



Candidate Questionnaire

General Information

Candidate Name: Marquita Thomas

Office Sought: West Hollywood City Council

Proposed Ballot Designation: Chamber CEO
(Or Occupation Listing)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Campaign Team*

Provide the names and cell phone numbers for the following campaign team members:

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Elected Office

Do you currently, or have you ever held public office? No

If yes, which public office(s) have you held and when did you do so?

Personal and Political Background

Current Occupation:

Are you a registered Democrat? Yes

Have you ever been registered with another political party or selected “Decline to State” or “No Party Preference” for your voter registration party affiliation, and if so, for what period? No

In less than 250 words, briefly summarize your personal background (work experience, education, community involvement, etc.).

I am the Executive Director of the Los Angeles LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce. I am responsible for programming, fundraising, marketing, and legislative advocacy for over 500 LGBTQ and allied small businesses. I have recently won decisions with the City, County and California Public Utilities Commissions regarding LGBTBE inclusion and LGBTBE spend goals that will result in over \$1B a year being spent in LGBTQ small business in the state.

What endorsements have you received from organizations and prominent individuals? (You may either use the space below or attach a separate list.) **Councilmember John D’Amico, Los Angeles African-American Women’s Political Action Committee, Kevin James, Justin Nelson, Yvette Nicole Brown, Damian Pelliccione and several advisory board members and commissioners**

In the past five years, have you:

- belonged to an organization that has taken action or formally expressed a viewpoint on Israel or related issues; No
- participated in an organized activity, including a forum, on Israel or related issues; No or
- while holding office, introduced or co-sponsored legislation (other than purely ceremonial, supportive measures) on Israel or related issues? No

Policy Questions

Please describe your positions on the following issues. Please limit your responses to 250 words for each response. If you wish, one response may include up to 500 words.

1. Please describe your last trip to Israel and the Middle East, including the year of the trip and any group that arranged or sponsored the trip. If you have not yet been to Israel, when and to where do you plan on going in Israel, and the region generally, for your trip?

I visited Israel in October 2018 with a Wider Bridge, an organization that builds allyship between American and Israeli LGBTQ communities. I spent around 12 days traveling to Tel Aviv, Beersheba and Jerusalem. Prior to Israel, I spent time in Turkey.

2. Who do you speak with to develop your positions and views on Israel and the Middle East, including people overseas and local leaders in Southern California?

I would never make a sweeping generalization about any country and therefore would never have a “standpoint” or a “view” about a country or an entire region.

Often when we speak about other countries, we are speaking about the leadership of those countries and those leaders can be discussed without applying our thoughts about that country's leadership to an entire country. Just as "Trump" was not reflective of all of "America" nor is any country's leader reflective of an entire country. Having "views" about other countries is what leads to xenophobia, no country or region is a monolith.

3. Please describe your relationship, if any, with the Israeli-American and Jewish community in Los Angeles.

The City of West Hollywood was founded and incorporated by three communities – LGBTQ individuals, Russian-speaking Jews and seniors as a safe haven with the promise of affordable housing. The City continues to contract social services with Jewish Family Services which provides many incredible services like a food bank as well as services for seniors and families, those experiencing domestic violence and those who need counseling or mental health services.

4. If elected, what committees and organizations would you try to be active in, and what policy areas would you try to affect that are relevant to Israel and the Middle East?

Many people who immigrated to Los Angeles and West Hollywood from Israel and the Middle East have experienced a significant amount of prejudice and discrimination in recent years. As a Councilmember, I will work to create a stronger stance against hate in the City and elevate the voices of all immigrants. I will also work to ensure that those who have been victims of hate know how to report these incidents.

5. Over the past decade, there has been a small but growing movement around the country to divest from Israel. These groups often use anti-Semitic language in their efforts, some target Jewish students on campuses and instead of discussing how to engage the democratic-process to challenge Israeli policies that may be objectionable, they try to delegitimize Israel or question its right to exist. In short, these are frequently attempts to influence state and local governments and their universities and pension boards not to invest in Israeli companies or companies that do business anywhere in Israel. 6. What is your view on the Israel boycott and divestment movement and what will you do about it? The FBI's Uniform Crime Report for 2014 showed that there were more than 609 anti-Jewish hate crimes in the United States that year and even today, Jews were the most persecuted and targeted religious group in the country. 7. What steps would you take (for example, in the education and law enforcement arenas) to help prevent current and future anti-Jewish hatred and anti-Semitic activity in your jurisdiction? 7A. As a Democrat, what steps can we take to help fight anti-Semitism on both the left and the right?

My answer to questions 5-7 are the same:

Often opinions on issues are developed by hearing propaganda and not from the communities impacted by an issue. I know that communities are made better when residents understand the unique challenges of diverse communities. As a City councilmember, I will work to implement listening sessions for diverse communities to allow members of each community to speak on issues important to them. In doing so, we create allyship in the City. In hearing from the communities directly impacted, minds and hearts get changed.

8. What other issues do you think are unique or important to the Jewish and pro-Israel community, and how do you propose to make a difference with these issues and keep in touch with the community?

The issues of the Jewish and pro-Israel community are similar to those of the Black, AAPI and other marginalized communities – a lack of understanding and recognition. In particular, the City of West Hollywood has not recognized Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, this important day should be recognized in this progressive City and it is a shame that it has often been overlooked by the City.