
FINAL
Sierra Club Board of Directors Nominee Questionnaire
(Answers by Dr. MK Dorsey)

Question 1: The mission of the Sierra Club is “to explore, enjoy and protect the planet. To practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out those objectives.” Why do you want to run as a Director for the Sierra Club Board?

I am running as a Director for the Sierra Club Board to work with members like you reading this (and non-members who want to support us) to: support strong campaigns to stop the unfolding climate catastrophe; protect forests from logging; protect the quality of our air, water and wetlands; and save endangered species.

We can advance our mission by using our limited resources to enhance and support our grassroots, chapters, and groups. Campaigns are most successful if they are part of a broader, inclusive, visionary strategy. Delivering for the Club and our planet means positioning the Club for realities of the 21st century by:

- enhancing our grassroots;
- supporting sustainability & environmental justice; and
- building diverse constituencies, with young people, people of color and new citizens.

Question 2: The function of boards is to provide high-level oversight to organizations. Describe your leadership skills and type of experience you bring to this role, and how will it help you fulfill your position on the board?

I have long played a role successfully and collaboratively leading the Club. I have helped in our Club's fundraising and beyond. I've done so as a fully paid life member. I've worked with our Advancement staff, and with staff to secure program funding—specifically for our work on environmental justice. Over the years I have also secured and placed young volunteers (some former students) at the Club—many of whom went on to ultimately join the staff. One of my best students ultimately became a member of the board.

One of the key roles of the board Directors is conducting the performance evaluation (as well as salary setting—up or down) of our Executive Director. I have participated in this process and shifted it to encourage and mandate the ED to take on diversity at the staff and organizational level. While not always in agreement with the ED I have sought to be fair

and empirically based in evaluating him –positively and negatively; as well as advise the ED on improving and delivering better/best practices.

I have also played a productive role in campaign priority setting--and believe this is a key role on the board.

Overall I am a serial organization builder and leader in for-profit, nonprofit, scholarly and governmental realms. In the for-profit arena, I am an active investor as well as co-founder and principal of Around the Corner Capital—an energy advisory and impact finance platform. In non-profit realms, in 1997 I co-created the northern California headquartered Center for Environmental Health. In 2013, working with two former student collaborators, I co-created the predecessor to the Sunrise Movement (where I now presently serve as Treasurer of the c3). In late 2018 the Sunrise Movement co-orchestrated launching the Green New Deal. My government engagement began in 1992 as a member of the U.S. State Department Delegation to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, “The Earth Summit.” From 1994-96 I was a task force member of President William Jefferson Clinton’s Council on Sustainable Development. From April 2007 until November 2008 I was a member of Senator Barack Obama’s energy and environment Presidential campaign team.

Question 3: Sierra Club recently adopted new [values](#) (Anti-racism, Balance, Collaboration, Justice and Transformation). Can you give an example of a time when you have lived out these values?

Being a black American on planet earth, and in the United States of America in particular, I live out these values and experience their antithesis every day I am fortunate enough to be awake and alive.

I am pleased the Sierra Club, after so many years is trying to live up to these "values". The Club has come an exceptionally long way from when membership used to be primaced on approval of at least one other member in order to exclude certain "kinds" of members to the first time the Nominating Committee questioned and denounced my belief in the appropriateness of civil disobedience –as nothing short of a constitutional right. I reminded the NomCom, unsuccessfully, that civil disobedience is precisely what enabled me to have all the legal rights I do in the USA and indeed be able to be considered as a candidate for the board.

The Club to date has fallen dramatically short on **modeling and delivering on these "core values"** *grounded in equity and inclusion--despite lofty claims and proclamations to the contrary. The outgoing Executive Director openly courted union-busting, anti-labour donors. The current board openly admonishes Directors for trying to deepen our internal and national dialogue around diversity.*

We can and should do much better. As a member of the board I will lead that effort to set on a proper course rooting in the value of integrity and how it can deliver “Anti-racism,

Balance, Collaboration, Justice and Transformation”.

Question 4: Sierra Club is committed to equity, inclusion and justice in all aspects of endeavors and at all levels, internally and externally.

- a. How do you incorporate active anti-racism into your leadership with volunteers and staff?
- b. How do you ensure an equitable and just transition to tackling climate change?

The data is in. Diversity is best supported and furthered when the leadership --i.e., the legal fiduciaries--Board members, set the performance bar. There are a great number of tested organizational anti-racism and diversity practices that institutions spanning the universe of non-profits to the Army to corporations have drawn upon. I fully support the new Executive Director and senior management to call on leading professionals to help them augment and extend their nascent, heretofore beleaguered efforts. I further support tying increasing diversity to the ED's performance evaluation--as that has yet to be done in a serious manner. This is a fair, empirical manner to incorporate active anti-racism into management practices.

Question 5: One of the significant ways Sierra Club accomplishes its mission is through political engagement. What can Sierra Club do better to develop a more energized and robust grassroots movement that will participate in the political process?

We can better articulate how our bread and butter issues--like wilderness & (proverbially) saving and hugging trees--tie into and touch bread and butter issues for everyday people. Research from UC Berkeley reveals how the lack of urban tree cover drives 'climate racism'. As the only major environmental organization with an outings program (that includes significant outings in and near major urban areas with diverse populations), we have a unique opportunity to 'connect the dots' with Americans from all political persuasions and dispositions. With outings, we can connect with issues and people where they are, forging bigger, bolder coalitions that build power, and deliver victories to protect the climate, future generations and quite literally save the planet.

Question 6: Frontline communities are experiencing the adverse effects of climate change, environmental pollution, and limited access to resources. What types of relationships does Sierra Club need to nurture in order to be effective in advocating for environmental justice?

Let's push harder and be bolder to transitioning our country out of ALL fossil fuels and deliver on our process of 100% renewable energy for all Americans and ultimately for everyone on the planet--especially for those who cannot afford it.

We can help deliver political implementation. Our efforts to deliver environmental and

energy justice need to be ramped up in Biden's early years--as he signs over more oil and gas leases than former President Trump. Our next ED, as well as our staff and volunteers can turn up the heat on big oil. We can now both forge a deeper discussion on our Club's role on working with frontline groups, civil disobedience and strategically engage with diverse partners for the planet and future generations. This deeper conversation and action appeals to diverse audiences already leading our nation using CD and other productive tactics. We can join and fortify these efforts especially when they overlap with our priorities.

Question 7: One of Sierra Club's most unique and powerful assets is its vast grassroots network and its ability to address a wide variety of issues and concerns nationwide. What are your priorities to maximize the impact of our grassroots volunteers?

We need to balance fundraising and working with diverse audiences- new and old. We need to keep up the fight both against fossil fuels and for 100% renewable energy. Working on both means delivering on much needed environmental justice.

Question 8: Good communication strategies are one key to environmental and political success. How can communication and messaging be improved to reach a broader audience, including raising brand awareness?

We need a more inclusive communication strategy that engages those online and offline. We must strike a balance or risk losing members--new and old.

Question 9: Volunteer leaders are a critical part of Sierra Club. Traditionally, non-Board of Director volunteers have been closely involved in the national decision-making process for Sierra Club. How would you enhance and grow volunteer participation and ensure that they continue to play a central role in the governance of Sierra Club?

Many volunteers express a lost-at-sea sentiment—I hear it too often. We can and must do much more to create and maintain harmony between staff and volunteers. Joint trainings. Sharing best practices and deepening collaboration —as much if not more than the tawdry, bawdy tales of internecine organizational fracas that too often air our dirty laundry in public.

The next Executive Director (ED) could easily reinstate the bimonthly call with Past Directors of the Board--a practice he long ago abandoned (sadly). The President, with the new ED & key senior staff, could expand the call to quarterly town halls with new and old members. Such efforts could easily join together fundraising, fundraising training, inter alia,

to help us tackle our unrestricted funding issues, and better cultivate volunteer and staff harmony--well beyond the limits of social media feeds, tweets and endless Zooms.

Question 10: If you were elected, how would you address the Board's accountability for how Directors work together, treat each other, and fulfill their duty to the organization as a whole?

One of the best things we can do to "address the Board's accountability for how Directors work together, treat each other, and fulfill their duty to the organization as a whole" is cultivate our fiduciary responsibility for organizational fundraising. Too few Directors, caught up in a milquetoast "values" harangue and endless circular debates devalue our ONLY legal responsibility: delivering sound fiscal health, q-on-q and year-on-year, --and the sensibility and capability of fiduciary responsibility by **ALL** members of the board. Accordingly, I support 100% giving and getting by all board members--in order to best enable Directors to work together. The sums need not be large--although that would not hurt--but as a Director I will support and affirm 100% effort. Focusing on the money--is a good way to escape the wretched clutches of the wayward, wasteful DC consultants peddling "values" over the real value of monetary health.

We are on a slight glide path to escape the culture of hide-the-donor, but we are not there yet. Too few Directors and Grasstop volunteers get and give (no matter how small). Fewer Directors still have helped reign in HNIs (high net worth individuals). You don't have to be wealthy to do it, but you can be trained to do it better.

So in the end of the day: Directors must share the fundraising lifting burdens in ways heretofore unseen. This effort means Directors must work both closely with the next Executive Director and our professional staff--and we will need to re-cultivate a culture of reciprocity from the ED and our fundraising staff.

I've also openly encouraged senior staff and the ED to sever ties with donors who's values are openly opposed to our Club. We must consider the implications of taking vast sums from openly anti-union electric car manufactures and trying to forge blue-green or positive union-environmentalist relationships is the sine qua non of fulfilling our duty as Directors to the organization as a whole.
