Black Lives Matter B-town 2024 Primary Questionnaire

Please copy and paste in your OWN document and please complete all questions. Then send back to blacklivesmatterbtown@gmail.com by ***April 10th 2024 5pm.*** *You have one full week to reply.*
IF you are a County Commissioner or County Council candidate there are specific questions for you at the end.

We ask that you think that through carefully and see why they all might apply to the position you are seeking. Bare minimum we want your personal and or political opinion on each question. Do NOT repeat answers from your previous questionnaires. Write in your OWN words do not quote from books, articles or other media.

1.How do you define "anti-racism"? Please try to use your own words and do not quote from a book or online resources. Additionally, how as an elected official would you apply anti-racism? How do you define "privilege"? How has privilege impacted decisions you have made as an elected official, or if you are running for the first time, as an engaged community member? Give specific examples in either your current policies as a seated official or in your candidate platform.

Anti-racism is calling out racist, white supremacist behavior in the most full-throated way possible and implementing changes in actions and policies that create a more equitable and just society. The channels for doing this may be conventional or unconventional and it is necessary for elected officials to identify ways in which to be anti-racist via law or ordinance, policy, such as hiring, and via public communication as necessary. This is necessary to fully protect those constituents that elected officials serve from every walk of life and experience. I am keenly aware of my privilege in Monroe County as a member of a nine-generation family and as a white, straight, Protestant, male. While I am not perfect at it, I am cognizant that every public body works better when those with privilege make way for greater representation around the table. As a council member, I've worked to include all community members, not just ones that live or love like me (or share my experiences) in county decisions. Additionally, I've supported training for county elected officials and employees centered more robustly on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. Those trainings are increasing awareness and affecting action among the county workforce. I strive for a community where everyone, not just people that live or love like me, has access to the life they truly wish to have.

0. How do you understand Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) measures and/or Affirmative Action? Be specific about your understanding of these concepts. Do you agree or disagree with their implementation in workplace environments (including political ones)? Given the conservative backlash against these initiatives do you believe these are crucial elements of the Democrat party and/or Liberal or Progressive ideals? Why or why not? Have you seen a benefit to these initiatives personally if so, when and where?

I understand Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) and Affirmative Action, which largely preceded today's concepts of DEI, as continued efforts to more fairly rebalance access to more Black, Brown, and Indigenous individuals across a spectrum of needs and in ways that many of those same individuals have been largely deprived or at a significant disadvantage. I recognize that generations of racist policies that enshrined segregation, Jim Crow laws, and immoral housing and hiring practices, among other issues, created generations of practices and policies

that robbed Black, Brown, and Indigenous individuals from a multitude of experiences of their white counterparts. I believe that that racism in the United States cost this nation, and specifically people of color, life, opportunity, time, treasure, and as a result, deprived the nation as a whole. As I indicated in the previous question, it is critical for every organization to consider wholeheartedly who is receiving access to goods or services in a community and who is involved in the leadership and decision-making process. If there is not great representation in elected office and public employment of those individuals who have been traditionally marginalized, then it is extremely hard for those members present to make policy decisions. This is why it is important to me that public bodies, including boards and commissions, have more diverse representation and meaningful engagement in policy. It is also important to educate our workforce to be mindful of issues of representation. In my own life, my graduate studies were some of my first conversations about feminist theory, ableism, discriminatory policies, and anti-Queer rhetoric. I strive to embrace that education, continue it, and apply it to my own teaching, service as an elected official, and knowledge base as a community member and volunteer. Everyone is better served when everyone is better aware.

0. Since the 2020 surge of support for the BLM movement there has been an extensive backlash/whitelash against the Movement. We see it clearly in the media and politics locally and nationally. Are you as a candidate or a current elected official a supporter of the BLM Movement and its messaging and goals? Do you know what those goals are? If so please articulate them in your own words? Give specific examples of how you support the BLM movement in your policy work or in your candidate platform.

I support BLM Bloomington and Black lives in my community, and I support the goals and efforts of the movement as I've understood them in my time serving Monroe County. I am aware of the 13 Guiding Principles of BLM Bloomington and if I were to put them in my own words and respectfully given them their due, I would say that these principles build up Black and marginalized families in Bloomington by reducing hunger, creating connection and meaning among Black families, advocate unapologetically on issues affecting community members, remain supportive of vulnerable LGBTQIA+ constituencies, and create places of empathetic leadership in all that BLM does. I've worked in my service to reduce food insecurity which cut across Monroe County populations, be vigilant against rhetoric that creates disparities between individuals (especially those who are marginalized by white supremacy), and I've asked the tough questions of processes and other officials to determine why things were done that may have been counter to some of the goals of these guiding principles. I have also served on the Monroe County Health Equity Council which seeks to reduce barriers to marginalized community members who need access (and answers) on their vital healthcare. This forum unites elected officials and community leaders so that they can have the tough conversations on everything from transit access, which we'd just about have lost in parts of the county without quick intervention, to addressing food deserts. I know that there is greater work I can do and I fully acknowledge that I have not done all that I can do. There is always much more to do in the nature of the work of advocacy and public service.

0. To the best of your knowledge, describe why people of color are disproportionately targeted and arrested by the criminal justice system. What ideas do you have to make the justice

system more equitable and impartial? What concerns do you have about the militarization of our police force?

In the last two years, Prosecutor Erika Oliphant has been working within a partnership of the NAACP and Eric Grommon, a professor of Criminal Justice at the O'Neill School. This study was taken at the continued request of the NAACP who have been faithfully pointing to disparities for some time. The study's efforts have been targeted towards understanding how decision-making occurs in the Prosecutor's office among the multiple individuals prosecuting cases. The study has yielded information that demonstrates that, while prosecutors are not necessarily instigating issues of racially targeting or disparity, their decision-making may be reinforcing disparities that already exist via calls leading to complaints and arrests, as just one part of the data. Sheriff Ruben Marté has expanded transparency around the work of his road deputies around the county as well as those officers serving within the Monroe County Correction Center. We've learned in both of these cases that more information, rather than less, helps. I believe that many of the current disparities come about as a result of generational differences that exist between those who have greater privilege in the community versus those who do not. Many individuals, including BLM Bloomington, have sought information on what happens during a traffic stop, incarceration, or when someone is seeking help from first responders. Our community must be a place that provides that information through very transparent ways so that each family or individual knows what to expect during an encounter they, or anyone else, instigate.

0. What does Restorative Justice look like to you? Given the amazing response from our community against the new jail, what programs focused on Restorative Justice do you support or would you support as an elected official to lower the number of community members who are incarcerated? How would these ideas be implemented? Give as many details as you can.

Restorative Justice, to me, involves the effort to redefine the relationship between those committing the harm and those who have been victimized. The effort allows both members to reclaim a healthy place within the community. This process focuses on participation from all members in the process, fixing what has been broken, full accountability on the part of the perpetrator, an effort to reunite what has been divided, and then strengthening the community. I generally support those efforts when those who have been victimized would wish to play a part in the restorative justice process. That effort takes enough buy-in for those willing to play a part in restorative justice that I could see a strong amount of harm that could begin to be addressed that way. Our courts, prosecutor, and public defender office have piloted several programs to avoid greater levels of incarceration and their part of the implementation of restorative justice, at any level, would be crucial. At the same time, the General Assembly and Governor sets the laws which govern the state and at some level, would also need to commit to buy-in so that the actions of our community would not be invalidated with victims and perpetrators further harmed in the process.

0. Describe a society in which there are no prisons or jails. How does that justice system differ from ours? What other aspects of culture would be different in a society without the carceral state? How would this change or eliminate policing? Would you support this type of society?

A society that could get to that level of comfort at all levels would have much less hardship, pain, and apparently have almost next to no violence or victimization. I'd give anything to live in that sort of place and to get there, we'd need reforms at nearly every level conceptualized. On our way to that vision, we need to address poverty, food insecurity, access to care, and other disparities that create hardships among community members so that we can reduce incarceration and as result, victimization and other problems.

0. Given the American legacy of slavery, tyranny, and discrimination against Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color; do you believe that White Supremacy exists within US society today? If so, please give as many examples as you think are necessary to elucidate that belief, and if NOT please tell us why. Name a specific issue/s in our community relating to White Supremacy and how you have or would respond to it.

White Supremacy exists in the United States. We see this explicitly in domestic terrorist groups and others that seek to foment hate and violence against other Americans. We literally had Nazis, couched as something else (which is always how these things are), at our city Farmers' Market in Bloomington. We had similarly minded individuals that showed up and speak at City Council meetings and offer vile, hateful remarks. These groups will often take the rule of law or slowness of a public body and turn it against them. In the case of the Nazis at the Farmer's Market, I'd have pursued the city abandoning marketing and permitting private, not-for-profit groups to fill in a remaining void. This would have allowed a market to continue, Nazis be damned, and an easier time for the community (particularly those in marginalized communities) in a quicker way. To address the public comment issue, I would have just told those Nazis to go to hell and then reminded the community what fascism via Nazis and other hate groups had cost this community over the years.

But just as insidiously and no less dangerous is White Supremacy that exists in governmental and corporate policies, justice systems, implicit bias, and normative cultural structures that exclude, other, and harm Black, Brown and Indigenous people. Unspoken rules, unfair decisions, closed doors and gatekeeping, and discomfort with a legacy that needs to be confronted all lead to the marginalization and violence against people of color. These need to be addressed by proactively elevating Black, Brown, and Indigenous leaders, listening to what they say and believing them, and breaking down barriers that have been propped up by a white supremacist culture.

0. Given that 44 Million people are food-insecure in the US and given that the rate for Monroe County is 12.2% (over 17,000 residents), what plans or ideas do you have for food justice in our community? Do you support community based food programs that bring locally grown nutrient dense food to those in need? If so please detail those programs here.

**Statistics from Feeding America Org 2021*
https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/food-insecurity

I have supported efforts to fill in voids created by food deserts and food insecurity. This has meant dedicating pandemic rescue dollars to support food banks and other hunger measures. Specifically, I worked to ensure that a Community Kitchen Express location would remain at

Cresmont. My mother was born in a home two blocks from that location and that entity, along with other strong not-for-profits in the community help to keep people fed. I think a new set of our work needs to focus on helping the community, particularly our Black farmers, to get support in returning to locally grown food sources that are more nutrient dense. We've become too reactive in food scarcity and I think supporting efforts to create food producers may be a job creator that supports working families. Having also governed during the pandemic, I know that this helps keep families more secure should the unthinkable happen again or if we experience economic downturns.

0. Bloomington/Monroe County finds itself in an affordable housing crisis. How will you ensure more affordable housing? Do you support density housing with priority given to people of color, people making under $30,000 a year, families with dependents, and disabled people? What is your definition of "affordable" housing? Specifically, please discuss non-student housing.

Simply put, we've got to get back to building affordable housing and that means a change in planning or permitting that is currently occurring at the Plan Commission and Commissioner level of government. I would support density housing for groups that need it, including people of color, qualifying individuals making under $30,000 a year, families with dependents, and people who are disabled. We are also missing housing at several levels and building housing now might mean that more individuals looking to live or work in Monroe County would find a home. Our current system now is creating a hardship at every level as families battle each other for homes among other scarcity items they need, like childcare spots so families can return to work.

If you are a County Commissioner or County Council candidate there are extra questions below. If you are not one of these types of candidates you are done with the questionnaire.

County Commissioner & Counselor Questions:

1.Given the current city and specifically Mayoral approach of displacing and demolishing homeless encampments what will you do to help with short term living solutions for our homeless/unhoused community members. Do you support public sleeping measures? What will the county do to add protections for these vulnerable community members? Be specific and give examples from your policies or campaign platform.

I believe we need to continue investments into the existing Heading Home plan that Monroe County supports. This plan identifies a range of solutions, ranging from fundamental infrastructure investments to data sharing, with a priority of a housing first model to alleviate the crisis. It also engages several different housing stakeholders and targets rapid rehousing wherever necessary. I think in a few more years, this initiative will be directing greater amounts of the effort and helping to get long-lasting results. As said earlier, we can also increase housing stock on low-income households, help landlords with incentives for low-income housing, and also expanding the health care and income opportunities for those who find themselves homeless. This plan requires buy-in from all participants, including those receiving assistance, to be effective. I would be highly interested in public sleeping measures as a solution and would be interested how that could work differently or in tandem with efforts made by shelter providers like Beacon, which the county has also supported. I think one way to protect these vulnerable

populations comes from listening to them, approaching their life with dignity, and working to empower them towards solutions.

0. Given the recent anti-LGBTQ bills across the country and in Indiana & given that BIPOC LGBT folks will be doubly impacted, how will you as a County official make sure LGBTQ Youth and in particular Trans and Non-Binary Youth have access to life saving gender care services in our community? How will you support our LGBTQ Elders? How will you address the intersectionality of Race and LGBTQ needs in our community? How will you protect LGBTQ children from hate crimes and discrimination in our county?

When asked at a recent League of Women Voters' Forum what I think the state should do to help us do our job, I recommended that the state could stop picking on Trans kids. This continued legislative harm committed on Trans and Non-Binary youth, along with continued grievances towards LBGTQ constituencies, is a problem of epic proportions. I believe that any civil rights grievance brought upon even the smallest number of us is a terrible problem for every single one of us. As a community, we've got to say that whenever we can and we also should make this place a safe harbor for those individuals. I will address the intersectionality of race and LGBTQ by listening to these constituencies, including elders who may have trouble advocating for themselves, and following their lead. I've learned a lot from constituents simply by hearing their grievances and offering compassion towards their position, followed by action. Monroe County should be a place of protection and dignity for all willing to live, work, play, and age in place here.

0. Given the sweeping restriction of Reproductive Rights in Indiana and across the country how will you as a County Official help those seeking abortions, birth control and or protection from prosecution for seeking those services? How can we in Monroe county protect those rights for our residents? Be specific, address your platform, policies and any extra knowledge you possess about this issue.

We similarly need to stand up against these encroachments directed people at every level. Women, child-bearing and menstruating people are grieving the drastic overreaches and encroachments by public officials and courts. We need to listen to those effected in solidarity and then follow with action, which is what the county has already done for potentially impacted employees who may need the additional protection and support we can provide. We've indicated that the county will support any person who is a county employee and needs support in going across state lines to receive the reproductive care they need. I suspect that greater issues will offer a continuing complexity of change as we see more court rulings and legislative decisions. This process will require that we are vigilant and the county should continue to consult and work together with emerging not-for-profit organizations, including All-Options, Futures Family Planning Clinic, Tandem, and Health Net, in order to assist with these ever-evolving needs as people get their necessary healthcare.

4.Given there is often a disconnect between City and County, how do you plan to work with the City of Bloomington elected officials to engage them in the work the County is doing on various social and economic issues? Especially issues related to the Black community given that the majority of long term Black residents of Bloomington live in the county. Additionally how will

you support a Black Community center IF one is started? Please be specific citing examples from your policies and or platform.

City and county need simply to work better together. I think this is doable and I am running on it. I believe that we can work together, and that when we do get results for the communities we represent, and we can be proud of that work and regularize it through the connection of our words with our actions. We owe it to our residents, who don't really care about our differences, to get those results. I'd support a Black Community Center and I would love to hear ideas on where Black community members think it should be. I could see the county supporting such a vital resource and undertaking the questions needed to do so.

0. Currently there are multiple health department county licenses farm, food and home-based vendors MUST get from the Health Department in order to operate in Monroe County. Specifically, at the multiple markets here. The licenses and permits put an extreme financial and systemic barrier up for BIPOC farmers and food vendors. Do you believe these permits are necessary, do you know what they are, do you agree that they are systemic barriers? How can we incorporate safety measures in the Health Dept while also cutting costs and barriers for BIPOC farmers & food vendors?

Licensing and governmental policies can create barriers, especially for those who are underserved or have been systemically oppressed in other ways. It is important to ensure that the food we consume is handled properly in order to reduce health risks, especially among our most vulnerable populations including children, seniors, people experiencing homelessness, and medically fragile residents. Many of the requirements for farmers and food vendors, from produce safety to retail and seasonal food business and food protection manager certifications, are informed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Indiana Department of Health and upheld by the county health department. To reduce barriers and ensure safety, I would support an effort to facilitate licensing and permitting activities in convenient locations and times for those most affected by the barriers that exist and identify financial program partnerships that could off-set the costs of this process.