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? *

Justice reform is my top priority. This encompasses a huge umbrella of smaller issues, each of which could be a separate conversation on its own, though all about working toward the ultimate goal of ridding our justice system of corruption and ending these systemic abuses that have run roughshod over the liberty of countless individuals over generations. One specific focus within this priority is to stop the prosecution of victimless crimes and keep new ones from being created as a false solution for a perceived societal problem. Victimless crimes have been weaponized against people of color essentially from the moment slavery was abolished as a means to keep the shackles on. Decriminalizing all offenses which are nonviolent in nature takes away the central excuse for the imprisonment of the vast majority of incarcerated individuals, and also naturally redirects the place of law enforcement to its proper role of investigating violent crimes. When police are not tasked with countless distractions from this proper role there is no longer purpose for constant interjection into the lives of free individuals, each of which carries the possibility of escalation to violence for trivial or perceived reasons, and will naturally result in reductions in the police force and their budgets.
Insofar as this violence directed at free people is detrimental to personal health as well as social health in society, I suppose one could phrase it as such. There’s no question that the justice system suffers from deliberate racism in the ways it is set up, as well as giving far too much leeway to individuals within the system who may act inappropriately based on their own internal biases.

Do you believe racism is a public health crisis? *

I usually do not term it in this fashion, but we are in agreement. A central problem growing police presence overseeing our communities is that, like any branch of the State, they are a bureaucratic force that constantly desires more funding. In order to do this, their scope has gradually extended to many unnecessary areas, each of which limits the liberty of people through increased social controls masquerading as crimes. Defunding cuts back this ongoing involvement in our daily lives and gets us closer to law enforcement as officers of the peace working with the people and on their behalf rather than something that looks more akin to an occupying military force. Demilitarization of police is a natural follow-up to this scaling back because there will no longer be ballooning surplus tax revenue for purchase of military equipment, nor would it have any place in this future of peaceful cooperation with residents.

Do you support defunding the police? *

Any citizen who has been unduly aggressed upon deserves to have the opportunity for legal recourse. The primary problem with police brutality lies in the numerous ways they are shielded from accountability, from not being willing to investigate themselves in an unbiased fashion, to public union contracts that make it difficult to terminate criminal cops, but most of all in the patently unjust practice of qualified immunity. I support the efforts of US Reps. Ayanna Pressley (D) and Justin Amash (L) to rescind qualified immunity, and find it extremely upsetting that in a Democratic chamber this has gotten stalled for months. By ending qualified immunity, violent cops will have to personally answer for abusive acts against our people instead of facing minimal consequences, with at best legal settlements footed by the taxpayer.
How does your racial identity shape your perspective of public policy? Explain your answer. *

Being a white man, I have not personally experienced the same type of relationship with law enforcement nor borne the same application of public policy as that of a person of color. Recognizing that my own experience is not the gold standard of how things work, as well as being an empathetic person by nature, has allowed me to see at least some of the ways policy has disproportionately harmed people different from me. One of the chief reasons I am philosophically libertarian is a deep belief in the right of individuals to live their lives freely and peacefully, and that this principle must be applied equally to all people or it is devoid of meaning. Either liberty is a natural right enjoyed by everybody or some people have been granted exclusive privileges by the State at the expense of other people. I refuse to accept the latter.

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. *

Absolutely. When the basis of criminal justice claims to be rehabilitation, it makes no logical sense to continue to deprive somebody after they have duly served their time. I actually don’t even agree with removing voting rights while incarcerated because even while imprisoned one retains natural rights and should be able to have a voice in society while serving their sentence. Regardless, it’s disgusting to support denying one’s rights as a citizen because they previously were convicted of a felony or still owe money from it. This enables the entire idea of disrupting communities of color via mass incarceration in the first place.