

The Peace and Freedom Party

2012 Presidential Candidate Questionnaire

I. Introduction

• What is your occupation? Where are you from?

I was born in Virginia and moved at a young age to Philadelphia.

I spent much of my childhood living in North Philadelphia, in a Black working class neighborhood that suffered from extreme poverty and police repression. As a middle school student, I became an organizer with the Philadelphia Student Union, a citywide group struggling against racism and for increased funding for Philadelphia public schools.

After moving to Washington, D.C., I graduated from School Without Walls High School (class of 2002) and then Howard University (class of 2008).

I currently live in Los Angeles where I am pursuing a master's degree in teaching from the University of Southern California with the goal of becoming a public school teacher.

• Briefly describe your educational background, any past political campaigns, and any work you've done as an activist.

See above for educational background.

I became politically active as a middle school student. In 1996, I helped to lead a protest in which 2,000 students walked out of Philadelphia schools to advocate for increased public school funding.

I was living Washington, D.C., in September 2001. I was very aware of the ultra-militaristic response of the U.S. government, and the racist demonization of the Muslim and Arab community that was part of the war drive. I soon became a young leader in the new, mass anti-war movement. I began volunteering with the ANSWER Coalition (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) just days after it formed. I spoke out as a high school student organizer at ANSWER's first press conference on Sept. 24 and co-chaired the Sept. 29, 2001, national anti-war rally, the first mass action in the country after the 9/11 attacks that brought 25,000 people into the streets of D.C.

I traveled to Cuba in 2002 with Pastors for Peace and witnessed first-hand the accomplishments of a society that is organized to meet human needs, not the profit motive of a few greedy bankers and corporate owners.

While an undergraduate organizer at Howard University, I chaired and spoke at every national anti-war rally organized by the ANSWER

Coalition, including the historic anti-war rally on Jan. 18, 2003, which drew over 500,000 people into the streets to stop the Iraq war before it started.

I have represented the U.S. anti-war movement and the Party for Socialism and Liberation at important conferences and mass gatherings across the globe.

In the Summer of 2003, I went to France and Switzerland to participate in international anti-war forums and protest the G8 summit in Evian. One year later, I was the youngest delegate to the World Meeting of Artists and Intellectuals in Defense of Humanity in Venezuela, hosted by President Hugo Chavez and the Venezuelan government.

I represented the U.S. anti-war movement at the 3rd General Assembly of the Asia Wide Campaign Against the U.S. and Japanese Aggression and Domination of Asia in 2009. There, I met with activists from all over Asia, who were involved in the struggle against the continued presence of the U.S. military in their respective countries.

For over a decade, I has helped to lead countless demonstrations across the country against imperialist wars, racism, budget cuts, tuition hikes, police brutality, anti-LGBT bigotry, and in support of immigrant rights, women's rights and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, and have been a tireless advocate for the rights of working people and for socialism.

I am a founding member of the Party for Socialism and Liberation and a member of the PSL's Central Committee.

• Describe how your candidacy would promote the Peace and Freedom Party ("PFP"), and how you expect the PFP to promote your candidacy.

We are running a dynamic campaign that has already attracted media interest, particularly African-American media. There are many people across California and in many other states as well who are working on the campaign, including many young people. I believe that my campaign can particularly help attract young people and people of color to PFP. If I win the PFP nomination, my campaign will promote PFP nationally. I would identify myself as the candidate of PFP as well as PSL in all the states where we campaign.

I would expect that the PFP as a whole would vigorously promote my campaign along with those of the other PFP candidates.

• What attracts you to the PFP? What past involvement have you had with it?

I am a socialist and a PFP registrant. While my personal involvement with PFP is recent, the PSL has participated in PFP since its founding in 2004.

• Do you have any experience that would be particularly useful to you as a presidential candidate – such as public speaking experience, union organizing experience, teaching experience, or the like?

Yes, as you can see, I have been an activist and an organizer for many years. I have helped build large demonstrations and spoken as a young leader in the anti-war movement at many different events across the US and around the world. I have worked on countless community rallies, teach-ins, forums, walk-outs and very many different kinds of protests and struggle that have taken place in cities and towns all over the U.S. I have had the opportunity to meet and collaborate with activists from around the globe and I have a deep understanding of the many issues involved in the fight against capitalism and for a better world. I am a young socialist with a great deal of experience in the major struggles of the day, a great deal of optimism and energy and a proven dedication to fighting for justice for all people. I think all of this will be useful as a presidential candidate.

II. Specific Topics.

The following topics and questions highlight areas of concern to the PFP and its registrants. Please answer them in any form you deem appropriate, and in as much detail as you wish. We hope that your answers will reveal who you are, what you believe, how you would represent the PFP, what you would say to voters during your campaign. Although we would like to know about your particular brand of socialism, these questions are not framed with a socialist slant; they are phrased as if by the mainstream media, since that is what you are likely to encounter during your campaign. We hope your answers will help us distinguish you from other candidates seeking the PFP nomination, as well as from the candidates of the other political parties.

1) Foreign Policy. Please tell us what you think the foreign policy of the United States should be. In your answer, you may choose to address one or more of the following related questions:

a) What changes do you propose to the current defense budget?

The United States has a military budget, not a defense budget. No other country's government is thinking of invading the United States – it has now been 198 years since that happened. The U.S. military constitutes the main threat of war in the world. The more than 900 U.S. bases around the world should all be shut down, all nuclear weapons dismantled, and all troops, planes and ships brought back. The real annual military budget of more than \$1 trillion should be converted to meeting people's needs here

and paying reparations to countries which have been devastated by U.S. invasions, sanctions and other forms of aggression.

b) How would you decide whether or not to use U.S. military resources in any particular foreign conflict?

There is no justification for imperialist war or intervention.

c) Should the United States use economic sanctions to advance its foreign policy? If so, under what circumstances?

No.

2) Economy. What would you do to achieve socialism in the U.S.? You may choose to address the following related questions in your response:

Socialism can only be achieved through the rise of a mass, revolutionary workers movement that overturns the capitalist system.

a) What sort of welfare programs do you think should exist in the U.S.? Do you support a guaranteed annual income for all U.S. citizens?

Every person should have the right to a good-paying job or a living income.

b) Do you support the nationalization of any industry?

All industries need to be nationalized in order to order to build a socialist planned economy.

c) What do you think should be done about our nation's foreclosure crisis?

There should be an immediate moratorium on foreclosures and evictions. Everyone should have the right to good, quality housing.

d) What steps would you take to reduce unemployment?

#1 – The trillion dollar+ military budget should be converted to repair the country's infrastructure, build new schools, health clinics, mass transit, renewable energy facilities, childcare centers, etc. Millions of new construction and staffing jobs would be created. \$500 billion = 10 million jobs @\$50,000/year.

e) What specific legislation would you support to improve workers' rights?

Every worker should have the right to a union. As long as capitalism exists, employers should be barred from interfering in any way with the union organizing process, and face criminal charges if they do interfere. A speedy card check process should replace the present one.

3) Health and Health Care. Please outline your approach to health care. In your response, you may wish to address the following:

a) Should there be a national health care policy? If so, what should it be?

There should a national health care system created, with single-payer, universal care. Health care should be free.

b) What are the key problems with health care in the U.S. today?

The lack of the above.

c) What are your positions on abortion, contraception, and stem cell research?

I support full reproductive rights, including the right to free, safe, legal abortion and contraception, and stem cell research.

4) Civil Rights. Please outline your approach to civil rights. In answering, you may choose to answer any or all of the following:

a) What parts of the Patriot Act should be eliminated and what, if anything, should be retained?

The Patriot Act should be eliminated.

b) What do you think the chief aims of the criminal justice system should be, and what are your views on the death penalty?

The existing “justice” system is racist and anti-working class. The system itself -- and particularly the mass incarceration of more than 2 million people -- is a crime against humanity. The aim of a real justice system should be rehabilitation. Solitary confinement should be outlawed and the death penalty abolished. Most prison sentences are outrageously long, longer than virtually every other country. We have to fight the epidemic of racist police brutality.

U.S. leaders who have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity around the world and inside the United States should be prosecuted, as should the executives of the big banks and other industries guilty of economic crimes.

c) What is your position on “gay marriage,” and what can the President do to facilitate the adoption of that position?

I support marriage equality. Like on all issues, the president has unique access to the media and can have a huge impact on public opinion. If not captive to the capitalist structure, the president could, for example, call for a mass mobilization to Washington on the issue of marriage equality, or other civil rights, or jobs, or health care, or taxing the rich, or ending foreclosures, etc., etc., etc., and millions of people would occupy the capital.

5) Immigration. Please outline your approach to immigration issues. In answering, you may choose to answer any or all of the following:

a) What would the goals of your immigration policy be?

Full rights for all – including the right to vote – regardless of citizenship status.

b) What is the appropriate role of the Federal Government in regulating, policing, and/or tracking immigration into the U.S.?

NAFTA, CAFTA and other “free trade” agreements must be abolished – these are really “free capital” agreements. The U.S. should pay reparations to countries in Latin America, Asia and elsewhere for damage done. ICE should be eliminated and

c) What should the federal government do with regard to the millions of people now in the U.S., often labeled “illegal immigrants”?

Immediate amnesty/legalization, end repression of immigrants.

6) Education. Please outline your views on how to improve the educational system. You may choose to answer any or all of these questions in your response:

a) What obligations does the federal government have with regards to providing education the people within the U.S. borders?

Education from pre-school through university should be free and available to all.

b) Should state and/or local governments be able to regulate the content of public school curricula?

Under a socialist system, a democratically elected national school board in conjunction with the teachers union and elected representatives of students should determine curricula.

c) How should education in the U.S. be paid for?

Taxing the rich, eliminating the military budget.

7) Environment. Please outline your approach to environmental issues. In answering, you may choose to answer any or all of the questions below:

a) As president, what would you do to limit pollution and preserve our natural resources?

Non-renewable natural resources of all kinds are being rapidly depleted for the sake of maximizing profit. A long-term, sustainable, socialist economic system is the only way this can be stopped. This is also the only real solution to the crisis of climate change, pollution, and environmental degradation of all kinds.

b) Would your actions described above negatively impact industry?

The capitalists would be negatively impacted and should be. The necessary actions would create millions of new jobs.

c) Do you advocate a national energy policy? If so, please describe it.

See a). There must be a radical turn toward building up mass transit and the vastly expanded use of renewable energy.

8) Election Improvement. Please outline your approach to improving the electoral process in U.S. In your answer, you may wish to answer some or all of the following questions:

a) What is your view of the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Citizens United* ruling?

It represents the culmination of “dollar democracy” and the rule of rich.

b) Is “get the money out of politics” a realistic goal? If so, how do you think that goal could be accomplished?

Money has dominated politics in the United States and in all capitalist systems. Real election reform – like real health care reform – will come about right after a revolution.

What can be done to loosen the two major parties’ stranglehold on the electoral process?

By building a mass workers’ and people’s movement that can bring about a new system.

9) Your Campaign. What are the realistic goals of your campaign, and what are your strategies for achieving those goals? In your response, consider answering the following:

a) What would you most like to teach voters about socialism?

That it represents the only realistic alternative to the militarism, oppression, exploitation and environmental destruction that is accelerating and making life harder and more dangerous for the vast majority of people in the world.

c) What makes you more appealing to “the 99%” than Barack Obama, and how can you most effectively communicate that?

I have actually been a part of the Occupy movement, the anti-racist, women’s and anti-war movements. I come from and can speak to the real interests of the working class in general and the African-American community in particular.

c) If you believe that socialist candidates have generally failed to live up to their potential in U.S. political history, do you have any explanation for why that is? How do you think socialist candidates could succeed in the future?

I think that many socialist candidates have conducted strong campaigns in the past, some less so. But the United States has for decades been the center of anti-communism and anti-socialism in the world. The post-WW II era of relative prosperity provided a material basis for the idea of “American exceptionalism.” That period has come to an end for tens of millions of people, as the “natural process” of capitalism has driven down real wages and benefits. Today, more than 145 million people in the United States are categorized as either living in poverty or as “low-income.” There is no way out of this growing crisis, and the others described above, under capitalism. I believe that we have a tremendous opportunity to reach millions of people in 2012 with the message that only socialism can resolve these problems.

