, and as such is a significant public health crisis.

Do you support defunding the police? Explain your answer.

I support restructuring the police using an analytic process that will lead to a downsizing of police. In addition, I support using the funds that are released from this process to support community development programs in lower-income communities (which will serve multiple objectives, including crime reduction).

This being said, I do not support a literal defunding of police, and I don't support the selection of an arbitrary target (e.g., 50%) for defunding police. Instead, I support the use of an analytic process to determine the extent to which the police should be defunded. The most promising approach is an analysis of 911 calls to determine which calls require a police response, and which calls can be responded to with a mental health professional and/or a social worker and/or a paramedic. This (and other analytic assessments) will lead to an understanding of the extent to which police departments can be defunded.

What is your position on charging officers with bodily harm-related crimes when excessive force is used? Explain your answer.

I fully support charging officers with bodily harm-related crimes when they use excessive force. I strongly supported I-940, which eliminated the need to demonstrate that an officer acted with malice in order to find the officer guilty of using excessive force (an absurd standard). Police officers need to be accountable to strict standards of behavior, and need to be charged with crimes when they violate these standards, and especially so when this involves the excessive use of force, as the inappropriate use of force can be, and often is, lethal.
How does your racial identity shape your perspective of public policy? Explain your answer. *

I am Caucasian. For the first roughly 30 years of my life, I grew up in a privileged environment. I grew up in Bellevue, Washington, I attended Dartmouth College, and I worked in my first career as a management consultant based in Washington, D.C. for over a decade.

The next 28 years of my life have been much more tumultuous. I became a teacher. I worked for 16 years full-time as a substitute teacher for Seattle Public Schools. During this time, I worked on prolonged (semester or full-year) assignments for a number of schools in South Seattle (Rainier Beach, Cleveland High School, Franklin High School, Aki Kurose Middle School, Orca at Whitworth) that had not filled a specific teaching assignment. I now work as a social studies teacher for Mercer Island High School. I also was elected to serve on the Executive Board of the 37th District Democrats, and I worked for several years as a volunteer Treasurer for Arts in Motion, a non-profit community school of the arts that provided music and arts lessons for lower-income youth. These years have led to a different understanding of the vast inequities in our society. And this, in turn, has led to a progression in my public policy. I was always politically liberal, but my policy proposals have become far more progressive and far more specific.

Do you support the restoration of voting rights for Washingtonians who are incarcerated or have been previously incarcerated or owe fees and fines? Explain your answer. *

I do support the restoration of voting rights for ex-felons and for individuals who owe fees and fines. Voting is a critical right of citizenship. When an individual has completed their sentence, their voting rights should be restored. I will also add that I am opposed to the excessive use of legal financial obligations, which often serve as a significant obstacle for incarcerated individuals to make progress in moving forward in their life.