

# Trayon White Responses

## DC for Democracy Questionnaire for 2016 Democratic Primary

Please answer the following questions, which will help our members in making their endorsement decision. Responses should be sent to [dcfordemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:dcfordemocracy@gmail.com) no later than Friday, April 8, and will be published online shortly after that.

1. Bills now before the DC Council are intended to reduce the influence of big money donors through several approaches:

- banning corporate campaign contributions,
- keeping donors who make very large contributions from getting government contracts and special tax breaks, and
- providing for public financing of political campaigns through a system that matches small donations, similar to what it used in New York City.

Where do you stand on each of these approaches?

We need all three approaches.

**Corporate contributions** can lead to corruption. Furthermore, they undermine public confidence in Government because of the apparent, if not real, conflict of interest that occurs when elected officials cater to corporate interests instead of the public interest.

For example, for emergency, transitional family housing, Mayor Bowser has recently proposed contracts that would be windfalls to corporations that donated to her election. Some have argued that rewarding her corporate donors motivated Muriel Bowser's proposal.

Similarly, LLCs controlled by Mr. Phinis Jones have contributed extensively to Muriel Bowser and LaRuby May campaigns. Phinis Jones has been criticized for diverting public money that should have been used to repair publicly subsidized housing in Ward 8. Muriel Bowser and LaRuby May have been slow to hold Mr. Jones accountable — thus bringing into question whether they are acting in his interest or in the public interest.

For too long “**Pay to Play**” has dominated DC politics. Individuals who contribute large amounts to politicians (either personally or through corporations) end up with lucrative contracts and special tax breaks. I favor legislation that, in effect, says “If you pay, then you may not play.”

In other words large direct or indirect contributions would, for a certain period of time, preclude a person from being able to benefit from DC Government contracts or special DC tax breaks.

Although banning corporate contributions and “pay to play” will be helpful, I fear that these measures alone will not be sufficient to counter the power of monied interests. If public interests are to be served over monied interests, then it is the public who must pay for political campaigns, we need **public investment** in elections to counter money from the rich and powerful.

I favor a system of public financing that magnifies the voices of the people who will be voting to elect a candidate. This can be accomplished through a combination of block grants and matching contributions.

On the Council I will work to accomplish campaign finance reforms, and I will advocate for these reforms during my campaign.

2. Do you support the pending ballot initiative to gradually raise the DC minimum wage to \$15 by 2020, and to eliminate the difference between the tipped minimum wage and regular minimum wage by 2024? If not, please explain your reasons.

Yes. I am hopeful that this initiative will be on the November ballot; and I will urge my supporters to vote “Yes” for the DC15 initiative.

3. Child care on average costs \$21,000 a year for families. What would you do to ensure access for all families? Do you support universal child care?

Yes. Well-to-do families can afford high quality child care; less well-off families cannot. The DC Government should work to correct this injustice.

High quality care, itself, will benefit the children. Furthermore, the organizations that provide and oversee this care will have opportunities to help families obtain such “wrap-around services” as health care and nutrition education.

4. In recent years, DC has lost tens of thousands of units of affordable housing. Over the next few years, we are projected to lose thousands more. How many of these units should the DC government replace or preserve? What steps do you propose to replace and preserve that many units?

Neither current DC Government programs nor the ones Mayor Bowser proposed in her 2017 budget are sufficient to overcome the loss of affordable units. I favor a plan that assures that preserving/replacing all current affordable units plus an additional 20 percent — in order to replace affordable units that the DC has lost in recent years.

Accomplishing this objective requires a comprehensive approach:

First, we must to reform DC’s rent control law to eliminate loopholes and to assure that landlords have reasonable, but not absurdly high, returns on their investments.

Second, we must expand programs that help families stay in their homes. Short term government assistance to make a rent or mortgage payment, for example, could be less expensive than providing new housing a families who lost their homes.

Third, we must make it easier for DC residents with low incomes to purchase their own single family homes or condos or coops. This entails expanding the amounts available through the Home Purchase Assistance Program.

Fourth the Government must encourage the creation of more housing for low income residents. This means not only more

money for the Housing Production Trust Fund but also favorable treatment for Planned Unit Developments that include large numbers of housing units for people with low and very low incomes.

Finally, we should recognize that effective jobs programs and increases in the minimum wage will make it easier for some DC residents to afford market-rate housing.

5. What actions would you take to enhance public safety and reduce violent crime while reforming racialized policing that unfairly targets people of color?

To end violent crime, we must see the phenomenon as a public health challenge. This requires a careful analysis of the root causes of the problems and effective efforts to address those causes.

Such analyses often show a relationship between crime and economic conditions. There is a great deal of truth to the adage, “The best way to stop a bullet is with a job.” Constructive and meaningful employment will also take up time that might have otherwise been devoted to crime: “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop.”

Another important consideration is the relationship between mental health needs and crime. I applaud the recent DC Council legislation that calls for co-locating police and mental health professionals. Those professionals are able to bring to bear far more training and resources than a Metropolitan Police Department officer would have available when responding to incidents involving mental health needs.

In Ward 8 and across DC some gun violence stems from competition among those who sell illegal drugs, including marijuana. Regulating the legal sale of marijuana can drive down

illegal drug sales. Yes, legal dispensaries will compete with one another; however, reputable business owners are less likely to compete by shooting each other.

A final part of the solution is the relationship between police officers and those whom they must serve and protect. Too often, those officers disrespect DC's poorest residents; and the officers attitudes and behavior impair their effectiveness. My solutions include enhancing civilian control of the Metropolitan Police Department and reforming police management practices to reinforce proper behavior on the part of MPD officers.

6. Good government requires checks and balances between the council and the mayor. Which policies do you support that are different from Mayor Bowser's policies? Please be as specific as possible.

Where shall we start?

Perhaps the most important difference between my approach and the Mayor's has to do with openness. With very limited input from regular people, Mayor Bowser and her staff often make decisions and then try to drum up support for whatever **they have already decided**.

One of the most flagrant examples of this approach is Mayor Bowser's announcing sites for emergency family shelters before she sought community input on the location of the shelters. Then, she even refused to answer questions about why she picked certain sites and certain developers for her initiative.

An earlier example of the Mayor's "tone deaf" approach to governing was her so called "Safer, Stronger" approach to policing. Because she went her own way on this issue — ignoring community input, it took a progressive DC Council to curtail the worst of what

the Mayor had proposed.

I also disagree with Mayor Bowser on the development of St. Elizabeth's campus and other sites near the Congress Heights Metro Station. The priorities should be assuring continued housing for those who live in the community already and creating business and employment opportunities for Ward 8 residents. Mayor Bowser's initiatives will further line the pockets of politically collected business owners and developers. Instead, I favor an approach that includes

- much needed quality housing for current Congress Heights and Ward 8 residents;
- helping Ward 8 and other DC residents to start retail businesses in Congress Heights and the St. Es campus, and
- creating spaces that Ward 8 and DC residents could use as workshops and storage facilities for businesses they own.

I would mention one more policy difference between myself and the Mayor. She continues a long trend of favoring public charter schools over DC Public Schools. I see the charter schools as laboratories for change — where a small number of charters would try out approaches that, if successful, the DC Public Schools would adopt. In other words, the DC Government's investment in charters should be aimed at supporting and enhancing our Public School system — not working to compete with and dismantle that system.