



Candidate Questionnaire
Local Candidates Committee
NYC District Attorney Elections 2017

Citizens Union appreciates your response to the following questionnaire related to policy issues facing New York City and our interest in reforming city and state government. Please return the questionnaire to us as soon as possible, and no later than June 28th. Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for the New York City Council, and to issue our preference for the Primary and endorsement for the General Election. Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.

If you seek our support, we will also need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process. Please contact us if you wish to be interviewed.

We plan to make responses to this questionnaire public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues.

We thank you very much for your response.

Biographical Information

Candidate Name: Ama Dwimoh

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat

Age:

Education: Bachelors Degree from Barnard College, Columbia University; Law Degree from

General Town University Law Center
Office Sought (including Kings County District Attorney

Occupation/Employer: Brooklyn Borough President's Office, Special Counsel

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

(Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.)

Campaign Contact Information

Campaign Manager Name: Evan Thies

Additional Staff Contact: Ingrid Martin

Address: n/a

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Affirmations

Have you completed required campaign finance filings?

YES / NO

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee?

YES / NO

(Please note: interviews are prerequisites of being considered for Citizens Union endorsements.)

I. CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

Please state your position on the following issues by using the space provided below each question or a separate sheet of paper to elaborate on your positions on the following questions. You may also provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to advance your positions on these issues.

- 1. What trends do you see in criminal activity that the district attorney's office should address?

Brooklyn has achieved major public safety gains over the last few decades and crime has gone down significantly overall. But lower crime does not mean justice for all in Brooklyn. Many neighborhoods still suffer from significant public safety issues—including frequent shootings and other violent crime.

There are also still many, many Brooklynites who need help from the criminal justice system, but aren't receiving it—including the abused, neglected and exploited. Something must be done to improve quality of life and prevent crime pro-actively in neighborhoods that have not seen the same gains as others, and to protect the most vulnerable among us beyond what is already being done.

- 2. What role do you think the district attorney plays in anti-corruption efforts and building public trust? What changes would you make to the structure of the office to help bolster public confidence in the DA's office?

The District Attorney should play a very large role in restoring the public trust and fighting corruption in Brooklyn. That is why I have created an integrity agenda for the office which will prevent wrongful convictions, create accountability in the office, bring new levels of transparency. I will also expand the Conviction Review Unit and modernize systems at the Brooklyn DA's office to better track cases.

I also believe it is the responsibility of the DA to root out corruption. For far too long we have relied on federal offices to do that work for us. I would not hesitate to use office resources to investigate and prosecute corruption whenever and wherever it emerges.

- 3. To what extent would your office use the district attorney's existing authority to investigate and monitor elected officials' conduct in relation to issues like campaign finance compliance and proper use of government resources and influence?

I would investigate any credible claim of campaign finance law violation, graft or other illegal misconduct by a public official. I would also advocate for new state laws to better define corruption and empower DAs to clean up government. Unfortunately, current law does not prohibit New Yorkers from lying to DA's office staff, nor does it provide DAs with the same legal tools as federal prosecutors.

4. Do you believe more needs to be done to ease the re-entry of formerly incarcerated persons into society and if so, what would you propose?

~~es. Much more has to be done. My office will pair social workers with offenders before~~
~~uring, and post-incarceration. The social worker will be well-versed in the inmate's~~
~~case so s/he will be able to help find suitable job placement after incarceration and~~
~~deal with other underlying issues. I will also partner my office with local organizati~~
~~ho are best-suited to ease ex-inmates into normal life in addition to working to~~
~~streamline the government process for delivering helpful services and resources.~~

5. What should the role of the district attorney be in addressing issues relating to terrorism? How would you ensure citizens' privacy rights while fulfilling this role?

~~It is the DA's responsibility to help facilitate ongoing~~
~~investigations in partnership with law enforcement, in addition to~~
~~working with federal prosecutors, in order to keep Brooklyn safe~~
~~from terror. I would never violate the privacy rights of~~
~~Brooklynites in order to meet that responsibility--and I do not~~
~~think it's necessary to fight terrorism.~~

6. Do you think that the number of incidents of police misconduct is a problem? If so, what would you propose to facilitate more effective oversight of police misconduct? What data do you have to support your point of view?

~~I do think it's a problem. In order to have rule of law, public safety and justice~~
~~for all, there must be trust in our law enforcement and our criminal justice syst~~
~~When police and other law enforcement abuse their power, that faith is broken. It~~
~~especially troubling that CCRB data and other reports show that the vast majority~~
~~complaints of excessive force against police are from Black and Latino New Yorker~~
~~Those with power must also fear punishment for misusing it. Police who break the~~
~~or act unethically -- especially those who abuse their power by mistreating~~
~~civilians -- must face the strongest penalties for their actions. That is why I~~
~~support a special prosecutor in those cases and body cameras for police.~~

7. There had been fears that a drop in the reportable instances of Stop, Question, and Frisk could lead to higher crime, but it hasn't. What are your own feelings about the more judicious use of Stop, Question, and Frisk?

~~Stop and Frisk has not proven to be effective, and it alienates good~~
~~New Yorkers from law enforcement, harming our ability to police~~
~~neighborhoods. The most "judicious" use of Stop and Frisk is to not~~
~~use Stop and Frisk at all.~~

8. Do you support requiring that police interrogations be videotaped?

Yes.

9. Earlier this year a commission led by Judge Jonathan Lippman and supported by Speaker Mark-Viverito and Mayor de Blasio made recommendations for the closing of the Rikers Island jail complex. How do you feel about the plan to close the complex? What concerns do you have and what are the potential benefits and pitfalls of the plan?

I support the Lippman Commission plan to close Rikers Island. My only concern is that the 10-year process is too long. We must start the process immediately by reducing the Rikers' population through misdemeanor reforms and a much more robust pre-trial monitoring program, and begin the land use process to close and expand jails in the boroughs where necessary.

10. In November, voters in New York will be asked whether they wish to hold a constitutional convention to amend the New York State Constitution. Do you support holding such a convention?

It has not been demonstrated to me that the benefits of a Convention outweigh the risks to the protections our Constitution already contains. There is also a legislative process for making changes already in place.

4. Set prosecution priorities that reflect Brooklyn's values.
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5. Reduce unnecessary incarceration with fewer pre-trial detentions for misdemeanor crimes and by waiving bail in many more cases.
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III. ETHICAL REPRESENTATION OF CONSTITUENTS

Citizens Union believes that all New Yorkers deserve to be represented by officials who work for the public interest and honor public trust. With the corruption conviction of recent state legislative leaders, we seek to endorse a candidate who will demonstrate that she/he will honor the full commitment of the oath of office, and will always represent the public interest above all else.

Please tell us how you have and would continue to conduct the political affairs of this office in an upright manner, and restore the public trust in your district.

The actions of the District Attorney must beyond reproach to maintain trust in our criminal justice system and rule of law. To that end, the office and its executive must be apolitical at all times. And in Brooklyn, we must go further because of past ethical violations and misconduct within the office that led to selective prosecution and, worse, lack of confidence in the borough's chief justice officer. That is why I have created my integrity agenda to install independent oversight of the office and new systems in order to hold everyone in the office -- from the DA down -- to a higher standard so we can begin to rebuild the trust that has been lost.

As DA, I would enact those reforms, stay politically independent, and aggressively pursue corruption investigations and prosecutions wherever I find abuses of the public trust.
