

# The Peace and Freedom Party

## 2012 Presidential Candidate Questionnaire

Stewart Alexander

### **I. Introduction**

I currently work as an automobile sales consultant. This work has brought me into direct contact with the public, has provided me with an insider's look into problems with our financial system and has taught me many lessons about the hazards of consumer debt.

I was born in Newport News, Virginia; however, I have lived in California since I was a child. My earliest political memory was meeting Malcolm X with my father. Malcolm came to a local mosque in Watts and my father brought me along to hear him speak. I don't remember anything particular about what he said, but I do remember how seriously he took his task. I intend to employ an equal amount of seriousness with this Presidential campaign.

I graduated from George Washington High in Los Angeles in 1970 and attended college for a year and a half at Los Angeles Trade Technical College and the California State University at Dominguez Hills California. In the U.S. Air Force, I was trained as an air passenger specialist, air cargo specialist, and packing and crating specialist.

I am a seasoned political activist. I first began as a political organizer in 1979. I was a candidate for mayor of Los Angeles in 1989 and I was the Peace and Freedom Party candidate for California lieutenant governor in 2006 receiving 43,300 statewide votes. I was a candidate for president of the United States with the Peace and Freedom Party in 2007. In 2007, I was nominated for vice president of the United States with the Socialist Party USA and then, in 2011, I was nominated as the U.S. presidential nominee for the Socialist Party USA. I have been actively seeking the presidential nomination for the Peace and Freedom Party since 2010.

In 1986, I worked with the Florida Consumer Action Network as a political activist; I worked with the Long Island Citizens Campaign and was a political talk show host on KTYM Radio from the end of 1986 to 1989.

When millions of people see me, they see someone that has represented the Peace and Freedom Party, the Socialist Party USA and, more generally, the cause of socialism. My awakening and birth into socialism was with the Peace and Freedom Party in 1998. I can say, the Peace and Freedom Party is my mother, the Socialist Party USA is my father, and socialism is my life. My mentors from the Peace and Freedom Party include: Kevin Akin, C.T. Weber, Jack Harrison, Norma Harrison, Maggie Phair, John Reiger and Tom

Condit. I have promoted the Peace and Freedom Party for more than a decade doing voter registration drives to get PFP candidates on the California ballot. I also introduced the PFP Supporting Membership program that proved to be very successful in retaining party membership and as a vehicle for fundraising. I have publicly promoted the PFP on radio, on television and on the internet. People have contacted me from around the world interested in my campaigns for the party and regarding their interest in the work of the PFP. As a U.S. presidential candidate, I will be the ambassador for the Peace and Freedom Party, the Socialist Party USA, for working people and for the worldwide socialist movement.

When I learned of the Peace and Freedom Party in 1998, it was an excellent pairing with my life and exemplified what I thought a working class party should represent; working people. As a U.S. presidential candidate, I can relate to the struggles of working people. I have worked as a retail clerk of Safeway Stores, I was a license general contractor, I worked as a warehouseman, I managed a housecleaning business, I managed a nurse's registry, I have worked as a political activist for working people, and I worked on the assembly line building L-1011 passenger jets for Lockheed Aircraft in Burbank, California. I have had union membership with the Teamsters as a warehouseman, the retail clerks union, and the machinist union.

## **II. Specific Topics.**

### **1) Foreign Policy**

As a socialist and as the candidate of the Peace and Freedom Party my goal will be to put forward positions that aim to dismantle the US war machine. I want to make clear that my politics are not just anti-war. Instead, I support an anti-militarist and pro-peace agenda. This begins with immediate demands such as reducing the Military Budget by 50%, ending the current wars and occupations (including the violent drone attacks on the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan) and criminally prosecuting the military and civilian officials responsible for involving the United States in undeclared, unconstitutional, or illegal wars including those who created the illegal confinement facilities and authorized the use of torture in Guantanamo Bay.

A socialist President could also be instrumental in creating world peace. I support removing the United States from NATO and ending all international military, police and security aid to foreign countries, especially to known human rights violators such as the nations of Egypt, Israel and Colombia. These measures, in addition to the responsible elimination of weapons of mass destruction, will send a clear message to the world – the American people and the American government are finally committed to peace.

Wars are very serious affairs. Inevitably, it is the children of poor and working class people all over the world that pay a high cost for them. That is why I would also propose that any future wars or military intervention would require a binding popular vote of the

people. I should be clear. I consider economic sanctions as war by another name – they result in extreme deprivation for civilians and make use of troops nearly inevitable. This is the path Obama has the US headed for with Iran. I would challenge this war drive as a Presidential candidate by calling for an end to the escalation against Iran. I think this campaign can help to develop a democratically enforced Human Rights perspective that recognizes the infinite preciousness of each individual in the world.

## **2) Economy.**

Our economic plan begins with a commitment to a full employment economy. The only way to accomplish this is to implement programs that utilize the core beliefs of democratic socialism – namely that the lives of people are more important than the defense of private property. Things like a basic income guarantee, Federal funding for a worker owned and run cooperative sector and public works projects that aim to make a green transition through infrastructure development are just a few of the proposals that would transform our society from a playground for the 1% to one that encourages worker ownership and control of businesses.

Since most of us will spend most of our adult lives at work, I think it is essential for our workplaces to operate democratically. This idea runs absolutely contrary to the notion of the corporation – an entity that Noam Chomsky correctly described as “unaccountable private tyrannies.” When I talk about worker’s rights, I do not just mean creating small experimental worker owned and run cooperatives. I mean that every worker should have the right to transform their own workplace into a space that is run democratically. In some instances this will mean forming a trade union – and workers should have the right to do so without employer interference – and in other instances this might mean that workers organize to transform the worksite into a large-scale worker owned and run cooperative or a publicly owned enterprise. A socialist economy would aim to put an end to the reign of multinational corporations by allowing working people to organize democratically.

Public ownership, also known as nationalization, will certainly be a part of a socialist economy. Key sectors, for instance the energy sector, need to be managed on a national level for two important reasons. In the case of energy, it is critical that the growing sectors of the democratic economy be guaranteed an energy supply by an entity that is run like a highly regulated public utility. Second, as we have seen in the Gulf of Mexico with BP, the Exxon Valdez in Alaska and with the Global Warming we experience every day, we must make an immediate transition to clean and renewable energy sources. Private profits prevent this transition from happening rapidly. A publicly owned energy sector would place the interests of people and the environment ahead of profits.

Similarly, since 2008 we have experienced a banking and financial sector that has looted public funds while evicting millions of people from their homes. We need a banking and financial sector that serves the needs of the people. The immediate need is to place a moratorium on all foreclosures. I would issue that order as President. Yet, we also need

a banking and financial that is publicly owned – one that is able to move funds from one location to another without making that act contingent on profit accumulation. As the Occupy Wall Street movement has demonstrated, America is ready for such a change.

### **3) Health and Health Care.**

The private healthcare industry has always has two ideas in mind in regard to healthcare reform – either block all attempts at reform or stick the American people with a bad reform. For decades, the first idea held sway. Then in 2009, the growing anger of the American people, 45 million of whom had no health insurance coverage, forced the healthcare companies to switch to the second idea – the bad reform. They found a willing partner in President Barack Obama and the Democrats who drowned out demands for a single-payer system and passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

This bad reform will use public funds to subsidize private health insurers that sell junk healthcare plans to the uninsured. More important for the private health insurance companies, this act insures their continued ability to accumulate profits.

I believe that America is ready to move not only to a single-payer system, but eventually to a fully socialized medical system. Millions of people have experienced claims being denied, healthcare debt fueled bankruptcies, bad health and even deaths all as a result of the private control of healthcare. Single-payer would move us forward by eliminating the corrupting role of private health insurers.

However, a key structural problem is the lack of primary care facilities. Simply put, if all the people who need primary medical care attempted to receive it, the system would be overwhelmed. This is precisely why we need to extend public ownership to medical facilities – so that a rational plan can be developed to satisfy people’s healthcare needs. Private ownership will never allow this.

A socialized medical system would be the best way to guarantee universal access to all the medical services people need. This includes primary care and also a full range of high-quality and free Family Planning resources including community-based sex education, contraceptives and abortion services.

### **4) Civil Rights.**

The shooting death of 17 year old Trayvon Martin clearly demonstrates that we have a long way to go in this country when it comes to ensuring that the Civil Rights of all people are protected. I would use the Peace and Freedom nomination as a platform to speak against the ills of racism – to discuss not only my own experiences of discrimination, but to shine light on the systematic abuses of police forces throughout this country and to denounce the deeply racist policies that lead to the mass incarceration of young people of color. In some cases this will mean making direct proposals for change, but it may also often mean educating the people in the philosophy of social solidarity that

is so important for a socialist society and is diametrically opposed to the fear and racism of capitalism.

In the larger picture, we need to begin to dismantle the punitive prison system. With nearly 6 million people in the country under some form of “correctional supervision,” the US has certainly become a prison nation. A socialist economy that provides jobs and educational opportunities to all people will help alleviate some of this. The decriminalization of drugs will also take a large chunk out of the prison population. I would also propose making a robust investment in alternatives to prison – especially programs of restorative justice. Socialist ideas of solidarity, compassion and justice offer a new value system from which to judge current criminal justice system.

This is equally true at the Federal level where domestic spying has reached new highs under the Obama administration. My campaign supports a complete dismantlement of the security apparatus that has been created post-911. This includes restoring the most elementary of democratic rights, Habeas Corpus, by repealing the National Defense Authorization Act and restoring civil liberties by revoking the Patriot Act. Both Acts send the country down a dangerous path that will eliminate our privacy and freedom.

Freedom is precisely why I support things like Gay Marriage. Each and every person in the country should have the right to live their lives in any way they wish. As a Presidential candidate, I would speak in favor of this right to marriage, in favor of the right of same sex couples to adopt children and in favor of the right of all people to live, worship and associate as they see fit.

### **5) Immigration.**

In the same way that socialism seeks to place human needs at the forefront of our economic policy, we should place human needs at the center of proposals around immigration. I favor a policy of open borders – where workers from any country can pass freely and safely between national lines. Such a policy would make our society more open, would reduce the increasing number of human rights violations that occur at our borders and would add to the cultural vibrancy of our communities.

An open borders policy would force a change in the way Local, State and Federal agencies deal with immigrants. A non-punitive residency based approach to tracking immigrants, linked to the need for things like driver’s licenses and Census studies, would balance the need for information with a human rights perspective. The further enforcement of worksite safety regulations, a limit on hours worked per week for all workers and the universalization of the right to organize on the workplace to include non-citizen residents would alleviate many of the current abuses.

Reforms at the Federal level such as the current push to pass the Dream Act reflect the growing desire of recent immigrants to be fully integrated into American society. Yet, the Dream Act will offer very restricted avenues to citizenship. I support full amnesty for all those people who reside in the US. While we should extend full rights to all non-

citizens, we should also develop a vigorous citizenship program that encourages people to become citizens and provides the necessary educational supports to do so. America can become a shining light of international solidarity among working people by opening its borders to all.

## **6) Education.**

The Federal Government has an obligation to provide free, high-quality education to all people in this country from the cradle to the grave. This includes open admission to educational facilities from pre-K until graduate school. Our country came the closest to providing such guarantees in the post-World War II period with the G.I. Bill. Since then, the forces of market privatization have hijacked all levels of the education system creating a highly unequal system that provides magnificent opportunities for enrichment to the richest 1% while systematically under educating the 99%.

A socialist educational policy would result in a re-thinking of the role of the school in society. Too often schools are walled off from the rest of the society – surrounded by gates, shuttered during non-school hours and patrolled by uniformed police. I reject this vision of a school and view the school as a central institution in an empowered local community. The physical space of the school should be a resource to community members and the process of planning in the school should be opened up to include the voices of community members. While we certainly do need Federal standards to ensure a basic level of education is taking place, we also need significant community control of schools to ground them in local areas.

There is nothing inherently wrong with some State and Local funding of education although these measures should not be based on automatically unequal measures such as property taxes. However, the Federal government must ensure that a level playing field is maintained in terms of educational opportunity. Change at the Federal level can universally ensure that schools lunches are actually nutritious, that Civil Rights laws are enforced and that the curriculum includes enrichment through the arts. We should aim to foster a dynamic interaction between the national and local levels inside of the education system.

Further, when we mention school we should mention two other important aspects of schools in socialism. First, since schooling will be free, there will be little need for student debt. We must both re-shape the future and take responsibility for the past injustices of the education system. As a result, I would support a wiping clean of all current student debt. Second, we need to provide vigorous Federal funding to community-based schools that carry out the necessary tasks of Basic Education, GED education and English for Speakers of Other Languages schooling. These alternative schools are the places where our true commitment to education for everyone is tested out.

## **7) Environment.**

We need to radically re-think the relationship between humans and nature. Capitalism has reduced nature to a thing, an input, a cost of production. As a result, we have

experienced widespread ecological devastation over the past 100 years. One need only look at the depletion of the ancient Redwood Forest in Northern California to see the wanton disregard with which capitalism has treated nature. An eco-socialist perspective seeks to re-connect humanity with nature. We seek to build harmony between the two so that both may thrive.

Clearly, one part of this is to quickly transition to a society based on renewable energy sources. The most efficient way to do so would be through public ownership of the energy sector. To be clear, as long as capitalists can gain a profit while polluting the environment, they will do so. Nothing will stop them. No international treaty, no consumer campaign and no miniscule fine from a toothless Environmental Protection Agency. As long as capitalism can accumulate it will pollute.

We aim to change this by harnessing the dynamic power of change in energy policy at the Federal level and de-centralized experiments in renewable living at the local level. Ours is the first socialist project that cannot base itself on the offer of endless consumption. We must, instead, propose the alternative of a world in which safe organically produced foods, clean drinking water and a re-birth of nature become the norm and the goal of society. The alternative is a suicidal ecological descent that will rival the worst dystopian view of the future. The impending environmental crisis may finally sharpen the call of socialism or barbarism.

### **8) Election Improvement.**

Citizens United stands with the NDAA and the Patriot Act as shining symbols of the end of democracy in the United States. Consider Citizens United as neoliberalism's high point in the US and a low point for the notion of Human Rights and economic justice. As a presidential candidate, I would speak against Citizens United and call for Federal legislation that strips corporations of the right to personhood. This would be a part of a larger pro-democracy push that is already underway in the various Occupy movements throughout the country. Simply put, corporations have hijacked an already fundamentally flawed electoral process and are transforming it into their own hierarchical image of a society where they get to choose the candidates based on funding and exclude competitors by restricting ballot access.

Getting money out of politics is a realistic goal though it cuts against the values of the capitalist system of zero-sum competition. Current proposals for campaign finance reform offer little possibility for change. Instead, three key reforms would radically transform the US electoral system by creating a truly democratic process – public funding of elections, universal ballot access laws and proportional representation.

The public funding of elections would effectively eliminate the corrupting effect of corporate money in the elections. Public financing in combination with strict curbs on corporate lobbying would begin to challenge corporate hegemony in the elections. Pairing this with Federal legislation that creates a universal ballot access law and one that

brings candidate debates under democratic control would push the balance toward the inclusion of multiple voices and perspectives in our electoral system.

Creating a system of Proportional Representation would enshrine the positive changes made in the public financing of elections. I maintain a firm commitment to the notion that we need many voices inside of our electoral system in order to ensure a functional democracy. The Democrats and Republicans represent the narrow interests of the 1% and their corporate financiers. We need a system that establishes democracy – proportional representation is that system.

### **9) Your Campaign.**

My campaign as the Peace and Freedom party candidate for President of the United States would place me in the role of being an ambassador for socialism. I would like to teach the people of California about the great contributions that socialists have made to US history – how we created the trade union movement, advanced demands for Woman's Suffrage, defended the Right to Free Speech (often times from jail), resisted drives to imperialist war, joined and helped to organize the Civil Rights movement and struggled to create many of the social programs that people enjoy today including Social Security, Medicare and Unemployment Benefits. In this way, I will be doing my part as an educator, walking in the footsteps of people like Howard Zinn.

But I also want to inspire people to dream about a new kind of socialism. A socialism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century which they can help to create themselves through sharing their ideas, through meeting with other people in their communities and on their worksites and, ultimately, through taking political action. What I can offer that Obama cannot is a plan for the day after the election ends. Nothing would make me happier than to have my campaigning as a candidate be the way in which new people become connected to the socialist politics offered by the Peace and Freedom Party. If just one person becomes engaged in a fight to end police brutality, or a struggle for higher wages and dignity or a movement against environmental racism in their neighborhood, then my campaign would have been a success.

Ultimately, a socialist electoral campaign can only do so much. We can use the media opportunities we are afforded to encourage people to fight back. We can take a direct action to demand inclusion into the debates. And we can expose the campaign finances of the Democrats and Republicans publicly to show just how much they are owned by the 1%. Yet, our potential can only be realized when measured by how much we strengthen the organizations we represent. This is precisely why I am seeking the Peace and Freedom nomination – in order to make a contribution to a political project rooted in the idea of human liberation. We can succeed as candidates by inspiring confidence in the people to act and by serving as the keeper of the flame for the idea of a society organized around the fulfillment of human needs.