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

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

I am a queer, Black mother, educator, and activist working shoulder to shoulder with community in Seattle and throughout Washington State for over 20 years for racial, gender, and economic justice. Our campaign is built on a justice-centered platform with priorities that will support the liberation and protection of Black lives locally and across the state. From go, our campaign has worked with community to build a robust policy platform to support the liberation and protection of Black lives, with our top 3 priorities of climate justice, progressive revenue reform, and economic justice for working families. These priorities will benefit all working families, but will especially benefit Black families. Because in Washington, Black families are more likely to live in areas with more pollution, to pay a wildly disproportionate share of their income in taxes compared to wealthy families that pay a very small percentage, and to have lost jobs due to the Covid pandemic.

I am also a proud abolitionist, and will fight to reunite Black families through the dismantling of the racist carceral state. In Seattle, I have put my body on the line for justice as a fellow activist in the #NoNewYouthJail and #BlockTheBunker movements. As an elected official, I will continue to work to divest from the racist police and carceral systems as part of a shared community journey to radically transform our society into a just one for all.
Do you believe racism is a public health crisis? Explain your answer.*

Racism is our nation's greatest public health crisis, and racism exacerbates every other public health crisis. Even before the pandemic, systemic racism had led to huge disparities in health and life outcomes for Black and white folks across the country, and here in King County. For example, in my racially diverse Rainier Valley census tract, the average life expectancy is 78. But just two miles east of us, on mostly white Mercer Island, the average life expectancy is 87 – 9 years longer. Black neighbors in King County are overrepresented in the houseless population by more than 3-fold. And the average annual rate of homicides among the Black community is 5.2 times the county average. And as bad as these disparities are, the pandemic is making them even worse.

The Covid pandemic has altered every facet of life for all Americans, but Black people are experiencing outsized impact in the crisis. Compared to white patients, Black Covid patients have a 40% greater risk of hospitalization, almost twice the risk of requiring ICU care or ventilatory support, and a 36% increased risk of death. And Black- and Brown-owned businesses, which are the lifeblood of Black and Brown communities, have been disproportionately impacted by Coronavirus. Despite the outsized need for help, the Center for Responsible Lending found that 95% of Black-owned business were shut out of the crucial first round of funding in the Paycheck Protection Program, as the program was designed to allow huge businesses to access the funding much more quickly. As a result of the pandemic and our country's racist reaction to it, Black and Brown businesses, and therefore communities, are facing economic devastation.

The Black community is facing this public health crisis because American society has always been a white supremacist system. For hundreds of years, Americans have upheld white supremacy through means both direct and indirect -- from sharecropping, to lynching, to segregation, to discrimination, to redlining, to stop-and-frisking, to police killings, to racist drug laws, to predatory lending, to the schools-to-prison pipeline, to qualified immunity, to mass incarceration. We cannot continue to allow the public health crisis of racism to continue to harm and kill us, and as an elected official, every policy I pursue will further the goal of a truly just society for all.
Do you support defunding the police? Explain your answer. *

Yes, we must divest from the harmful policing systems in place, and invest in community care and first response that truly keep us safe. The current system is not broken – it is operating in exactly the way it was designed, which shows how fundamentally we must transform. In order to achieve public safety, we must replace the police with systems that are created to protect, not brutalize, the community. In 35 out of 50 of America's largest cities, including Seattle, “public safety” (mainly the police) comprises the majority of city budgets – spending more than health, libraries, early learning, parks, recreation, food security, housing, transportation, infrastructure, utilities, arts, and elections all combined. With this level of funding from cities in addition to new funding at the state level, we can replace our racist police systems with culturally responsive community welfare and safety services, using responders such as social workers, housing and houselessness specialists, and violence prevention coordinators to respond to most emergent situations. And we can invest in programs that prevent situations that lead to 911 calls in the first place, such as quality public education, affordable housing, restorative justice programs, drug rehabilitation programs, community-based street ambassador programs, vocational training, apprenticeship programs, mental health counseling, family counseling, gun safety laws, youth recreation facilities, employment opportunities, harm reduction programs for drug use, carceral higher education programs, and antibullying education.

I’ve been proud to lead on policing justice, ending youth incarceration, and abolition for more than a decade. We are called to redefine and rebuild public safety, and I am ready to build that future in Olympia. Working with Black-led organizations and other community stakeholders, I will:

--Expand funding and local implementation of I-940, to accelerate rollout of community policing practices for local police & sheriff departments

--Continue investment and policy development that addresses the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Womxn Policy platform - including funding and resources for response to MMIW cases in sovereign and urban tribal communities.

--Improve funding for 911 call center systems - with particular focus on urban and unincorporated regions. In addition to equipment updates, expand training for anti-bias training for intact and referrals.

--Support the demands for holistic school safety put forward by Seattle and Renton Public Schools students, families, and teachers

--Support the divestment and investment demands brought forward by Black-led organizations and community organizing collectives to re-imagine public safety
What is your position on charging officers with bodily harm-related crimes when excessive force is used? Explain your answer. *

When I heard that the grand jury decided not to charge Breonna Taylor's killers, I couldn't stop thinking about Tamika Palmer, Breonna Taylor's mom. As a Black mom, with Black sisters, and with young children who will soon grow to be at risk of police violence, if they aren't already -- our collective heartbreak has been overwhelming.

I support all measures to ensure that police officers can no longer end Black lives with impunity. I support ending qualified immunity at the state level. I absolutely believe that officers should be charged as if they were regular citizens when they harm civilians with excessive force. I also support fully empowered civilian oversight boards led by the most impacted communities, the demilitarization of police, legislation that prohibits police unions from negotiating discipline, and the expulsion of police unions from larger labor organizations.

How does your racial identity shape your perspective of public policy? Explain your answer. *

As a Black, queer woman, I have known for my whole life that Black women have to work two or three times as hard as our counterparts to receive even a fraction of the recognition or pay. I know race impacts life outcomes, because it's impacted my life outcomes, my Black brother's life outcomes, and my younger sisters' lives as well. This lived experience is what has driven my work for racial, gender, and economic justice for the last 20 years, and will continue to drive it for the rest of my life.

My work, and my life, is fully intersectional. After all, I am not a queer person on Monday, a Black person on Tuesday, and a mom on Wednesday – I am all of those things, all of the time. As such, all of my public policy efforts will support the liberation and protection of Black lives locally and across the state, understanding that we are not only fighting the brutality of racism, but also of homophobia, sexism, ableism, Islamophobia, and other dangerous injustices.

And I am proud to say that my campaign has reflected my Black liberation values. I am the only candidate in the race not accepting donations from corporate PACs. I also have sworn off police and police union dollars, at times refunding donations. I will go to Olympia without owing any gratitude or favors to bail bond company owners, big business, or for-profit healthcare companies. I am proud of that commitment.
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. *

Yes. Not only do I support the restoration of their voting rights, I support the elimination of their fees and fines entirely.

Mass incarceration is the new Jim Crow. It is a modern-day form of slavery, and as an elected official, I will continue to collaborate with fellow abolitionists to eliminate the racist carceral state. As part of this journey to radically transform our society to become a just one, I will support changes that improve the lives of those who are incarcerated. I will support the elimination of cash bail, as no one's freedom should depend on one's ability to pay. I will also support changes in prison operations, such as those that require that our neighbors who are imprisoned earn fair wages for their work. I will also work to eliminate solitary confinement, forced feeding, and other scientifically proven methods of induced trauma for incarcerated people.