



The Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

1015 18th Street, N.W., Suite 200, Washington, D.C., 20036 | 202-349-1498

| www.CaribbeanPac.org

Caribbean-American Political Action Committee (C-PAC) District of Columbia – 2020 Candidate Questionnaire

Please return the completed form via email to cpac.dmv@gmail.com by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, March 5, 2020. Responses will be shared with C-PAC’s membership.

Office Sought: DC Council Ward 4

Candidate’s Name: Janeese Lewis George

Current Occupation: Candidate

Party: Democrat

Campaign contact information (Address, Phone, Fax, Email, Website):

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1. What specific actions will you take to improve the well-being of your constituents and improve District services and access for all residents?

As the first candidate to qualify in Ward 4 under DC’s public-financing program, I am deeply committed to making sure our policies prioritize people over corporate and wealthy interests. Improving services and access for residents is rooted in community-driven and data-driven solutions. When it comes to constituent services, I will support legislative reforms (such as the Constituent Service Fund Reform Amendment Act Of 2019) to reduce the possibility of pay-to-play politics in our government. Every resident deserves attention, period. I will also prioritize making sure information about services are accessible to residents by reducing language barriers to information and expanding outreach into communities. We must:

- tackle the housing affordability crisis
- ensure affordable child care and quality neighborhood schools
- prevent crime and advance community safety
- create an inclusive economy
- create transportation equity
- fight for statehood
- demand accountability and integrity from elected leaders



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2. During recent legislative sessions, the D.C. Council advanced B23-0201, a bill to establish a District of Columbia Office of Caribbean Affairs (OCA), which is a long-standing priority of the Caribbean-American Community. Please explain your position on this legislation and whether you will support efforts to staff and fund the proposed office?

An independent office of Caribbean Affairs would help the DC government better understand the issues and needs of Caribbean-Americans, particularly as it relates to economic opportunity and housing, we see disparities in pay for Caribbean-Americans ([as highlighted in a December 2018 study by the Urban Institute](#)) and some housing burdens for renters. As Councilmember, I would support efforts to maintain a diverse city by lifting up our cultures and responding to community-driven needs. Caribbean-Americans contribute a great deal to the District and all of us (Caribbean-Americans and allies) should celebrate those accomplishments and make sure the concerns of this important community are heard and addressed.

3. What initiatives did you lead or support that impact Washington, D.C.'s Caribbean-American community?

Affordable housing (including expanding rent control) - The cost of living in Ward 4 (as a renter or owner) continues to rise and families, seniors, and immigrants are most impacted. We need to preserve existing housing, produce affordable housing (and hold developers accountable to produce the housing required), and protect housing for vulnerable communities. Housing discrimination is also a serious issue and we need to make sure landlords do not discriminate against Black and Brown tenants.

Supporting bold criminal justice reform - Our first and foremost priority should be to make sure all residents feel safe in the community. This includes reducing violent crime and police harassment/profiling. I will champion full implementation of the NEAR (Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results) Act to use evidence-based solutions to address crime instead of focusing on police-only solutions. We must dissolve all cooperation with ICE and continue to oppose detention centers in our community.

Closing the opportunity gap in education for children and adult learners. Making sure all students have access to a quality education is essential. In addition, for adults who are learning English or getting workforce training, we need to support programs that foster respect and build community.



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4. Are you familiar with the status and impact of Caribbean-American owned businesses in your community and throughout Washington, D.C.? How will you support the viability and competitiveness of the City's small, minority, veteran, women, and especially Caribbean-owned businesses? In addition, how will you improve procurement and contract opportunities for these businesses?

We've seen Caribbean-American owned businesses like Sweet Mango in Ward 4 and across the city close. These businesses not only offer residents variety but showcase cultures that are often overlooked. We need to be intentional about how we develop and implement policies so they do not adversely impact minority communities. The elimination of the Caribbean Carnival (along with the recession) had a severe impact on Caribbean owned business. Gentrification and rising costs for retail space has made it challenging for many minority businesses to stay open. As Councilmember, I would support legislation to focus on minority business development, grants, and professional development. I have already begun meeting with business leaders to examine ways to improve our current agencies and streamline processes to better serve the needs of business and consumers.

5. There are increased concerns regarding violence – especially gun violence – in many parts of the District. What are your proposals to address and stem violence with 21st century tools and policies?

The safety of residents is my top priority. As a former Assistant Attorney General, I focused on reducing crime and engaging youth offenders to address root issues. We must take a public health approach to gun violence. This includes immediate changes to how MPD interacts with communities to be more engaged, tracks data, and monitors potential violence. We must also fund non-police resources to assist in de-escalation. We need violence interrupters, counselors, and wraparound service providers to help address root causes. We've seen this strategy work in places like Chicago where violent crime has decreased by 50%. Most importantly, we must view this as a community response that brings residents, police, teachers, social services, and others together to address violence.

See my full statement on recent gun violence in Ward 4:

<https://www.janeese4dc.com/news/on-the-recent-gun-violence-in-our-community/>



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6. How do you propose increasing access to safe, quality, affordable mental and physical health care and services throughout the District of Columbia?

DC has a health crisis. We have closed access to nearby hospitals in our most vulnerable communities and have not held accountable unscrupulous health service providers who have left patients without running water or other adequate services. On a national level, we must support efforts to expand access to health care (including mental health services) with Medicare for All. I also support funding more resources for seniors and special needs residents to receive additional support and services within their community. Particularly in Ward 4, we need more community-based nonprofit services available to residents so they do not have to travel long distances for care.

7. Unfortunately, the challenges and concerns facing immigrants are increasing at an alarming rate. Do you support comprehensive immigration reform? How do you propose addressing the challenges facing DREAMers, the administration's suspension of temporary protective status for many D.C. residents, and the constant threats facing sanctuary cities?

We must pass the Sanctuary Values Act but standing up for immigrant communities must be more than just words. DCDOC is still handing over residents to ICE. We need to pass a permanent bill that prevents cooperation with ICE and includes better enforcement mechanisms with DCDOC fails to live up to the values passed. We must also expand and fund free legal services and fund support services for adult learning, childcare, and senior services. ICE has no place on DC streets and no agency, employee or entity of the District Government should be cooperating with ICE including the DOC. As councilmember, I will work to close the current loophole which allows D.C. DOC to notify ICE regarding the residency and release of inmates and ensure that we can truly call ourselves "a Sanctuary City."

8. There is growing attention and distress about the significant increase in lawsuits filed against District residents by debt collectors over the last few years. What is your position on the Debt Buying Limitation Amendment Act, which is pending before the D.C. Council's Committee on Business and Economic Development and the Council's Committee of the Whole?

D.C. ranked first nationwide in collection complaints per capita in 2018. As a [recent Washington City Paper highlighted](#), nearly 30% of DC residents are in debt collection and disproportionately people of color. I support the Debt Buying Limitation Amendment Act. This bill promotes



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economic and racial justice for DC residents by adding basic protections for residents being sued by debt buyers and debt collectors.

9. What concrete steps will you take to improve the District of Columbia's Public School system – including facilities and equipment, teacher treatment, relationships with parents, as well as education standards and test scores in all wards of the City?

Our city deserves an equitable public school system--anchored by strong neighborhood schools--that educates and empowers students and provides the necessary resources for teachers and families. Achieving equitable school funding, including adequate funding for early childhood education, will be my top priority as the Ward 4 Councilmember. We have already seen investments in universal pre-K pay off in reducing some of our opportunity gaps and promoting the participation of mothers in the labor force. It's time to take the next step in ensuring every child and their family has the support they need to thrive during their most developmentally critical years. In addition, English Language Learners need dedicated support to thrive in our schools. As a member of Council, I will fight to ensure that supplemental funding for English Language Learners is used properly for our students, including providing evidence-based professional development and curriculum for ELL staff. Supporting ELL students also means supporting their families. We need to be thinking comprehensively about all the ways to ensure all our schools are fully language-accessible to parents and caregivers of students who are English Language Learners. Students do better when their parents are able to advocate for their children's educational success.

As a proud DCPC graduate, I am committed to quality education for all and that is why I am proud to have the endorsement of the Washington Teachers' Union.

10. In Washington, D.C., many seniors seek to age in their homes and/or communities. What efforts will you take to improve service accessibility, support for families, and the quality of programs offered to the City's senior citizens?

As Councilmember, I'm committed to expanding affordable housing opportunities for seniors, bringing more health services (including ones to help seniors maintain mobility), and funding quality programs at our senior centers and recreation facilities. According to [Census data](#), 13% of seniors of 65+ live below the poverty line. DC already offers seniors reductions on housing costs



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but we can help stabilize housing by enacting the Reclaim Rent Control platform. Stabilizing housing costs will allow seniors to age in place and create opportunities for seniors to age in the community even when they can no longer live on their own. I would work to expand services to seniors including transportation options, health services, and increasing pedestrian safety/

11. What priority issues inspired your candidacy for political office?

Ward 4 has been home my whole life. I was born and raised on Second and Kennedy Street, right around the corner from Jackie Lee's and Phi Beta Sigma. My mom was and still is a postal worker serving the Ward 4 community. My grandmother was a lunch lady at Alice Deal Middle School. They both instilled in me the importance of education and hard work, and the responsibility of lifting as we climb.

I cherish Ward 4, which is why I care so much about what is happening here. The cost of housing is skyrocketing. The DC Council is engineered to serve major campaign donors, well-connected insiders, and big business interests rather than constituents. We have a two-tiered education system, and we're losing children to gun violence week after week. Many of us have two or three jobs yet struggle to house and feed our families. DC has the highest Black maternal mortality rate in the nation, yet hospitals are closing. It is getting costlier and more difficult to commute to school and work each day. Our city isn't prepared for the impact of climate change. And despite paying higher taxes per capita than any state in the nation, we do not yet have our fair representation in Congress.

All of these things are deeply connected. To solve one of them, we need to address all of them, and we need DC Council leaders who are accountable for their actions and transparent to constituents, who refuse corporate contributions, and who will ensure government services are accessible to all of us.

That is why I launched my campaign to represent Ward 4 on the DC Council. As an attorney, community advocate, Democratic Party activist, and civil servant, I've spent my life fighting for my neighbors. Now, I am ready to unite Ward 4 residents behind a bold policy agenda and back it up with meaningful action. I want you to join me—let's make this our fight.