

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 Write in your OWN words do not quote from books, articles or other media.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 Please try to use your own words and do not quote from a book or online resources.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 the elimination of discrimination based upon race. This means a respect for all people, their views and perspectives. Recognizing privilege is an important part of the work of equity. As an example, when I teach gender studies I utilize bell hooks’ book (c. 2000) where she discusses the intersections of oppression and privilege. We each have a unique experience in society – from our families of origin, our schools, our communities, etc. Being an elected official is part of privilege – it is a position of decision-making that others in the community do not have. I recognize my privilege as a white person in society, as a woman I recognize the impact of sexism on my life.

I have been an active participant in the Monroe County Health Equity Council to bring underserved and those without power into the decision-making process. While the program was specifically designed to address public health (which is already a broad subject), my hope is to integrate that mindset into all of the decisions we make in Monroe County government.

2. 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? DEI and Affirmative Action are essential to the decisions we make in county government every day. They are about how we relate to one another in the community at large and also in our hiring practices. The conservative backlash indicates we are doing the right thing. There were some immediate positive responses (“I didn’t know this before”) as a result of the DEI training we arranged for Monroe County employees (Guardin). All employees were required to attend. We presently have additional trainings available, and it is important to determine

if more targeted programming would be beneficial again.

3. 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.

Yes, I support the BLM movement. The principles of justice and freedom are at the forefront of the movement. The public often only hears about BLM after there is a fatality or violent incident against a black victim by a police officer. Accountability from the top to the bottom of the criminal justice system is required as is a deeper understanding by the public about the impact of racism. I will support any reform in our county criminal justice system. For example, it would be useful to have a committee to review the actions of deputies, jail staff and the courts (prosecutor, judges, public defender) – to review complaints and incidents in the public eye. This is real accountability. I have supported the expansion of body cameras from officers on the streets to the county jail.

4. 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?

The local NAACP branch - of which I have been a member for years - completed a vital study regarding the racial composition of arrestees and the people who are incarcerated locally. We need to provide the space for programming – both outside the justice system and inside of it. This will reduce exposure to the criminal justice system (preventing arrests) and reduce recidivism. We have invested a significant percentage of American Rescue Plan Act dollars (a once-in-a-lifetime funding source) to address the environment, food insecurity, housing, and daycare services. Each of these programs addresses equity issues in our community. The militarization of the police force involves the acquisition of weaponry – typically from military branches – for use in the civilian police force. We must always question what is really necessary. That is the Sheriff's decision and relies on Council funding.

5. 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.

We must work as a society to address inequities based on race. As a trained mediator (Community Justice and Mediation) I was a volunteer in the victim-offender reconciliation program. As our consultants noted, our court cases take far too long and this area of the criminal justice system needs significant

reform. As part of this, the bail system also requires significant reform. This is up to the Judges, in addition to the Prosecutor, to address. We need to provide the space for programming – both outside the justice system and inside of it. This will reduce exposure to the criminal justice system (preventing arrests) and reduce recidivism. We have invested a significant percentage of American Rescue Plan Act dollars (a once-in-a-lifetime funding source) to address the environment, food insecurity, housing, and daycare services. Each of these programs address equity issues in our community.

6. 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 decarcerated society is an ideal. It would be wonderful if the jail were empty. The new facility could become something entirely different, which would be marvelous. Policing and our justice system budget would be greatly impacted. These funds could be used for programs focused on social equity instead.

7. 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. Sadly, white supremacy exists across the US (and in our community) today, some blatant and some more hidden. Either way, ALL white supremacy is intolerable.
8. 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>

We utilized American Rescue Plan Act dollars to help address food insecurity in our community (People's Market, Hoosier Hills Food Bank, and Pantry 279) – and I was proud to also donate my personal time as a volunteer at Hoosier Hills Food Bank and Pantry 279 to distribute food. These experiences provided an even deeper understanding of the scope of the issue for me. While some of the funding was directed toward the purchase of food, we also provided infrastructure to keep these vital organizations going (transportation, storage). Community food programs – from the local pantries (Alexander's Army, Pantry 279, People's Market, the food bank at Crestmont, etc.) all play an important role. In addition, creating more community garden space (such as what the county offers at Will Detmer Park and what is planned for the new Van Buren Township

office) can and should be extended to new housing developments as well – so that the gardens are easily accessible.

9. 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.

We are missing key data to help us make better decisions. How many apartments that were built for IU students are empty? Can they be refurbished to become more family friendly (vs. having individual rooms within an apartment for rent on a separate lease). How many more of these apartments do we really need in Bloomington? Affordable housing is a legal term. Attainable means that low-income and moderate-income residents can afford to invest in a mortgage or can afford the rent. I support the creation of an affordable housing development, utilizing a Tax Increment Finance District model (residential TIF). Residents would have to meet the affordable housing requirements set by the Federal government. This cannot be a giveaway to developers (who have invested heavily in my primary opponent’s campaign – why?). We utilized American Rescue Plan Act funding to support infrastructure in the next phase of Habitat for Humanity’s Osage project. Preventing evictions and expunging eviction records are other important ways to increase housing opportunities.

The densest housing belongs in the city of Bloomington and the town of Ellettsville – where there is access to sewer. Currently, the city will not connect a county property to the city sewer system. They are awaiting the outcome of their lawsuit with the State of Indiana regarding the expiration that the state legislature placed on contracts.

By state law, septic systems require an acre of land. We are looking at areas of potentially denser housing as a possibility in the county, where a package plant can be utilized (it requires a specific environment).

We need a diverse housing stock – we don’t need cookie-cutter subdivisions and shoddy workmanship. The Plan Commission and Commissioners are presented with development plans and often are told a specific price (“affordable”) price range for the homes or apartment units, however they are often priced MUCH higher when they are completed. There is no way to hold developers accountable. It is important for me to NOT accept donations from builders and developers as they are a for-profit special interest group. The needs of the community, not the pockets of those who seek personal gain rather than working for ALL of the residents of Monroe County.

The State legislature prohibits local governments from creating a local minimum wage. I will continue to fight to bring this issue back to the legislature (and we need different legislators at the State House!).

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.

While public sleeping measures sound like a good way forward, there are significant public health issues involved (sanitation, safety, etc.). We have invested American Rescue Plan Act dollars in New Hope, Heading Home, and in Beacon to address housing needs in our community. We are just scratching the surface and we need significant, long-term investments in the provision of shelters – from barrier-free to family-oriented housing.

2. Given the recent anti-LGBTQ bills across the country and in Indiana & given that BIPOC LGBTQ 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?

We should consider a community fund to assist those who need to travel out-of-state for gender care service. Again, we need to work to elect progressive Democrats to the legislature to prevent backlash legislation. I support full rights for all LGBTQIA+ residents – without exception.

3. 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.

Our county employee health insurance policy covers employees' travel expenses for services. We need to find a way to develop a community-wide travel fund program. At the same time, we need saner voices in the state legislature to address this issue. As a former Planned Parenthood volunteer (clinic safety escort), I understand the importance of access to reproductive health care. Funding is key here – and that is the purview of the county council. Community gatherings on these topics will help us develop innovative programming that we can develop to address all reproductive health needs for our entire county.

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.

With the new administration, we have had a much more collaborative environment between the city and the county. This is something we need to build upon and expand our collaboration to include other aspects of governance to serve the community better. I would absolutely support the creation of a Black community center! We can potentially assist the development of a center with space and/or funding and on-going collaborative programming to incorporate all residents across the county.

5. 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?
The Commissioners tasked the Health Board and the Health department for a revision of the fees for multi-market licensing. **This has already been accomplished.** I heard from the People's Market about the cost of multiple licenses, and we took action. This will help both lower the barrier for economic participation in the markets, and at the same time, it will help ensure that products are more affordable for consumers as well.