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

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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 strongly support reducing funding at the local and state levels in police departments, jails and prisons. Savings from those sources should be directly invested in community-based organizations that are led by and serve BIPOC communities. This would result in significant investments in human services, social housing, health care, food assistance, community organizing, and much more. It would also empower Black-led organizations to determine the best use of the funds in the communities, and consequently help liberate and protect Black lives.

In addition at the state level, I have proposed the Health Equity And Recovery Trust, the HEART plan, to raise $500 million/year to invest in public health, provide funding for non-profit agencies in communities of color to hire community-based health workers to assist BIPOC communities and families, build supportive housing for homeless people, and expand services towards health care for all.

The HEART plan expands critical social services and makes investments that will benefit Washingtonians during and after the pandemic. For example, I propose creating a non-profit, state-funded factory to produce PPE in Washington State. By producing protective equipment in state, we can ensure healthcare workers aren’t left vulnerable if we are unable to source PPE from outside manufacturers.

This policy would directly help save the lives of Black frontline workers, who have been exposed to the virus. The pandemic has disproportionately affected Black communities, infecting 1 in 1000 Black people nationwide. My priority is to get Black communities the healthcare and financial assistance that they need – and to stop the spread of the virus through a robust public health response.

Republicans in the legislature are calling for an all-cuts state budget, so it will take a strong coalition to overcome that opposition. With the looming $5 billion state budget shortfall, austerity budget cuts would be catastrophic -- and would slow the economic recovery and threaten the hard-won investments in communities of color that we’ve enacted over the years. Funding for public schools, transit, mental health treatment, social service programs, student financial aid, free college tuition, social housing and much more -- they’re all at risk if we don’t take action.

My plan which would help prevent austerity budget cuts, rebalance our regressive tax code and invest in an equitable recovery through programs to invest in public health, rescue our state’s childcare system, expand early learning, provide direct cash assistance to working families, build affordable housing and achieve so much more.

Crucially, my plan is funded entirely with progressive revenue: a tax on excessive corporate compensation (salaries exceeding $500,000/year), a “social security” tax on larger corporations to pay for child care and early learning, a capital gains tax, and other sources. I propose to use a significant share of these taxes to invest in communities of color, the same folks who haven’t received enough public investment to date.

I wrote the HEART plan with outreach to leaders in communities of color, healthcare providers, and legislators. I have built coalitions to pass major legislation in the past, and I’m organizing now to get the HEART plan passed next session. If you would like to actively participate or join the coalition, please reach out! I would love to work with Black Lives Matter Seattle King County and your allied organizations!
You can see the draft plan at https://frankchopp.com/heart/

Do you believe racism is a public health crisis? Explain your answer. *

Yes, racism and discrimination are prevalent in society and directly cause a public health crisis. There is no doubt that it very negatively impacts individuals and whole communities in systemic ways. Racism directly causes public health tragedies. Lives are shortened, health care is inadequate, diseases are spread more insidiously, and behavioral health problems (mental illness and substance use disorders), are caused and made worse by systemic racism.

There is clear evidence of these impacts. For example, Black and Latino people are renters at 7 times the rate as whites, according to a recent UW study on King County. Black women are evicted at an even higher rate. Studies show that after being evicted, people have a 20% chance of becoming homeless, which in turn exposes people to threats to their health and safety.

This disparity is a legacy of redlining and housing discrimination which denied Black families FHA-backed mortgages for decades. It also points to failures in our current system, which advantages landlords who can afford to hire an attorney with expertise in housing law.

In response, as Speaker of the House, I enacted a significant eviction reform bill in 2019. The law changed the required advance notice of evictions from 3 days to two weeks and requires landlords to provide tenants at risk of eviction with information on finding a free or low-cost lawyer. It also exempts tenants from paying many court fees if they owe less than $1200 in rent; most evictions are over less than $1000, so this will help many people.
Do you support defunding the police? Explain your answer. *

Yes. Although police funding is mostly a local decision, I support actions to reduce police funding and re-invest the funding in Black communities, for social services, affordable housing, healthcare, childcare, public education and more. The criminal justice system can’t address many public safety needs, such as mental health, substance abuse, and homelessness. Investing in social services can act as a police reform by reducing interaction between police and communities that have been targeted by police violence.

At the state level, I will work to prohibit law enforcement from accepting surplus military equipment or training from military organizations. I will also evaluate funding for the State Patrol to ensure they aren’t used to suppress protests, as we saw in Seattle this summer. When I went to protests in Capitol Hill, I was disturbed to see heavily armed State Patrol officers.

It’s also critical that we decriminalize many non-violent offenses. Criminalizing low-level offenses has been the justification for increases in police funding, so decriminalizing many non-violent offenses is critical to reducing interaction between police and communities that have been impacted by police violence.

I support the proposed Treatment and Recovery Act, which would treat personal drug use as a civil issue, not involving police or the criminal justice system. Criminalization rarely solves a substance use issue or helps someone out of poverty; more often, it traps people in a cycle of incarceration and despair.
What is your position on charging officers with bodily harm-related crimes when excessive force is used? Explain your answer.*

We must pursue specific strategies to ensure that law enforcement is held accountable, that there is oversight and transparency, and that training is tailored to address longstanding biases in police departments.

In the state legislature, I worked with the community coalition supporting Initiative 940. As Speaker of the House, I helped enact I-940, which was then sustained by the voters. I-940 was an important step in the right direction, but is clearly not enough.

We must revoke qualified immunity for police and ensure there is due process for victims of police violence.

In this area, we must address law enforcement Collective Bargaining Agreements, which obstruct due process and allow police to act with near impunity. The problems with the current law enforcement bargaining agreements were on full display during this summer’s racial justice protests. Seattle police repeatedly used tear gas, military gear, and aggressive tactics against protesters, even when crowds were peaceful. Police union contracts have created dangerously unaccountable police departments.

We cannot give police unions veto power over a victim’s due process, especially when it involves the deprivation of the civil liberties and human rights. When an officer violates a person’s civil liberties, there must be serious consequences, otherwise police will continue to routinely abuse their authority.

I will work to change state law to make sure police contracts cannot block due process and that police officers can be de-certified from employment in law enforcement. Black communities must have justice when police violate their rights.
How does your racial identity shape your perspective of public policy? Explain your answer.

As a white person, I don’t have the lived experience of a person of color. It’s incumbent on me to actively engage with communities of color and support their priorities. As a legislator who came up through the ranks as a community organizer, I always write policy and budgets with the folks who will be most impacted. This community organizing approach is needed to bring historically excluded people into the policymaking process.

When I served as Executive Director of the Fremont Public Association (now known as Solid Ground), I helped tens of thousands of low-income people access healthcare, housing, food assistance, emergency shelter, and other survival services. I worked to combat the racial injustices prevalent in all parts of our society – especially apparent in the disproportionate number of Black people who are low-income or homeless. I helped people receive the resources that they critically needed.

In the state legislature, I have continued to fight poverty and advance racial and economic justice and equity. Working with communities of color, I allocated over $2.5 billion in public funding to build tens of thousands of social housing for low-income people, including over 300 affordable apartment buildings in Seattle.

I helped develop thousands of apartments that directly house thousands of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, affordable to live in our city, many in historically redlined neighborhoods like Sand Point.

I also initiated and enacted the Apple Health for All Kids program which provides free healthcare for 800,000 kids every year, guaranteeing that all kids will get the care they need.

And I initiated and enacted the Workforce Education Investment Act in 2019, which guarantees free college and university tuition for all-low-income students, 120,000 every year – half of whom are students of color.

To write and pass each of these landmark programs, I sought out BIPOC community leaders and made sure I supported their priorities. As a result, the legislation I have passed has benefited Black communities across the state. We need to do much more to invest in Black communities. I will continue to be an ally and an advocate for the priorities of Black communities.
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, absolutely. The carceral system is a legacy of slavery and has long denied a disproportionate number of Black people the right to vote. We must end cash bail and other discriminatory measures designed to trap people in the criminal justice system.
Several years ago, we made historic progress to restore voting rights for previously incarcerated individuals, but now it must be expanded to those who have been charged with fees and fines. In addition, I helped lead the successful legislation for the Washington State Voting Rights Act, which prompted many cities to transition away from at-large voting and towards district representation. Now we must phase out at-large districts for school board and port commissioner so all communities have a say in how their schools and local governments are operated and spend our tax dollars in ways that serve BIPOC communities.

This form was created inside of BlackLivesMatter Seattle.