

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE: BACKGROUND

We have established a questionnaire/interview process in which we will invite candidates to participate as a way to gather both objective and subjective information. This information will be synthesized and used in the selection of the candidates we choose to endorse. As a multi-media outlet with a primary focus on the African-American community, we've established criterion by which we will select the candidates for endorsement. The process of setting the criterion began with a critical analysis of the current state of African Americans in Memphis.

A brief statistical and empirical journey revealed the following:

- According to the 2000 Census, Memphis had the 8th largest African-American population percentage-wise at 61.9 percent, representing 402,367 people.
- According to the 1997 Census data, there were 10,931 black-owned businesses in Memphis and of that number only 1,335 had paid employees. Among those 1,335 businesses, average annual revenues were \$357,000 in contrast to average annual sales for white-owned firms (with employees) of \$4,818,000. Among the total number of black-owned firms, average revenues were only \$64,000 per year. More importantly, the total amount of revenues attributed to black-owned business was less than one-tenth of one percent of all revenues generated by all businesses in the Memphis-MSA. (That's \$705,000/\$90,391,440,000.)
- According to the U.S Department of Labor unemployment figures for 2009, the percentage for unemployment among African-American men in Tennessee was 20.2 percent compared with 11.1 percent for white men and 17.1 percent for Hispanic men. In some areas of Memphis it was estimated that the rate was 50 percent or more and overall the rate was approximately 30 percent.
- According to www.city-data.com, there is nearly a 30 percent poverty rate in the African-American community of Memphis, representing over 132,000 residents. There are neighborhoods where over 90 percent of the residents live at or below the nationally defined poverty rate. According to city-data statistics, there are fewer than 20,000 white residents living at or below the poverty rate and negligible numbers of other represented residents of other races.
- According to statistics released last year by Memphis City Schools, only 66.9 percent of the students are graduating, indicating a 33 percent dropout rate in a district that is largely African American. According to a 2008 report by the Schott Foundation for Public Education, Memphis had the nation's highest gap in graduation rates between black males and white males, standing at 30 percent in 2005/2006.

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- Significant disparities also exist in imprisonment rates, health care, crime and violence and more importantly in the availability of resources and opportunities that would open the door for these circumstances to begin to dynamically or even moderately shift towards more positive trends.

From our point of view candidates must intrinsically understand these dynamics and how they impact the welfare of our entire city. We will endorse candidates- regardless of race or party affiliation- that represent the best vision, that can present solution-oriented plans of action, and exhibit the best ability to execute and deliver on their plans to address the issues and disparities facing the citizens of Memphis.

We understand that the issues that exist in Memphis and Shelby County are broad and complex. We know that each candidate must serve and govern in the interest of all voters. However, it is also our contention that understanding the severity and significance of the issues confronting black Memphis and working to address those issues will not only serve to uplift the African-American population of Memphis, but in doing so will improve the quality of life for all Memphians, hopefully allowing us to ultimately and truly be "One Memphis."

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CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
Please return by Friday, April 16, 2010

Vision and Plans

What is your vision for Memphis?

My vision for Shelby County begins with finding solutions to our county's most critical issues. We must improve our economic development and reduce our debt. While doing so, we must continue to address our many public safety concerns. We also have an obligation to work to ensure our young people have access to the best education possible. Finally, we have to ensure that our Regional Medical Center will be sustainable for years to come.

We must also bring back a spirit of trust and pride in our government and our county. Shelby County has so much to offer to its citizens. We have wonderful institutions of higher education, college sports, professional sports, the arts, music, magnificent parks, and most importantly our citizens. I want to work with all our communities to continue to make Shelby County an even better place to live.

What is your platform or plan of action for the office that you are seeking? What do you want to ACCOMPLISH while in office and what problems must be addressed in order to achieve those goals and objectives?

I believe Shelby County has tremendous potential, and I believe I can help achieve that potential. In order to achieve that potential, we must first address our needs. Our needs are common with all urban areas: jobs, economic development, public safety, and education. Additionally, our flagship medical facility, the MED, must be properly funded to meet our increasing needs.

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How do you plan to address the issues listed above through the office you desire to hold?

To enhance our economic development, Shelby County should focus on what I call "smarter growth." This involves long range planning, utilizing existing infrastructure such as roads, schools, greenways, retail and medical industries, and recreation to name a few. Much has been invested in infrastructure that is currently underutilized, partly as a result of poor planning for growth over the years. Our objective should be to capitalize on services existing but not fully utilized.

Furthermore, economic growth begins with a safe, attractive community where people want to live and industries desire to locate. Together we must continue to work towards both of these goals. In order to aid economic growth, we will strengthen our talented, educated workforce to further enable them to meet the standards of a demanding and complex technical society.

We must also continue to reduce our debt. A debt reduction plan is already in place and working, but it operates slowly. Fiscal discipline will see slow progress in this area over the next 20 years. The key to accelerated progress will be through a stronger economy and economic development resulting in an improved revenue stream. Increased taxation is not the answer.

Finally, funding problems regarding the MED are a result of many sources: the increasing number of uninsured individuals requiring treatment, partial reimbursement from the state for this treatment, and little financial help from Mississippi and Arkansas for treating their residents who have no insurance. The County has an obligation to provide public health services. That obligation could be enhanced by more reliance on health clinics rather than The MED. Reductions in cost could be achieved by investing in more health clinics. A renewed dialogue at the state and local level with a change in administrations at both levels should focus on more reimbursement equity for MED services rendered.

Qualifications and Experience

Why are you running for elected office?

My decision to run for Shelby County Mayor hinged on my belief that Shelby County has tremendous potential, and I believe I can help achieve that potential. For eight years as your Sheriff, I have proven that I can get the job done. Good management principles and a progressive vision can accomplish many goals in the years ahead.

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What makes you qualified for holding an office? What previous experience lends itself to success in the office? What have you accomplished?

I served most of my professional life as a successful public administrator providing positive and visionary leadership, managing multi-million dollar budgets and thousands of employees. Serving as Shelby County Sheriff for the past eight years, I have fixed serious budget problems, freed the jail from an embarrassing and costly federal oversight, and made real progress in the fight against crime. I have been nationally recognized for these and other administrative matters. I want to apply the same management principles and problem-solving methods to the Office of Mayor. I see a job to do, and I believe I can do it. I have also been in every neighborhood in Shelby County, often in times of stress. I have a good sense of the issues facing the citizens of Shelby County, and this unique experience best qualifies me to be Shelby County Mayor.

Who has endorsed or expressed support for your candidacy?

The Coalition For A Better Memphis has given me its highest ranking among all mayoral candidates and among all political parties. I value this most because it was a non-partisan evaluation representing a cross section of our Shelby County community. My list of financial supporters, which is listed online, reflects support from neighborhood leaders, small business owners, corporate and community leaders, as well as citizens both in Memphis and in the suburbs. This is truly a diverse representation of Shelby County.

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Ability to Implement Initiatives

A clear vision and a plan for the future are important, but it means nothing if a candidate does not have the ability to get anything accomplished.

How would you tackle the issues identified as critical for the city/county from the seat you are seeking?

As discussed earlier, I would use the same management principles I have demonstrated as Sheriff over the last eight years to tackle our county's most critical issues involving economic development, creating better jobs, improving education funding, reducing our debt, and helping to sustain the Med.

What opportunities do you see in working with other cities and counties in the metro area and how do you define your role in government and the overall role of government?

One major opportunity I see in working with other cities and counties in our metro area is working together to help find a solution for sustaining the Med. If the Med were closed, it would drastically affect our surrounding counties in Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi. We must collaborate to come up with new ideas and new possibilities for funding and a more efficient business model to make sure we do not lose the Med.

I would define a mayor's role in government as manager of the county's business and a facilitator for community lead initiatives. The mayor should bring the community and other government officials together to facilitate new ideas and a plan for the future of the county.

The overall role of government should be to reach across racial, ethnic, political, and social bounds to truly build coalitions with the singular goal of uniting Shelby County to promote our positive attributes. Additionally, we should continue building regional bonds with our neighboring states and counties to promote the mutual goals of economic development, tourism, and education advancement making us more attractive for future growth.

How would you go about building consensus or support to accomplish goals?

In order to build consensus or support for accomplishing goals, we must reach out to other government officials and the people in the community. We must reach across party lines and racial lines to work together to achieve these common goals. Government officials who fail to accomplish this task will be doing a disservice to the Shelby County citizens. Having the support of the community is crucial to the success of improving our county.

Would you demonstrate the integrity and fortitude to stand on principle to accomplish an important objective despite opposition or lack of popularity for an idea? Give an example. Provide past examples of experiences you had where that was the case?

Yes! Eight years ago, the Sheriff's Office was considered one of the worst law enforcement agencies in America. Today, it is considered one of the most efficient. Achieving this status required some tough decisions regarding budget control, man power utilization, training, and accountability. We were able to succeed by working positively with labor organizations, employee groups, the County Commission, and the Mayor. Together we partnered to achieve significant improvement and mutual understanding for the benefit of all of us.