

1200 People at GOTV & Candidate Assembly



Strong Commitments on Housing, Education and Immigration from Executive Candidates

May 30, 2018 at The People's Community Baptist Church

It was standing room only when AIM leaders gathered to clarify the commitments of the County Executive Candidates to AIM's bold proposals for the future of Montgomery County. The AIM demands were developed over a year of listening sessions with 3000 people throughout the county and the focus was on specific

community solutions.

The evening started with spirit as Pastor Haywood Robinson led those congregated in the song "It Will Get Better," and put forth AIM's analysis of the county. "Montgomery County is at a cross roads, with enormous changes in politics, population and economics. . . AIM has been part of governing this county for nearly 20 years and we are committed to a vision of a county where all people can thrive, regardless of race, income, age or economic status."

[Read the Afro-American newspaper's coverage of the action here.](#)



Cheers went up during role call of the 25 congregations and schools represented, with over 300 leaders from Bethel World

Outreach Church, and more than 250 from The People's Community Baptist Church.

The evening turned more somber as AIM members shared their personal stories and stated AIM's specific Issue Agenda. Meghan Jones shared about her 6-year wait to get transit-accessible affordable housing that lets her to get to her two part time jobs so she can make ends meet. Ms. Patricia Vasquez shared the unacceptable conditions of South Lake Elementary, the 3rd highest poverty school in the county, where the heat and air conditioning don't work, 300 students share two bathrooms with non-working urinals and lunch is anywhere from 10:30am to 2pm for students. An anonymous 10-year old student disclosed how afraid she is of her mother being deported and how devastating that would be for her and her family.

Speakers challenged the candidates to make Montgomery County the leader in the country on protecting immigrant families from separation via deportation and affordable housing.



Bishop Darlingston Johnson of Bethel World Outreach and Rev. Abhi Janamanchi of Cedar Lane UU got to the central work of the evening. First, the 1200 people assembled each texted 5 Montgomery County voters, telling them to vote on June 26, and committing to share with the voters a personal report-back on where the candidates stand on the AIM Issues.

The candidates stood, one by one, to answer AIM's questions on:

- **Doubling the production and preservation of affordable housing** over the next four years by increasing funding to \$100M/year, building on county and Metro land, and increasing density at transit hubs.
- **Supporting congregation-issued IDs and funding 20 immigration lawyers and paralegals** to reduce fear of

going to the hospital or being in the community, and ensuring immigrant families who qualify for legal status can obtain it.

- **Expanding the Excel Beyond the Bell Elementary Program to 20 schools and renovating high poverty school particularly Burnt Mills and South Lake.**

The Candidates responded to the energy and spirit in the room, almost universally committing to the items on the AIM Agenda. This positions AIM well no matter who is in the County Executive seat next year to reach our goals on affordable housing, education, and immigration.

After a spirit-filled song from the Bethel World Outreach Choir, AIM Clergy Chair, Rev. Dr. Michael Armstrong gave a rousing Call To Action. He preached from Psalm 137, where the people of Israel were taken into captivity and asked by their captors to sing a song of Zion. Rev Armstrong agitated us to go forth and proclaim the song of justice AIM has created for Montgomery County, and to build our power to make it real.



AIM has come a long way in the past two years. Our goal to identify, train, and develop new leaders around a bold agenda for the county has paid off, with new leadership up front and in the pews at the action on May 30. We have shown that we can turn out 1200 people on our issues, more than any other organization in Montgomery County. We have proven that we can and will organize on the issues we proclaim as our own, as we have seen reflected in the budgets for after-school and housing this year.

THANK YOU to countless people for making this Action and GOTV Campaign a success. In particular, The People's Community Baptist Church, its lay leaders and Pastor Haywood Robinson, the AIM Strategy Team, Rev. Dr. Michael Armstrong, the GOTV team and team that prepared the candidates for the

action, everyone who leads a core team and GOTV at their congregation, Linda Bleadingheiser, everyone who was a super section lead, section lead, floor team member, everyone who made the action better at the dress rehearsal and in editing speeches. Thank you also to everyone who spoke at the action and worked long hours to write, prepare and practice your speeches and roles.