



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: Jesse A.J. Smith

Age: 38

Family: none

Hometown: I moved to growing up

Lived in Oakland since: 2006

Education: no formal education, autodidact

Occupation: Writer

Employer: Freelancer

Political experience: Civil disobedience, organizer, campaign manager, ghost writer, canvassing, foreclosure defense, etc etc. I'm an activist. I've been on police corruption, anti-fascism, and defense of sex-worker rights.

Notable affiliations: Occupy Oakland
As a member of my focus

1. What do you see as the greatest challenges when it comes to providing residents with a livable, affordable and safe community?

The only challenge to solving these problems is political will. We have the resources, both economic and intellectual, but we continue repeat the mistakes of the past; from trickle-down economics to “broken windows” policing. This is a matter of ideological fealty, the religious veneration of capitalism that hands over power to corporate interests such as developers and banks, or the authoritarian compulsion to trust and praise the police, even as they rape and pimp minors. In short, when we abdicate our power, our responsibilities, we suffer. Fortunately, there are known solutions to these problems.

2. What is the biggest opportunity for your district or city during the next four years?

Oakland has always been a wellspring of political innovation, leading the nation and inspiring the world. We can, once again, demonstrate a new way of organizing society, and empowering people. Empowering people is not just an ideal or an end goal. It is the solution.

3. Describe your commitment to your district or city leading up to your bid for office.

I stay constantly engaged in civic duty, assisting the homeless, supporting political campaigns, engaging in meetings at City Hall, lobbying, taking arrest in civil disobedience, cleaning up vandalism, and support local businesses. I have a lot of civic passion, and Oakland is great place for it. Because of Oakland’s uniquely rich civic culture, I’ve been part of, and have helped establish, many community organizations and projects.

4. Silicon Valley and the Bay Area are at the center of global, technological advancement. How do you see technology’s role in changing the lives of both longtime residents and transplants?

Technology is wonderful. It extends and enriches our lives, eliminates suffering, toil, and disease. Technology is beneficial in such a way it is not worth remarking on, politically. Technology itself has not imposed on our society, or caused distress or ruination in our lives. I assume this question concerns the economic impact of the tech-industry, which has nothing to do with technology. For instance, it is the economic impact of the tech-industry which has caused people to lose their homes, forcing elderly people to live in tents. The impact of technology is that these same homeless people have smart phones. Conflating technology with our economic system is a huge problem. Rhetoric matters, and this question is flawed. This question reflects the problems with how we think about and discuss the issue. As Confucius said, "The beginning of wisdom is to call things by their proper name." In politics, it is not only essential to wisdom, it's essential to getting anything done.

If we don't reign in the impact of unregulated capitalism, the humanitarian crisis we are currently in will get worse. It is killing seniors through homelessness and stress. An entire generation is coming of age that not only can never dream of owning a home, even a modest apartment is a fanciful and unreasonable aspiration. "Transplants" could at one time mean refugees, artists, and dreamers inspired by our culture and history... but now it means gentrifiers, the mega-rich, the 1%, heirs to family fortunes, and tech workers yes, but even they are exploited, living modestly on their high salaries, as they pay \$4k a month in rent, \$15 a day to commute, all while trying to enjoy exorbitantly priced amenities catered to the truly rich, working 60 hour weeks and maybe driving for Über on the side.

I came of age and found employment during the first tech boom in the 90s. Tech workers were truly affluent, and stimulated the economy, improving the lives of all workers. The first tech boom did not result in mass homelessness. It still could have been done better. Through organizing and the proper use of government, the tech industry can cease to be the bane of the Bay, and become a source of prosperity for all.