

Candidate Questionnaire

Local Candidates Committee

District Attorney Elections 2019

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 May 1st.** Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for District Attorney, 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: Mina Quinto Malik

Candidate Cell Phone: 347-683-1781

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat

Age: 47

Education: JD, The American University Washington College of Law; B.A., Bates College

Office Sought (including district): Queens County District Attorney

Occupation/Employer: Full-time candidate; former Deputy Attorney General, District of Columbia. Lecturer on Law, Harvard Law School.

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: See attached CV.

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

Campaign Contact Information

Campaign Manager Name: Jeanne Stuart, jeanne@mina4da.com

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Twitter: [@MinaMalik4DA](https://twitter.com/MinaMalik4DA)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Mina4DA>

Affirmations

Have you completed required campaign finance filings? YES / NO — **Our first filing is due May 24th, 2019.**

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.)

Signature of Candidate: _____



Date:

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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. 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?

As Queens District Attorney I will focus on serious crimes that have a disproportionate impact on the well-being and livelihood of other Queens residents. This includes violent crimes, as well as economic crimes that impact the survival of economically marginalized communities in Queens, such as wage and tip theft, worker misclassification and employer negligence.

Given the increase in bias-related offenses in recent history, I would also concentrate on

hate crimes. Hate crimes will not be tolerated in Queens. We must also be proactive and educate community members on diversity, acceptance, and inclusion.

My commitment to residents of Queens is to ensure that every community is safe and whole. That means not only addressing serious crimes that impact public safety and the daily lives of our neighbors, but also ending the criminalization of communities of color that are overpoliced, over-incarcerated and underserved. Rediverting the efforts of the Queens District Attorney's office away from low-level drug prosecutions and "quality of life" crimes, towards focusing on violent, serious crimes and economic crimes will improve the health and safety of all communities.

2. What would your priorities be as district attorney? What would you change in the incumbent's approach to fulfilling the responsibilities of the district attorney?

1. Restore fundamental fairness by establishing a Conviction Review Unit, end low-level drug prosecutions, implement open file discovery, expand Brady disclosures, and make incarceration the exception and diversion from prison the rule.
2. Eliminate economic oppression by ending cash bail, revise civil asset forfeiture and stand up for workers.
3. Hold law enforcement accountable by prosecuting police misconduct and protecting against ICE.
4. Create diversity, inclusion, transparency and government accountability.

My focus is to revamp the mission of the District Attorney to focus on justice, not merely getting the most convictions. We must pursue accountability that keeps our communities both safe and whole. To do that, we need to take a holistic approach to criminal justice, focus on alternatives to incarceration and ensure people do not recidivate. We also need to end the disparities in our criminal justice system by declining to prosecute for minor offenses that overwhelmingly target the poor and people of color, and ending cash bail. For too long in Queens, enforcement has heavily fallen on the most vulnerable in our society; I will ensure we have accountability for all by aggressively prosecuting police misconduct and crimes by employers against their workers. I would also end the gamesmanship in our criminal justice process by enacting open discovery, as well as closely tracking prosecutorial bias. Ultimately, my goal is to transform the culture of the Office so it reflects both a 21st century reform mindset and the rich diversity of Queens.

3. What about your background and approach to the position differentiates you from the others running for district attorney?

I bring to this position the lived experience as a woman, an immigrant, a person of color, a mother of two black sons who has seen the other side of law enforcement in Queens

through that lens, and the professional experience of someone who has spent over twenty years as a public servant working in criminal justice and as an agent of change.

I have worked for both the defense and the prosecution, and I have enacted reform at the highest levels in three government agencies as Special Counsel in the Brooklyn DA's Office, Executive Director of the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board and Deputy to the Attorney General in the District of Columbia.

Practically speaking, I am the only candidate who has the experience managing large teams and a city-wide agency— 1200 employees at the Brooklyn DA's office; 200 employees at the CCRB, and 110 employees at the Attorney General's office.

I'm the only candidate who has looked into the eyes of a woman who was raped, a child who was abused, a victim of police misconduct and a person who was wrongfully convicted, and promised all of them that I would get them justice.

4. What role do you think the district attorney plays in anti-corruption efforts and building public trust, and how would you fulfill that role once in office?

Rooting out corruption and nepotism in Queens will be a high priority in my Office, and I plan to do that by bringing in executive leadership that is reflective of and accountable to the community. Standing up to powerful government interests to make sure everyone is held accountable is foundational to ensuring justice. As Executive Director of the CCRB, I often had to stand up to powerful police unions in order to implement necessary reforms to ensure accountability when misconduct was committed, and I will do the same for police, government officials, and other powerful, moneyed interests as Queens DA.

One key component of this work is transparency. It is a cornerstone of my campaign to ensure that the District Attorney's office is accountable to the people it serves by enacting a data transparency initiative, similar to what I spearheaded at the Civilian Complaint Review Board.

5. 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?

Ensuring public transparency, particularly when corruption exists or is suspected — by releasing information on investigations and prosecutions — will promote public trust and confidence in government and the DAO.

6. 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?

Yes. We need to aggressively support the re-entry for criminal justice-involved people; not only because it is the only morally right thing to do, but also because supporting re-entry decreases recidivism, increases economic stability and makes all communities more safe.

The first step is to make incarceration the exception and diverting people from prison the rule. Diversion courts and programs should match the needs of individuals and help address health needs and the underlying causes of misconduct.

As Deputy Attorney General in the District of Columbia, I had several formerly incarcerated and justice-involved individuals on my staff. As an example, my former executive assistant was convicted of manslaughter and one of our restorative justice facilitators spent 18½ years in federal prison.

I will also advocate for more job training programs for the formerly incarcerated and justice-involved. The criminal justice system fails the community it serves when we only care about a person from arrest to release, and then forget about them. We need to aggressively support re-entry for the formerly incarcerated and justice-involved in order to reduce recidivism and increase public safety. To support individuals upon reentry, we must make substantial investments in mental health services, housing, job training, education and reentry programs.

7. 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?

Yes — police misconduct not only harms the individuals directly involved, but also makes all communities less safe by eroding public trust in law enforcement. As Queens District Attorney, I will hold law enforcement accountable by prosecuting police misconduct and protecting against ICE. I also support the establishment of an Independent Public Integrity Unit to ensure rigorous and impartial investigation of police misconduct.

You can trust me to take police misconduct seriously and ensure the necessary reforms because I've already done it. As Executive Director of the Civilian Complaint Review Board—the largest police oversight agency in the nation—I transformed the agency. During my tenure, we drastically reduced investigation times; implemented more

proactive prosecutions and as a result, increased case substantiation rates. I also spearheaded and launched a first-of-its kind data transparency initiative and increased community outreach by 200%.

I will continue to hold law enforcement accountable and ensure victims get the justice they deserve.

8. What are your views on the state legislation recently enacted with regard to discovery and use of bail?

I believe that the newly passed legislation regarding discovery and the use of bail is a step in the right direction for our city. As district attorney, I will require my assistant district attorneys to turn over all discovery evidence to the defense immediately, ensure the rights and protections to a speedy trial for the accused and reform our borough's policy on bail so that it is more equal and less costly to taxpayers. Queens County deserve a criminal justice system that is fair and just.

9. Do you support requiring police interrogations to be videotaped?

Yes I do. Videotaping all police interrogations will aid in avoiding any appearance of impropriety or misconduct.

10. How do you feel about the city's plan to close the Rikers Island complex? What concerns do you have and what are the potential benefits and pitfalls of the plan?

Rikers is an abomination and must be closed. We should use the closing of Rikers as an opportunity not only to reduce the number of people detained, but also to change how we treat people in detention. We should follow the example of other countries, such as those that use the Nordic model, and design detention facilities that treat the incarcerated with dignity and aggressively support their reentry.

Research shows that community detention centers would be beneficial to those who are detained because it allows them to have regular access and closer communication to their loved ones, legal counsel and support systems.

Having a borough-based facility next to the courthouse would also obviate the need to spend taxpayers' money to bus and transport those who are detained back and forth from Rikers for court appearances across the five boroughs.

I can't stress enough that it is critical that the Queens community has its concerns fully heard. Too often, our communities are left out of governmental decisions affecting our neighborhoods and that should not be the case here. The issue of closing Rikers Island

and building detention facilities in residential areas is too important to ignore the voice of the people.

Additional Comments:

Growing up in Corona and Elmhurst, I saw that law enforcement – from the police to the prosecutors to the judges – didn't look like me or my family. The people in policy-making positions certainly didn't look like us. That's why I pursued a career in criminal justice and criminal justice reform. My passion for restoring justice to our system has only grown through my experiences as partner to my husband Derek, an African-American civil rights attorney and former public defender, and my experience as a mother to two black sons.

I believe that my 20+ years in criminal justice and deep experience fighting for reform across the criminal justice system has prepared me for this role - from serving as the Executive Director of the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board; to implementing alternative to incarceration, diversion courts, and restorative justice as Deputy Attorney General; to working as a Criminal Investigator for a Public Defender Service; to fighting as a Brooklyn prosecutor to reverse wrongful convictions and decriminalizing low-level marijuana possession; to working as a Queens prosecutor to get justice for victims of sexual assault and trafficking.

As a Special Victims prosecutor in Queens, I worked with hundreds of women and children who were assaulted or abused and helped them get justice. For many of these victims, simply coming forward was its own challenge, and in doing so they were risking reliving their own trauma. I held those experiences with me going forward, and as Deputy Attorney General in the District of Columbia conceptualized and launched a new Special Victims Unit which was specifically designed to help vulnerable victims get justice without being retraumatized.

I am also proud that, after being tapped by Brooklyn DA Ken Thompson to be his Special Counsel, I was able to work closely with him to create his landmark Conviction Review Unit, which to date has exonerated and freed 25 wrongfully convicted individuals. Not only has it freed those people in Brooklyn, but it has now also become the gold standard for the nation.

I bring to this position the lived experience as a woman, an immigrant, a person of color, a mother of two black sons who has seen the other side of law enforcement in Queens from that angle, and the professional experience of someone who has spent over twenty years as a public servant working in criminal justice and as an agent of change.

I'm the only candidate who has looked into the eyes of a woman who was raped, a child who was abused and a person who was wrongfully convicted and promised all of them that I would get them justice. I hope to earn your support.

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II. CAMPAIGN PROMISES MADE TO VOTERS

What are the top five campaign promises you are making to the voters during this campaign?

If elected, Citizens Union will use these promises to evaluate your performance while in office, as well as to evaluate your candidacy in the future.

Please feel free to use additional paper if the space provided is not sufficient, and to affix additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements. We thank you very much for your response.

TOP FIVE 2019 CAMPAIGN PROMISES OR GOALS

1. **Restore fundamental fairness** by establishing a Conviction Review Unit and a Civil Rights and Integrity Unit; ending low-level drug prosecutions; implementing open discovery; and making incarceration the exception and diverting people from prison the rule.
2. **Eliminate economic oppression** by ending cash bail, minimizing fines and fees, revising civil asset forfeiture, and standing up for workers' rights.
3. **Hold law enforcement accountable** by prosecuting police misconduct and protecting against ICE.
4. **Keep all people safe** by vigorously prosecuting violent offenders, fighting hate crimes, and advocating for prisoner safety.
5. **Create diversity, inclusion, transparency and accountability** by diversifying the workforce and leadership at the District Attorney's Office; eliminating prosecutorial bias; and making data accessible to the public.

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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. We seek to endorse a candidate who will demonstrate that they will honor the full commitment of the oath of office, and will always represent the public interest above all else. Please give us your views on this aspect of public service.

I share Citizens Union's mission on the ethical representation of constituents in public office. Public service means a willingness to be fully accountable and transparent to your constituents, serving the public interest above all else, and being fully dedicated to the mission of the office. This is especially important for a position such as district attorney, who cannot function without public trust in their impartiality, transparency, and equitable treatment of all constituents before the law.

I'm not a career politician and never thought I'd be running for office. I've been fighting in the trenches of our criminal justice system for my entire career, balancing the scales of justice for the last twenty years. I'm running because I know what it will take to effect change in the District Attorney's Office, and after transforming three large criminal justice agencies—from the CCRB, to the Brooklyn DA's office, to the Attorney General's Office in DC—I will be ready on Day One to execute the duties of the office.

Not only that, but I come to this as a political outsider—someone un beholden to the establishment, political machine or moneyed special interests. I have spent my entire career in public service fighting for the common good with integrity. Residents of Queens can trust that by electing me they will get a dedicated, honest and faithful public servant.

Please return to: Citizens Union, Local Candidates Committee, 299 Broadway, Suite 700 New York, NY 10007 Via email to candidates@citizensunion.org or fax to 212.227.0345 • Call us at 212-227-0342 with questions.