

Noni Session for Oakland City Council District 3

QUESTIONNAIRE

GREEN PARTY OF ALAMEDA COUNTY 2016 ENDORSEMENT DECISION

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Note: You may respond to any question with a link to your website or other posted positions. For the yes/no questions, please answer yes or no and if you wish to add to your answer, feel free to do so.

1. Motivation -- Why did you choose to run for City office? If you are running against an incumbent, what are your main dis-satisfactions and differences with him or her?

A strong distinction between the incumbent running for the District 3 city council seat, is that I possess the strongest authentic, grassroots base. What most differentiates me is my proven commitment and history of working collectively to implement a People's Agenda grounded in the needs of Oaklanders, not the developer class.

A further distinction between myself and the the incumbent is that the people I seek to represent are my community. They are people who urgently need the changes I intend to implement once in office.

Over the course of my personal and educational trajectory, I have occupied the roles of a young mother, graduate student, and doctoral researcher. I have experienced life on both sides of the proverbial tracks. While I received an elite education later in life, my early experiences with marginalization and social exclusion keep my identity firmly rooted in the underrepresented communities of my origin. Due to my lived experience as a third generation West Oakland native, I have built-in accountability. I have a personal stake in truly representative politics in Oakland; and some of the people for whom I would speak, those least represented in the Oakland's electoral process, are my neighbors, family, and friends.

2. Program and Priorities -- Elected office provides the opportunity to proactively lead by placing new ideas on the agenda for consideration and development. What are some specific ideas you intend to pursue if elected? What do you believe are the main priorities for the City?

As the District 3 Councilperson I pledge consistent honest, transparent representation for my constituents. My top priorities in office are to insure holistic communities

- **secure housing**
- **strong schools**
- **nonviolent communities**
- **alternative models of economics**

End Oakland's housing crisis

- **Level the rental playing field through adjusting the current definition of "affordable"**
- **Staunch the outflow of Oakland residents through vigorous implementation and enforcement of real renter protections**
- **Prioritize models for funding that permanently re-house Oakland's rising homeless population**

Expand economic opportunity

- **Fully Fund, re-open, and prioritize neighborhood employment centers**
- **Direct city and grant funds toward local projects and that create community-based economic development like worker-owned co-ops**
- **Support cooperative and local economics model**
- **Cultivate healthy sustainable jobs fund programs that make entry points to small business ownership simple**

Foster Empowered communities

- **Strengthen citizens' police accountability measures**
- **Create policy to shift recruitment, training, and residency requirements for new officers toward a community policing model**
- **Ensure that afterschool and youth summer programs are fully-funded citywide**

Build Community-based solutions for Community Governance

- **Citizen-based self governance models**
- **Create citizen task forces**
- **Support civic education initiatives to create equitable access to community-based governance spaces in Oakland**
- **Foster community access to government officials for community access time**

3. Qualifications -- Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for the office of City. If you are a current City Government elected official, what issues can you point to in your time as an elected official that have had a positive impact?

My primary education in Oakland's independent Black schools has informed the concern I have for my community and the passion that has impacted my life, perspective, and values. I attended public middle and high schools in North and West Oakland, and went on to San Francisco State University to attain a double major in Cultural Anthropology and Black Studies.

After teaching for a year in a Title I Community Day School in Richmond California, I entered my Doctoral program in Cultural Anthropology at Cornell University where my people-centered framework sharpened even further. During my doctoral research in Nairobi Kenya, I worked for the United Nations Development Programme as a field researcher and government agency liaison. During this time I developed the ability to take in social data and quickly assimilate that data to accurately represent the interests of constituencies. I became particularly effective at taking socially-driven data to build bridges between community-centered needs and government processes.

This skill set has profoundly informed my 5+ years of coalition and social justice work in Oakland during which time I have further developed knowledge of the unique needs and conditions of the District 3 residents, but also Oakland at-large

4. Local groups -- Are you affiliated with any of the active Oakland groups? Such as TOLA, Make Oakland Better Now, Oakland Justice Coalition, Block by Block, Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club, GO Public Schools, OCO, or any other. Describe your involvement and why you feel this group is worthy of your support.

I have been intensely involved in forms of social activism directed at creating and sustaining non-capital oriented communities in Oakland. For the last four years I have been a co-organizer with Cowrie Village. This organization hosts bartering events in order to create non cash skills and goods sharing networks among Black Oaklanders. I have also been a Co-organizer of Afrocentric Oakland. Each year we coordinate and host the Pan-African Family reunion: an all-day family and cultural event whose goal is to use public space to create and sustain social networks among African diasporic peoples living in Oakland and the greater Bay Area. For the last two years I have been a co-organizer with SOBO (State of Black Oakland) a united front coalition through which we are currently building a people's platform to advance self-determination for African American people in Oakland.

5. Local activities -- Other than local politics, are you involved in any other Oakland based community activities that you would like to share with us? This can range from volunteering in your school to being in your church baseball league

Currently I serve on the board for the Oakland Fund for Children & Youth. Through work we empower Oakland youth by connecting them to education and services that are a right for all.

6. Budget -- If you were on council for the next budget in 2017 how would you act differently from the council members dealing with the budget in 2015? How much additional revenue should the City aim to take in, and how would you generate it?

My first orders of business would be to prioritize spending on youth programing, economic and workforce development, as well as race & equity all of which seem to be among the low priorities in the current city budget. While the mayor insists her budget promotes a safer Oakland, the lack of funding for the aforementioned expenses indicates otherwise. This could also be said for the increase in funding for corporate charter schools rather than public.

For the mayor and city council to be held accountable for a budget that reflects an investment in the future for people of Oakland there needs to be transparency and citizen oversight in the budget making process. I would generate additional revenue by investigating ballot initiatives for more progressive taxation.

7. Youth -- Describe the condition of youth in Oakland? What would your priorities for youth be for Oakland government and how would they get implemented and paid for?

While Oakland's current investments in infrastructure, policing and development are at the forefront of budget agenda the population most disregarded in this equation are the youth particularly in low-income and people of color communities. By redefining affordable housing students can maintain communities that provide nurturance to their growth into adulthood. Redefining affordable housing would also contribute the qualified teachers having an ability to stay in Oakland.

With a current model of funding for charters that can at times discriminatorily select students, many of our youth are denied access to quality education which reinforces a school to prison pipeline. Oakland is in great need of allocating funds to improve public schools specifically that are labeled as Intensive Support Schools. These programs could be paid for by reassessing the overwhelming amount of monies budgeted toward the police budget, and state and federal grants.

8. Police -- How do you think our community policing is going and what are the next steps? Describe the current relationship between the residents and the Oakland Police. Do you suggest any changes? Do you support Restorative Justice programs and how should the city be involved, if at all. What are your thoughts about police misconduct and how do you feel Oakland should deal with it?

Like our community as a whole the nature of the citizen-police officer experience in Oakland diverges sharply. In more affluent and empowered of our citizens they can expect protection and as much responsiveness and current city capacity will allow. For the less empowered citizen relations with law enforcement are marked by fear, violation, uncertainty, and too often, personal peril. As we vigorously

apply the upcoming citizen police board, I will also work to implement community policing models through such reforms as shifting recruitment, training, and residency requirements. Your police office should also be your neighbor. For me, restorative justice would also mean that the aforementioned changes were determined through a community based process. Through some of these changes on the model of policing intend to achieve a drastic reduction in police misconduct in oakland

9. Development Projects -- What are your thoughts and views about the West Oakland Army Base, The upper Broadway-Valdez Triangle, Oak to 9th and other projects?

These projects a paradigmatic of the ways the development process in Oakland, while bringing some opportunity defers far too much to developers and does not demand enough in return. Not nearly as many Oakland residents were hired at the Army Base as were promised because the project language is too general. We need to demand real, significant employment and housing benefits in exchange for approving projects. I would demand specific numbers including having the developer pay to recruit and train Oakland if he is unable to do so himself. Developers of housing projects should be required to transfer part of the real estate into an urban land trust which will build and sell affordable housing to working class Oakland residents.

10. Housing & Gentrification -- Increasing rents, dislocation, and gentrification have been in the news. What policies do you advocate to assure that Oakland tenants are protected and that Oakland remains an economically and racially diverse city? Do you favor rent control?

I absolutely support rent control. As well I propose to Level the rental playing field through adjusting the current definition of “affordable,” and staunch the outflow of Oakland residents through vigorous implementation and enforcement of real renter protections

11. Environment -- What do you think the Oakland City government should be doing about the environment? **While I am in full support of the “No Coal in Oakland” I believe Oakland city government can do more to address the impacts of violence, both social and environmental, in the poorest communities. Investment in the old and crumbling infrastructure in West Oakland should be a high priority for council. As well we can work to create the same kinds of “complete” communities in all parts of the city. We can improvements in public transport and public safety and beautification. As well we should attend to the equitable distribution of 21st century alternative to fossil fuel use like prioritizing funding for programs that make solar energy available in all parts of Oakland including the flatlands.**

12. Public Banking -- Will you introduce, co-sponsor and/or support an ordinance or charter amendment to create a Public Bank of Oakland, inspired by the Bank of North Dakota [\[1\]](#) (BND), a 100 year old public institution? The Public Bank of Oakland would hold the city's deposits - in contrast to having them held by Wall Street Banks as currently done. It would make fiscally responsible loans in the best interest of the residents of Oakland - in contrast to Wall Street banks' record of risk and ruin. Profits made by the Public Bank of Oakland would be returned to the General Fund of the City of Oakland, or used to further buttress the loan capabilities of

the bank, much as the BND does (the BND has returned over \$400,000,000 to the General Fund of the State of North Dakota over the last 21 years,^[i] while substantially increasing its capitalization and its loan outreach) **That is amazing. Yes absolutely. Community economics is the model toward which i would like to move oakland**

[i] <https://bnd.nd.gov/>

[ii] <https://ilsr.org/rule/bank-of-north-dakota-2/>

13. Local Payday Lenders -- Oakland is awash with for-profit Check Cashing and PayDay Loan emporiums (a simple Google query^[i] shows 20). These outfits provide emergency cash and other financial products to those who cannot obtain it otherwise - at outrageously high interest rates and/or extremely high fees. Professor Mehrsa Baradaran, in her book *How the Other Half Banks*,^[ii] quotes the astounding statistic that those who use these services spend on average over \$2000 per household per year.

It is not widely known but Oakland is home to the only non-profit check cashing and payday lending storefront in the country - Community Check Cashing^[iii] (CCC) in Fruitvale Plaza. It provides the same services for-profit operators do at 33% - 50% of the cost, while paying its employees a living wage. Will you support build-out and capitalization loans by the City of Oakland to expand CCC to other storefronts around Oakland (much as the City Council gave a 50-year, \$3,300,000 interest-free loan to the E 12th St. developers^[iv])?

Yes, very much. As well i would support similar city support models for cooperative owned businesses.

[i] Type 'Oakland Payday lenders' into Google Search and click on the resulting map.

[ii] [NALC.org](http://nalco.org) "Author makes the case for postal banking" <http://tinyurl.com/h9e6a2p>

Baradaran noted that the average unbanked family with an income of around \$25,000 spends about \$2,400 per year on financial transactions like these, even more than it spends on food.

[iii] <http://communitycheckcashing.org/>

[iv] Oakland City Council agenda, June 15th, 2016 <http://tinyurl.com/jzy398p>

14. Satisfaction of Residents -- How do you think the average resident feels about city government? How would you rate the satisfaction level?

The average resident i think feels a sense of ambivalence when it comes to their satisfaction level. They see they prosperity coming to our city but it does not come with stronger communities of more secure housing or more stable jobs with livable wages. I would assert that many Oaklanders feel uncertain as to whether they will even be able to remain in the city

15. Accountability -- How do you propose making yourself accountable and accessible to the citizens of Oakland?

My utmost concern is for the people and their empowerment in the governance process that affects their lives. I intend to foster community access to governance with initiatives such as civic education initiatives to create equitable access to community-based governance spaces in Oakland and neighborhood assemblies, and old fashioned office hours.

16. Governance -- What kind of relationship could you have with other office holders? Who do you see as a working majority on council and who can you work with?

I will work effectively and cooperatively with council members to push for the most progressive change in Oakland. Serving on the board of Oakland Fund for Children & Youth has enabled me to build positive, professional relationships with existing council members that will be in office after this election cycle.

17. Endorsements -- Who has endorsed you so far? Who do you expect to endorse you? Who are you endorsing, from President all the way down ballot to local races? Include your #2 and 3 choices (if applicable) for your own race and note that this year the City races are Council seats, School Board seats and City Attorney.

OJC; John George Democratic Club; National Union of Healthcare Workers; SEIU Local 1021; ACCE; BBBON; EBWPC; Wellstone Democratic Club; Oakland Rising; MGO; Hon. Gus Newport; Walter Riley, Millie Cleveland; Darice Jones; Yvette Holt, Carroll Fife, Tur-Ha Ak

I endorse Kharyshi Wigington for school board in district 3 as well as Nehada Imara in District 7 for city council. Due to no other qualifying candidates beyond the incumbent and myself in the race I can give no other endorsements in my own race.

18. Campaign Funding -- How much money do you currently have for this race? How much money do you plan to raise? Where will the money come from? Describe sources of financial contributions for your campaign that you would refuse to accept (if any).

Though my fundraising is in it's beginning stages I have hired a fundraising coordinator, Evelyn Torres who has outlined our campaign goals and a timeline for budgeting. Our projected fundraising goal is \$100k. Union endorsers will make independent expenditures to help fund the campaign. We have compiled our donor list from which we will attain funds from progressive residents of Oakland as well as my personal contacts. I have not solicited money from developers and will not take it if offered.

19. Checks and balances -- How do you view current the relationship between the Council and Mayor? Any comments on the same question for the Auditor and City Attorney? Are there any changes they would propose to the city charter?

The internal politics of city hall are yet opaque for me knowing that the true nature of many of these relationships remains hidden. Though in general city council is seen to put up little resistance to Mayor initiated initiatives.

20. Money in elections. -- Does Oakland need campaign finance reform? If so, what kind? Do you support amending the Constitution to end corporate Constitutional rights and getting money out of politics? Have you [Taken the Pledge to Amend?](https://movetoamend.org/take-pledge-amend) (<https://movetoamend.org/take-pledge-amend>)

Due to the number of discrepancies over the the last few years regarding campaign finance particularly in the case of the incumbent in district which I am running. I do think investigations in finance reform are in order. I fully support the amending the

constitution to get big money interest out of politics. I have in fact taken the pledge to amend, I will stand up for this amendment to legislature at every possible opportunity.

21. Anything Else? -- Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

I have been registered as No Party Preference. Recently, I have registered as a Democrat in order to vote in the Primary; however I have never identified fully with the Democratic Party. My closest ideological alignment is with the Green Party and the ten key values. I hope to work with the green party as much as possible for guidance and accountability for enacting best practices for the people of Oakland.

Yes or No questions (follow with an explanation if you want to add one)

- Do you support raising the minimum wage to a living wage? Yes.
- Are you in favor of a police commission? Yes, A citizen oversight commissioner in the form in which it was initially written before city council amendments.
- Would you vote for using eminent domain to abate foreclosure crisis? Yes.
- Do you support Ranked Choice Voting?Yes.
- Would you support Proportional Representation?Yes.
- Do you support diverting people from prosecution if they participate in a restorative justice program? Yes.
- Do you support Community Choice Aggregation?Yes.
- Would you vote to allow more grey water systems?YES.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.

Sincerely,
Greg Jan
Green Party of Alameda County

(Please reply to: GPAC-VoterGuide@yahoogroups.com by Saturday, August 27).