

City Council Candidate Responses to Questions from [REAL](#) Oct. 2021

The Candidates

Ward 1: [Emily “Lemy” Coffin](#) v. [Stanley Moulton](#)

Ward 2: [Karen Foster](#) (unopposed)

Ward 3: [David Kris](#) v. [James Nash](#)

Ward 4: [Jesse Hassinger](#) v. [Garrick Perry](#)

Ward 5: [Alex Jarrett](#) (unopposed)

Ward 6: [Marianne LaBarge](#) (unopposed)

Ward 7: [Rachel Maiore](#) (unopposed)

Four-way race for two at-large seats (at-large candidate responses are [here](#)):

- Marissa Elkins
- Jamila Gore
- David Murphy
- Michael Quinlan

The Questions

1. What does it mean to you to work for racial equity here in Northampton? What will Northampton look like once racial equity is a reality?
2. Talk about how, if elected, you would bring a racial equity lens to a specific local issue.
3. What are your thoughts and intentions with regard to policing in Northampton? What, if anything, should change and how?
4. Talk about a learning experience in your personal or professional life that was important to your understanding of systemic racism and white supremacy.

RESPONSE FROM EMILY “LEMY” COFFIN

1. What does it mean to you to work for racial equity here in Northampton? What will Northampton look like once racial equity is a reality?

It is hard to imagine arriving at something as big of a project as racial equity, especially in Northampton. I have been working for racial justice in Northampton as long as I have lived here, working in groups like Western Mass Showing Up for Racial Justice and more recently in helping imagine the Department of Community Care. My community projects have always been centered around racial justice because I know that working towards racial justice lifts up everyone in the community.

For me, working for racial justice and equity in Northampton looks like creating lasting and sustainable practices and policies within the local government. It looks like governing practices that support bold and ongoing challenges of systemic racism, and working with folks in the city government to think about really shifting power structures to uplift the voices and wisdom of Black and Indigenous people.

2. Talk about how, if elected, you would bring a racial equity lens to a specific local issue.

In government, there are often metrics used to determine the efficacy or impacts of any given project (for example, an environmental impact study). I would like to develop tangible tools for city councilors and the local government to really use to actually apply a racial equity lens to many, if not all issues, that come through city hall. This could be in the form of rubrics and other metrics to really create strong assessment tools regarding whether specific projects really live up to our values regarding racial justice. Creating accountability is hard work--for example in thinking about the recent project of the Resilience Hub. The imaging of that project included one survey for unhoused folks at the very beginning, and throughout creating the report for the project it is unclear how they were accountable to unhoused folks every step of the way. With any project in Northampton, I would find ways to really hone in on what pieces of the project need direct input and what pieces of the project local officials can move forward on in order to get things off the ground. This takes a sharp lens of racial and social justice, and I believe we need to integrate that further into the functioning of the city.

3. What are your thoughts and intentions with regard to policing in Northampton? What, if anything, should change and how?

At the end of the day, I do not believe punishment or policing solves social problems. And the data backs that up.

To use the words of Mariame Kaba, my thoughts and intentions around policing in Northampton revolve around establishing and investing in “life-giving institutions”. I have dedicated hundreds of hours to commission meetings, engaging with city leaders and community members alike, and researching innovative and progressive approaches to public safety. All this was done with one goal in mind: what life-giving institution(s) could we make happen right here in our city? I believe one solution is the Department of Community Care, on which many residents in our community, as well as the Northampton Police Review Commission members, have been working. It is crucial that we look at data-driven underpinnings of what creates instability and violence in our community--and the data is clear that when we fund social welfare programs and community-based support it increases safety for everyone in our community.

What needs to change is that our community members need to come together to ask big questions about not only community safety but community care. I have been and will continue to work to secure funding for all sorts of life-giving institutions, including schools, green infrastructure, participatory government, childcare programs, peer-led crisis response and more.

4. Talk about a learning experience in your personal or professional life that was important to your understanding of systemic racism and white supremacy.

It is hard to highlight just one experience, because they happen every day.

When I was a young person, I began my work in political organizing through advocating for queer youth in schools. I started a GSA at my school, and at the height of the prop 8 debate in California, I really had marriage equality on my mind. As I progressed through the school system as a white gender non-conforming queer young person, I became more and more aware of the ways schools were unsafe for me.

In my predominately white suburban neighborhood safe schools definitely posed a risk and was contributing to the suicide epidemic of queer young people. Then I got more involved with working for safer schools for queer youth across the state. I quickly learned that unsafe schools for queer youth of color meant young people were being plucked from the school and entering the school to prison pipeline--a much different reality than I had previously imagined. I had mentors of color walk me through this and support me in joining in the fight for making schools safer for ALL queer young people, which oftentimes meant putting aside what I thought was correct or "the right fight" to join.

This meant advocating for better dress code policies that were contributing to the criminalization of queer youth of color, and really diving into the intersection of queer struggles and struggles of BIPOC students. This meant working to incorporate anti-racism into my GSA, and make sure our members thought the realities of racism as much as we thought about the realities of homophobia and transphobia in our club. This meant navigating my own oppression at the same time as navigating my power and privilege--and working time and time again to not let coming to terms with my oppression as a young gender non-conforming person get in the way of coming to terms with my power and privilege as a white person.

Since then, this happens time and time again. I am always peeling back more layers of the way white supremacy takes me away from the goal of racial justice regularly. I see white supremacy every day, so every day it's my job to resist white supremacy every day--in my job, in my community, and in my relationships.

RESPONSE FROM STANLEY MOULTON

1. What does it mean to you to work for racial equity here in Northampton? What will Northampton look like once racial equity is a reality?

Racial equity must not be compartmentalized to be used as a tool of convenience. Rather, it must be a lens through which all community leaders view their decisions affecting inclusiveness, development of policies, advancement of programs, hiring of personnel and allocation of money. That requires recognizing existing inequities and an awareness of how their actions will intentionally remove barriers to equity, or, conversely, have unintentional consequences worsening inequities.

Racial equity will be achieved when the faces of the community's leaders, decision-makers (including members of advisory committees and task forces) and government staff (including in the schools) reflect the demographics of Northampton; and all barriers have been removed so that race is no longer a predictor for access to income, housing, food, safety, education, health, transportation, recreation and other factors that contribute to a good quality of life.

2. Talk about how, if elected, you would bring a racial equity lens to a specific local issue.

The response to climate change and racial equity must be interconnected. I believe the Northampton Climate Resilience & Regeneration Plan must prioritize assessment of how specific actions to achieve the city's goal of becoming a net carbon-neutral city by 2050 will impact communities of color that already are disproportionately affected by climate change due to higher rates of respiratory diseases and greater exposure to unhealthy environments in housing and workplaces, and outdoors in heat islands.

The city must ensure that increasing energy efficiency in buildings, which likely will increase property values, does not decrease affordable housing. Communities of color often do not have the resources to make the initial capital investment in renewable energy such as solar panels. One possible solution is for the city to partner with a non-profit to provide low-interest loans for solar installation. Reduced use of fossil fuels assumes access to public transportation and/or ride-sharing programs such as ValleyBike – but those services are not equitably available to all. These are just a few examples of how racial equity must be an integral part of evaluating all steps the city takes to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

3. What are your thoughts and intentions with regard to policing in Northampton? What, if anything, should change and how?

The Northampton Policing Review Commission 2021 report “Reimagining Safety” includes testimony from community members who reported feeling unsafe with police response they experienced. Northampton should accept nothing less than 100 percent satisfaction with the response by a range of public safety providers.

I support a fully resourced Department of Community Care with adequate money and staff to operate 24 hours a day and provide unarmed civilian response to a variety of calls now handled by police, including mental health and substance abuse crises. I agree with the Policing Review Commission's recommendation that the department's staff should include peer responders who are trained in deescalation and harm reduction and knowledgeable about referrals for community members in need of additional services outside of the criminal justice system.

The Department of Community Care should have the same status under the city's public safety umbrella as Emergency Dispatch, Fire/Rescue and Police.

4. Talk about a learning experience in your personal or professional life that was important to your understanding of systemic racism and white supremacy.

The racial composition of the Charter Review Committee that I chaired in 2019 is evidence that the city must work harder to overcome the effects of institutional racism by eliminating barriers to engaging underserved communities, including people of color, in their government. The Charter Review Committee, composed of eight white people and one mixed-race person, confronted difficult and, at times, uncomfortable questions about how to apply racial equity to our own work.

We moved the committee's final hearing out of City Hall to the Jackson Street School, a more welcoming place for people who are not usually engaged in municipal government, and worked with the Pioneer Valley Workers Center to encourage participation by members of underserved communities, including people of color. Their compelling testimony led to one of the committee's key recommendations – extending voting rights in municipal elections to resident non-citizens.

In its final report, the committee emphasized further work the city must do to affirm its commitment to racial equity, and pointed to the “Re-Energizing Democracy” report compiled in 2016 by the Northampton Department of Planning & Sustainability that identified barriers to diversity in municipal government. Our report reads in part: “We encourage city officials to consider remedies to these barriers including arranging meetings in neighborhoods convenient to members of under-represented communities; providing translation services; and considering incentives to encourage diversity in municipal government such as a tiered system of stipends based on financial need.”

RESPONSE FROM KAREN FOSTER

1. What does it mean to you to work for racial equity here in Northampton? What will Northampton look like once racial equity is a reality?

Working toward racial equity in Northampton will mean looking with a critical eye toward our institutions to recognize where our institutions are upholding inequities and then working toward change, even when that change causes discomfort. We need to actively change our power structures so that people of color are not merely at the table but are actively engaged at every level of decision-making in our city. For a concrete recent example, the Northampton Policing Review Commission was created with a power structure that ensured that people who have most been harmed by policing would have a powerful voice in recommending change. I had recommended, but it was not a part of the final plan, stipends for a specific number of members who would serve in order to promote service from people whose financial obligations would prevent them from being able to commit to such a significant volunteer commitment. Moving forward, we should be tracking the racial and socioeconomic composition of our city boards and commissions so that we know where our gaps are and can begin to target outreach about serving on boards and commissions among those who are underrepresented. We can offer stipends for serving on a board or commission to people who are low income and we can lobby the state to allow for remote participation in public meetings permanently, opening the door to service to those with caregiving responsibilities at home or transportation barriers to serving.

When racial equity is a reality, there will be people of color in positions of power throughout our schools, business community, and municipal government. Our neighborhoods will reflect the racial composition of the city. Students of color in our schools will thrive. Our public safety system will serve every member of our community with an appropriate and supportive response to the reason for the call.

2. Talk about how, if elected, you would bring a racial equity lens to a specific local issue.

Ward 2 is the future home to 3 affordable housing projects in various stages of completion, from near-completion to an early vision. One 53 unit affordable and attainable housing project at Village Hill has anticipated occupancy by winter. Another project, around 20 units, is in the very early planning stages for Laurel St. Finally, City Council will be reviewing in the near future a proposed zoning and land use change for an empty lot that is municipally owned on Chapel St. that would be the first step for the City to move forward with affordable housing in that location.

I am particularly excited about welcoming these three projects to this corner of Northampton for many reasons. The neighborhoods have access to public transportation as well as good pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. Each pocket where housing is proposed has either abutting green space or is very close to beautiful green space. I have worked to build relationships with the developers, communicate with residents already living in the neighborhoods, and to stand in support of bringing more affordable housing to Northampton. These neighborhoods are largely, but not exclusively, populated by homeowners who have benefitted from generational wealth built through land and home ownership. It has been very important to me to recognize as a councilor how so many people who are not white have been excluded from our community due to the costs of both rental housing and home ownership. Supporting these projects, which will provide highly sought-after affordable housing in Northampton is one way to help make Northampton accessible to individuals and families of color who do not come from generational wealth.

It is important to recognize that supporting affordable housing is just one small piece of a much larger puzzle regarding equity and housing. This past year we amended our city's zoning ordinance to effectively eliminate single family zoning and to allow 2-family by right construction throughout the city. I'm currently working with members of the Youth Commission and a colleague to take a deeper dive into our zoning to see if there are additional changes we can make to promote even greater equity through our zoning ordinances. I would also love to explore or support a reparations fund to provide housing down payment assistance to future homeowners of color as a way to support home ownership among a more diverse population in Northampton who do not have generational wealth to draw from for a down payment.

3. What are your thoughts and intentions with regard to policing in Northampton? What, if anything, should change and how?

The community conversations we have been having regarding policing since the spring of 2020 have been deeply moving, powerful, and are leading to meaningful progress. I have spent many hours and many conversations educating myself about this issue and hearing constituents' perspectives. I fully support the formation of the proposed Department of Community Care. I advocated for the Department to be a municipal department rather than a set of contracted services, which was a strong recommendation from the Northampton Policing Review Commission. I advocated for the new department to be a municipal department so that staff would have access to a pay scale and benefits along with community support that would support career-track positions, which will hopefully lead to lower turnover among staff and a higher probability for success than services provided through a contract with likely lower pay and higher turnover.

The drawback of the department being a part of the municipal government is that the wheels of government turn slowly. I heard the urgency of the calls for change in how we handle issues such as homelessness, addiction, and mental health, and I recognize that the slow start-up of the department has caused disillusionment among many of those who were calling for change. It is possible that contracted services would have been able to ramp up more quickly; however, it has always been my goal to support meaningful and lasting change that has broad community support. I believe we are heading in the right direction. In 2020 as I talked with constituents, very few people had ever considered the need for an alternative to policing in Northampton. By the 2021 budget hearing, not only have I heard near unanimous support for a Department of Community Care from constituents but this new department is now codified into our city's budget.

There is a concern I have heard expressed by some who are interacting most closely with those with lived experience with homelessness, addiction, and mental health issues that there is a need to recognize the strengths that Chief Kasper and the Northampton Police Department bring to their roles and their push for change in a system that has racial injustice at its core. I too value Chief Kasper and NPD's work toward progress, though I recognize the system itself is not set up to meet the needs of the most vulnerable members of our community. I look forward to continued community conversations about our values and our commitment to each other in our community as we work to lay the groundwork for and to grow a model for alternatives to policing in Northampton so that we grow a public safety system that feels safe to all members of our community. To me, progress in public safety would include a prominent role for a Department of Community Care and, over time, a reduced reliance on policing for matters that do not need to be criminalized.

4. Talk about a learning experience in your personal or professional life that was important to your understanding of systemic racism and white supremacy.

A close college friend of mine was of Japanese descent and talked with me at length about the impact the Japanese internment during World War 2 had on her family. I was a history major, and our friendship led to me writing my thesis about the treatment of "Enemy Aliens" during World War 2 - immigrants and their families of Italian, German, and Japanese descent. I spent a year and a half researching the confluence of the national fear toward the Japanese following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the policies of FDR's presidency, and the failures of the Justice Department that led to the World War 2 internment of many first generation Italian and German immigrants as well as all Japanese immigrants and their descendants who had as little as 1/16 Japanese ancestry. My research brought me through racialized propaganda, the racist history of our immigration laws, and our shameful treatment of the "other" throughout history. It was formative to my understanding of generational trauma, an important key to understanding racism as a public health issue today.

RESPONSE FROM DAVID KRIS

1. What does it mean to you to work for racial equity here in Northampton? What will Northampton look like once racial equity is a reality?

To work towards racial justice in our local context means two things. One it means having a city government that is responsive and truly engages with the issue of racism. And does more than just pay lip service but actually implements policies that are advocated for by BL-POC folks. It's not enough to not be racist we must actively be anti-racist. We must also look at how the interlocking structures of race, class, gender come together to create inequalities. Second I think White folks in Northampton have to continue to learn and listen more. And I say this as a White person that no matter how much we think we know now there's still more to learn and to understand.

Northampton when justice is achieved Northampton will be a city in which folks feel safe to drive and walk around. Our great cultural and green spaces will be open to everyone, folks won't feel like they don't belong. When we get justice I think we won't see folks living in the streets or on the bike path.

2. Talk about how, if elected, you would bring a racial equity lens to a specific local issue.

An issue that I would bring a racial justice lens to would be access to housing. What this would like would be addressing the structural barriers that currently exist in housing. Number one being the sheer cost of renting an apartment in the city on a month to month basis Making rules and lease agreements easily accessible and available to non-English speakers. The upfront costs involved in renting an apartment in the city. And finally work with the Mayor and the appropriate people to improve transportation for folk to get to and from their places of employment. All of these factors contribute to racial disparities in housing in the city of Northampton

3. What are your thoughts and intentions with regard to policing in Northampton? What, if anything, should change and how?

I believe in a fundamental different approach to police. I'm a strong believer in the department of community care. I think it should have greater funding and be accountable to the community. Our community should strive for restorative justice programs as I believe that too often in Northampton and across the country the solution to nearly every problem is more police and more punishment. In reality the root cause for things like petty crime are a lack of material conditions such as affordable housing, job opportunities, or jobs that pay a livable wage, public transportation and education. And many things such as addiction or mental illness are criminalized when it ought to be treated like a matter of public health. I'd rather see Northampton work to invest and pass ordinances that would address these conditions than rather use the police as a catch all for everything in our community

4. Talk about a learning experience in your personal or professional life that was important to your understanding of systemic racism and white supremacy.

Prior to last summer I had always thought of myself as not a racist. I always tried to treat everyone with respect, understood and supported Black Lives Matter on a surface level. But after attending numerous rallies and marches throughout Western Mass and D.C. I did

something I hadn't done before which was truly listen and engage to BI-POC speakers and leadership and what they were saying. And the take away I had from listening was it's not enough to not be racist you have to be anti-racist and as a white person you have to be willing and able to challenge racism directly at your place of work, at your home and at your school. And the hardest part is you have to look yourself and see how your actions or inactions contribute to White supremacy. The other key takeaway was that if you believe Black Lives Matter as a White person you have to do more than just put a sign in the front of your house or chant slogans, you have to support and work towards policies that improve Black Lives. As a White person you have to do the work.

RESPONSE FROM JAMES NASH

1. What does it mean to you to work for racial equity here in Northampton? What will Northampton look like once racial equity is a reality?

First of all, let me say I appreciate that an organization like REAL has been created within our school community and for the opportunity to address these questions.

Racism is baked into us all; it was part of the original recipe for this nation. Racism made it culturally acceptable to displace Native Americans while importing enslaved people from Africa to perform forced labor. While our nation has evolved and improved, Racism continues to be ever present in our daily bread in harmful and deadly ways. We still have a country of haves and have nots largely defined by the same American color line, where Black, Latinx, Asian, and Native Americans are imperiled by wholly different systems of education, housing, healthcare, public safety, and justice, to name a few. The only way to effectively address this systematic racism is with great intentionality, which is what REAL is doing in our schools.

For me, working for racial equity in Northampton has meant further educating myself about the generational impacts of systemic racism, examining our city policies and protocols to see how they reinforce, even if unintentionally, structural racism. In addition to educating myself, as a white man, I feel it is important for me to do more listening than talking.

My career in Human Services has taught me that a way forward is through building relationships and creating community. Prior to becoming a city councilor I was a vocal supporter of the Lumberyard mixed use housing development and I welcomed the idea of greater diversity, and families with new energy and ideas joining us as neighbors. Once elected I worked to establish the Walking School Bus route from the Lumberyard where children in the neighborhood are safely shepherded to school by community volunteers. The smiles and good wishes shared by children, parents, and volunteers is a great way to start any day.

Now don't get me wrong, I believe social change happens by adopting policies and laws that protect marginalized groups -- but I also think it happens within the context of personal relationships and community building. I believe that by intentionally building efforts like this, we can work to set our ingrained stereotypes aside to better know each other. I see my role as city councilor as not just a legislator, but as a community leader to see that positive change happens.

In answer to your second question, when racial equity is a reality in Northampton, we will be a city that is more racially diverse, where it won't be remarkable to have people of color on all of our city boards, in many of our top-level city jobs and as owners of our businesses. It will be both what people are accustomed to and what people expect.

2. Talk about how, if elected, you would bring a racial equity lens to a specific local issue.

Recently, I worked as a member of the ordinance review committee where we intentionally added a social justice lens to our work to see if there were ways our ordinances negatively impacted racial equity. Are there policies that have unintended consequences? Our work made me consider the intersectionality and the ways certain policies wind up targeting people who are in marginalized groups more than people in dominant or privileged groups where the initial fee or fine starts a domino effect of consequences.

One outcome of Ordinance Review had to do with eviction notification and ensuring that tenants receive proper notice from landlords when they are about to be evicted while also sharing information about services to prevent eviction. Councilor Thorpe and I have been tasked by City Council to explore what other cities and towns are doing around eviction notification while also keeping in mind the legal limitations around what a municipality can require of a landlord. Our Office of Planning and Sustainability has been very helpful in our work and we are looking now towards an upstream solution where tenants and landlords are made aware of housing security information and services prior to the crisis of an eviction.

3. What are your thoughts and intentions with regard to policing in Northampton? What, if anything, should change and how?

I supported the creation of the Policing Review Commission, attended its public forums, and I support all fourteen recommendations. I also think we can't cherry pick which recommendations to implement – we need to implement all of them. We need to provide a wider range of emergency response to people in the city, with more options when an emergency is called in. We need the resilience hub. Over the last year I looked into models in cities like Ithaca, Eugene and Toronto, where they too were looking at new ways to provide emergency services with a mental health component. Those models are innovative – but I actually think what Northampton is doing now is even more innovative and more committed to change: The Department of Community Care working in concert with the Resilience Hub will address needs police never should have been expected to meet. We are also dedicating a larger portion of our financial resources than other cities to these new efforts. Thankfully, the commonwealth is also on board with assisting us in these innovations.

4. Talk about a learning experience in your personal or professional life that was important to your understanding of systemic racism and white supremacy.

As a white man raised in predominantly white communities, it's my responsibility to consciously educate myself about the impact of systemic racism and white supremacy. To this end, I have read books such as "The new Jim Crow" and I attended D.E.I. trainings through my job and a board I serve on. I have especially valued the insight of my adult children, their friends, as well as my many nieces, nephews, and godchildren who are active in the movement against systemic racism. The conversions have been deep and meaningful. I am also more deliberately engaging with friends and acquaintances who are people of color about issues of race. We are living in a time where we have the chance to engage and evolve, and I am not shying away from this opportunity.

RESPONSE FROM JESSE HASSINGER

1. What does it mean to you to work for racial equity here in Northampton? What will Northampton look like once racial equity is a reality?

I feel that the most important thing about working for racial equity in Northampton is to first get an understanding that white supremacy is something that we all participate in on a daily basis just by doing nothing. The US government, and by extension our city government, was built expressly to protect white landowners and, at various times throughout the past 400+ years, anyone seen as an "outsider" to that caste was violently excluded. Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples have always been excluded and continue to be the main groups that are refused access to the most basic rights within local and federal government. This approach to Othering to support white supremacy began long before the arrival of the first slave ships in 1619; it began when the first colonial settlers landed on the shores of what would become North America. Eurocentric colonizer-settlers were the beginnings of racial exclusion on these shores. Without that basis of understanding there is no forward movement towards equity. Personal reckoning about one's own ancestry must happen before white people can begin to actually work towards equity that isn't just empty gestures. I engage in this, personally, every day. The identifying, calling out, and discussing how systematic white supremacy works is the only way that we can hope to expose it, dismantle it, and replace it with something that can work for racial equity. I am currently involved in this process with a multi-racial group on the Arts Council and I will be bringing these things farther into city government to continue this work at a level that can continue to expose, and work to change, more of the racist structures that are inherent in daily life.

My vision of a city that has realistic racial equity would be one where carceral systems are not the go-to for every minor infraction that happens. We will not jail people for sleeping in Pulaski Park; we will not incarcerate people who cannot afford housing because of a racist and economic exclusionary system; we will not forcibly institutionalize people because of a difficult mental situation; we will not intimidate or violently oppose people for peaceably assembling; and we will not be imposing laws that inadvertently or explicitly target people with economic sanctions that force them to lose their jobs, their housing, and/or their freedom. Instead we will be investing in building up communities to have voice in our process of governing and creating a system of justice that is transformative.

2. Talk about how, if elected, you would bring a racial equity lens to a specific local issue.

In the larger scale, by bringing in a continual dialogue around what it means to be governing a city on land that has been seized, expropriated, and stolen from Indigenous peoples through force and violence, how our ancestors were complicit in that, and how we, ourselves, are complicit in the erasure of Indigenous cultures by not actively pursuing our own role. We can then extend this same complicity and accountability to the treatment of non-white landowners. A dialogue and public reckoning within city government is crucial and with every ordinance, conversation, debate, or discussion in city council the questions of how will our underrepresented and historically unrecognized communities be affected by our choices as a predominately white council must be raised. I recognize my privilege being a cisgendered white man, and that it is my responsibility to be asking these difficult questions while being guided by the voices of BIPOC and economically insecure communities, and persons with disabilities as to their needs and preferences.

More specifically we can take the local issue of traffic stops, for which our city is notorious for using racial profiling tactics. I believe that traffic stops should not be under the jurisdiction of the police department and that there should not be financial penalties for them. The very act of being stopped by the police can be a traumatic experience, even more so for people who have to ask themselves if a traffic stop will lead to jail time, assault, or the possibility of death - all of which we have seen all too often across this country. Beyond the act, however, is the financial hardship that can occur. When racially profiling during traffic stops, one element that goes hand-in-hand in this country is the truth that the economic situation of many people who get pulled over by police can be tenuous, and that a \$150 ticket for an infraction could be the difference between paying rent or not; which then begins the cycle of becoming financially indentured to the state with additional fines, court appearances, property seizures, and incarceration all distinct possibilities for people who cannot pay that ticket. This is a prime example of a law created on the surface to ensure safe driving, but at its heart it is either passively racist because it doesn't account for situations where people are in economic straits, or explicitly racist because it attempts to eliminate drivers who cannot otherwise afford these tickets. The enforcement of this law, however, is most certainly racist when we see that traffic stops of BIPOC individuals is significantly greater than their share of the population.

3. What are your thoughts and intentions with regard to policing in Northampton? What, if anything, should change and how?

I am in full support of investing in community by fully funding and ensuring that the Community Care Department, that is in the process of being created, exists outside of the carceral system so that the communities that it will serve will not be affected by the inherently violent presence of police to emergency calls that they are not, nor should be, trained for like mental health issues, wellness checks, and the like. By removing these tasks from the police department and making sure that they are not involved in the Community Care Department, we can begin to rectify some of the wrongs that have plagued this aspect of emergency assistance for decades. It is imperative to closely monitor what should be addressed by police and what should be addressed by the Community Care Dept to make sure that this separation remains and try to ensure that what the police do handle and how they interact with the community is held accountable and that their methods are transparent. At the core the city's police department is over weaponized and overstaffed and we need to recenter our priorities on helping build up education systems, healthcare systems, and community aid to a level where crime and drug use are not needed to escape from the confines of a system that universally oppresses those below a certain wealth level.

4. Talk about a learning experience in your personal or professional life that was important to your understanding of systemic racism and white supremacy.

Even though I grew up in a household where my parents had participated in the Civil Rights Movement and continued to stand for progressive ideals, I also grew up with privilege that shielded me from seeing many of the negative situations that the BIPOC community have to deal with on a daily basis. I found myself empathetic with situations and ideas around anti-racist beliefs, but also realized that for many years there wasn't much that affected me directly. Even the anti-Semitic acts that occurred in Central New York where I grew up were at an arms-length for my day-to-day life. I knew of the existence of issues around racist violence, police violence against BIPOC communities, appropriation and whitewashing of cultures, and I knew that these issues originated with the government and the police state, but it wasn't until the death of Trayvon Martin that I really started to delve deep into what systematic white supremacy really was and meant. I began to pay closer attention to the issues surrounding the systematic and

attempted total oppression of non-white people and as technology emerged so that the lies and cover-ups around the "justifiable" homicides enacted by the police were exposed my want to understand and figure out how to change the system delved deeper. I not only continued my appreciation of the culture of these communities, but I began to understand how allyship can often be a balm for white people and rarely does it lead to any meaningful change. I wanted to go beyond allyship to become an accomplice; to go beyond reading and listening to physically being active in dismantling racist institutions. Since the pandemic began and city council meetings moved to Zoom, it has become painfully obvious that there isn't this inward assessment of accountability. This was made explicit when the FY2022 budget was passed with an 8-1 vote without pushing back on the mayor as to his blatant underfunding of the Community Care Department and approving the police department's budget increase while there were still hundreds of people and hundreds of hours spent recounting personal stories, factual data, and eight months of results from the Policing Review Commission to show that the creation of this department would need around \$1 million instead of the \$440,000 that the budget allocated. This is not accountability and this makes the pretty words that were written after the public lynching of George Floyd meaningless, and worse, offensive. I felt that because of my own personal drive to try and expose white supremacy, account for it, and work to change it, that my presence on city council, taking the lead from the communities that I will be actively involved in supporting, listening to, and uplifting, could significantly jumpstart that process.

RESPONSE FROM GARRICK PERRY

1. What does it mean to you to work for racial equity here in Northampton? What will Northampton look like once racial equity is a reality?

For me, working for racial equity is a daily struggle and ultimately a community effort. I believe that there isn't just one path to achieve the goal of racial equity. This work takes place not only in the policies we enact but also in small everyday interactions within our community. Knowing the history of America and our institutions, it is hard for me to imagine racial equity as a reality. This isn't to say that I am not hopeful that one day we might be able to achieve racial equity, it is just to note the fact that it is a long, arduous journey that began well before me and will continue until after I am gone. In the face of such a momentous task I believe our elected officials have a duty to examine current laws and institutions with an eye towards correcting inequality. This will often not be an easy task but it is one that will help bring us a few steps closer to our goals of true racial equity. As a black male raising two biracial children in Northampton, working towards racial equity is a very personal issue and I hope my perspective helps move this work forward.

2. Talk about how, if elected, you would bring a racial equity lens to a specific local issue.

With my background, I believe I will bring a racial equity lens to every local issue that I deal with. Recently I was approached concerning reparations in Northampton. During discussions, we talked about the lack of a core African American community in Northampton. I would like to look at ways to not only entice new minority businesses but to also retain some of the minority population that comes to our area for education, internships and relocation. There is a lack of spaces designed to serve our minority populations. I believe we can bring in businesses that cater to our diverse population and their needs. We need black hairdressers and barber shops, we need more places for minorities to gather and more opportunities to build and connect. With my background as an entertainer and as someone who has managed a local community based venue I understand the importance of having places that feel safe and inviting. Over the years I have revelled in my role as an impromptu "nighttime ambassador". I have loved meeting countless minorities who are visiting or new to this city and watching their eyes light up when they see a person of color running the establishment. I enjoy giving the rundown on which restaurants to visit, where to see live music and connecting folks. However it often pains me when I realize that many of these spaces exist outside of our city. I adore the spaces and businesses we share with our neighboring cities but I believe that Northampton can do a better job at servicing the needs of all our population.

3. What are your thoughts and intentions with regard to policing in Northampton? What, if anything, should change and how?

I know that policing in America is fundamentally flawed but here in Northampton we have an excellent opportunity to reimagine how policing works. I believe in the formation of a Department of Community Care that is given the resources it needs to succeed. I also believe that we have to reevaluate the way in which police interact with our population with a focus on community development and positive interactions. I would love to see unarmed foot patrols with the Police Department checking in on our local businesses and community members and seeing if they need actual assistance (e.g., snow removal, directions, etc.). I believe that the Department of Community Care and the Northampton Police Department must work hand in hand to reimagine law enforcement. For instance I would love to see unarmed officers training and riding alongside members of the Department of Community Care. Our city is at a great crossroads in terms of

policing and I believe that with effective leadership, funding, communication and cooperation, Northampton can be at the forefront of true change.

4. Talk about a learning experience in your personal or professional life that was important to your understanding of systemic racism and white supremacy.

Honestly, as a black male in America my entire life has been a lesson in understanding systemic racism. I grew up living in majority black and minority neighborhoods yet going to school at private institutions that were predominately white. My single mother worked multiple jobs to make sure that my intelligence and creativity wasn't quashed by my surroundings. The majority of my life I have been aware of the large divide between races.

As a touring musician, I have had the pleasure of travelling and getting glimpses of countless small towns and large cities. The Alchemystics have always been a diverse group of musicians and are quite the sight to behold in some places. (Imagine rolling into West Virginia with an African American elder rasta, a heavily tattooed roadie, a few caucasians with dreads, a rambunctious rap dad like myself, and the rest of our motley crew.) As the months led up to the 2016 election I noticed a shift on the road. Some rest stops seemed a bit less friendly, the once harmless stares seemed a bit harsher, and you could feel a tension in the air. Then came the signs, little red markers that warned you of what kind of area you were entering. This all culminated one day when we were loading into a venue in Manchester, New Hampshire. As we carried gear into the establishment, a car load of people began yelling racial epithets at myself and my drummer, who is also African American. I have played countless shows in NH over the years and have played in Manchester dozens of times, but this was the first time I was ever called the "n word" in broad daylight. In that moment I was reminded how deeply racism is embedded in our society and how much work still needs to be done to address this.

RESPONSE FROM ALEX JARRETT

Thank you REAL Northampton for asking us these questions. I will start by sharing my experience working on the Northampton Policing Review Commission.

The Commission began with a majority BIPOC (Black, indigenous, people of color) membership. We had to navigate not only what we were trying to accomplish, but also how we would run our meetings and how we would listen to the community. We ran up against the structural issues of a lack of financial support for our members and the time commitment required. Three of the members who are parents and women of color resigned in the first few months.

We held many public forums and I received direct comments from constituents relating their personal stories. I saw how policing impacts people differently based on race, social class, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental health status and other factors. I'm pleased with the report we generated and am excited to see some of the first recommendations come to life in the form of the new Community Care Department to provide an alternative emergency crisis response. I support the report's recommendations to reduce the scope of policing, and prioritize supporting people to reduce the need for policing.

Coming out of this experience of listening and learning, I believe we need to figure out how to increase public engagement, especially among BIPOC residents, through more outreach to constituents, support for civic engagement through grants and reimbursement for expenses like childcare and transportation, and continued access to city meetings through virtual platforms even when COVID precautions aren't needed.

I don't know what complete racial equity would be for Northampton, but I know the process for getting there will involve structural change on a local, regional and national level to undo the centuries of inequity in housing and zoning, education, public safety, transportation and other issues that got us here. It will include reparations, a topic I would like our community to take on, and elevating the voices of BIPOC members of our community.

I know I will need more help to reach out to my constituents and am looking for community engagement volunteers to help me and other elected officials reach underrepresented groups. And I welcome feedback and ideas about how to work toward racial equity. Please reach out!

REAL HAS NOT YET RECEIVED A RESPONSE FROM MARIANNE LABARGE.

RESPONSE FROM RACHEL MAIORE

1. What does it mean to you to work for racial equity here in Northampton? What will Northampton look like once racial equity is a reality?

Working for racial equity means, as a white ally, integrating our racial-equity lens into every aspect of our lives; in every personal and professional interaction, in each juncture where formative decisions are made; not tacking it on as an afterthought.

Working for racial equity for me means recognizing- and getting others to recognize- when the culture of white supremacy is at work. It's asking questions like, what voices are being heard in the room? Which ones are being elevated? Which ones are being shut down? Who is not in the room? What does the room look like? Does it invite underrepresented demographics like people of color, women, low-income, and young people to participate?

It starts with noticing and then sitting with the discomfort of the answers, not avoiding or running away from it, as white privilege allows. Then the work that is needed to pave a path forward towards great racial and social equity becomes clear.

I believe it is for people of color, not for me as a white person, to describe what racial equity would look like as a reality in Northampton.

2. Talk about how, if elected, you would bring a racial equity lens to a specific local issue.

I serve on the Council Committee for City Services where we appoint residents to committees, boards and commissions. We are very interested in trying to make the process more equitable and want to find ways to encourage more engagement from underrepresented community members.

There are almost always vacant seats on committees and I know from my work on the Human Rights Commission what a big difference each member can make in terms of the scope and speed of moving projects forward.

Councilor Foster and I became particularly interested in how to engage residents from under-represented communities more in both our boards and committees as well as how we can encourage more representative participation in city meetings and events. To that end we have been working with the Collaborative for Educational Services around their exciting new grant, "Redesigning Power Structures", which will look at just that. The grant will go to supporting more representative grassroots leadership in our communities and helping organizations, including municipal government boards, committees and councils, to transform their culture to encourage new voices. This could include providing stipends to support these new voices serving in city government as well studying structural and policy changes to help usher them in.

3. What are your thoughts and intentions with regard to policing in Northampton? What, if anything, should change and how?

Northampton is on the right track with the establishment of a Department of Community Care, and the goal of a mental health crisis team to be housed in it to provide more support for those in crisis while also reducing the odds of negative experiences and further trauma.

The conversation, however, should not stop here. From simple animal control calls, to complex domestic violence situations, we need to consider at every juncture in which our police force interacts with community members. What does that interaction look like? What are the positive and negative outcomes? Is there a civilian entity that could better serve the needs of our community while lessening the chances of traumatic interactions?

A specific next step that was recommended by the Policing Review Commission is to review the NPD's minor traffic stops, and explore alternatives to armed police for them, as traffic stops are statistically fraught with the peril of escalation, particularly and disproportionately for black people and people of color.

4. Talk about a learning experience in your personal or professional life that was important to your understanding of systemic racism and white supremacy.

I have informal and more formal experiences I'd like to share.

As Director of the Valley Women's March during the Trump years we were successful in organizing and mobilizing so many women, gender-oppressed people and allies. But there came a time a couple of years in where we had to say no to 'urgency', and learn how to better share our power and resources. We asked hard questions about how we were growing and who we were including in all these great efforts. That is when we made the decision to do the time intensive work of relationship building and partnering across our region.

It was a wonderful, empowering experience getting to know our regional neighbors and building our new, more racially and economically diverse feminist and anti-racist network. We were truly living our values. We moved the annual March to Springfield with the intention of rotating it around the region until the Pandemic hit. After some of our members who are Native American pointed out the painful history and trigger the word 'pioneer' brings up we changed the name of the organization from the Pioneer Valley Women's March to the Valley Women's March. I am proud of our accomplishments and growth and if we had started with a proactively inclusive structure we would have never encountered issues such as the problematic naming!

Over my 30 years of activism, I had attended scores of anti-racism trainings, but never from the perspective of being a white woman. 'Finding Freedom: White Women Taking On Our Own White Supremacy' was the transformative weekend training for me. Unpacking the particular role of white women as both pawns and perpetrators of white supremacy culture was quite powerful. It enabled me to more viscerally feel how our liberation is bound together.

The weekend was full of attention to our self care. Kind; but also sent out an important message: that caring and valuing ourselves is liberational and critical to caring and valuing others. It disrupts the sham-based conditional valuing that is inherent in white supremacy culture, because we all ultimately all lose out from the disconnect that racism and white supremacy bring.

The trainings are still going on and are online: info@wearefindingfreedom.org