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? *

At least twice in this country’s history, we have been lulled into the comforting false belief that we have solved racism. After the Civil War and the passage of the Civil War Amendments (13th, 14th, 15th), our leaders turned their back on the hard work of Reconstruction and racial equality in the name of instead promoting reconciliation. The Post-Reconstruction era that followed is possibly the saddest moment in American history. And again, after the Civil Rights Era brought the end of Jim Crow, the passage of landmark equal rights legislation, and a wave of court cases where the NAACP won enforcement of the 14th Amendment after a century of neglect, our leaders once again declared victory and turned their backs in the 1970s.

The result is that the legacy of centuries of systemic and institutional racism is still evident wherever we look. Hiring discrimination and pay disparities by race are trivially easy for academics to prove, and the accumulation of decades of inequality is a wealth gap so severe that African American families have barely 15% of the wealth of a typical white family. Schools have resegregated. The Confederate flag proliferates in states that fought with the Union (or didn’t even exist yet). The President makes nakedly racist appeals to his followers. And with the Voting Rights Act gutted, minority voters face greater challenges to register and to vote than whites do.

Today, we appear poised at the dawn of a moment where we can once again make real progress in racial equality. Just like the 1860s and the 1960s, Americans are confronting with clear eyes the evil of racial discrimination around us and are organizing for action. It makes me hopeful. But we can’t forget the lessons of the past. As Dr. King said: “Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability.” We ALL need to be leaning in. And we need to keep leaning in. The problem of racism is systemic, but the solutions will necessarily be narrow. So as we adopt and implement one solution, we need to look to the next instead of resting on our laurels. If strong police reform passes, we must turn next to bail reform or school funding or some other aspect of this pervasive problem.

I have tried to live this approach in Congress. I spent much of the latter years of President Obama’s Administration pushing for the Department of Housing and Urban Development to implement a rule called Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing that requires cities to be actively desegregating their neighborhoods in order to receive federal dollars. As that near completion, I signed on to the bill to establish a commission to study reparations, and as President Trump’s bank regulators have attempted to gut the Community Reinvestment Act (the law which banned red-lining and instead required banks to invest in minority neighborhoods and businesses), I have focused my effort on protecting it. We must always be pushing to use the power of government to undo the 400-year legacy that has left tens of millions of Americans with so little opportunity to pursue the American Dream. You can hold me accountable by demanding to know which problem I’m focused on at the moment and how we continue to press forward.

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

Yes, racism is absolutely a public health crisis. I believe I have explained why racism is a public health crisis in the above answer.
Do you support defunding the police? Explain your answer.

Manny Ellis. George Floyd. Breonna Taylor. Ahmad Arbery. Each of these stories is heartbreaking and there are countless more, and that reflects the fact that we have deep-seated problems – again, that are systemic! Our criminal justice system incarcerates the highest percentage of people in the world and vastly over incarcerates people of color. No one can argue with these facts. We need a cultural change. We need to change sentencing laws and practices. And we need not just to reform, but to transform law enforcement. I am a proud original co-sponsor of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act in Congress, which has been called the most sweeping legislation of its kind in history. I would advocate bringing the state version to the floor in Washington. It is important that efforts such as these are just the beginning of a conversation that we must continue until disparities are addressed entirely.

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

Yes. As I mentioned above, I have co-sponsored the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, and believe that this legislation is just the first step in transforming law enforcement. There is no excuse for the excessive use of force, and officers must be held accountable. The excessive use of force is another reason why we must invest in more community resources such as social workers and mental health professionals, so that officers are not the first and only option when help is needed.

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

Black Lives Matter. Period. Full stop. I have been saying it for years, working to pass legislation that supports this movement, and have taken to the street to march with the movement. I will continue to place the highest priority on advancing the cause of racial justice through all means. I am a white privileged male and fully acknowledge that but it doesn’t change the fact that this issue is personal as my immediate family is multiracial; one of my sons is black. Dr. King said that the “arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” Well, with all due respect, it's bending too slowly! No one can propagate that all lives matter until Black Lives Matter.
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. Specifically, I believe that the voting rights for Washingtonians who are incarcerated or have been previously incarcerated should be restored. Voting is a right that all Americans should have the ability to exercise. More broadly, I believe in a prison system which rehabilitates people over punishment. Most incarcerated people are there for nonviolent crimes, and if we want to discourage recidivism, we have to teach folks skills, trades, and provide opportunities for mental health care to help teach coping skills. Having the financial ability to restart one’s life after being released from prison is key to a successful future. I believe if we want to lower the rate of recidivism we need a comprehensive reform and rehabilitation strategy which includes training our incarcerated folks for a better future and making more opportunities affordable and achievable to them.

This form was created inside of BlackLivesMatter Seattle.