

Council and Supervisor Candidates Take on Race and Social Justice Issues - Part Two

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Sep 14, 2020(The People's Vanguard of Davis: <http://davisvanguard.org>Delivered by Newstex) By David M. Greenwald Yolo Committee for Diverse and Inclusive Elections (YCDIE) on Saturday afternoon held a candidates forum for the City Council candidates and the Supervisor candidates for the Fourth District. Question number two: What do you see as the core challenges of people of color in the city of Davis or Yolo County? What would you prioritize to help overcome them?City Council District 3 Larry Guenther responded that as someone who is not a person of color he needs to reach out to people of color to get their views on the issues.

'One of the issues is they are people of color, and they are not looked at the same as white people in this community,' he said. He noted that he is a huge fan of community engagement, and community engagement needs to reach everybody for it to be effective. He wants to include people that have not traditionally been involved in city politics, in order to make sure that they get their voices heard, so that decisions are made with those voices being heard. Lucas Frerichs responded that he recognizes his life experiences are different from others. Not just race, but class, gender, sexual and other. 'For me it's to listen, to believe other people's life experiences and do my best to be a strong ally,' he said. He mentioned as well the cost of living in the city of Davis, which he believes is a big issue, and so he said, 'I think the work on housing in the creation of additional housing which is affordable, is a real key among these issues that have been identified.' He also mentioned the work that the city has taken on with regard to police accountability and public safety reform. 'I think there's a lot more to do with regards to police reform and how we want to strategically invest in funding public safety in our community.'City Council District 2 Dillan Horton said previous speakers have noted how our housing crisis really impacts underserved and underrepresented communities. He noted past policies that prevented people of color from owning houses in past years. 'The shadows of those policies, government or otherwise, have their effects right now in the modern-day Davis,' he said. 'We have a very small African American population, those things are not necessarily by accident. 'Focusing on everyone having access to quality affordable housing as we expand the stock of affordable housing in our community,' he said. He is also concerned about the lack of access to economic development and the difficulty that people have trying to start new small businesses in our community. He also said with regard to police reform he wants to separate things like response to mental health crises and other issues away from law enforcement. Colin Walsh responded that as a white male he cannot relate how people of color feel from his experience alone. But he said, walking throughout the district and talking to people throughout the community, he has been listening and hearing, and 'what I'm hearing is equitable housing opportunity is a serious issue locally and it has been for years.' He also noted, equitable treatment by the police and equitable access to education, especially with the shelter-in-place order, is a huge concern. 'As a council member I would seek housing in such a way that it allows for many different types of people to live there,' he said. 'I would like to see our affordable housing ordinance updated.' He also suggested working with the police accountability commission on potential reforms there. Will Arnold said that a

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lot of people have talked about the link between affordability and economic disparity and race 'they are not intrinsically linked, but as we know there are deep connections to things in our society.' Affordable housing and homelessness are among the things, he said, they have taken head on during his first term on the council. 'There is a connection to us becoming a more welcoming and inclusive community for everyone, including people of color,' he said. He continued, 'We know a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate. We have a lot of well meaning white folks in town who, I believe, their heart is in the right place but there are folks that tend to make assumptions about the lives and needs of people of color.' Arnold related a story shortly after the Trayvon Martin killing where his wife was approached by a probably well-meaning woman who warned her about wearing a hoodie. 'That was very unsettling for my wife,' he said. That doesn't even include the more blatant examples where she has been called racial epithets around town. City Council District 5 Rochelle Swanson said 'if there's one core challenge, it's about welcoming all voices to actually participate.' She said, 'I hear about the lack of representation in my own household because my two older children are Black. They definitely have no problem sharing with me and sharing their own voices because there have been issues that have come before Council,' and they find there are lots of well-meaning white people 'who are talking about what it's like for us to live in Davis. 'I would never pretend to know that it's the same for me as it is if my skin was brown,' she said. She had an experience with an IEP (individualized education program) which she said was a tenth of what they were entitled to, and then she showed up and the conversation went very differently. She said that we have to change the tenor that all voices generally are welcome and be creative. Connor Gorman also acknowledged that he was not a person of color. 'I need to do more listening around what people of color in our community need,' he said. He sees the need to educate white people in Davis 'around the racism that does exist in Davis interpersonally and structurally, and is an important thing that needs to be done and the city council can play a role in that.' Through conversations, he said that he has some sense of what the issues are that are faced by people of color. He identified two issues that most of the other candidates also brought up policing and cost of living. 'I would like to see a separate department of public safety that incorporates programs and services that are independent of policing,' he said. 'On housing, I would push for more affordable housing and I would like to include the idea of having a stronger renters rights ordinance.' Kelsey Fortune talked about the need to create platforms for people of color for diverse voices. She also identified two large policy platforms that she said are key pieces of her campaign housing and policing. We need a more holistic approach to function in our community police, social workers, mental health advocates, and more. 'I see this as one public safety department that houses police but is not controlled by the police department,' she said. 'I also think it's very important that we address the militarization of the police force.' She referenced the occasion where police were in riot gear here in town, and said, 'I think that's very problematic.' She noted, 'We also still do have an armored vehicle that I think is absolutely unnecessary. 'Having a healthier rental market, in general, is always going to be good for diversity,' she said. 'The vacancy rate is way too low for it to be healthy for any renter.' Doing so will promote a more diverse community, she said. Josh Chapman sees three core problems. First, addressing the systemic racism that is in our community. 'Davis has historically been a homogeneous community,' he said. 'One that is white and privileged, and that inevitably leads to systemic and institutional racism even where people have the best of intentions.' He said the second core problem is people and their interactions with law enforcement. He noted the militarization of law enforcement, which he believes has been the process of policymaking primarily at the state and federal level. 'I think that the militarization of law enforcement has led to conflict between police departments and the communities they are sworn to represent,' he said. He said that leads directly to lack of representation. The reference to civilian oversight and community involvement he said is 'critical.' Board of Supervisors - District 4 Jim Provenza said 'the old adage of a person being born on third base and thinking they hit a home run, relates well to white privilege.' He said that 'if you look at the historical basis for a lot of the disparities it lies amid racist decisions.' In housing, he said, at one time HUD wouldn't let people into certain housing projects. With the creation of suburbs, white people got FHA loans in order to build housing that was exclusive and not available for people of color. 'And there were covenants against them moving into the suburbs.' He said, 'It's not just economic, but it is racial.' He believes they can do a lot to help close the gap between the middle class and people who lack the means, but if we are dealing with systemic racism we still fall behind. 'I think we still need to address economics as well as racism.' Working with First 5, he said that one thing that we are doing is sending resources to the poorest of the poor to help at a very early age, to help the families and children who would otherwise be left behind. He also is going to support Prop. 16 which will eliminate the ban on affirmative action and he will ask the supervisors to take that up. Linda Deos said she is coming from a place of privilege as a white woman, but she has had some experience as a lesbian who has been beat up for being gay and who has lost a job for being gay. 'I can

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get it in some respects but at the same time I can walk out that door and feel relatively safe,' she explained. One of the issues she identified is criminal justice reform. 'When we look at our specific county features,' she said, 'three percent of our county is black, but 25 percent of our jail population is black. That has to change. 'Is that institutional racism? Of course, it is, but not enough has been done to stop it in recent years by the Board of Supervisors,' she said. She also cited the child welfare system and asked why such a high percentage of black and brown children are taken as placements by the system here. David M. Greenwald reporting The post Council and Supervisor Candidates Take on Race and Social Justice Issues - Part Two[1] appeared first on Davis Vanguard[2]. [1]: <https://www.davisvanguard.org/2020/09/council-and-supervisor-candidates-take-on-race-and-social-justice-issues-part-two/> [2]: <https://www.davisvanguard.org>

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