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? *

The most pressing issue we face is helping our state and our economy recover from COVID-19 – stopping the spread and keeping as many people from getting sick as we can. This also means tackling the structural flaws in our economy that the pandemic has highlighted. We must rebuild our economy from the middle out, not the top down. That will require raising wages, expanding benefits like paid leave, and passing universal health care for all. Black people on average earn several orders of magnitude less than white people in their lifetimes. By raising wages and pushing for more pay equity legislation, we can close that gap and allow Black and other marginalized communities to finally start building intergenerational wealth that gives them the resources to have better quality of life for decades to come. Also, in passing a universal health care system, we will have an opportunity to dismantle the existing racist healthcare structure as it stands. With universal coverage, we can do away with racist insurance company policies and infuse more inclusive practices in wellness, dismantling the racist practices that medical professionals have been trained and conditioned to provide.

As we rebuild our economy, we must preserve critical state services which require new, progressive revenue that fixes our upside-down tax system. This includes continuing to expand access to quality education, from universal pre-K to fully funded public schools to free college. Our success and prosperity depends on a well-educated workforce and our democracy depends on a well-educated society. And in everything we do, we must put equity and social justice at the center of our work—from police reform to universal health care to housing for all—we must dismantle systems of oppression and ensure every Washingtonian has the opportunities to succeed and thrive in our state.

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

Racism is a systemic and public health crisis in the U.S. that is resting on over 400 years of deeply ingrained and unjust policies. This country and this state were founded on racist principles, from stolen land and indigenous genocide to a slave labor economy that continues to this day. Racism in America manifests as lower wages, standards of living, institutional violence, and abysmal medical treatment for Black and Brown people in this country, working in tandem to create conditions that actively hold down and inflict harm on those populations.

These principles have gone on to effect virtually every facet of our life. Families of color have much less generational wealth, with white families having on average over 6 times the amount of money that a Black family has, Black homeownership being consistently lower (and now decreasing) compared to white homeownership. Additionally, when a Black family does try and become homeowners, they face significantly more loan rejections, higher interest rates when approved, and higher tax assessments.

We also see racial inequity manifesting in healthcare, with Latino and Hispanic people having the highest uninsured rates of any racial group in the country, and Black and brown folks disproportionately catching and dying from COVID-19. The health system as it stands is deeply racist in its application and treatment, leading to Black women facing significantly higher levels of negative treatment outcomes and death – if a doctor even considers her case medically worthy. Race is a huge factor in our criminal justice system, with Black incarceration rates being 5 times higher than that of white people and penalties on Black and brown people being generally more severe than penalties that white people receive for the same crime.

Racism is toxic to public wellbeing and the health of Black and Brown people. We must work to dismantle the systemic racism in our society and put an equity lens on everything we do going forward.

Do you support defunding the police? Explain your answer. *

I am supportive of the work that is being done in Seattle to confront structural racism and police misconduct in the city. The City Council's decision to uphold their new budget plan was a victory for keeping communities safe. At the state level, I would like to see more reforms, including demilitarizing the police and blocking them from acquiring any more weapons of war - which should never be used on our own people. Furthermore, I am in favor of ending mass incarceration policies and excessive policing and redirecting those funds into community-based alternatives. The savings from those changes can be used for more violence prevention measures, reconciliation, and better funding for critical human services that lift up communities, not put them under more surveillance.
What is your position on charging officers with bodily harm-related crimes when excessive force is used? Explain your answer. *

I firmly believe that we need to have more accountability measures in place for when law enforcement does wrong. When a nurse or a lawyer does wrong and harms those that they serve, they risk losing licensing and other reprimands. Law enforcement who have purview over many life and death situations should be held to at least the same standard. I am in favor of eliminating qualified immunity and creating more oversight practices, like independent investigations in cases of misconduct to hold law enforcement to the highest standard possible and make our communities more safe from excessive force.

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

Like far too many, as someone who identifies as LGBTQ, I have personally felt the sting of discrimination — I know what it feels like to be marginalized. I also know that as a white man, I have had many opportunities that have been denied to others. That is why as a state lawmaker, I have used my privilege, as well as my experiences of discrimination, to focus on advancing social justice for every community who faces systemic barriers in our state. Going forward, we must all redouble our commitment to equity in all we do. As we expand education and opportunity, as we grow jobs and new industries, we must ensure that every Washingtonian has the chance to share in the success that lies ahead. As Lt. Governor, I will work with the new state Office of Equity, with legislators and leaders of color, with our state's ethnic, women's and LGBTQ commissions to place an equity lens on all the work we do in state government.

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 am strongly in support to restoring voting rights to Washingtonians who have been incarcerated. This past session we had legislation in the Senate that would have reinstated voting rights to people who had been incarcerated that made it all the way to the Senate floor. I was deeply disappointed that in the end, we we're not able to get this bill over the finish line due to oftentimes racist interference from the Republican opposition. I am very hopeful that this year, with more progressive members joining the Senate after the coming election, we will have the numbers to further shift the balance of power and finally pass this legislation to right this historic injustice.