

# East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club Candidate Questionnaire

## Jovanka Beckles

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**Q1** First name

Jovanka

**Q2** Last name

Beckles

**Q3** Office you are seeking

State Assemblymember for District 15

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**Q5** Are you a registered Democrat?

Yes

**Q6** If so for how long?

My entire voting life

**Q7** With which Democratic organizations are you affiliated?

Wellstone Democratic Club; Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club; Stonewall Democratic Club, though I need to pay my dues for this year.

**Q8** Are you a member of the East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club?

No

## East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club Candidate Questionnaire

**Q9** If so for how long?

I've been a member the past. I have allowed my membership to expire, inadvertently.

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**Q10** If not have you supported or contributed to the club in some way?

I have supported many if not all, of the clubs events.

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**Q11** What other lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) organizations are you affiliated with and in what capacity?

I'm a member of the Richmond Rainbow Pride. It is an organization that creates spaces that are safe and welcoming to the LGBTIQQ community of Richmond. It was formed in response to the bullying and homophobia inflicted upon me during my tenure on the Richmond City Council.

Richmond Rainbow Price holds events of interest to the community, advocates for the interests of the community, and promotes LGBTIQQ visibility in the greater Richmond community.

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**Q12** What specifically have you done to advance LGBT rights and/or to nurture an inclusive and affirming community for LGBT individuals and families? Please give specific examples.

I have lived the experience of being a queer woman of color since I was a teen, even before I was publicly “Outed” by my high school basketball coach. I have been connected to LGBTQ communities in many capacities since. In my day job as a Mental Health Specialist I have counseled, supported and advocated on behalf of LGBTQ youth. Being a queer parent, I know first hand some of the challenges facing LGBTQ parents, and I have had the opportunity to advocate for LGBTQ parenting rights. Before I was elected to public office, my wife and I ran a small tea dance business for LGBTQ patrons and allies.

I faced subtle and indirect homophobia during my campaigns for the Richmond City Council. Once elected the first openly gay, Latina and black city council member in Richmond, I became the target of homophobic backlash the moment I took my seat on the council. It became so outrageous that a local LGBTQ filmmaker decided to document it in the film Against Hate. Fortunately, the overt homophobia backfired when the community rallied around me in particular and the LGBTQ community in general.

“I’m going to keep coming up here and tell you have gays have no morality...You’re filth. You’re dirt. Because I have the Constitutional right to say it.”

“Some people don’t care for her lifestyle. I don’t care for it myself.”

Those were just some of the jeers and taunts yelled at me from Richmond residents and my fellow colleagues. Rather than hang my head or quit my LGBTQ priorities, I realized how important it was for every LGBTQ person in Richmond and the Bay Area to see me stand tall and against the hate.

As a city council member I authored an anti-bully in the workplace resolution to ensure no Richmond worker was forced to stand against the hate I regularly faced. I made sure to honor the youth organizations that provided safe spaces to young people of all orientations, and lift up community leaders who protected these children. I helped establish a Human Rights Commission in Richmond, and I am an active member in Richmond Rainbow Pride with my wife Nicole Valentino, who sits on the Board.

I am a proud gay, Latina and black politician and I will always use my voice to protect and move forward LGBTQ rights, especially as our rights and equalities are under attack again.

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**Q13** Who are your LGBT supporters?

Equality California  
Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club  
Tom Ammiano, former CA State Assemblymember and LGBTQ advocate  
Gabriel Haaland, past president Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club  
Harry Britt, LGBTQ champion, former San Francisco Supervisor  
Cecilia Chung, LGBTQ champion; former Chair, San Francisco Human Rights Commission  
Carolyn Wysinger, Queer Author & West Contra Costa educator  
(partial list)

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**Q14** What LGBT candidates have you supported, and did it include financial or campaign support?

I endorsed Darryl Moore, Gabriel Quinto, and Joey Smith in past local elections.

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### **Q15** What other issues or causes have you advocated for that you feel are relevant to the LGBT community?

The LGBTQ civil rights for which we have fought for decades are again under attack at the federal level, so it is imperative to ensure California leads the way in continuing to create and support LGBTQ policy.

Non-binary options on I.D. cards was a great legislative victory this year, and we need to build on this success and ensure a non-binary option appears on any classifying paperwork.

Further LGBTQ legislative priorities for me in the Assembly will be:

Protecting LGBTQ refugees coming to California.

Continue to fight against California Public Education institutional LGBTQ discrimination.

Fighting LGBTQ discrimination in blood donation and FDA's "Men who have sex with men" regulations.

Supporting SB 219 for LGBTQ Senior Bill of Rights.

Expanding on California's Equal Restroom Access Act (ERAA) to ensure all non-binary persons have access to a neutral bathroom nearby.

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### **Q16** What makes you uniquely qualified for the office you are seeking?

I am a two-term Richmond City Council member and have learned how to initiate and guide legislation to passage. I have always been at the forefront of the progressive movement in Richmond and the greater Bay Area, and my nearly 8-year record of sponsoring and garnering support for local initiatives to benefit workers, immigrants, and the underserved sets me apart from all other contenders in this race. As one of only two card-carrying union members in this race, I am especially attuned to the challenges faced in our communities.

I am no stranger to the issues that plague Bay Area cities and their diverse communities. I have a record of finding legislative solutions to the housing, education and affordability crisis these constituents face. My record as an elected official for the last eight years highlights my understanding of the region's issues, as well as a connection with the diverse communities that call AD15 home.

I have the experience needed to represent the issues of AD15 in the Assembly and I answer only to the constituents I represent, not deep pocketed corporations and special interests. I am the only candidate who has never accepted a campaign contribution from a corporation or special interest group in my whole career. This means that I am not compelled to answer to those who flood campaign accounts with financial incentives to pay close attention to their issues. As one of the few candidates with more than one term as an elected official under my belt, the voters of AD15 can look to my record to see where I stand on the issues.

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### Q17 Why should Stonewall consider you over your opponents for an early endorsement other than being LGBTQ?

An early endorsement would make those who are unfamiliar with my work and record, take notice and recognize what I have done to improve circumstances for our communities. As the first Out Black Latina immigrant elected to the Richmond City Council and a full time Mental Health Specialist for Contra Costa County, I have witnessed and experienced many of the accomplishments and challenges faced by Assembly District 15 communities. These include policies such as maintaining our City's commitment to protect immigrants by implementing a municipal ID program and upholding our sanctuary city policies; advocating for community policing that serves all community members; ensuring fair hiring practices among line staff and management; honoring union workers; fighting for fair housing; and many more.

Election after election, we keep choosing good people with good platforms who only disappoint us once they get into office. That's where my campaign is different. I'm the only candidate endorsed by Bernie Sanders' Our Revolution. Our Revolution understands that I'm not just another "good guy" progressive. My main job is to help build an organized movement that truly represents the 99%, with elected officials responsible and accountable to that movement because they're corporate-donation free.

Uniting diverse communities will further my people-powered campaign, which relies on volunteers and individual contributions. Since I have never, or will I ever, accept corporate donations, we need your support to reach out to our communities.

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### Q18 What would be your main policy goals?

As your corporate-donation free Assemblymember I will fight for: Medicare for All; protecting renters, the LGBTQ community, retirees, and homeowners against banks; promoting unions; campaign finance reform; criminal justice reform; environmental justice; ban fracking; free college and childcare; and eliminating corporate tax loopholes in Proposition 13.

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### Q19 How do these goals relate to the LGBT community?

The LGBTQ community is uniquely vulnerable. Other communities face challenges and obstacles, yet they have their own individual cultures that historically have given them a sense of unity in struggle. I hope that my leadership in the pursuit of these goals will help individuals in the LGBTQ community experience a sense of connection and unity with working families throughout the Bay Area and beyond. It is only through unifying with others that we will achieve what we all need to flourish and create a better world for our children and generations to come.

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### Q20 What do you hope to accomplish if you are elected?

Passage of Single-payer health care;

Work to create funding streams to build low- and moderate-income housing;

Work to create statewide programs to help local residents identify and maintain safe, and affordable housing, including foreclosure prevention, credit counseling, and pre-purchase assistance.

I will continue to champion environmental regulations and work to see that Big Oil and polluters are held accountable. The California legislature is awash with money from the oil industry, but as the only corporate-free candidate in this race, I can promise that their influence will not be an issue with me.

Also see responses to question 18: I will turn these policy goals into legislation, work with other legislators to find funding to pass and implement them.

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## East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club Candidate Questionnaire

### Q21 Why do you feel you can win this race?

We rely on a people-powered strategy.

I am planning to hire a seasoned campaign manager who will direct my winning campaign

With our campaign boots on the ground:

We have already held three canvasses and are mobilizing canvassers every three weeks; we will be stepping up this effort in April.

We will be working closely with Our Revolution chapters in Contra Costa and Alameda counties.

Members of East Bay Democratic Socialists of America will be holding canvassing blitzes in targeted neighborhoods in South Berkeley and North Oakland in April and May.

House parties: leafleting neighborhoods where parties will take place to meet the candidate. This is a fundraising as well as outreach effort.

Phone banking: we hold a weekly phone bank and have instituted a "home bank" for volunteers to call from home. Right now we're using phone banking to recruit volunteers and identify supporters.

Campaign literature: we have a basic campaign piece we use for canvassing and handing out at events, farmers markets, etc. We're working on a tri-fold flier, a bilingual flyer, and a 4-page newsprint piece to mail to targeted voters throughout the district.

With Social media:

I send out a weekly email blast through our database software, NationBuilder.

I have an actively-managed campaign Facebook page and use Instagram and Snapchat.

I publish a 250-word article in the bi-weekly Richmond Progressive Alliance online newsletter, which reaches nearly 3000 political activists in the San Francisco Bay Area.

With Media:

Have articles and letters in local newspapers;

I have interviewed and hope to be endorsed by Telegraph Media, whose publications have a combined circulation of about 225,000 a month; their flagship East Bay Express and the magazine websites attract more than 500,000 page views monthly.

Appearances on local Spanish language and public radio stations

Our corporate free, people powered campaign is supported by many organizations, unions, community leaders and residents:

Bernie Sanders' Our Revolution

Service Employees International Union

SEIU-CA, Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) Action

California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) Action

Cal Students for Equal Rights and a Valid Education - CalSERVE

UC Berkeley Progressive Student Association

Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE) Action

Redwood Citizens Action

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Berkeley Citizens Action

Berkeley Progressive Alliance

Berkeley Tenants Union

Democratic Socialists of America East Bay

Our Revolution Contra Costa

Our Revolution East Bay

Pinole Progressive Alliance

Richmond Progressive Alliance

San Francisco Berniecrats

Women for Justice - Pacific Region

Contra Costa County Green Party

Solano County Green Party

Ericka Huggins, activist and educator

Danny Glover, actor, film director, and political activist

Tom Ammiano, former CA State Assemblymember and LGBTQ advocate

Jane Kim, San Francisco Supervisor\*

Bobby Seale, Co-Founder and Chairman of the Black Panther Party

David Campos, former San Francisco Supervisor; Santa Clara County Deputy County Executive

Harry Britt, LGBTQ champion, former San Francisco Supervisor

Ken Jones, Community Organizer, former member BART Citizen Review Board

Cecilia Chung, LGBTQ champion; former Chair, San Francisco Human Rights Commission

Alex Shantz, Former St. Helena School Board Trustee

Peter Gallota, former President, Harvey Milk Democratic Club

RN Dotty Nygard, CD-10 Candidate & California Nurses Association member

Nate Albee, Former Harvey Milk Club President

Stephany Ashley, Former Harvey Milk Club President

Brian Basinger, Former Harvey Milk Club President

Jerry Threet, Former Harvey Milk Club President

Laura Thomas, Former Harvey Milk Club President

Greg Shaw, Former Harvey Milk Club President

Marianne Kearney-Brown, Trustee, Vallejo Unified School District Board\*

Hosam Haggag, Northern Vice Chair, Arab American Caucus, California Democratic Party

Ken "Kacey" Carpenter, AD 24 delegate and community activist; author, "My Journey With Bernie"

Carolina Morales, Harvey Milk Club Co-President

Stephen Jaffe, Civil rights attorney, Democratic candidate for Congress, 12th Cong. District; President and co-founder, South Beach District 6 Democratic Club\*

Demetrio Gonzales, President, Richmond Teachers Union\*

Richard Tamm, Co-chair, Voting Rights Task Force\*; Treasurer, Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club\*

Gayle McLaughlin, Former Richmond Mayor, candidate for California Lt. Governor

Ada Recinos, Richmond City Councilmember\*

Melvin Willis, Richmond City Councilmember\*

Eduardo Martinez, Richmond City Councilmember\*

Ben Choi, Richmond City Councilmember\*

Mister Phillips, Trustee, WCCUSD Board\*

Madeline Kronenberg, Trustee WCCUSD Board\*

Andrés Soto, Communities for a Better Environment\*

Reverend Phil Lawson, Pastor Emeritus of Easter Hill United Methodist Church

Michael Davenport, Richmond civic leader; Founder, DP Security

Dr. Desmond Carson, Lifelong Medical Care\*

Jonathan White, Martinez School Board Vice President\*

Claudia Jimenez, Contra Costa Racial Justice Coalition \*

Whitney Dotson, East Bay Board Regional Parks Board member\*

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William D. Johnson, East Bay Board Regional Parks Board member

Carolyn Wysinger, Queer Author & West Contra Costa educator

Otheree Christian, former president, Iron Triangle Neighborhood Council\*

Steve Early, labor activist; author, "Refinery Town: Big Oil, Big Money and the Remaking of an American City"

Robin Reed Poindexter, Richmond Fire Department Deputy Fire Marshall

Kate Harrison, Berkeley City Council\*

Gus Newport, Former Berkeley Mayor

Mark Williams, AC Transit Board Director, Ward 4\*

Lateefah Simon, BART Board Director, District 7\*

Kriss Worthington, Berkeley City Councilmember\*

Leah Simon-Weisberg, Commissioner, Berkeley Rent Board\*

Alejandro Soto-Vigil, Commissioner, Berkeley Rent Board\*

Jess Dervin-Ackerman, Environmental and Political Organizer; former Director, San Francisco Chapter, Sierra Club

Dr. Vicki Alexander, AD 15 woman of the year 2017

Shanhti Gonzales, Trustee, Oakland School Board\*

Carroll Fife, Community Activist

Sheila Jordan, Alameda County Superintendent of Schools Emerita

Sharon Maldonado, former Berkeley Rent Board Commissioner

Tracy Baxter, former SF Democratic County Central Committee Member (AD 13) and playwright

Victor Aguilar, Jr., Trustee, San Leandro USD School Board

Michael Eisenscher, labor, peace, environmental and social justice activist

(partial list)

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