

**BLACK AUSTIN DEMOCRATS:**  
**RANDI SHADE**  
**Austin City Council, Candidate Place 3**

1) Why do you want the endorsement of Black Austin Democrats?

**I would be very proud to be endorsed by the Black Austin Democrats. If elected, I would be a strong advocate for the issues of concern to the African-American community in Austin. I feel I'm best suited for this position, because my background is different from most City officials. I have a broad range of experience that includes working in the private and public sector, starting an Internet start-up, operating a local community foundation and supporting countless non-profits as a volunteer, donor and board member. Based on that background, I bring to this election a unique combination of passion and hands-on experience, and a strong desire to get things done right. As my longtime friends, colleagues, and clients will tell you: I build strong positive relationships that last a lifetime; I am approachable, accessible, and accountable; I know when to listen and learn, and when to speak-up; and I bring diverse people together to get results and have a strong track record for doing both..**

2) What is your plan to address the rising cost of living and the resultant gentrification occurring in Austin's Eastside neighborhoods? Please be mindful of the fact that you are addressing a primarily African-American and Latino organization that is looking for responses that go beyond truisms.

**We need to do more to keep the cost of living down. I supported the 2006 affordable housing bond program, and I supported the creation of the Community Land Trust as a Board Member of PeopleFund. I also supported the Council's recent vote to increase the density bonus and MFI levels for MLK and Saltillo TODs, and I support efforts to increase the number of family-sized units and provide more daycare, while also protecting pocket parks in the area. I have been a frequent volunteer with AIM's Raise the Roof which helps do home repair for owner-occupied homes, primarily in East Austin, and I've assisted residents access the Urban League's roof repair program. If elected, I would work to create mechanisms that encourage additional private sector investment in addressing our affordable housing challenges, as well as strengthen the relationship the City has with leading local nonprofits working successfully in this arena. Regarding other affordability strategies, we should explore targeted exemptions and tax relief for original residents, and also seek ways to influence the legislature with respect to its over-reliance on property taxes, which is contributing directly to our cost of living challenges.**

3) Do you support the decision of the Travis County Sheriff to expand its collaboration with U.S. Immigration, Customs, and Enforcement (ICE) in the Criminal Alien Program, as well as their offer to provide ICE with an investigative office?

**No.**

4) Are you satisfied with the progress of the African-American Quality of Life initiative?

Please identify three benchmarks outlined by the committee in which you have had direct or indirect involvement.

**No. The major areas in which I have been involved are: 1. Affordable Housing through my work described in the question above (board member of PeopleFund, active supporter of affordable housing bond package, volunteer work for Raise the Roof and other organizations); 2. Business and Economic Development: as a board member of PeopleFund, I have actively participated in the East Austin Summit and several other activities that promote minority owned businesses. Indirectly, I've also been involved in health and food security through my work with Meals on Wheels and my support of the Health District.**

5) As in other parts of the city, the pace of development and redevelopment in Southeast Austin, particularly Montopolis, has accelerated. Are you satisfied that documented community participation in city planning has been achieved in this area of Austin?

**No. Too many people I've spoken with feel "duped" after engaging in the neighborhood planning process, which is currently our only ongoing mechanism for achieving meaningful citizen participation in "city planning." Most people who participate in the neighborhood planning process are surprised to learn that their plan makes recommendations, but a newly proposed project that conforms to zoning requirements but not the intent of the neighborhood plan can and is still often pursued. As a matter of policy, I believe that City staff should be instructed to encourage developers (even single family home-owners) to dialogue with their neighbors before entering into the permitting process as part of their permitting application. Without a doubt, we need to do a better job of empowering citizens and neighbors to control their own destiny by giving them the much needed tools to involve them more directly in the planning of their city and neighborhood.**

6) Do you think it is a healthy thing for members of boards and commissions (e.g. the community development commission) to serve for years—even decades—while there is a waiting list of people eager to serve?

**No. While I appreciate the long-term service of many citizens on our City boards and commissions, I think everyone who wants to serve should have the opportunity.**

7) The Affordable Housing Incentives Task Force identified the preservation of the existing affordable housing stock in Austin as a key task. Page 16 of the report observed "the city should develop a comprehensive and proactive policy regarding preservation of housing affordability by March 1, 2008." Do you agree with the task force's analysis? How have you facilitated the city's accomplishment of this recommendation?

**I agree with the analysis. I'm challenging an incumbent, so I was not able to help the city accomplish this recommendation in an official capacity, but I have been involved in a meaningful way with our community's efforts to deliver more affordable housing as Board Member of PeopleFund, which recently launched the Community Land Trust, and as a**

**volunteer for groups like Habitat for Humanity, Foundation Communities, American Youthworks, and AIM's Raise the Roof.**

8) Food insecurity is a significant issue in Austin. What can the city do to further partner with the city's basic needs organizations (e.g. the Austin Food Bank) as the economy slides into recession?

**It is wonderful that Austin is consistently recognized for its economic vitality, but until everyone's basic human needs are met, we have very few bragging rights as far as I am concerned. Too often issues related to poverty, including food insecurity, are at the bottom of our City's priority list rather than at the top. Our City contracts with more than 60 health and human service organizations and spends tens of millions of dollars each year, but we've got to do more to create lasting solutions and leverage the strengths of our local nonprofit organizations. I plan to build on my extensive experience in the nonprofit sector to improve the way the City does business with basic needs providers and will also work hard to create new resources by bringing private sector partners to the table. I will also explore new sources of federal funding that will likely become available with the upcoming change in White House administrations.**

9) What is your assessment of the city's response to the Hurricane Katrina crisis? How involved were you at the time and how involved are you now?

**Austin did a good job of helping those in need in the short term. It's not clear to me that we did an equally good job of helping them over the long term. At the time, I donated food and clothing to the relief effort, like so many other Austinites, and I volunteered at the Convention Center, as well as through the Entrepreneurs Foundation. I'm embarrassed to say that I have done very little since that time to be helpful to the specific population of Katrina refugees in Austin.**

10) Do you believe it is possible to grow the city's tax base more responsibly?

**Absolutely. I'm against leveraging our city's future on the backs of lower income families and will fight taxes that unfairly burden low and middle income individuals. I would like to see a decrease in the overall property tax burden on Austin residents. If elected, I would seek ways to reign in the City's portion of the overall property tax burden by seeking out efficiencies in City spending and service delivery. I would also seek ways to influence the state legislature with respect to its over-reliance on property taxes. My position on City taxes is that they should be no higher than absolutely necessary. Where we can, we should, lower or even eliminate them without compromising needed service.**

**Thank you for these excellent questions and I ask for your support.**