



Austin City Council Candidate Questionnaire Responses
District 1

October 9, 2018

Question 1	Why are you seeking this public office? (Please be brief)
Vincent Harding	I have been blessed with tremendous opportunities in my life and love my community. I believe I am the most qualified person to help my community solve the problems that we face.
Natasha Harper-Madison	I decided to run for public office for my love of Austin and the people here that make up my family, friends and community. After having served Austin in multiple capacities, including boards and commissions and community advocacy it became clear that the way for me to most substantively give back to my city was by effecting change in policy and constituent services. Austin deserves a council person prepared to do the work, with integrity, honesty and the courage to make tough decisions for our overall greater good- I believe I am that person and my time to contribute is now.
Misael Ramos	I'm seeking public office because I feel we need someone who's a true voice of our neighborhoods and communities. I feel I'm the best candidate when it comes to my professional background and the work I've done for various neighborhoods and communities on the East Side.
Reedy Spigner	I am seeking City Council Member D1 because I want to see affordable and workplace housing, more connectivity with the bus system to East Austin, smart economic development. District 1 is the most diverse community in Austin, it's a microcosm of what America really looks like. I'm running because I want to see District 1 as an united and livable community and I'm uniquely qualified with my background to make this task a reality.

Question 2	Please tell us why you are seeking the endorsement of SDA. Do you consider yourself to be a Democrat? Do you have a history of involvement in Democratic politics and/or LGBTQ issues? If so please briefly describe this history.
Vincent Harding	I have been involved with SDA for a number of years attending meetings and going to the PRIDE parade. It would be a tremendous honor to receive this endorsement and continue the push for total equality.
Natasha Harper-Madison	Stonewall Austin Dems absolutely represent values deeply important to me as a Democrat. I have history with multiple LGBTQIA+ organizations, organizers and issues as well as democratic politics including Out Youth Austin, The Q, Transform, Queer Dance Freakout and others.
Misael Ramos	I do consider myself to be a Democrat and I volunteered for the Obama campaign in 08' and 12' and for Hillary's in 16'. With my work at TAASA, I also consider myself an ally for people in the LGBTQ community and for any victim of sexual assault or sexual transgressions regardless of their sexual orientation.



October 9, 2018

<p>Reedy Spigner</p>	<p>I would be honored to have the endorsement of the SDA! I believe it's one of the most important endorsements because it means I fight for equality for all, which I do everyday in my community. The LGBTQ community is a diversified community as District 1, I want to hear the voices and concerns of the LGBTQ community and bring all voices to the table - all voices need to be heard at City Hall and I believe I'm the most relatable and qualified candidate from District 1 to deliver and create policies for the LGBTQ community. I will listen and I will advocate for equality. I'm a sustaining member of the Travis County Democratic Party.</p>
-----------------------------	--

Question 3	Do you believe LGBTQ individuals should be protected against discrimination in employment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression?
<p>Vincent Harding</p>	<p>Absolutely. Currently, some equal employment opportunity cases provide protections for LGBTQ individuals on the basis of "not conforming to gender norms." If there is a shift in the Supreme Court, then someday hopefully LGBTQ status will be a protected class in and of itself.</p>
<p>Natasha Harper-Madison</p>	<p>I absolutely believe that all people deserve protection against discrimination in employment regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. It is paramount for our progress as a city that we move forward with no tolerance for hate and bias based discriminations.</p>
<p>Misael Ramos</p>	<p>Yes there should be protections for LGBTQ people in the workplace and the fact there are still 29 states that can fire you for just being who you are is not acceptable.</p>
<p>Reedy Spigner</p>	<p>Absolutely LGBTQ individuals should be protected against discrimination seeking employment and in the workplace. I will work with and have individuals of the LGBTQ community on tasks forces, appointments, Boards and Commissions.</p>

Question 4	If elected would you commit to appointing LGBTQ individuals to City Boards and Commissions.
<p>Vincent Harding</p>	<p>Yes. I also welcome recommendations for Board and Commissions.</p>
<p>Natasha Harper-Madison</p>	<p>Yes. Representation matters, and it is important as a city with one of the highest percentages of LGBTQ+ populations in the country that we have boards and commissions that are representative our diverse community.</p>
<p>Misael Ramos</p>	<p>Yes, I believe we should have diversity in all facets of our city. Representation is the only way we will combat systemic issues plaguing people within the LGBTQ community, minorities, or women.</p>
<p>Reedy Spigner</p>	<p>Yes I will commit to appointing LGBTQ individuals to City Boards and Commissions. Nico Ramsey is our Communications Director with the Reedy Spigner campaign. Nico is on the Austin Steering Committee at Human Rights Campaign he is an intimate and valued member partner with our campaign and a close friend that always offers me the best advice. We love Nico!</p>



October 9, 2018

Question 5	Do you think that the Austin Police Department is doing everything it can to make its officers aware of and sensitive to the rights and dignity of Austin’s LGBTQ citizens?
<p>Vincent Harding</p> <p>Natasha Harper-Madison</p> <p>Misael Ramos</p> <p>Reedy Spigner</p>	<p>No. More education and training can always be done to help Austin.</p> <p>I believe that APD is doing the best they can with the resources currently available to them. That said, there is a great deal of work to be done to get the department up to speed with sensitivity in the way that they perform their jobs. Every person deserves to have interactions with peace officers where they are treated with dignity and respect. It’s beyond time for our city to equip our emergency services personnel and first responders to address issues specific to the LGBTQIA+ community, as a council person I will absolutely be an ally for making the necessary improvements and adjustments we need in this area.</p> <p>No I don’t. I think we need more training and better police involvement when it comes to issues LGBTQ people are facing. APD officers should receive training and be asked to volunteer with LGBTQ organizations around the city so they can learn firsthand of the issues people are facing.</p> <p>I would have to research this question more due to new appointment of Police Chief Brian Manley. I have asked for a sit down with Chief Manley to talk about community policing and mental health has been a big topic in our community and I would take this opportunity to ask Chief Manley about LGBTQ community.</p>

Question 6	If elected, would you act to increase recruitment of LGBTQ employees for the police, fire, and emergency medical services? What proposals would you suggest to make coming out on the job safer for LGBTQ employees?
<p>Vincent Harding</p> <p>Natasha Harper-Madison</p> <p>Misael Ramos</p>	<p>Yes. As someone that has worked in Human Resources before, recruitment is pivotal and working with local education institutions and organizations can help let others know about the positions available. I would work to make policies that allows people to have a “interactive conversation” with Human Resources if the individual prefers. That way, the individual wanting to come out can have a plan tailored for his or her situation and not attempt to use a one size fits all approach.</p> <p>Absolutely, 100 percent I would act to increase recruitment and retention for LGBTQIA+ employees within the public services sector. In addition to the policies currently in place I would propose a zero tolerance policy for discrimination and harassment for public servants across departments and extending to boards and commissions. I believe we should engage and deploy the newly formed LGBTQ Quality of Life Commission as frequently as possible when deciding how to create and enforce protocol and best practices.</p> <p>I would increase the employment of LGBTQ employees and would see that funding go towards creating safe spaces in the work place. Whether that’s by partnering LGBTQ run non-profits with the police and fire departments or creating programs that emphasize open dialogues that our civil service people can attend. Creating a safe space creates trust and trust can lead to the bonds that will make people ok with coming out.</p>



October 9, 2018

Reedy Spigner	Yes I would increase recruitment. I would like to sit down with members of the LGBTQ community and ask them questions as to what I can do with proposal and listen to the ideas they have for safer workplaces. My goal would be is to create safer workplaces for all in District 1.
----------------------	---

Question 7	Do you think the City of Austin is doing enough to ensure equality for its LGBTQ employees? For example, how would you address organizational issues such as transgender employees transitioning on the job?
Vincent Harding	I would review current health care policies to see if transitioning health related services is covered. If not, then I would work with leaders and subject matter experts on which health care plans offer those services.
Natasha Harper-Madison	Unfortunately, I don't think the city of Austin is at peak performance for ensuring equality for its LGBTQIA+ employees, yet. I do however believe we are well on our way to substantial improvements. It is critical that the city as an employer offer considerations for the evolution of all employees including but certainly not limited to gender transition. Facebook and Oracle both offer considerations including medical coverage for gender reassignment, this is the kind of bold leadership I would encourage we have as a council and as a city.
Misael Ramos	I do not because I believe the city could do more in regards to ensuring companies are offering the same benefits towards same-sex marriages as they are towards non-same-sex marriage. There should be protections for married people who may be transitioning so they don't lose their benefits if they so happen to be transitioning to a similar sex as their current spouse.
Reedy Spigner	I would have to research this question more with the city.

Question 8	If elected, would you continue to uphold the current requirement that a company that receives economic incentives from the City not discriminate against its LGBTQ employees?
Vincent Harding	Absolutely. Austin should not provide economic incentives to any company that is discriminating against LGBTQ employees.
Natasha Harper-Madison	Yes, absolutely, there should be zero tolerance for any company doing business with the city to engage in discrimination against any employees regardless of sexual orientation, gender, age, race or physical ability.
Misael Ramos	I will definitely uphold this and think any company regardless if they receive incentives from the city or not should never discriminate against LGBTQ employees.
Reedy Spigner	Yes.



October 9, 2018

Question 9	How familiar are you with organizations, such as Out Youth, the Austin Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, and AIDS Services of Austin that serve the LGBTQ community? If elected, would you support increased funding for the services organizations like these provide? What services do you think are crucial for LGBTQ residents?
<p>Vincent Harding</p> <p>Natasha Harper-Madison</p> <p>Misael Ramos</p> <p>Reedy Spigner</p>	<p>I am familiar of these organizations and have been to some meetings that were in part sponsored by some of these organizations. I would talk with people from the LGBTQ community about the services desired and work to increase funding to accomplish those goals.</p> <p>I am very familiar, personally and professionally with all of the aforementioned organizations as well as the many others that serve our LGBTQIA+ communities. While all communities have similar needs and concerns, some that I believe to be crucial for LGBTQIA+ residents include access to advocacy, counseling, dignified health and wellness services, workforce development, employment, and affordable housing. I would absolutely support increased funding for the services these organizations provide and more.</p> <p>I'm familiar with the AGLCC, The Trevor Project, GLSEN, and Out Youth and wish there was more money allocated in the bond towards organizations like these. Suicide prevention, anti-bullying, and orgs that seek to educate communities on LGBTQ issues will always receive my backing.</p> <p>I have been to several of these organizations events and I have advocated at my own work place for LGBTQ. I believe having safe places for the LGBTQ community are vital most importantly workplace.</p>

Question 10	Describe a step you would take, or have taken, or a proposal you would make, or have made as a member of Austin's City Council that would <u>specifically</u> benefit Austin's LGBTQ community.
<p>Vincent Harding</p> <p>Natasha Harper-Madison</p>	<p>As a City Council Member, I want to provide a working environment in the City of Austin where people feel comfortable to be who they are, provide the health care services needed, continue to have the PRIDE parade and international film festival, and continue to recruit LGBTQ businesses to the City.</p> <p>As a city, we need to implement policies that protect trans inmates in our jails and encourage accurate reporting by law enforcement. Crimes involving trans victims are often mischaracterized or omitted altogether due to incorrect reporting from both APD and local news outlets, such as misgendering. We can work with APD to develop updated field arrest cards that allow arrested individuals to state what pronouns they use, their chosen name, and whether they prefer to be searched by a male or female officer. Which will go a long way in handling trans inmates with the dignity they deserve.</p>



Austin City Council Candidate Questionnaire Responses
District 1

October 9, 2018

Misael Ramos	First, we need policy changes in regards to housing. Discrimination clauses for housing docs in the state of Texas don't specify that a person should not be discriminated against when it comes to their sexual orientation or identity. This needs to change. I will also go to the state legislature to fight for outlawing conversion therapy clinics. I can go on and on about that last one but I'll stop there.
Reedy Spigner	I would ensure that the LGBTQ community have the same rights and treated equally as straight. You should have the right to marry, adopt children, and not be discriminated in the workplace or public places.

Question 11	In the 85th Texas Legislative Session, legislation was filed that would prohibit people from using bathrooms based on their preferred gender identity. Similar legislation is certain to be filed in the 86th Texas Legislative Session. Would you be
Vincent Harding	Yes. I have gone to the Texas Legislature and testified on behalf of progressive causes during several sessions and would so again on this issue.
Natasha Harper-Madison	As woman and an ally to our trans community, yes. Bathroom bills are harmful, absurd, and seek to "solve" a problem that doesn't exist, resulting in the creation of actual problems. The reasoning behind them is unfounded and discriminatory. I promise to always stand up and speak out against legislation that seeks to harm and alienate any segment of our city's community.
Misael Ramos	Yes I would be glad to testify against this legislation.
Reedy Spigner	YES!

Question 12	In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court, in the case of <i>Obergefell vs. Hodges</i>, ruled that all marriages be treated equally. In 2017, the Texas Supreme Court threw out a lower court ruling that said spouses of gay and lesbian public employees are entitled to government-subsidized same-sex marriage benefits. Do you agree or disagree with this ruling and would you maintain the City of Austin's policy to provide employee benefits to all married employees?
Vincent Harding	Yes, I agree with Austin's policy to provide employee benefits to all married employees. The weekend of the Hodges ruling, I went on Fox7Austin and defended the Freedom to Marry.
Natasha Harper-Madison	Government recognition of marriage comes with many benefits, such as potentially lower taxes and the ability to make important medical decisions for your spouse. There are also legal benefits, such as the government's inability to force married spouses to disclose confidential information privately discussed during a marriage. I firmly believe that same-sex couples should enjoy the same benefits extended to opposite-sex couples. It's unfair and discriminatory that same-sex couples are denied these benefits — especially since many LGBTQ+ parents have children of their own that could greatly benefit from the financial and legal advantages of a legally recognized union.



October 9, 2018

Misael Ramos	I disagree with this ruling and think all married persons should receive the equal rights of same-sex marriages, benefits included. Marriage is marriage no matter the gender, sex, or race. It should be treated equally as such.
Reedy Spigner	LGBTQ should have the same rights as same-sex marriages, no questions! And Yes, employee benefits should be provided to all married employees.

Question 13	Do you believe that public schools should institute rules and policies to prohibit harassment and discrimination against LGBTQ students?
Vincent Harding	Yes. No student should be subjected to harassment and discrimination.
Natasha Harper-Madison	I believe public schools should enforce the protections offered under Title IX and invest in programs that build empathy. Prohibiting harassment and discrimination are protections that should be provided for all students in Austin public schools most especially vulnerable and underrepresented populations. Additionally, we should implement policy that offers students the ability to identify their preferred pronouns.
Misael Ramos	I do and I also think our schools here in Texas are afraid of making their resources for LGBTQ kids known. We need to shed this way of thought because it only perpetuates the systemic views and barriers holding us back.
Reedy Spigner	Yes absolutely. No child should endure any type of discrimination or bullying.

Question 14	If elected, how would you stay informed of the concerns and interests of your LGBTQ constituents?
Vincent Harding	I plan to receive periodic updates from individuals on Boards and Commissions; that includes the LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission. I also want to have an open line of communication with people and organizations in the LGBTQ community.
Natasha Harper-Madison	I would take full advantage of the opportunity to work robustly alongside our LGBT Quality of Life Commission as well as the myriad of organizations in Austin that serve this community. Additionally I commit to making my office a safe place where all constituents feel comfortable and confident in my desire to resolve their issues.
Misael Ramos	I would have townhalls specific to my LGBTQ constituents to make sure their voices are being heard. I would also live stream on skype so if people can't make it to the townhalls, they can still participate and ask questions from afar.
Reedy Spigner	Absolutely and I would encourage all members of the city council to have LGBTQ on their staff.



October 9, 2018

Question 15	Have you attended functions in Austin's LGBTQ community and, if so, which?
<p>Vincent Harding</p>	<p>I have marched in the PRIDE parade several times, attended multiple meetings that were sponsored at least in part by the LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce, attended multiple meetings that were sponsored at least in part by the Austin LGBT Bar Association, the TCDP Freedom To Marry JBR Dinner, and Stonewall Democrats events and meetings.</p>
<p>Natasha Harper-Madison</p>	<p>Yes, I have attended events at AIDS services of Austin, including the monthly lunch and learn, Out Youth Austin Prom events as well as other events specifically for families, I have volunteered and attended events at the former Q headquarters, the LGBT Chamber luncheons, happy hours and other social events. Additionally I have had the opportunity and pleasure of marching (and dancing) with Transform (Erica Nix) in Pride Austin parades and for the Queer Dance Freakout organized by Becca Hyatt. Lastly, as a person introduced to drag culture in the 80's by my trans aunt, a drag performer, I have had the benefit of being a part of Austin's drag scene as an ally, supporter and super fan for 20+ years.</p>
<p>Misael Ramos</p>	<p>I've attended ABP and Austin Pride.</p>
<p>Reedy Spigner</p>	<p>Yes, I have attended art shows and plays by LGBTQ community. Being involved in my daughters school the PTA at Norman and LBJ has had discussions on the bathroom law, which I have always advocated against the bathroom law. I have attended AISD services of Austin luncheon, as a community leader I have mentored children who are gay and lesbian. I want all Austinite to feel comfortable in their own skin and will continue to advocate for all. Our campaign is about Unity Through Diversity, one love one heart.</p>