

**Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC 2010 Questionnaire
for D.C. Council Candidates**

**Responses from Commissioner Nancy Shia, ANC1c06
DC Statehood Green Party Candidate
Ward One Council**

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

1 Yes, I would oppose any effort to hold an initiative in the District that would take away the civil marriage rights now enjoyed by same-sex couples, and I would publicly campaign and take direct action if necessary for marriage equality in the event such an initiative is held.

Marriage is a civil right that has been a long time in coming. Civil rights should never be determined by plebiscite. Had voting rights in Southern states been left to a plebiscite, African Americans would not have “been allowed” to vote. In 1964, it took an act of Congress and the support of the President to secure voting rights for all people. It’s clear from the 2000 presidential election that it still takes vigilance to secure the right of African Americans to vote.

The right to marriage is no less a civil right than the right to vote, and, no doubt, it will take constant vigilance to keep it secure. I’ve worked as a journalist/photographer in Washington since arriving here in 1972 and often covered stories of the gay and lesbian communities. I’ve been published in The Blade and The Advocate. The issue of same sex marriage has been around since forever, and people have been getting married in spite of its legality. I was there during the historic same-sex weddings held in front of the Lincoln Memorial on April 29th 2000. (See photos attached.)

I’ve stood up for civil rights and gravitated toward the “other than mainstream” since before graduating high school in 1965. My Advisory Neighborhood Commission passed more than one resolution supporting civil marriages for all people, which I strongly supported. They were all passed unanimously.

I worked with the church I attend, All Souls Unitarian, in the “Standing on the Side of Love” Movement to help get the bill passed in the DC Council. I was there when the historic bill securing same-sex marriage as a civil right was signed into law. (See photos attached.)

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2 If the District's civil marriage equality were taken away by any one person or institution, I would become part of a movement to undue the injustice. Phone calls, demonstrations, press conferences, news articles, sit-ins (if necessary), because progress gained should never be progress lost. Clearly, the momentum is on our side, but never forget, freedom is a constant struggle and vigilance is its price. With the District's tenuous status as the "federal city," we, the People who live here, are at the mercies of members of Congress. This is why I strongly believe that Statehood would solidify our rights to full citizenship, and we will be able to control our own destiny. It's also why I am running on the DC Statehood/Green Party. The one party system plays into Congress' rationale for not giving us Statehood. Without Statehood, the civil marriage right will always be threatened by Congresspersons who represent a district with a lot of vociferous bigots.

3 Yes, I agree that private contractors doing business with the District should be required to provide equal benefits including health insurance to same-sex partners. A family is a family, regardless of sex or type of family member. People survive better together than alone. For all projects using taxpayer money, employment benefits should be extended to all family members residing together. I would extend the benefits to include not only partners, but also aging parents too young for Medicare, if they live with the employee. The employee will be a better worker if he/she doesn't have to worry about another family member whom they live with not having adequate health care.

4 Yes, I would oppose a so-called "conscience clause" that would allow exemptions from any human rights act. A "conscience clause" is simply one way of watering down the implementation of same sex marriage equality, and it gives a free pass to bigots who'd like to continue their bigotry. A civil right is a civil right, and should never be conditioned on anything, including someone's alleged conscience. Also, if charities are funded by taxpayers, they should not be given the option to uphold District law. When people's lives are at stake, as they often are when charities serve, there should be no tolerance for bigoted reasons not to heal or help. Undoubtedly our public dollars can find charities that are unwilling to discriminate for any reason.

PUBLIC HEALTH

5 Do you support sufficient funding to ensure that the drive to make HIV testing routine among District residents includes counseling and treatment referrals for those testing positive?

Since the rate of HIV infection is so high in DC, I would support everything that will effectively work against the spread of HIV. Routine testing is important. It must become a part of everyone's annual physical examination, covered and encouraged by insurance companies. A grassroots education campaign could help increase the amount of testing. Available counseling and treatment referrals are effective ways to slow down the spread of HIV. I would also support education in the high schools and clinics. If there is not already a healthcare truck that travels the city testing for HIV and other communicable diseases, there should be one. A positive campaign about the benefits of knowing if you are infected could also be done in the high schools.

6. Are you committed to continuing and expanding the District's condom distribution program to include water-based lubricant and tracking of their distribution to specified locations?

Absolutely, I am committed to including water-based lubricants along with the condoms. In 1994, Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala held a press conference on the science of condoms, in which she and others spoke about the necessity for water-based lubricants. My son was 12 at the time, and I suggested he do his science fair project on the science of condoms.

He did. Undoubtedly sharing that knowledge with young people as soon as they may be experimenting sexually will go a long way in reducing the spread of HIV/AIDs. Water based lubricants are critical to safe sex.

I'd also like to see condom/lubricant distribution in some nontraditional distribution places. A beauty or nail salon and a senior center would be good places to distribute free condoms. The high school nurse's office is another place where sexually active students can get free condoms and lubricant.

It would be beneficial to track the incidence of newly reported cases of HIV in the areas where condoms are being distributed to determine if the distribution is having an effect. However, with DC being such a transient city, the data may be a little unreliable.

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7. Will you support legislation giving the directors of the Office of GLBT Affairs and the Office of African Affairs the authority to issue competitive grants as other minority constituent offices have, that will be open to organizations serving the populations within the office's purview?

Yes, I would support legislation giving the directors of the Office of GLBT Affairs and Office of African Affairs the authority to issue competitive grants, like the Office of Latino Affairs and other minority offices have.

As long as the Office of Gay/Lesbian/Bi/Transgender Affairs and the Office of African Affairs are serving a minority, they should be given the same tools to serve as other minority offices have, including grants to organizations serving the populations within the offices' purview.

8. Describe steps you will support to improve performance at the HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD, and TB Administration (HAHSTA), including in HIV prevention, HIV/AIDS surveillance, and mental health services.

HIV testing should become as routine as testing for TB and other communicable diseases, and HAHSTA should work with the public clinics to make this a reality. Testing should also be widely available through the DC Public School system. High school and middle school young people who are sexually active should be able to go to the school nurse in confidence to be tested, and any nurse who does not agree to test the students in the school she or he serves should be given sensitivity training. School counselors should also be educated in how to counsel after getting tested. Every effort must be made to maintain the student's confidentiality in this matter.

Sex education in the schools and clinics must include Post Exposure Prophylaxis. This could go a long way in stemming the spread of HIV/AIDs. It could be given to the patient at the same time he/she is being tested. Senior centers are another place to educate people about Post Exposure Prophylaxis. A pamphlet on post exposure should be placed alongside the bowl of free condoms at the front desk of Seniors Rec Center. The city should designate one 24/7 clinic or hospital as a place where people can receive the treatment necessary after exposure to stem the infection. This must be open to all people, regardless of ability to pay.

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Also included in the purview of HAHSTA would be a clean needle exchange, to avoid the spread of HIV/AIDs through drug use.

I also support the Medical Marijuana Treatment Initiative recently passed by the Council for the treatment of HIV and other diseases. However, the bill needs some work. Granting of dispensary licenses needs to be taken out of the hands of the Alcohol Beverage Regulation Administration (ABRA) and put into the hands of the Department of Health. Licenses must be granted on a merit basis and not on a first-come-first-serve basis. My Advisory Neighborhood Commission passed a resolution supporting the Bill when it was before the Council, and has sent comments on the bill as it stands now to improve its implementation.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND THE JUDICIARY

9. Will you support funding for mandatory lesbian, gay bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) sensitivity and diversity training for all members of the Metropolitan Police Department and the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department?

Absolutely. This should be part of MPD and FEMS training before they are even put onto the force of the police department and fire department. This is so necessary to avoid a lot of problems. I would expand this sensitivity training to all government workers, especially those who come into contact with the public.

Schools should have teacher and staff sensitivity training, especially in schools with a very diverse population. Bullying has always been a problem in schools, and it's often the gay child who is bullied. There should be steps in place in every school where children can talk to someone about the bullies and the problem gets taken care of. Children should also be given sensitivity training to learn not to mistreat or abuse fellow students for their differences.

After the sensitivity training as cadets, MPD should monitor its ranks to be sure the training has taken hold. Random testing could be implemented to detect bigotry and hatred for a class of people. If an officer fails the test, additional sensitivity training should be mandated. There should be a three strikes rule, where after three times and MPD personnel openly expresses bigotry, they should be relieved of their duties. Bigotry leads to false charges, leads to perjury in court, leads to police corruption.

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10. Will you support a budget for the Office of Police Complaints large enough to void developing a backlog of cases?

Absolutely. I would also support an educational campaign for people to know how to take their complaints to the Office of Police Complaints. This campaign would be targeted especially to minority communities. People should know how to identify police misconduct, and what remedies we have to end it. As it stands today, most people do not want to go through the process of the OPC because it takes too long; it's too drawn out; and the police usually lie about what happened. Time is the enemy of justice. If laws have any meaning, police should not be able to get around them by making people wait way too long to have their grievances heard.

11. Will you support efforts to rein in police officials who respond to legitimate crime concerns with unsustainable, media-centric quick fixes that infringe constitutionally protected civil liberties? And will you do so without waiting for courts to overturn them, as the U.S. Court of Appeals did to the Neighborhood Safety Zone.

I would support constitutionally protected liberties against police abuse of their power in whatever way I can. Activism is the American way of making changes and achieving progress that improves people's lives. As a freelance photographer in Washington DC for 38 years, I have come to cherish the First Amendment and what it means. Several times I've been called on to fight for the freedoms entailed in the First Amendment. On September 27, 2002, I was on the bike ride that was surrounded, corralled and hogtied in Pershing Park. I was lucky enough to escape capture, but for several hours fought for the right to document by photographing what was happening. The city now owes millions of dollars from that incident, but there are still too many in MPD who routinely deny citizens the right to photograph on public streets. On October 12, 2008, I was arrested, handcuffed and locked up by a corrupt sergeant who was getting back at me for something I said on the listserv 15 months earlier. Witnessing and experiencing civil rights abuses first hand makes a stronger advocate for constitutional protections against bigotry and abuse.

Statehood is the only way we will reach full citizenship and own our right to self-determination. Until we get it, we'll have to keep dealing with the pettiness of some MPD, who keep getting away with it because the Office of Police Complaints is backlogged so long, that the system is failing us. The First Amendment is still worth fighting for. That's why I'm running.

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12 Will you support maintaining the award-winning Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit with both a citywide scope and a dedicated and well-trained central core unit with a full time sergeant?

Yes, I support keeping the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit with a citywide scope and a well-trained central core unit with full time sergeant. It is critical that this sergeant remain in the position for a long time because the community the unit is serving needs consistency in the MPD personnel serving them. It is also very important that the sergeant assigned to the Unit have adequate sensitivity training to be able to handle the position.

13. Will you press for increased oversight of the [Metropolitan Police Department's](#) gathering and analysis of [crime statistics](#) to ensure greater comprehensiveness and objectivity, including transgender-related hate crime data?

Yes, I will press for increased oversight of the MPD's gathering and analysis of crime statistics to ensure greater comprehensiveness and objectivity, including transgender-related hate crime data. I have witnessed MPD members look away when one of their ranks is abusing a suspect. I've been inside the back room of 3rd District where members come and go shouting all kinds of hate about ANC commissioners, activists and gay people. I would press for oversight of MPD's abusive and bigoted words and deeds by an independent entity, one not affected by "the thin blue line".

14. Yes, I support making the D.C. Attorney General an elected position, because of all the problems DC and the Council had with the present D.C. Attorney General, who was appointed by the mayor and said he worked for the mayor, not the people of the District of Columbia. If the voters elect the Attorney General, the voters can fire him if he is not prosecuting hate crimes and upholding civil and human rights.

HUMAN RIGHTS

15. Will you support a budget for the Office of Human Rights large enough to allow it to keep the backlog at below 70 aged cases; keep below 210 days the average time it takes to issue a probable cause finding; and expand education, prevention, and language access efforts?

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Absolutely, I would support a budget with sufficient resources for the Office of Human Rights to allow justice to be served expeditiously and judiciously. Justice delayed is almost always justice denied.

I would also support community education on what a violation of human rights entails and what remedies there are if a right is violated. This should be included in high school and middle school curriculum. I have often witnessed MPD stopping young people for no apparent reason. If young people were taught how to respond to unwarranted arrests, MPD may stop making so many. Part of this training should include how to photograph and gather evidence during such incidents. Clinics should have a video playing while people wait in the waiting room on what to do if you are stopped by the police. The video will be in several languages, depending on the population the clinic serves.

I was a member of the Justice and Solidarity Collective in 2002-2004. The collective presented a series of programs on how activists can defend themselves in different situations. One of the programs was done in Spanish. I videotaped each program and made the tapes available to anyone who requested a VHS copy.

16 Yes, I would block ceremonial resolutions and decline to honor anyone or any organization that promotes bigotry in any way. I have no tolerance for bigotry and have no problem fearlessly going up against it. I remember an older cousin from my childhood who was gay, and he wore traditional clothing from the Middle East. His puffy pants looked like women's clothes, and I loved the way he looked. Having been an activist all my life, my children were raised in a home where they met and came to love all kinds of people, including transgender people. I gave my children karate lessons in a school with many lesbians, DC Self-Defense Karate Association. The school taught them how to defend against bullies of all kinds. Bigots are nothing more than bullies, and they need to know there is NO place for bigotry in any form.

17. Are you committed to including a transgender representative on the D.C. Commission on Human Rights?

Yes, I am committed to including a transgender representative on the D.C. Commission on Human Rights. Transgender people are often the focus of bitter bigotry and violence often the victims of extremely vicious hate crimes. The Commission needs a transgender to educate and sensitize other members of the Commission about these crimes.

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18. Do you agree that the Director of the Office of Human Rights should be required to have professional training and experience in [civil rights law enforcement](#)?

Of course the Director of the Office of Human Rights should be required to have professional training and experience in civil rights law enforcement. Defending our rights means enforcing the law against predatory bigotry. If an officer chooses not to arrest a bigot who assaulted an LGBT because the officer makes prejudicial assumptions against the LGBT should be held accountable for his bigotry.

What good are the laws protecting our rights if they are not enforced? If the job of the director of the Office of Human Rights is to protect human rights, he'll need an action plan on enforcing them.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND YOUTH

19. Will you oppose both federal and local voucher programs that fund students in religious schools that are beyond the protections of the D.C. Human Rights Act?

Yes. I will oppose both federal and local voucher programs that fund students in religious schools that are beyond the protections of the D.C. Human Rights Act.

Many religions have a bias against teaching the whole picture of sex-ed to young people. Because sex is already a sensitive subject for young people, religious bias adds confusion. Teaching it is against the separation of church and state. Public money should not go to fund teaching religious biases regarding sex.

20. Will you support improved services and treatment for gay and transgender homeless youth, including [transitional housing](#)?

Yes, I would support improved services and treatment for LGBT homeless youth, including transitional housing. The Latin American Youth Center has a Temporary Living Program house for young homeless men, and it has served the community well for many years.

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21. Will you oppose the use of either federal or District taxpayer funds to promote “abstinence only until marriage” sex education that undermines safer-sex programs by excluding more comprehensive information?

Yes, absolutely, I would oppose the use of any tax dollars to promote “abstinence only until marriage” sex education, because it is another variation on a religious theme. Knowledge is power, and the youth need to know the whole picture of sex. Ignorance of any important part could be dangerous.

CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES

22. Do you support the right of adults in the District to choose adult-oriented entertainment for themselves, and the right of appropriately licensed and zoned businesses to provide it?

Yes, I support the right of adults to choose whatever they want to entertain themselves, and the right of appropriately licensed and zoned businesses to provide it.

23. Will you support legislation to curb abuses by NIMBYs who are now allowed to file an endless series of baseless complaints to harass or extort bars and restaurants?

Actually, this question is kind of like the opposite of the way it is in Adams Morgan, my point of reference for community service. If you are talking about the alcohol license process here, I have worked with businesses to help them get their license to serve alcohol. But problems happen when alcohol service continues late into the night on a patio. In a residential area, people need to sleep at night to be able to go to work the next day. I support businesses and community residents working together to come up with a mutually acceptable voluntary agreement, which is what ABRA is supposed to help both sides do.

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24. What are your thoughts regarding GLAA's proposal, explained in [Agenda: 2010](#), to mitigate the problems associated with prostitution by legalizing and regulating it? What will you do to provide alternatives to survival sex for at-risk populations like homeless youth and transgenders?

I believe that if you legalize prostitution the government will have more control over it, and it would become a safer industry. I completely agree with the GLAA agenda that the forced marginality of sex workers is why it is so harmful to many. I applaud you bringing it up with such clear statements of truth

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