



2019-2020 District Leader Candidate Questionnaire

Completed questionnaires will be public documents available on our website, so put your best foot forward. If we ultimately hold an endorsement vote in your race, your questionnaire will be circulated to our membership before the vote.

Name	Jesse Pierce
Preferred campaign contact information: name, email address, phone number	[redacted]
How long have you lived in your district?	I have lived in the 52nd for four years. I worked in the district for two years before living here.
What civic and political organizations are you involved with in your district?	New Kings Democrats, Rep Your Block, 52nd AD Basement Group, Lambda Independent Democrats, Kings County Democratic Committee (AD52/ED29)
What have you accomplished in public life that you are most proud of?	<p>As Co-Lead Organizer for #RepYourBlock 2018 in the 52nd Assembly District alongside Becky Steinberg, we successfully helped petition over 130 residents onto County Committee -- many of them for the first time. We coordinated with the Independent Neighborhood Democrats (IND) and local electeds, effectively working with long-standing residents and County Committee Members of the 52nd while onboarding a sizeable new group of people to County Committee. After the success of #RepYourBlock in the 52nd, I helped launch a group of 52nd County Committee members (now called the Basement Group) who organized after the September 2018 County Committee meeting.</p> <p>Working with this broad range of Brooklynites as part of the #RepYourBlock campaign and organizing in the Basement Group are some of my proudest accomplishments.</p> <p>To provide context, I first joined New Kings Democrats in 2016 because I wanted to spend my time doing meaningful organizing at the local level of politics. New Kings was my initiation. I was and am exposed to so many creative, resilient, mission-driven people who care deeply about making things work for their communities. I saw firsthand the dramatic impact a group of dedicated organizers can have. Being a part of the core internal #RepYourBlock team helped me put many of the things I learned and experienced into direct action.</p> <p>Working and helping 52nd Rep Your Blockers join the Brooklyn Democratic Party, many for the first time (first time for me too!), felt like what grassroots democracy is supposed to be about: connecting with your neighbors, working together as a team to achieve a larger goal and continuing to show up because you care about making change. I'm proud of #RepYourBlock and being a part of the beginnings of the Basement Group because it is an opportunity to be on a team focused on creating the democracy we want to see in the world. I believe this highly local, structural work is critical -- it is the foundation we must create if we hope to address the bread and butter issues affecting our community.</p>
Why do you want to serve as a District Leader?	I believe the Brooklyn Democratic Party can have greater purpose and

	<p>influence locally by focusing more on improving our democracy at home and less on insider politics-as-usual. The Party can and should do so much more to put the organizing of Brooklyn Democrats first. Together, I believe we can set a standard for the rest of the country on how the Party can lead with progressive values, transparent policies, and inclusive practices for residents. As District Leader, I want to work with my neighbors to create an accessible and responsive network of Brooklyn Democrats in the 52nd AD, who work together to educate and inform their neighbors and facilitate a healthy, functioning local democracy.</p>
<p>Why do you want New Kings Democrats' endorsement?</p>	<p>NKD is home to me. This club is where I was first introduced to Brooklyn politics and how I could personally have an impact. There is no Jesse Pierce for District Leader without NKD. I first learned what County Committee was from the club as a member. Moving into a leadership role on NKD and #RepYourBlock was my County Committee education. Running for District Leader is the next step I want to take in my contribution to this work, because my experience in County Committee, with NKD, and alongside community members in the 52nd has shown me how a progressive KCDC Executive Committee could bring powerful change to the Party.</p> <p>Concretely, the club's endorsement offers invaluable credibility as a candidate who believes strongly in creating a responsive Brooklyn Democratic Party, who believes the Party has an obligation to be accountable to <u>all</u> Brooklyn Democrats, and who believes the processes that run our Party should be transparent and accessible to everyone.</p> <p>Moreover, I know firsthand that an NKD endorsement translates to action: NKD members are powerhouses -- knocking doors and turning out for their endorsed candidates. As a candidate focused on grassroots organizing, this type of engagement is very meaningful to me, reflects the values of my campaign, and would provide critical support in my race.</p>
<p>What are your district's greatest strengths and struggles?</p>	<p>I love the 52nd! I worked here before I lived here and I feel immeasurably grateful to be a resident of the district everyday. The 52nd Assembly District has a rich history of civic participation, with long-standing progressive political clubs that have organized since the 1960s (such as Independent Neighborhood Democrats, Lambda Independent Democrats and Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats). The 52nd is consistently a leader in voter turnout in Brooklyn, New York City, and New York State.</p> <p>Even with some of the highest voter turnout in the state, the percentage of turnout by registered voters across the district is relatively low, at an average of 25 - 35% per election district, depending on the election. There is room to grow in letting people know about elections and their rights to information and decision making. I believe the 52nd can do more to engage with our neighbors on a recurring basis to elevate voter turnout.</p> <p>In addition, incumbency culture is an issue across New York State politics and the 52nd is no exception. This Female District Leader race is the first competitive race for the position since 2010. In general, since it is incredibly rare for District Leader races to be true races, I'm excited for the 52nd Assembly District residents to have choice and opportunity for conversation about what they'd like to see in a representative in this seat.</p> <p>Additionally, based on the 52nd's historical development, many communities</p>

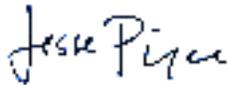
	<p>(particularly communities of color) are underrepresented in both the district's electoral politics and in County Committee. There needs to be more direct engagement with those who are most marginalized from the political process. For me, this means engaging with community groups and organizations, supporting their ongoing work to advocate for their priorities, having routine conversation about how they can engage in Party reform, and creating mechanisms to ensure our politics are more accessible and inclusive.</p> <p>Last, even with some of the highest voter engagement and County Committee participation, half of the County Committee seats in the 52nd are filled by the appointment process. AD 52 County Committee votes often go to entrenched, regressive party leadership. We should be encouraging a culture of participation, where petitioning, talking with one's neighbors, attending County Committee meetings, and voting are encouraged at all levels of AD 52's leadership.</p>
<p>What is your vision for the Brooklyn Democratic Party?</p>	<p>My vision of the Brooklyn Democratic Party is as a standard bearer of progressive values for the rest of the state and country -- where the Party sets the tone and leads the conversation on inclusive practices, transparency and accountability in its operations.</p> <p>My vision of the Brooklyn Democratic Party is also one where grassroots organizing is front and center in the Party's operations, establishing a progressive platform and advocating for policies and electeds that best serve the entirety of Brooklyn Democrats.</p>
<p>If elected, how will you support the work of New Kings Democrats and its partners to make the Brooklyn Democratic Party more transparent, accountable, or inclusive?</p>	<p>If elected District Leader, I will use my voice to advocate for reforms that are critical to making the Party more responsive to the grassroots. Proxy reform and comprehensive, responsible financial reporting are two areas on which I would focus my advocacy efforts immediately.</p> <p>I will only vote for Party leadership dedicated to making foundational changes to the Party in clear support of transparency, accountability and inclusivity.</p> <p>I will develop a proposal to bring more transparency to the 52nd County Committee appointment process. I want to reduce the power of the District Leader as gatekeeper to County Committee seats and encourage a community-driven process, where 52nd County Committee members and 52nd Democrats can nominate individuals for County Committee and are part of the conversation on who is appointed.</p> <p>I will also advocate for the immediate convening of a 52nd Assembly District Committee -- not just for the sake of filling potential vacancies in the 52nd, but to create a functioning and responsive network of 52nd Brooklyn Democrats, separate from political clubs, who work together to educate and inform their neighbors and facilitate a healthy, functioning local democracy.</p>
<p>Please review NKD's County Committee Reform Platform: https://bit.ly/2Zw4fpE Do you support these proposed reforms? Are there any that you do not support? If so, why?</p>	<p>I support the proposed reforms.</p> <p>The Party has a responsibility to act as an organization of integrity, where table stakes of operations are following its own rules, encouraging residents to run themselves for County Committee, prioritizing a culture of participation, and taking care and responsibility for all votes. If elected District Leader, I will work to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Reform the proxy process</u>. Today, the Brooklyn Democratic Party often

	<p>makes decisions on behalf of all Brooklynites through an antiquated proxy vote system that keeps the powerful in power and limits the voice of the electorate. As District Leader, I will lead the effort to reform the proxy process as a member of the Executive Committee.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <u>Advocate for women’s rights and gender justice in the Party.</u> Getting more women, transgender, and non-binary people into positions of power starts at the grassroots. We can do this through strategies such as reinvigorating the local Party’s women’s caucus and restructuring Party positions to include nonbinary people who do not identify as female or male. 3. <u>Encourage participation in County Committee meetings.</u> For County Committee members to be able to meaningfully participate, meetings must be: in locations accessible by public transit, announced with reasonable notice, and organized by agendas that prioritize new business and the functioning of the Party. 4. <u>Make the local Party more accountable</u> by publishing meeting agendas, recording votes, providing more information on judicial elections, reforming the special election process, making committee appointments transparent, and disclosing Party finances.
<p>Do you believe the Party needs to change the way it nominates and elects judges? If so, please describe how you think this process could be improved.</p>	<p>Yes, similar to other areas of the Party’s operations, I believe the way judges are nominated and elected can be improved with increased transparency and accountability. Local party influence over judicial selection is complicated, opaque, and inconsistent. NKD’s work to explain judicial elections has been an important step forward – but a clear understanding of the most promising strategies for reducing the Party’s undemocratic control over Civil, Surrogate, and Supreme Court judges requires more information.</p> <p>Executive Committee conversations regarding judicial candidates are rarely public. If I am elected District Leader, (in addition to advocating for these conversations to be made public), I will use my access to Executive Committee decision-making as a resource we can leverage to inform a strategic reform effort - for judges who are elected directly and those who go through a convention process.</p> <p>As a District Leader candidate, I will encourage independent judicial delegates to petition and run themselves in the 52nd AD.</p>
<p>If elected, how will you engage your constituents in local politics? Do you have a plan for reaching out to traditionally underrepresented communities in your district?</p>	<p>Partnership with politically marginalized and institutionally oppressed communities is my priority as a candidate and will continue to be a priority as District Leader. This is work and relationship building that will be ongoing and doesn’t end when the campaign ends. I will prioritize showing up for issues important to the community, through listening and establishing a foundation of trust and integrity. As District Leader, I will implement this through a more robust ADC and engagement with grassroots organizers. To spread the word about County Committee and support people who want to run for CC positions, I will encourage the development of an ADC Membership committee.</p> <p>I want to convene an Assembly District Committee (ADC) in the 52nd that will engage with constituents about local politics. The 52nd has a high voter participation level (relative to the city and state at large) and the majority of 52nd voters do not belong to local political clubs. As District Leader, I would</p>

	<p>support regular ADC meetings and encourage County Committee members to run and elect their ADC officers, create committees that support the work to engage with 52nd Assembly Democrats, and empower County Committee members to engage with their neighbors on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>Second, ensuring a more inclusive County Committee requires active engagement with grassroots organizing groups who have been doing this work for decades (non-profits, Tenant Associations, and advocacy organizations). I will leverage Party resources to support electoral engagement, such as improving access to voting and creating mechanisms to hold electeds accountable. Through engagement with a broader community of Democrats, I believe we can work as a team to build a system that listens, is responsive, and is reflective of what is important to all of us.</p>
<p>If elected, how will you make sure that you have enough time to adequately serve as a district leader? How much time do you envision putting into this work every week?</p>	<p>My goal as District Leader is to be responsive to the needs of the 52nd. Being on the leadership teams of NKD and #RepYourBlock showed me how uneven time commitment requirements can be during the course of the work, but how important it is for people to 1) know how to reach out to you and 2) trust you will respond to them in a timely manner.</p> <p>Kings County Democratic Committee general meetings will likely require a huge time commitment before, during, and after the event. People will want to understand expectations of the meeting, what their responsibility will be, a proxy handoff process if they are unable to attend, transportation resources, what's happening during the meeting, and next steps once the meeting has adjourned. I like talking with 52nd County Committee members, I enjoy being someone people can reach out to, and I believe in running for this position, I am advocating for myself to be a go-to person for guidance in these events.</p> <p>I'm running for District Leader because I want to help create the best system for Democrats in my district to be informed and vote in elections, which means setting aside the appropriate amount of time my neighbors deserve.</p>
<p>What funds have you raised for this campaign? What are the major sources of your campaign funds?</p>	<p>Individual donors have been the sole source of my campaign funds to date. In the first two months of my campaign, I have raised almost \$10K via over 120 individual contributors. This has happened through campaign events, house parties, direct asks, and digital fundraising.</p>
<p>What endorsements have you received from publications, electeds, community leaders, or political organizations?</p>	<p>I have not received any official endorsements to date.</p>
<p>What areas of the district do you see as your biggest sources of votes and support?</p>	<p>I believe my biggest source of support is the body of existing 52nd County Committee members, many of whom I worked with during the 2018 #RepYourBlock campaign. Working with my neighbors to reform County Committee, establishing real connections and seeing those relationships grow into friendships has been a source of joy for me. I believe this is a role and position I can do because of the belief and support they've shown me.</p>
<p>Is there a District Leader in Brooklyn or elsewhere in NYC who you admire? If so, why?</p>	<p>I admire Amanda Farias, State Committeewoman from the Bronx. She is a fighter for her community and takes up the space she has rightfully earned, even in the face of the Bronx machine's tactics to dismiss her hard-fought election win. She self-funded her first campaign, recruited her neighbors to target the critical election districts, and was elected to the position through her grit, determination, and community support.</p> <p>As a State Committeewoman, she speaks out against the Bronx machine and</p>

	fights for the progressive values she believes in. She is brave in all the ways I aspire to be brave.
What is one fun fact about you?	I used to own a 3d printer and have a large, 3d printed blue owl in my apartment. Picture supplied upon request.

I have reviewed this questionnaire and agree that the responses set forth in this document are accurate:

Candidate Signature: 

Date: September 28, 2019

You must sign this questionnaire! When complete, please e-mail your signed and scanned questionnaire to politics@newkingsdemocrats.com