



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

AISHA KNOWLES

From your perspective, what happened to Russell City, why do you think it happened, and how did it affect your family?

A majority of Russell City was mysteriously burned, and residents were forced from their homes via eminent domain in order to create a pathway for an urban renewal project. The question I continue to ask myself as I get older is how hasn't the loss of Russell City affected my family? The total loss is unknown.

What is your connection to the Russell City Community?

I am a descendant. My dad, James Knowles, grew up in Russell City, along with many other cousins, aunts, uncles and other family members.

What is your background? What meaningful value or expertise can you bring to the committee?

Hello, my name is Aisha Knowles and live in Ashland (unincorporated San Leandro). Since the Fall of 2019, I have served as the Public Affairs Manager and Public Information Officer for the Fremont Fire Department following nearly 15 years of service with the Alameda County Fire Department as the Public Information and Community Relations Officer. I have served as a representative on the Alameda County Redevelopment Agency's Ashland Citizen's Advisory Committee and as the District 4 Representative of the Alameda County Commission on the Status of Women where I also served as Chair. In 2015, I became the first African-American President of the Rotary Club of San Leandro and, today, as President again, I remain the only African-American person to hold the role over the course of the Club's 96-year history. I have served on the Board of Directors for Building Futures (San Leandro) and currently serve on the Safety Committee of the Boys and Girls Clubs of San Leandro.

I am the Immediate Past President of the Alameda County Board of Education, where I was elected to serve two consecutive one-year terms as President during the pandemic. I was first elected as a Trustee to the County Board of Education in 2012. I am a Bay Area Youth Agency Consortium (BAYAC) Americorps Alumni (2002-2003), having served at the 49ers Academy in East Palo Alto, and have studied abroad in the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica. I have also participated in Rotary International service projects in Guatemala and Honduras.



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In 2020, I was recognized by the Alameda Labor Council as one of “Four Women to Reckon With,” and in 2019, I was named the Eden Area Chamber of Commerce’s First Responder of the Year. I have also been recognized by Assemblymember Bill Quirk as the Assembly District 20 Woman of the Year in Law and Public Safety (2015) and by former Assemblymember Rob Bonta as an Assembly District 18 Community Advocate of the Year (2015).

Born and raised in Hayward, I was a Hayward Youth Commissioner and Hayward Unified School District Student Representative from Mt. Eden High School, where, as Student Body President I found myself speaking up and speaking out to help represent the voices of students, families and community members. I bring a unique communications perspective and community engagement experiences from both Hayward and the unincorporated area to the committee, which may be beneficial in sorting out components of this project.

Do you have any additional or unique qualifications you would like to share? If so, please list them below.

Not at this time.

Tell us about your experience working in a team or community-based process.

I'm a member of the East Bay Incident Management Team where I work with other members of public safety organizations throughout Alameda County and Contra Costa County during large scale emergencies and/or disasters, and have also helped organize multiple fundraisers for Rotary--Crab Feeds, Lobsters for Literacy Dinners, holiday toy drive events, etc. where I'm working as part of a team or have served as the event chair. Most recently, I was part of the Russell City Reunion Picnic Event Committee Planning Team.

What is your purpose for being here? As a member of the committee, what do you want to achieve? At the end of the day, what would you want to see happen and what are you willing to do to get us there?

My purpose for being here is simple, to help ensure the truth about Russell City is brought to light and part of our history, that it's stories remain alive, and the memories are preserved.

Aisha Knowles