



**2020 City Council 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, we will circulate your questionnaire to our members before the vote.*

*Contact with questions: Jessica Thurston, NKD's VP of Political Affairs, [politics@newkingsdemocrats.com](mailto:politics@newkingsdemocrats.com)*

Name	Shahana Hanif
Council District number and neighborhoods represented	I'm running to represent CD39, which consists of Kensington, Borough Park, Windsor Terrace, Park Slope, Gowanus, Columbia Waterfront, Carroll Gardens, & Cobble Hill.
How long have you lived in the above district?	I have lived in District 39 my entire life - 29 years.
Why do you want to serve as a member of the NYC Council?	<p>Kensington is my home and where my father arrived as a ship jumper 30 years ago from Bangladesh, settling in the largest working-class Bangladeshi enclave in Brooklyn. It's where my sisters and I attended PS 230 and where my lived experiences politicized me to be the woman I am today. I am a Lupus survivor, and since diagnosis at 17, I have not rested in fighting to create a feminist city that radically prioritizes physical and mental healthcare for all.</p> <p>Lupus nearly killed me and took a crippling toll on my physical and emotional health. I underwent aggressive chemotherapy for months, lost all my hair and gained weight, and was left bed-ridden in hospitals and at home. My immigrant family, not having the English proficiency to navigate a nebulous healthcare system, was left at the mercy of an uncaring bureaucracy as I fought for my life.</p> <p>As the disease worsened, I had to have both hips and my left shoulder replaced. I was rejected for Access-A-Ride, leaving me no choice but to go up and down the stairs of subway stations without elevators and escalators as a disabled woman. I've had to crowdfund at a young age to pay for my medical expenses. I struggled with severe self-esteem issues while my body deteriorated with disabilities.</p> <p>My rheumatologist told me it would take a lot of grit and strength to survive. Now, I am channeling that strength to run for office and fight for those who are also struggling to survive in this City.</p>

	<p>My story is a familiar one to many who live with chronic illness and disabilities. People continue to be in pain because of the City's inability to provide free healthcare, free transit, and free education. Surviving an incurable illness, and going through our City's healthcare system of hospitals, health coverage, and prescriptions was the catalyst for my desire to run for office. I am fighting for a City that prioritizes wellness, joy, liberation, and a society that puts people over profit.</p> <p>Growing up, I have seen how politics, civic engagement initiatives, and changes in NYC neighborhoods have failed to include the needs of those who are most marginalized — especially BIPOC, women, immigrants, working-class people, and New Yorkers with mobility issues and accessibility needs. This is seen through policies and programs that systematically marginalize and disproportionately harm myself and other people in these vulnerable communities. I see this in District 39, where (1) schools in District 15 are deeply segregated by race and class, (2) more affluent nearby neighborhoods have more robust public services and open spaces than neighborhoods like Borough Park and Kensington, and (3) government outreach and programs are not accessible to limited English proficient community members across the district and especially in Kensington. I'm running for City Council to end these inequities across my District and across our city, and to ensure that communities who are often left out and excluded from the conversation in government can have a voice at the table.</p>
<p>What civic and political organizations are you involved with in the district?</p>	<p>As an activist and community organizer within my district for over a decade, I've formed many close connections and relationships with different local grassroots organizations, particularly ones that center BIPOC voices, immigrant voices, feminist voices, and voices from working-class backgrounds. I have been a vocal advocate and an organizer within my community around issues like affordable housing, immigrant rights, access to and creation of public plazas, and protection for survivors of domestic violence. Over the years, I've contributed to Sakhi for South Asian Women, The Kensington Stewards, and the Kensington Cultural Council as a leader in my district.</p> <p>Since 2013, I've been volunteering and building with Sakhi for South Asian Women, the largest anti-domestic violence organization serving South Asian survivors in NYC. I know that support for survivors must be intersectional and holistic. Domestic violence advocacy is an issue of gender inclusion, immigration, language access, homelessness, and criminal justice reform. According to Sakhi for South Asian Women, the organization's highest survivor intake of domestic violence cases in Brooklyn comes from the</p>

Kensington neighborhood. During COVID-19, I helped Sakhi for South Asian Women secure \$50,000 to help survivors obtain temporary housing amidst the pandemic, and in 2021 they'll have their first-ever office in Kensington. Our City is lagging behind on providing truly affordable housing options to survivors of gender-based and intimate partner violence. This advocacy has informed my policy decisions and priorities. [Ms. Zahan's case](#) shaped the foundation for my [Survivor Security Fund plan](#), which would provide immediate financial support to all survivors.

In 2016, I helped form The Kensington Stewards, a neighborhood association in Kensington. We fought locally to transform an empty lot into a public plaza: Avenue C Plaza. Prior to the creation of Avenue C Plaza, there was (and still continues to be) a lack of viable open spaces for the Kensington community, especially for immigrant women and families, to utilize and enjoy safely. Within the district, particularly within Kensington and Borough Park, the lack of public parks and open spaces prevent community gatherings and children from playing. Avenue C Plaza is a gender justice project for me as a means to reclaim public space because, in Kensington, there is a salient need for hangout spaces for Bangladeshi girls and women. When we were creating Avenue C Plaza, we were supported by the now defunct Department of Transportation's Neighborhood Plaza Partnership program, which provided organizational development training to local neighbors in neighborhoods without robust community organizations to become Plaza maintenance partners. While it was important for us to build local stewardship to look after the Plaza, doing so unpaid and without adequate funding support made it challenging to activate the space year after year. I realized the need to build a coalition of local organizations that were activating the Plaza with programming year-round to keep the Plaza activated.

In 2018, I incubated the Kensington Cultural Council (KCC) to maintain and activate the Avenue C Plaza. The KCC includes community organizations I've partnered with over the years like Arts & Democracy, ArtBuilt Mobile Studios, Casa Cultural, Bangladeshi Institute of Performing Arts, The Singing Winds, Charukantha, Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts NY, and The Kensington Stewards. With funding support from Small Business Services, the KCC is able to host collaborative programming like an annual community Iftar, concert series, and free arts events for immigrant families, develop new partnerships with local businesses and other community groups, and receive technical assistance and professional development to strengthen small cultural organizations and artists based in Kensington. In this pandemic, the need to build cultural infrastructure is more salient than ever. Activating Avenue C

	<p>Plaza remains a high priority especially as a central hub for girls and women to create and take up space.</p> <p>I have deep ties within feminist spaces in Kensington, which has made it easier to raise funds quickly for domestic violence survivors and women and youth at risk of displacement. In addition, I'm closely connected with Bangladeshi association and mosque leaders. During the peak of COVID-19, we worked in a coalition to purchase and deliver groceries to families across Brooklyn.</p> <p>As a lifelong resident of Kensington, the largest Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant enclave in Brooklyn, I have a deep understanding, love, and care for my working-class community and its people. After Trump's election and working as a tenant organizer at CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities, I took my organizing to the City Council by joining Council Member Brad Lander's office. It was important to me to build power in my home community, where we saw the grave and immediate impacts of Trump's legislative agenda targeting Muslims and immigrants. In my roles as Bangladeshi Community Liaison and Director of Organizing and Community Engagement, I've done direct constituent services work and have brought targeted City services into the district, coordinated and mobilized actions to protect neighbors against ICE and hate crimes, and led and expanded Participatory Budgeting. While I've paid closer attention to Kensington, my work has spanned across the district. As a result, I have a thorough understanding of the nuts-and-bolts of how City government operates and have years of experience building strong coalitions in the district.</p> <p>I'm a member of New Kings Democrats, Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats, and Democratic Socialists of America.</p>
<p>What have you accomplished in public life that you are most proud of?</p>	<p>Our City's government and services (from the NYPD to shelters to legal aid) are not accessible to limited English proficient and/or immigrant survivors of domestic violence. I am proudest of my culturally competent and decarceral domestic violence advocacy - particularly with Ms. Zahan, a Kensington-based survivor who I supported in 2018. Ms. Zahan, like many immigrants or limited English proficient folks in our City, did not speak English and was stuck in an abusive situation. I advocated for Ms. Zahan in Bangla, and with the support of District 39 raised over \$4000 in survival funds for bills and a safe transition from the shelter system to a new apartment while she searched for work. My advocacy for Ms. Zahan was featured in The New York Times, bringing attention to how many people and organizations it takes to successfully</p>

	<p>remove one woman from an abusive situation. My policy stems from reality - my advocacy drives my proposal for a Citywide Survivor Fund: how the City can best help survivors leave abusive situations is to bridge the gap to accessing financial security.</p>
<p>What are the greatest opportunities and challenges facing the district?</p>	<p>Our district is the center of a land use crisis - with a lack of affordable housing and severe environmental degradation. The Gowanus rezoning is imperfect - and I reject it as is. However, it could provide an opportunity to increase density and affordable housing in a resource-rich neighborhood.</p> <p>Unlike proposed rezonings in Sunset Park, Flushing, and Inwood, the Gowanus Rezoning would be located in a predominantly white and wealthy neighborhood. While I believe the creation of affordable housing, especially in wealthy neighborhoods, are crucial to the City, it is important that all proposed rezoning proactively include the needs and concerns of the surrounding community, especially the voices of BIPOC, working-class communities, and immigrant communities. From conversations I have had with NYCHA residents at Gowanus Houses, Wyckoff Gardens, and Warren Street Houses, and continued conversations with the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice, the rezoning as-is does not consider the voices of NYCHA residents nor does it take into consideration greener solutions.</p> <p>While the rezoning's goal is to create more affordable housing within a wealthier neighborhood in the City, the proposal as-is failed to center and has excluded NYCHA residents, low-income tenants, immigrant-owned businesses, and Black and Brown families facing displacement. The current proposed rezoning area excludes NYCHA's Gowanus Houses, Wyckoff Gardens, and Warren Street Houses, all in great need of infrastructure improvements. Although the developments are not in the district, the rezoning proposal should have included these NYCHA buildings to ensure that infrastructure upgrades can be made as part of the rezoning deal. The residents of Gowanus Houses, Wyckoff Gardens, and Warren Street Houses, who are predominantly BIPOC and working-class, have been deprived of proper utilities and no rezoning proposal should go forward until the voices of the NYCHA residents are centered.</p> <p>In addition, there is no environmental justice plan on what to do with the Gowanus Canal - and residents have noted a lack of transparency regarding the environmental impact statement throughout the rezoning process. As climate change impacts begin to further effect the City, it is important that we ensure that the proposed rezoning incorporates a special environmental district to tackle the superfund site. Tackling climate change is also racial justice work. Climate change disproportionately impacts Black, Brown, and working class communities. Now is the time for reparative environmental</p>

	<p>justice and to reinvest back into communities, particularly Black and Brown, low-income, and immigrant communities, that are most impacted by gentrification and displacement.</p> <p>When the City’s land use process fails to center working-class, Black and brown residents, it results in rezonings and land use proposals that do not help those who need safe, affordable housing the most. We see this with the Fourth Avenue rezoning - where low income residents were not prioritized in the planning process and negotiations. This resulted in a 22 percent decrease in affordable housing, rapid displacement of Black and Brown residents, a \$1,000 increase in median rent, an increase in median home sale prices, and rapid gaps between the lowest and highest income areas in Gowanus and other surrounding neighborhoods within the last 10 years.</p> <p>For me to consider a rezoning in Gowanus, the following is needed: (1) the concerns and feedback of NYCHA residents must be incorporated more thoroughly in the rezoning plan, (2) a racial impact assessment (which should be the standard in all land use procedures) must be conducted in order to determine whether the rezoning is equitable for BIPOC communities, and (3) greener solutions to combat the impacts of climate change such as creating an environmental justice special district, working with local environmental groups on how to achieve net zero combined sewage overflows, and releasing the required environmental impact statement earlier to ensure the community has more time to give feedback.</p>
<p>Why do you want New Kings Democrats’ endorsement?</p>	<p>NKD is an organization that was formative to my understanding about how the Democratic Party works in NYC. It was through a Rep Your Block meeting that I learned I wasn’t registered as a Democrat (I was unaffiliated!), and this is true of many immigrant folx and children of immigrants in my community. Through NKD I was able to see how the Democratic establishment actually sidelines communities like mine from participating.</p> <p>I later met Courtney Adrian, and we worked together to expand NKD’s outreach to include South Asians on the County Committee. This resulted in successfully identifying and recruiting two Muslim South Asian women to join. It was eye-opening for me to realize that even though AD44 has a South Asian population of over 17%, only 5% of all County Committee members are South Asian. NKD was pivotal in my desire to become involved in the process and further participate in electoral work. I’m invested in making sure that we continue to expand education about the Democratic Party and its functions to communities like mine.</p> <p>The New Kings Democrats’ endorsement will allow me to work alongside an organization that holds the county Democratic Party accountable to</p>

	<p>progressive values. As we move into a Biden/Harris administration, we must mobilize towards a Green New Deal, Medicare for All, and more accessible voting for our City, despite pushes from establishment politicians and political groups not to do so. I want to work alongside the New Kings Democrats to ensure that the Council can create more substantial changes to the daily lives of our most marginalized constituents. I also want to work with New Kings Democrats to ensure that the Council can make civic engagement and democratic participation more accessible for all New Yorkers.</p>
<p>If elected, what will your top three legislative and budgetary priorities be while in office?</p>	<p><b>ISSUE ONE: Defund the NYPD</b></p> <p>Despite countless protests and calls to action from Black and brown activists and organizers this summer, the City Council failed to listen to their constituents and passed a budget that gave the NYPD a substantial amount of funding. While other agencies in the City have had to make deep cuts to staff and resources, the NYPD was able to hire 900 new cadets in October.</p> <p>As Council Member, one of my first priorities will be to defund the police and reinvest the funding into other agencies such as the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Department of Homeless Services (DHS), and the Health + Hospitals -- agencies that will need the most resources to help New Yorkers get through a global pandemic.</p> <p>I will work to amend the City Charter section governing the police department and its duties. We, in the Council must reallocate resources by freezing all new hires of the city's police force, strengthening the ability of the Civilian Complaint Review Board to dismiss officers with excessive disciplinary complaints, and removing police officers from Department of Education (DOE), Department of Homeless Services (DHS), Administration for Children's Services (ACS), and other government agencies.</p> <p>Lastly, as Council Member, I will work to advocate for legislation that ensures that police union contracts do not include provisions that prevent police oversight and accountability. Police unions have been a barrier to truly holding the police accountable and we must ensure that police unions do not have the power to continue protecting cops who continue to brutalize the community.</p> <p><b>ISSUE TWO: Domestic Violence Survivor Resources</b></p> <p>As a Bangladeshi Muslim woman and daughter of immigrants, I know that support for survivors must be intersectional and holistic. Domestic violence advocacy is an issue of gender inclusion, immigration, language access, homelessness, and criminal justice reform. Through my work with District 39's Council Member Brad Lander, I have collaborated with multilingual and community oriented service providers to advocate for women seeking support</p>

throughout the district and beyond. It is important, especially with folks having to remain in place due to COVID-19, that survivors are able to access care and resources to allow them to safely leave an abusive situation.

As Council Member, I will advocate to equip survivors of gender-based and intimate partner violence with liberatory tools grounded in their safety and joy, using restorative approaches to dismantle pain and trauma. These tools include legal protections such as reforming early lease termination and lock-change policies to ensure survivors do not have financial barriers that prevent them from leaving an unsafe household, financial assistance for survivors such as the Survivor Security Fund, comprehensive and intersectional sex education, and access to rehabilitative, trauma-informed care for survivors through establishing a hotline and employing social workers in the district office.

### **ISSUE THREE: Climate Change and Environmental Justice**

The City Council must prioritize climate justice. I see this manifesting through many ways, but I want to highlight the viability and potential of (1) creating green collar jobs, (2) investing in resilient green spaces, and (3) working with my colleagues in the State Senate and Assembly to transition to renewable energy. Particularly with #3, I realize that the work of environmental justice and liberation cannot be completed alone, and will require partnerships not just with the Senate and Assembly, but also with activists, organizers, community leaders, seniors, and youth.

The ecofeminist and ecosocialist movements have taught us that issues of the environment are inseparable from issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, and nationality. Environmental justice means taking an intersectional approach to the environmental and climate issues: climate policies that do not consider race and class are harmful and reductive. Environmental justice means ensuring that climate advocacy and organizing prioritizes our most marginalized community members, because front-line communities, low-income communities, communities with close proximity to landfills and infills are always most impacted by climate change.

From a City Council perspective, environmental justice means environmental reparations. Reparative environmental justice recognizes the long legacy of pollution, redlining and public policy that has burdened certain communities and protected others in NYC. This justice can take the form of thoughtful civic engagement in the planning processes, prioritizing and fully funding NYCHA housing, and allocating community-based funds to efforts that allow communities to shape just solutions for themselves. Taking an environmental

justice approach means realizing how action on climate change needs to address housing and transportation, not just green spaces, public infrastructure, and clean energy. When planning new affordable housing projects or preserving existing ones, it is crucial to use an environmental justice lens. This means ensuring that folks who rely on such housing are able to live in green, energy resilient homes, away from environmental dangers and degradation.

*Some proposals from my environmental justice platform:*

### **Green Collar Jobs**

Green collar or green industry jobs are established to protect the environment while also providing low-income and marginalized community members with a pathway to a higher, more sustainable income. Focusing on environmental development and climate change mitigation efforts are not contradictory to COVID-19 economic development - natural disasters, utility failures, power outages, flooding and climate change are persistent threats that consistently disproportionately impact low-income communities, and are costly to mitigate.

City Council members can and should be pivotal in managing and fostering a Green Collar Jobs initiative – through pushing for public funding by designating Green Collar Jobs as either discretionary funds or infrastructural projects, or through endorsing community based programs that are already doing this work through both accreditation and monetary contributions.

### **Resilient Green Spaces**

Within the district, particularly within Kensington, the lack of public parks and open spaces prevent gathering and children from playing. Underfunded public spaces put young women, queer and trans folks, and people of color at risk, due to increased risk of harassment. This often pushes neighbors to call the cops, bringing policing and violence into our already vulnerable immigrant communities.

All New Yorkers should be within a five minute walk of an open, free, sustainable public park. Parks are not an aesthetic luxury, but rather a buffer for climate change and space for civic engagement. Especially in light of COVID-19, New Yorkers rely on open spaces more than ever before.

As Council Member, I will partner with local cultural organizations to activate plazas and public spaces throughout the district, through open street public

	<p>programming. I will create green jobs through park stewardship, and I will allocate funding to proper maintenance and public programming. I will host community town halls in open spaces for constituents to speak out about issues that matter to them, particularly following hate crimes. Our public parks need to be safer, more accessible, and intentional about gender inclusion.</p> <p>Leading with my neighbors to demand a public plaza for us and other projects that involve the district’s open spaces gave me the insight on the importance of such spaces for constituents, especially for families. This experience allowed me to shape my platform on one that prioritizes safe, clean, and accessible open spaces for District 39 constituents.</p> <p><b>Renewable Energy</b></p> <p>If elected, I will advocate against the North Brooklyn Pipeline, and other shareholder driven, environmentally damaging, and socially degrading energy projects, like fracking.</p> <p>In the City Council’s effort to decarbonize and increase energy resiliency, making infrastructural changes is a promising approach to protecting our most vulnerable communities against the immediate dangers of climate change, like increased temperatures and flooding. This includes funding greening projects in District 39’s apartment buildings, replacing peaker plants with solar power farms and other alternative sources, reducing urban heat islands, and retrofitting cool roofs on existing buildings — particularly community centers, libraries, and schools.</p> <p>Our current investor-owned utility system allows for lobbying against renewable energy; moving to public power will allow us to decarbonize and transition away from fossil fuels and natural gas, through allowing for more (and total) community control. If elected, I would push for publicly owned power, which would require collaboration with my colleagues in the State Legislature. I would support and fund community organizations, like UPROSE in Sunset Park, that build and maintain cooperatively owned energy infrastructure.</p>
<p>What is one thing you would do to make New York City government more transparent, accountable, or inclusive?</p>	<p>I want to expand language access throughout the City. Limited English proficient constituents should not be barred access to their government and its resources due to the government’s failure to be accessible. A lack of language access permeates every public service that the city fails to provide. I’m committed to continuing language accessible services and legal aid both as a means to get vital immigration-related information (like when a judge blocked changes made by the Trump administration to fee waiver rules) to my</p>

	<p>community in Bangla and challenge voter suppression by helping community members on their path to citizenship or bring them into the campaign to fight for noncitizen voting access in municipal elections. While the City promises translation and interpretation services, the majority of limited English proficient speakers do not receive the services they need. The implications of this are stark - staff at COVID-19 testing sites have not been able to provide accessible communication for folks whose primary language is not English. It is not enough to simply tell folks to get tested and be protected from COVID-19, it is important that folks are able to access the resources and services they need to survive the pandemic.</p> <p>Language access is crucial to ensuring all New Yorkers are able to engage with civic life and democratic participation.</p>
<p>Please review NKD's voting rights platform: <a href="https://www.newkingsdemocrats.com/voting_rights">https://www.newkingsdemocrats.com/voting_rights</a>. In what ways would you like to expand voting access, and how can you do this as a member of the NYC Council?</p>	<p>During this past election, we saw how making voting more accessible through early voting and mail in ballots have increased voter turnout. As a Council Member, I will work to expand voting access by ensuring that there are translators available at every site to increase language access, ensure that voter outreach is language accessible, provide know your rights workshops for voters in the district, and a voter guide workshop to explain to constituents what different elected positions are (i.e clearer explanation for laypersons to understand what a "judicial delegate" is or a "district leader").</p> <p>In addition, as Council Member, I will work with my colleagues in the State to expand mail in voting rights even past the COVID-19 pandemic, to pass same day voter registration, to pass automatic voter registration, and to work on creating early voting hours that are only available for senior citizens and folks who are disabled to ensure that they do not have to wait on long lines at polling sites.</p> <p>I would like to expand voting access by ensuring that non-citizens should, by default, have the right to vote in City elections. Barring undocumented residents from voting only reinforces the prison-industrial complex and national borders. I support and would continue to support the Our City, Our Vote legislation.</p>
<p>What criminal justice reforms would you like to see the Council implement?</p>	<p>My vision for the criminal justice system is not focused on punitive punishment and incarceration but is focused on the reinvestment of our communities. The City should work with the community and develop solutions that end the conditions that cause crime. As an advocate of anti-carceral survivor justice, my platform addresses this tangibly; I have proposed creating a domestic violence hotline in my office run by constituent service liaisons trained in culturally informed, language accessible social work. These advocates will work with survivors via a safe, confidential hotline to connect them to resources without police intervention. A Council hotline or</p>

non-police members of 311 can also de-escalate low-level offenses and neighborhood quality of life issues, particularly in partnership with community liaisons and non-profit mediation teams.

The New York City Council's Participatory Budgeting process recognizes budgets as moral documents that should be crafted with active input from everyday New Yorkers about how money within the district is spent. We must facilitate community control of our budgets using Participatory Budgeting to sustain the resources our communities need. Rebuilding our neighborhoods is not easy work and is not intuitive. Accessible community town halls and workshops can be tools used to brainstorm local needs and alternatives to policing in our neighborhoods.

Our current carceral system has become a part of our public education system in the form of exclusionary discipline like school suspensions, law enforcement referrals, handcuffing, zero-tolerance policies, and metal detectors that put Black and Latinx children with disabilities at the highest risk of suspensions. The over-criminalization of young people, particularly Black and Latinx young people, leads to a lifetime of trauma, adverse health effects, and PTSD. Instead of reinforcing the school-to-prison-pipeline, our city should mandate positive behavioral support within public schools through trauma-informed approaches, restorative practices, collaborative problem solving, and crisis intervention. Teachers should receive training for de-escalation rather than calling cops and traumatizing students. Schools should have enough funding to hire racially conscious social workers, trained in restorative justice, as guidance counselors who can also help de-escalate crises. Charter and private schools should be forbidden from exposing students to more stringent disciplinary policies. The City Council should work with CUNY schools to cut ties with the NYPD.

Police make religious institutions more vulnerable, not safer. The City Council must collaborate with religious institutions like mosques, synagogues, temples, gurdwaras, and churches to establish internal protocol for navigating hate crimes. This can include de-escalation and self-defense training, creating phone trees, and hosting intervention workshops.

In addition, the City Council should work to ensure that formerly incarcerated folks are able to successfully transition back into their communities, through working with the State to expand the current law on eliminating any criminal records and providing individuals with access to community resources, from permanent housing to job training.

<p>What specific racial justice issues are impacting the district and how would you address them as a Council Member?</p>	<p>District 39 is a deeply segregated district. While many parts of the district are full of high engagement voters with high political literacy (like Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, and Park Slope) and well funded public infrastructure (particularly open spaces), there are many communities within the district that are often overlooked by the City. My neighborhood, Kensington, which is a large working-class, immigrant, Bangladeshi enclave, is consistently failed by our City. The District is in dire need of well-funded immigrant language accessibility and culturally informed resources and outreach. As Director of Organizing for District 39, I have worked to improve outreach to Bangladeshis in Kensington, and know there is a long way to go.</p> <p>This permeates our school districts - which are deeply socioeconomically and racially stratified in the entire City. These inequities are only exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis: I recently wrote an op-ed in Bklyner, exposing the socio-emotional challenges faced by Bangladeshi families and students during remote schooling. The burdens of integration and desegregation often fall on the shoulders of parents and students. I will work with administrators, parents, teachers, and students to create a more inclusive curriculum, develop diversity plans, allocate resources equitably, reduce class sizes, fully fund and mandate culturally responsive pedagogy, increase outreach to limited English proficient parents, and bring restorative justice practices into schools.</p> <p>Decreasing segregation also means reimagining school choice and admission screens. While Black and Latinx students are almost 70% of all high school students in NYC, they make up only 9% of Specialized High School offers. In addition, I will work towards getting police officers out of schools, divesting from the NYPD and investing back into all schools across the City, not just the specialized high schools or “high performing/high ranked” schools.</p>
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<p>What is your perspective on, and what would be your plan regarding, the funding of the NYPD?</p>	<p>Yes, I believe in defunding and demilitarizing the NYPD. The activities I would immediately shift away from the NYPD are 1) intervening in immediate mental health crises, 2) responding to homeless services, 3) enforcing traffic laws, 4) resolving neighborhood quality of life issues (ex. noise complaints, loitering, etc.), 5) dealing with situations in school involving disputes and discipline, and 6) de-escalating situations of domestic violence. These changes would shift funds away from the bloated NYPD budget and into other crucial agencies and public services deeply in need of more funding. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene should address mental health crises in partnership with local nonprofits and social workers in order to provide culturally informative mental health care. The Department of Homeless Services and local nonprofits should work with any immediate issue that a homeless person is facing; and social workers/ social housing specialists should work with the individual to find them permanent and stable affordable housing. Traffic infractions should be dealt with by the Department of Transportation. School discipline (which should move away from an exclusionary discipline model) should be handled by DOE staff trained in de-escalation and transformative justice.</p>
<p>What housing issues specific to your council district concern you most, and how would you address them if elected?</p>	<p>There is an affordable housing crisis in my District, which disproportionately impacts communities of color. There are no NYCHA buildings in my District, there is a lack of community engagement in the housing and land use process, and there is extreme gentrification and displacement of Black and Brown residents. To put it bluntly: our communities are not centered in the land use planning process.</p> <p><b><u>Investing in Community Land Trusts (CLTs)</u></b></p> <p>I propose thoroughly investing in Community Land Trusts (CLTs). In order for housing for all New Yorkers to be truly affordable, it must be social, decommodified, and center true democratic resident control. CLTs best represent social housing for the City. We must effectively utilize vacant lots and vacant/foreclosed buildings in the City to create CLTs run by community members. Community land trusts are a promising way of investing back in Black, brown, and Indigenous communities - as they aim to provide long-term homeownership and generational wealth. The Council can provide much needed long-term and stable funding to CLTs, recruit diverse possible homeowners, help organize residents to learn about their rights as homeowners, and require cooperatives/CLTs to reveal their rationale behind rejections to ensure non-discriminatory practices. In addition, as Council</p>

Member, I would propose abolishing the Giuliani tax lien sale law to ensure that sales of foreclosed properties do not prioritize private developers and instead, properties can be considered as spaces for CLTs.

**Equitable Land Use Planning**

The Council is central to ensuring that the land use planning process is more inclusive and accessible to the local community. Local communities must be centered in the land use planning process. As Council Member, I will be advocating for a community-led comprehensive planning process so that individual ULURP actions could instead be first and foremost measured against whether the application furthers the community's vision for the neighborhood. I will ensure that the ULURP timeline is extended and fight to ensure that the process focuses more on listening to the voices of community members and no longer relies solely on the voices of the Community Board, the Borough President, and the City Planning Commission. I will work to ensure that accessibility is expanded for more community members to engage in the planning process by expanding language access or providing child care during the meetings. City Planning should also have more community-driven racial impact, environmental impact, and public health impact studies, with the inclusion of a community impact statement. The City's planning process must include voices of local grassroots organizations in the planning and feedback process.

**Investing in NYCHA Buildings and Residents**

The City must work to improve the infrastructure of NYCHA buildings. While Participatory Budgeting (PB) has provided a tiny funding stream to repair NYCHA buildings and should continue to be used, the funds that are currently available through PB are simply not enough to address billions of dollars of immediate improvements that are needed. Capital funding allocated to NYCHA should be increased with an accountability and watchdogging process to ensure repairs are actually made. To fully fund NYCHA, we must abolish 421a, oppose RAD, and tax the rich. These demands require a broad coalition, and to that end, I will be working closely with State and Federal elected officials to allocate and secure funding for improvements in NYCHA developments. Although there are no NYCHA complexes in my district I will always oppose RAD and the privatization of NYCHA and stand with public housing residents.

I believe that true social housing in New York City demands tenant-centered decision making. I will proactively fund housing rights organizations to help resource their advocacy demands and organizing work within the district. In partnership, I will host regular workshops conducted in collaboration with local neighborhood tenants' rights organizations and include a legal clinic,

presentations on new and existing rent laws, and more. I helped create a Bangladeshi and broader Asian residents' association at Queensbridge Houses as a tenant organizer at CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities. The base-building process was transformative, and building with a multilingual base of residents required investing in language justice to translate key documents and flyers and provide interpretation at meetings. Our meetings were in Bangla, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Korean. As such, multilingual base building and organizing are priorities to expand residents' democratic control.

### **Expanding Legal Rights for Tenants**

I will support an expanded right to counsel for all tenants and for all legal proceedings, not only for evictions. Protecting tenants means providing individual support for constituents and vulnerable community members. It also requires systemic overhauls to our overall legal system to protect and prioritize tenants over landlords. As a municipal legislator, I will have the capacity to make changes in our laws to ensure that tenants, not landlords, are protected and prioritized first within the confines of our legal system. Legal services and resources should be available for all tenants, regardless of ability to pay, to ensure that everyone has a fair chance in court. As Council Member, I will also work to invest in and ease access to free Know Your Rights trainings for tenants that talk about Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing, civil rights compliance around Section 3 local hiring and homeownership opportunities, and other building and tenant related trainings and services to allow tenants to fully understand their legal rights.

Staffing in my office will be intentional - these services deserve to be approached with care and cultural specificity: my constituent services team will ideally be a housing and tenant organizer who has crafted legislation to protect residents from displacement in the long term.

I want to proactively support pro-bono legal services providers like TakeRoot Justice that have been working with working-class communities - I'm working on a case right now with the 63 Tiffany Place Tenant Association, where residents are unable to qualify for SCRIE, DRIE, and rent stabilization, which has required my collaboration with several state and city stakeholders, from the Department of Buildings to the State Attorney General, to the Carroll Gardens Association.

### **Tackling homelessness**

Housing is a human right: domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness in NYC, and survivors in shelters are overwhelmingly women of color. I approach homelessness with a lens of gender justice because of my survivor advocacy in Kensington: housing instability and precarity forces

	<p>survivors to stay in abusive households. My long-term vision to end homelessness is to create permanently affordable housing for all New Yorkers. We can achieve this vision by having the City target the creation of permanent and supportive housing for homeless New Yorkers over the creation of shelters. This can be done through working with local nonprofit organizations to provide grants for folks who are displaced such as homeless folks and folks who were formerly incarcerated. These grants can be used to ensure that folks can meet rent payments and not be evicted. In addition, I would work to promote the use of Community Land Trusts to prioritize Black and Brown home ownership and to expand the reach of NYCHA eligibility to ensure that more folks qualify for public housing. I will also work with my colleagues in the State Legislature to implement a 100 percent affordable housing plan through the use of social housing that is bought and managed by the State.</p>
<p>Do you support cancelling rent for tenants and small business owners during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p>	<p>Yes!</p> <p>The need for rent relief is particularly pressing during this pandemic when many New Yorkers are facing employment insecurity. We need mechanisms to keep constituents in their homes without fear of eviction. The City Council should also focus on building permanent and affordable housing for all, especially for folks who have been displaced, rather than building shelters and temporary housing. Our housing policy platform is centered on the premise that housing is a human right and homes should be guaranteed, regardless of your household income.</p> <p>Support also means supporting small immigrant and/or BIPOC-owned businesses, through hosting job trainings, mentorship opportunities, Know Your Rights workshops, and providing capital grants to community members.</p>
<p>What will you do to help reach more gender equity within the NYC Council?</p>	<p>To achieve gender equity within the City Council, it is important to ensure that there is a pipeline that allows more women and gender non-conforming (GNC) folks, especially those who identify as BIPOC, to work within the Council and/or run for Council.</p> <p>As Council Member, I will commit to paying Council interns. Free internships often deter students, particularly BIPOC, from working class and/or immigrant communities. Yet, Council internships provide some of the best opportunities for students to learn about Council and to create networks for potential careers in city government. In addition, I am committed to ensuring that my staff is paid a living wage and will ensure that at least 50% of my staff will be women/GNC folks.</p> <p>My values reflect the reality of my campaign; the majority of my campaign leadership team are women and/or women of color. We have eight women as part of our leadership team and all members take on a leadership role within</p>

	<p>the campaign. My policy team, finance/fundraising director, field/voter contact director, volunteer coordinator, graphic designer, and communications are all women. Two of my policy directors, my volunteer coordinator, and graphic designer are women of color. I will continue thoughtful hiring practices when elected.</p>
<p>In reviewing the NYC Budget, what specific categories do you think should be either cut or increased to help the city's current economic predicament?</p>	<p>I firmly support the defunding of the New York Police Department. The NYPD is one of the City's most funded agencies; however, we have seen time and time again that the NYPD does not bring community safety. A lot of the work that the NYPD does (ex. Interacting with the homeless, responding to mental health emergencies, etc.) can be done by other agencies in the City if the agencies were given the proper funding for resources. In addition, many New York based activists and organizers, especially Black and Brown activists and organizers, have called for deeper cuts to the NYPD budget. I want to listen to the community and I would further defund the NYPD from the City budget.</p> <p>Instead, I would reallocate the funds to other agencies that are in crucial need of resources during COVID-19. The agencies include the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Health and Hospitals, Department of Homeless Services, Department of Education, and New York City Housing Authority.</p>
<p>What are your recovery priorities for the district related to the COVID-19 pandemic?</p>	<p>All recovery plans should include COVID-19 relief for small businesses, introducing legislation providing a right to counsel for small businesses employees, creating an undocumented workers bill of rights, and retrofitting small businesses with PPE.</p> <p>I will provide additional support to industries that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, particularly small, immigrant/BIPOC owned businesses and the taxi industry, through empowering local businesses to fight gentrification, hosting workshops on entrepreneurial opportunities, and cancelling medallion debt.</p> <p>I will also advocate with gig workers to ensure critical resources, like healthcare, pension funds, and debt relief. COVID-19 has decimated the taxi industry, which is only exacerbated due to longstanding debt from the medallion crisis. Recovery means establishing a health and pension fund for drivers.</p> <p>Recovery means investing in our City's youth of color, particularly through properly funding youth job training programs such as the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), fostering more opportunities for trade and</p>

	<p>vocational programs in schools, focusing on green industries, like urban farming/gardening and community WiFi stewardship.</p> <p>During a global pandemic, it is crucial to fund health agencies to ensure that all New Yorkers, regardless of who they are, have access to healthcare. We must ensure that going forward in this pandemic, especially as cases start to rise back up in New York, our hospitals and our healthcare infrastructure are prepared to service New Yorkers. Our healthcare infrastructure must be able to service our City's workers, especially our essential workers, who have played a huge role in sustaining our economy.</p> <p>I will support any program that will insure all folks, regardless of insurance and immigration status. I believe that healthcare is a human right and not something that should be profitable. All New Yorkers, regardless of employment or immigration status, should have access to safe, unbiased, and culturally-informed healthcare.</p> <p>As a Council Member, I will ensure that more funding will go towards programs like NYC Care so that the program survives and is expanded to more New Yorkers. In addition, I will ensure that more funding will go towards health centered community organizations and clinics (ex. free/low cost community based clinics) and will work with City agencies like the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Health &amp; Hospitals to ensure that health resources are available for working class New Yorkers and that outreach is done in an accessible and culturally responsive manner.</p>
<p>What would you do to reform the Land Use process to promote racial and social equity?</p>	<p>Every aspect of the Land Use process - from rezonings to environmental impact assessments - are about race.</p> <p>I would reimagine community boards to be more reflective of the communities they serve. While community boards theoretically are an opportunity for community participation, board members are often white, affluent, male, career professionals. I want to rethink the process for how community board members get appointed, investing in a system that gives power to the working class, BIPOC, immigrant and/or formerly incarcerated community members. This means thorough outreach (particularly to our most marginalized community members), but also making community boards more accessible. I briefly served on Community Board 12, which neither had a working website nor shared regular updates, which impacts the public's attendance in meetings. Finally, community board members should be compensated for their time, including transportation and childcare.</p> <p>I would reform the ULURP process - the ULURP timeline is not reflective of</p>

the planning and negotiations needed to make a thoughtful decision for the community and its people. Local residents, who are on community boards and attend meetings, are doing the work on a volunteer basis and may not have the time and resources to devote to planning sessions like private developers do. This results in a lot of land use decisions being approved without careful planning that is conscious and considerate of community needs. As it stands right now, ULURP is a system that forces neighbors to react to individual proposals from the Mayor and corporate developer interests instead of providing communities the opportunity to proactively plan for what they want to see in their communities. I will be advocating for a community-led comprehensive planning process so that individual ULURP actions could instead be first and foremost measured against whether the application furthers the community's vision for the neighborhood.

City Planning should also have more community-driven racial impact and environmental impact studies, with the inclusion of a community impact statement. The city planning process must include voices of local grassroots organizations in the planning and feedback process. Our most vulnerable community members (like NYCHA residents) are never centered in the land use process. One way to more adequately address this is through impact assessments that strategically and thoughtfully engage community members - our planning must be embedded, and participatory. This also means being thoughtful about who is conducting impact assessments - engineering firms disconnected from community should not determine or shape local priorities - assessments should be part of and central to community based planning.

In addition, the City needs to improve their outreach and coalition building within Indigenous affinity and community groups. In reframing our land use and urban planning process with the intention of giving land back and centering Indigenous sovereignty, a Racial Impact Study can be one tool for the City to center Indigenous voices.

As a former public housing and tenant organizer, I understand the power that organizing has to combat gentrification. Because of organizing and mobilizing efforts, local communities have been able to tackle and defeat big projects like Amazon HQ2 and Industry City. However, organizing and mobilizing can bring some concerns and hesitation within BIPOC and immigrant communities, including fear of retaliation from landlords and fear of deportation. To ensure that BIPOC, working class, and immigrant communities, particularly tenants, can effectively organize to protect their neighborhoods and homes, I will create workshops that are culturally informed and language accessible that will inform constituents on how to

	begin organizing and mobilizing in their neighborhoods and on their legal rights and protections when engaging in this work.
What is your vision for the Brooklyn Democratic Party?	<p>A Biden/Harris administration does not mean an immediate victory and relief for those who are most marginalized by the government -- BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ folks, immigrant folks, working class folks, folks who are disabled, etc. Even under a Biden/Harris administration, it is important that local and state governments continue to push for progressive policies especially policies that will help communities deeply impacted by the Trump administration.</p> <p>My vision for the Brooklyn Democratic Party is to listen to the voices of constituents, especially those who are most marginalized, and to start advocating for policies that work for us all. In the midst of a climate crisis, it is important for the Brooklyn Democratic Party and the national Democratic Party to support the Green New Deal. When many Americans cannot access healthcare during a pandemic, it is important to support Medicare for All. To do this, I believe the Brooklyn Democratic Party has to begin working with more grassroots organizers, especially BIPOC organizers, and begin to embrace organizing as an effective way to make systemic changes. In addition, the Brooklyn Democratic Party needs to be more inclusive and throw their support behind more BIPOC candidates and candidates from working class backgrounds as opposed to supporting establishment and legacy candidates.</p>
New Kings Democrats has proposed several <u>rules changes</u> to be considered by the County Committee. Do you support the proposals? If elected, will you advocate for these and other reforms that democratize power within the County Committee?	I support the proposals because it allows the meetings to be more accessible and to decentralize power within the committee. If elected, I will advocate for these and other reforms.
How much money have you raised for this campaign? What are the major sources?	<b>Our campaign has raised over \$58K total as of the time of submitting this endorsement form. The majority of these donations are under \$175 and mostly from the district and the City. As of our statement 5 filing, I had the largest small dollar donations, the largest matching fund total, and the most in-district donations.</b>
Are you accepting campaign contributions from law enforcement	No

unions?	
What endorsements have you received from publications, electeds, community leaders, or political organizations?	21 in 21, TREEage, Women of Color for Progress
Of the elected officials in the NYC Council, who do you admire most and why?	<p>I admire Council Member Carlina Rivera.</p> <p>Council Member Rivera’s work while in Council has uplifted women and working class folks in the City. During her time as co-chair of the Women’s Caucus, she was proactive about abortion funds and secured \$250,000 for the New York Abortion Access Fund. Council Member Rivera has also been a vocal advocate of CLTs in the City and introduced the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (COPA). Community Land Trusts are at the center of our affordable housing platform and if elected, I aim to expand on Council Member Rivera’s work and advocacy for CLTs in the City.</p> <p>Council Member Rivera also effectively took the lead on the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project, balancing out the impending need for resiliency infrastructure in the Lower East Side and the concerns of the local community.</p> <p>Council Member Rivera listened to and advocated for her community - who were concerned that the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project would close East River Park, and that the City did not properly inform community members about project impacts. Rivera secured phased construction for the project, which would allow portions of East River Park to still be opened during construction.</p> <p>Finally as a woman of color in politics, I look up to Council Member Rivera. She serves as representation for WOC who want to run for office and she amplifies this work through her involvement with Women of Color for Progress, an organization committed to elect more WOC into public office and create a pipeline for WOC political leaders. This work is crucial in creating an equitable government, particularly in District 39, a district that has never been represented by a woman.</p>
What are some of the best ways you think New York City residents can best participate in civic life?	Participatory Budgeting is rooted in democratizing power over public funds, which has led to critical and creative reinvestments in our schools, streets, and parks conceived of and voted on by the people in my district. Participatory budgeting is one of the few ways all New Yorkers, regardless of age or citizenship status, are able to meaningfully engage in civic life. Participatory budgeting is not an excuse for austerity budgets and is not perfect - and like other forms of democracy can unintentionally amplify the voices of more powerful, affluent, and white populations - but I have been intentional about

	<p>centering marginalized voices in the PB process, and transferring power to youth and women of color in my district.</p> <p>In my capacity as PB lead, I've transformed the district's participatory budgeting volunteer leadership infrastructure by recruiting and onboarding youth and women of color leaders. As a result of these intentional additions, ideation and final projects reflect the needs of youth, women, and often marginalized Muslim women, like the 10-week self-defense workshops facilitated by Malikah, an organization led by Muslim women, and peer-to-peer workshops to destigmatize reproductive and sexual health for middle schoolers at MS 442.</p> <p>I have also worked closely with the School Construction Authority and schools in the district to secure funding through participatory budgeting to repair our school buildings. As a part of this participatory budgeting project, I have worked alongside students and parents in advocating for their needs to create an accessible, equitable, and inclusive education system.</p> <p>Participatory budgeting recognizes budgets as moral documents and allows for constituents to take an active role in how discretionary funding within the district is spent. It is important for the Council to facilitate community control of budgets using participatory budgeting to sustain the resources our communities need. Engaging our neighborhoods in this process is not easy work and is not intuitive. Accessible community town halls and workshops can be tools used to brainstorm local needs and solutions for removing police from neighborhoods. Participatory budgeting is a crucial tool in investing back into our communities by working with the people who know it best, the constituents themselves.</p>
<p>What is one fun fact about you?</p>	<p>I learned how to ride a bike as an adult with a WOC bike collective!</p> <p>I want to fund bike cooperatives, bike shares, and transportation activists of color to teach other urbanists of color, like me, to feel comfortable bicycling!</p>

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

Candidate Signature:  Date: November 16, 2020

***You must sign this questionnaire! When complete, please email your signed and scanned questionnaire as a PDF to [politics@newkingsdemocrats.com](mailto:politics@newkingsdemocrats.com)***