

Kris Harsh – 6/28/21 Global Cleveland Candidate Questionnaire

notarized agreement that both parties were disentangled with each other and had no further business. We signed this agreement and Sam gave Harold the check (which cleared) in my office. At that time I first learned that Sam could not read, at least not English.

I have assisted many middle-eastern business owners, home owners and consider the good people of CAMEO to be friends. Sam's behavior is not reflective of the Arab-American or Muslim communities in Ohio. But it is worth noting that some of the greatest threats to any community come from some of those closest to it.

The immigrant, refugee and resettled communities in NE Ohio are not homogeneous. They are not all facing the same struggle. They each have unique needs, obstacles and struggles. With that uniqueness comes unique cultural, mental and emotional offerings. Newcomers bring fresh air to our neighborhoods. They bring hope for the future and a resilience in the face of struggle that should make most Americans blush. I've heard it said that America is "the land of the free, because of the brave" and I challenge anyone to find braver people than those who risk their lives to come here. We are all better off for their commitment to us and our nation.

2.e.

I'm a community organizer turned housing advocate. The first thing we need to do in Cleveland to accommodate new residents is have places for them to live! Everything else comes second. We need to have houses available for people to move into and landlords ready to accept these new families. We need to ensure we have places with multiple bedrooms. We should try to centralize people to their respective existing communities where possible and be ready to shuffle people around as their first home is not always the best home. After that, enrolling children in public schools is vital as well as cultural infrastructure that makes transition to American cultural life as easy as possible.

All immigrant communities dating back hundreds of years share a similar pattern; they resettle in ethnic enclaves where they can communicate in their native language until their children are fully bilingual. This is true whether your people are Polish, Syrian, Somalian or Vietnamese. It's vital to have a transplant community.

Lastly, we need to make them permanent residents. Cleveland has suffered for decades from out-migration. Retaining our immigrant communities so that as they grow, they grow with us, is vital. It is painful to watch urban areas welcome newcomers only to say goodbye in a few years when they move to the suburbs. We have to develop long term residential plans that center on home ownership.

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1.a.

I have worked at the Metro West CDC near the intersection of Clark and Fulton for nearly 7 years. We serve the most racially and ethnically diverse community in NE Ohio, if not the entire state. I have been the Housing Director, serving the Latino, Middle Eastern, African, Asian and Caucasian communities. Long before that I was the Director of Community Organizing for ESOP (Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People) at 3631 Perkins. Let's start there!

ESOP worked in low-income communities across Cleveland and had a functioning relationship with the Case Western Mandell School of Applied Social Science. Which means we had interns. One of our interns was Xiaorong (she went by "Sharon") who came from China and spoke both Mandarin and Cantonese. Since our office was located in the middle of what was transforming into "Asia Town" I asked if she would like to organize in that area since I could not overcome the language barrier myself. She did and came back with the community's issues which centered around (at that time) language barriers and access to local government on a whole. We held a community meeting to invite then Councilman Jeff Johnson to a forum to share these concerns with the city. At the time the city had no staff that were fluent in Mandarin or Cantonese. I am happy to see that the city now reports Ms. Chia-Min Chen as an Asian liaison with the Community Relations Board. Communicating in multiple languages is a must for Cleveland. My children currently study Mandarin at their school, Campus International.

More recently, in my current capacity I have worked closely with our large Hispanic community as well as the Arab-American and African communities located on the near west side. Granted, the overwhelming majority of our LatinX community is Puerto Rican and birthright citizens as a result, but we still have a large number of South and Central American residents as well as those from other Gulf island states. I have some conversational Spanish language (pero es mi lingua segunda!) and have been able to work with immigrants on dozens of housing, financial and educational issues as a result.

In 2016, with the help of Global Cleveland, we were working on a plan to welcome hundreds of refugees to Cleveland as part of the global humanitarian effort to assist people fleeing violence in Syria and the Congo. When Donald Trump was elected President those plan evaporated. We are hoping to revive them again.

Very specifically though, I want to talk about a family I helped out of a very bad situation. I'm not sure whether I should use the gentleman's name since the issue is financial but I will say the closest English name I can think of is "Harold". Harold is a Congolese refugee. An American helping him locally came to me with a situation he was involved in that cost him \$5,000. He was scammed by another member of the immigrant community (Arab-American) who has been here for about 25+ years. I knew of the scammer from my work in the community, we'll call him "Sam". I also knew the gun Sam carried was more for bluffing than for actual threats. Harold didn't know that. He paid this man \$5,000 to buy a house. That \$5,000 was half of all the money Harold's family had saved since arriving a few short years prior. I contacted Sam to ask about the house and quickly realized the house supposedly being sold to Harold belonged to Sam's mother. I stopped by and asked his mother if she planned to move and she said no. Harold had never seen the house, he trusted Sam and Sam took advantage of that trust. Long story short, I got Harold the \$5,000 back along with a signed and



c. between native-born and immigrant communities. Would you support the creation of such a taskforce or commission in Cleveland made up of city representatives, immigrant community leaders, business leaders, and members of Cleveland's non-profit community?

yes.

d. Would you support adding members and staff to the Community Relations Board that represent the changing immigrant population in Cleveland such as an African Immigrant Community Liaison and Arab Immigrant Community Liaison?

yes!

e. Were you aware that in 2017 Cleveland created a [Language Access Plan](#) that outlines how to engage with ESL (English as a Second Language) and ELL (English as a Learning Language)? How would you ensure implementation of this plan, as such services are mandated by [Title VI](#) of the 1964 Civil Rights Act?

I am aware of the plan's existence. I need to learn more about how best to implement it.

f. Would you support expanded language training in public schools for English speaking students as well as contextualized ESL support for English language learners at all levels of education and workforce development?

yes. I specifically send my own children to a school that teaches multiple languages for kindergarten on.

g. Do you support more immigrants, refugees, and international students moving to Cleveland/Cuyahoga County? If no, why not? If yes, how?

yes!

Would you like to receive information and data on immigrants and refugee populations and communities in Greater Cleveland?

YES NO





e. families as they did this past year. How do you plan to open Cleveland for these new residents and provide refugees with the opportunity to contribute to Cleveland?

see 2.e attached

3. Set the Table for Internationalization and Economic Growth

There are over 1000 immigrant entrepreneurs in Cleveland, are 38% more likely to be entrepreneurs than U.S. born residents.

a. What portion of the economic development office in the City of Cleveland would be devoted to supporting immigrant entrepreneurs under your leadership?

Interesting question - perhaps for a Mayoral candidate? I won't be dictating that.

b. As evidenced by this information, immigrants are a key part of building a successful and strong regional economy. With a spending power of over \$3B, how will you support integrating this powerful demographic into a regional growth plan?

please see my response to 2.e.

4. Embrace and Cultivate a Culture of Inclusion and Shared Prosperity

The important and paramount 'diversity, equity and inclusion' conversation happening right now often does not include members of the international community living in Cleveland. Would you support policies in the private and public sectors that

a. take into consideration the voices of this diverse and important constituency? Would you vote for and promote policies in government to achieve these goals?

yes.

b. Midwest cities leading the way in city wide growth and development through the inclusion of immigrant communities, such as Detroit and Pittsburgh have created taskforces or commissions to analyze the effects of immigration on their city, examine the challenges facing immigrants and immigrant communities, and promote immigrant success and build strong relationships



Refugee Response
US Together

USCRI - Cleveland
Young Latino Network

1. Personal Experience with the International Community

What is your experience serving and interacting with the international community in your own community and NEO at large?

a. How has this shaped your understanding of your community and your role as a leader?

see 1.a. attachment

2. Transform Cleveland into an International Hub of Innovation

a. Annually, hundreds of international students graduate from Case Western, TRI-C, and CSU with in-demand skills who are not being retained in the area to contribute to population and economic growth. Can you share what policies you will support to address this?

This is not my area of expertise. I will look to you to inform and educate me on this subject.

b. Cleveland has sister cities all around the world such as Ibadan, Nigeria; Lima, Peru; Gdansk, Poland; and Bangalore, India. What is your game plan for making Cleveland a more open and international-facing city to strengthen and grow these relationships?

I would like to expand internet access as a public utility. Aside from that, please see the answer above

c. Our population loss from 2010-2018 would have been even worse if not for the 37,000 immigrants who moved into Cuyahoga County during that time. These new residents have offset the population loss by 45%. How can we attract more immigrants to move here to continue this important trend?

Supporting CMSD's language services and the International Communities across Cleveland.

d. On average, 500-700 refugees are resettled to Cleveland every year, from countries such as Nepal, Afghanistan, The Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia. The Biden-Harris administration announced they will increase refugee admissions to 125,000 a year nationally, up from 15,000 this year. This means Cleveland's three refugee resettlement agencies will receive 3-4x as many



Immigration Knowledge and Understanding Questionnaire

Please return this form by July 23rd, 2021 to the address at the bottom of the page

Name Kris Harsh Date 6/28/21

E-mail Address voteKrisHarsh@gmail.com

Phone Number 216-224-8795

Municipality Cleveland

Office/Office Seeking City Council - Ward 13

If different specify here _____

Home Address 1601 Merl Ave City Cle State Oh Zip 44109

Work Address 3167 Fulton Rd. City Cle State Oh Zip 44109

Party Affiliation Democrat Website facebook.com/voteKrisHarsh

Background Information

Are you aware that neighbors across our community have businesses being started by people who were not born here? They take risk, they pool resources, they provide wonderful things like restaurants as well as important services. What would you do to increase immigrant entrepreneurship?

Yes - strengthen home ownership

The city of Cleveland has a rich history of immigration dating back over 130 years. Over this period immigrants and their descendants helping to transform Cleveland into what it is today and shaping into the future. Immigration continues to play an important role in Cleveland and our surrounding communities. These immigrants are vibrant and diverse coming from every continent and bringing with them unique cultures and experience. Not only this, but they work in important fields, open businesses, and create jobs. They weren't born here but Cleveland becomes their home to. As an individual running for or holding an elected office it is key to understand the international community that calls Cleveland home. At Global Cleveland we work to make Cleveland a place that is open and welcoming to all. We hope that you found the following statements informative and the questions thought-provoking. Most of all we hope that you will join us in this mission to continue making Cleveland a better, greater city and home for all its residents.

In Partnership with

- ASIA Inc
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