

# East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club Candidate Questionnaire

## Cheryl Sudduth

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**Q1** First name

Cheryl

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**Q2** Last name

Sudduth

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**Q3** Office you are seeking

CA State Assembly

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**Q5** Are you a registered Democrat?

Yes

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**Q6** If so for how long?

25 years

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

Albany Dems, Black Young Dems, Berkeley Dems, Dem Women Contra Costa, East Bay Young Dems, El Cerrito Dems, Lamorinda Dems, Muslim Dems, Oakland East Bay Dems, Wellstone Dems, West County Dems  
ACLU NorCal, BWOPA, CCISCO, CeaseFire, CCIRA, CIJYA, CPIC, EmergeCA, Emily's List, Higher Heights, Human Rights Commission, Global Women's Leadership Network, Indivisible East Bay, League Women Voters Berkeley/Albany/Emeryville, Let My People Go, Let My People Vote, NAACP, Thrive EB, West County Jail/Detention Center Strategy & Monitoring Team, Women's March,

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**Q8** Are you a member of the East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club? **No**

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**Q9** If so for how long?

N/A

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

Yes; donated y Supported

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

Albany High (advisor/supporter);

Cheer Mom - I have 'adopted' several LGBT youth from my daughter's cheer teams over the past 13y and they are my 'bonus' children. I've been their 'Mom', their mentor y provided their second homes. Some teens (esp Native, Latinx y Black males) have lacked support of their parents once they have told their parents of their sexuality, so they've traveled with us y we've hosted, as needed.

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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.

As an EEO officer so human rights issues are integral to what I represent professionally y personally. I have worked directly with LGBT youth athletes to ensure they feel valued y worthy (esp when they have not been accepted by their families). Sometimes the support has been as simple as providing personal care packages or as robust as providing housing y travel for competitions.

For me, what I've loved about working with youth in all demographics, esp LGBT, is not only embracing their rights to be different yet affirming the many ways we are alike and want to be included. The need to be loved, supported y accepted is a universal need.

I also worked with a few adults, one trans, who required protection in a pseudo-construction environment. Maintaining his privacy y safety and being his confidential ear was important as I learned his family had turned against him after learning he had transitioned (from being their daughter). As a compliance officer, it's not always practical or advisable to be able to give personal advise to workers yet when workers like these have little resources or family support, I do make exceptions.

He left the company years ago yet keeps in touch with me.

Lastly, I have been mentoring LGBT Latinx y Muslim youth - still a huge stigma in the Muslim community. Not only are they facing internal conflict y family turmoil yet the thought of communal isolation can be unbearable esp for immigrant youth. I consider this work some of the most important.

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**Q13** Who are your LGBT supporters?

There are a wealth of families throughout the community (district) who are supporting me, hosting me in their homes, as they know I am a champion of ALL people. My immigrant youth are my supporters and I am theirs.

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

Joey Smith (Dem Delegate), Dollene Jones (BART Board), Cesar Zepeda (Richmond City Council), Rebecca Kaplan (Oakland City Council), Peggy Moore (Oakland City Council), Gabe Quinto (El Cerrito Council), Judy Appel (Berkeley School Board)  
Campaign y Financial support

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

As a human rights activist, I believe the intersectionality of all issues purporting to gain equity y equal access to constitutional rights y due process for all persons regardless of race, gender, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation...all these I fight for professionally y civically.

Every person deserves to be treated humanely. I've advocated for safe communities for undocumented families via my work on CC Immigration Rights Alliance to help establish the Rapid Response Network (Stand Together Contra Costa); advocated for environmental equity esp in marginalized communities; an educational evolution where stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, administrators) have a say in the system; reasonably-priced housing that doesn't cost > 35% of one's wages to live indoors; ending pay gap disparities & fighting for living wages & paid benefits + equal pay for equal work; fighting for equal access to quality healthcare; advocate via my work as steering committee member of CC Racial Justice Coalition to reduce mass incarceration (esp of Black y Brown youth) & divert funds to education, prevention y diversion programs; advocate as CC Racial Justice steering committee member y ACLU Board member to have independent investigation of human rights violations of West County jail y detention center - - all of these things are not only relevant to the LGBT community, they are relevant and necessary to ALL communities.

These issues to address immigration rights, homelessness y the housing crisis, unemployment y underemployment, lack of education y subpar education, y a lack of healthcare are of paramount concern to all of us (or should be).

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

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I am not typical or simple or fearful. I'm not a politician nor am I interested in moving forth the status quo or continuing politics as usual. I'm a Mom y a concerned community member involved in politics. Soy una Guerrera. I am a Fighter. A bold, fearless Fighter prepared to take on the issues our community faces in an innovative way.

I am unbought, unbound, un beholden, unafraid, and un intimidated to tell the truth and fight for what's right without hesitation, without sacrificing my integrity, dignity or character.

A cellular y molecular biologist and biochemist with +25y public y private sector experience as a contract negotiator, policymaker, compliance official, EEO officer and a mediator for Sony + Siebel + Goodwill, I am well-versed in public sector administration on the local, state y federal level. Coupled with my experience working directly in the community, in nearly every one of the 12 cities of the district, with everyday people making amazing change happen, I am the only candidate with that breadth of real current grassroots experience. I am also the only candidate who is doing the work now and not just talking about it - whether on the CC Racial Justice Coalition Steering Committee fighting to reduce disparities in the criminal justice system; CC Immigration Rights Alliance Steering Committee to establish Stand Together CoCo & Rapid Response Network and fighting for due process and immigrant rights; working directly on the Budget Justice Coalition steering group to drive values-based budgeting at the county level; work directly with ACLU, Ella Baker Ctr, ICE out of CA (Oakland, CCC), EOC, Privacy Council y other groups to drive real change.

I have been working directly in every city over these past 25y, including now:

- Albany (AUSD A.C.T., Black Parents Advisory Group, Latino Parents Group, Sports Boosters, AHS PTSA Board, AMS PTA Board, donor, Superintendent's Advisory Committee, Girl Scouts parent volunteer)
- Berkeley (Cougars Football Parent Board, community ctr volunteer, mentor, STEM y science fair volunteer, ACLU Board, NAACP, youth basketball volunteer y donor, etiquette coach, donor, BUSD volunteer)
- El Cerrito (Youth Baseball Board, Community Ctr volunteer, NAACP Board, )
- El Sobrante (community volunteer, activist, Valley View PTA Board President y parent volunteer, youth mentor y volunteer at Boys & Girls Club, Girl Scouts parent volunteer)
- Emeryville (Head Over Heels: parent volunteer y mentor to dozens of gymnasts, donor)
- Hercules (Little League All-Stars volunteer, donor)
- Kensington (Girl Scouts volunteer at Universal Unitarian Church; volunteer at Kensington Elem, donor)
- Oakland (Babe Ruth Baseball parent board, volunteer, youth mentor, donor, Rebels basketball parent board y volunteer y mentor, Warriors football parent board y volunteer, donor, etiquette coach, NAACP, BWOPA, Chamber of Commerce, Black Chamber, ICE Out of Oakland, Clara Muhammad School PTSA Board, B.O.S.S., East Oakland Collective, Oakland Justice Coalition, Ella Baker Ctr, ACCE Oakland, City-Wide Anti-Displacement Network,
- Pinole (Little League All-Stars volunteer, donor)
- Richmond (Youth Baseball parent volunteer, board volunteer, youth football volunteer y donor, fundraiser, youth tennis donor y volunteer, Soulful Softball Sunday donor y volunteer, CCISCO, Ceasefire, Let My People Vote, BWOPA, NAACP, Boys y Girls Club volunteer y mentor, Hispanic Chamber, Latina Ctr, Let My People Go, West County Jail/Detention Ctr Strategy Team, )
- San Pablo (Board of Tara Hills Recreational Association)
- WCCUSD (Citizens Bond Oversight Comm, STEM y science fair volunteer, mentor)
- Contra Costa County (Racial Justice Coalition, Immigration Rights Alliance, Budget Justice Coalition, La Raza, La Puente, Indivisible East Bay,
- Alameda County (Privacy Council, Sierra Club, League of Women Voters Berkeley•Albany•Emeryville, Women's March Oakland, Muslim American Society,
- Otro: SF Muslim Ctr Board, Women's March SF, Higher Heights, MultiFaith Coalition, Human Rights Commission, Jewish Family & Children's Svcs Ctr of SF, Ctr for Biodiversity, Centro de la Raza

I have been an equity y human rights champion my entire life, since my days as a young Girl Scout petitioning the Missouri State Senate for equity funding for girls sports programs in our schools continuing as a volunteer STEM champion with youth and currently as an executive-level policymaker, compliance, EEO and contracting professional.

No other candidate has this combination of actual training, practical professional experience and continual on the ground, real people level work as I do and that makes me unique. As well, no candidate can couple this with the beauty of being a true outsider in this CADem party and this political climate which claims to be so welcoming though has yet to reflect it in the legislature: a Black-Brown, multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual, highly-educated, highly-skilled environmentalist Muslimah.

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

Representation matters. Just as it matters with LGBT candidates, it matters with candidates like me who represent a multi-dimensional Woman. A Woman who knows what it's like to FIGHT FOR EVERYONE because she's been an outsider and often overlooked. Because she's not only not a typical white Protestant male, she's everything opposite - She's a Black-Brown, multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual, highly-educated, highly-skilled environmentalist Muslimah with the audacity to run for office.

With no visible Muslims in state office in California, esp. one who is aligned with the human rights values we all share, it is vitally important we consider that representation counts. The person representing our District 15 must truly understand the issues we are facing - not just in principle, yet she must live and experience these issues with us, not just read them or hear about them from a distance or through social media yet she must really know them because She is One of US, so She can truly be a Voz de la Gente/Voice of the People.

Because our community is so diverse, Our Community deserves a representative who understands & appreciates that diversity on EVERY level, because She not only KNOWS the Community, She KNOWS the People because She is ONE OF THE PEOPLE. She is an unrelenting advocate who lives here, works here, learns here, shops here, plays here, prays here, speaks the language of the People and recognizes leadership is about Serving the People. I AM SHE. I AM THAT PERSON. I haven't been holed away in my little corner of the district only popping out at election time. I've been and I am ALL IN.

I am not one who is jumping positions after a few months in an elected position or viewing this as a political climbing opportunity. I didn't just show up a few months or just to run for this position. I have been here, putting in the work in this community - the entire community - over a sustained period of time, since moving to Kensington in 1992 and making it, then El Cerrito, Albany y El Sobrante home.

I have unwavering integrity and unshakable character. I don't claim to be something I'm not just because it's election season. I've been in this community every day for many years - not just when cameras are rolling on special occasions or to exploit issues. I care about issues because I'm intimately affected by them personally or as a human being.

For instance, I don't just talk or tweet about immigration because it's a hot button issue - I get intimately involved on the front lines because it's a human rights y racial justice y social justice issue AND it affects me y mí familia personally. People aren't political pawns. I've been personally affected by sexual assault y sexual harassment, gender bias + gender-based/race-based wage inequalities, ecological & environmental injustice... so my solution has been to resist being a keyboard warrior and be a street justice warrior joining many unsung warriors and change agents on the frontlines doing the work.

I have worked on the ground, at the grassroots level fighting for racial, social y economic justice in our communities, esp. marginalized areas affected by disparate treatment and I will continue to fight for unwavering civil rights protection, just immigration, evolutionary changes in our educational systems, creation of career opportunities, fighting wage inequalities so all are paid equal pay for equal work, rebuilding our criminal justice/juvenile justice, protecting people with disAbilities & the ADA, healthcare, small business administration, restoration & protection of voting rights, clean money politics, know your rights campaigns, fighting environmental conditions to build more sustainable futures, & making our communities safer & more welcoming with meaningful gun control regulations & implementing community policing.

I've made conscious efforts to work with all people in the community, all groups and not just those I think can benefit me yet any and everyone who I may provide benefits to through the organizations I volunteer. {My colleagues may have connections in their respective areas y sparse connections in other areas yet none can claim the wide net I have created nor the ability to bring people of varying interests together including MultiFaith and multiracial sectors. Why? Because I'm one of them, I've been around and they trust me. That's hard to do when you haven't been around or don't come around until you want something - like election time. I fight for everyone because I understand intersectionality. I don't just talk about it. I have yet to see any of them at our Muslim events or immigration events that don't involve 'media'. These fights are taking place EVERY DAY in our communities. My in-laws are Jewish so we fight alongside them. I was reared Christian so that's a fight I know without blinking. My best friends, mís hermanas are LGBT, and I'd shed blood for them. Mí familia is Heinz-57, all Native y immigrant - I'd put my own freedom on the line to ensure they are granted theirs. All of Us or None.}

Manv people. esp. those who feel their voices have been muted or whom feel they lack power - our undocumented miarant families v

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neighbors, those re-entering society from the criminal justice system & those still incarcerated, our unsheltered neighbors - they deserve a voice. I have found most people want to be heard & included so I listen to them to include their thoughts and concerns along with all others when developing priorities. Everyone's Voice Counts and I will take this unique perspective with me to Sacramento. More importantly, I will continue to connect with the community on these levels while representing D15 in the assembly by continually coming back and having these conversations. I have no interest in becoming a politician - just handling the business of the people, and I expect to be held accountable thereto.

I'm all in because the community deserves it and that's why I deserve your vote. Period.

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

As a representative, my goals will always be the goals of la Gente (the People) since I represent them & their needs - not my own agenda. As a steering member of the Budget Justice Coalition, we conducted a survey in Feb18 to gauge community budget & social value priorities. It is clear based on these results that Criminal Justice & Social Justice (housing, education, homelessness, jobs, economy) are the top priorities. The Racial Justice Coalition & the Oakland Justice Coalition are also fielding surveys in this regard. Initially, I would concentrate on getting a 'win' for the People in SB-10 which is currently in the Assembly yet looks to stall. We need to ensure no person's liberty is tied to his/her bank account balance or prejudiced by indeterminate factors like race, creed, gender or national origin. As well as ensuring passage of no-money bail legislation, I would champion legislation on reducing monies allocated to mass incarceration in the budget and divert same to programs on prevention, education, diversion and true rehabilitation. Another high priority is a revolutionary approach to the way our educational system is constructed, implemented, maintained, managed where the stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, administrators) have a hand in shaping the educational plans. True environmental justice that looks past the long-standing act of pointing fingers at just Chevron & examines other perpetrators like oil shops & restaurants that pour oil & waste down drains that empty into our aquifers which empty into the Bay or utility companies that illegally dispose of electronic devices.

No matter the initial priorities, all would be fluid in response to the People's needs.

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

I fight for Human Rights and LGBT Rights are Human Rights. The right to not have one's liberty hinge on one's wealth status; the right to due process; the right to live indoors without having to spend 70% of one's wages; the right to equal access to a free public education irrespective of one's ethnicity, gender or socioeconomic status; the right to be paid a fair equal wage not based on one's race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, sex, or national origin; and the right to breathe clean air, have access to clean water & fresh toxin-free food and to live in a lead-free & toxin-free environment - - all of these are issues affecting the LGBT community and are issues I fight for without reservation.

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

I hope to create a transparent, People-centric leadership which returns the governance of our commUNITY back to the People. A model which rebuilds the trust and motivates the commUNITY to want to become involved again at every level. A model which makes citizen leadership & commUNITY policing possible because we learn how to take back our streets & our communities through proactive unified strategic action.

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

I know I can win because I know our community. I know they are asking for something more, something better...more accountability, better leadership, more community involvement, better vision. Our community wants and needs a Fighter.

I have stood with the community to fight and I stand with the community to fight because I certainly know as a Black/Brown, Muslimah, multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual, educated Woman, Wife, Mother of 3 - I know what it feels like to be an outsider. I know the fear of walking in to a board room y no one looks like you (ever) or having to present to a crowd of 100s of conservative tech executives (i.e. white males) days after 9-1-1 while wearing hijab...and to appear unfazed by the 'loud' whispers.

I know this is the time for real bold, innovative leadership which reflects the 'voz de la gente' (voice of the people). Leadership that seeks to actually resolve issues with ingenuity & creativity rather than applying cookie cutter approaches or typical corporate Dems rhetoric -> no real resolution. While I may not be the loudest voice in the room, it would be tough to find anyone more passionate...I am neither afraid or bought or beholding to anyone or any group. I feel confident the time is now.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." -Marianne Williamson

For a Black-Brown multicultural Woman like me to successfully rear three children - putting 2 young Black-Brown young Men through Morehouse College (a 2017 graduate y current MBA student + a third year engineering/business student) and a daughter who just celebrated her 16th and will graduate Albany High in a few months - while maintaining a full-time professional career as an executive-level contracting & compliance officer and volunteering in my community AND remaining married for over 25y - - this is the very definition of believing in the power of living bold and successfully in a time of challenge y so-called 'impossibility'.

I have lived and demonstrated a life of extraordinary exceptions and move forth wanting the community to embrace the possibilities of its own greatness under the auspices that BOLD OUTCOMES can only be created with BOLD VISION. I have that Vision and I am just that Bold. I am bold enough to believe in myself and that the time has come to step out in to the light to take the reins of community leadership to the next level. I will neither sacrifice my character, integrity or ethics. I am unbought, unbound, unafraid, and unintimidated to tell the truth and be La Voz de la Gente/the Voice of the People in the Assembly. We are only hampered by our own lack of holding back y holding on to weakness. We think big and act bigger, think bold and act bolder - we achieve big and bold. I ask you all to join me.

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