

BEFORE YOU VOTE FOR LA COUNTY SHERIFF IN TUESDAY'S ELECTION, CHECK OUT WHERE THEY STAND ON YOUTH ISSUES

Young people of color – ages 13 – 24 – are the population most targeted for stop and frisk and ticketing on both the streets and public transportation; the population most likely to be injured or killed by sheriff deputies' gunfire; the population with the highest rates of arrest, detention and incarceration; the population most targeted by law enforcement for gang injunctions and gang labeling (on the CalGang Database); as well as the population suffering the highest rates of unemployment and underemployment. No population has more *to gain or lose* in the election of LA County's new Sheriff.

The Youth Justice Coalition co-sponsored two Sheriffs' Debates during the spring that both of the two final candidates Paul Tanaka and Jim McDonnell participated in, and we sat on a panel with Jim McDonnell last Saturday, October 25th (hosted by the ACLU and several other community organizations – Paul Tanaka declined to participate). These events enabled us to get answers to questions that youth and their families identified as most important to the safety and well-being of young people.

Below are the candidates' responses. (Not all candidates answered all the questions.) YJC notes occasionally appear when statistics given by the candidates are incorrect.

1. BACKGROUND OF CANDIDATE AND VISION FOR ROLE OF SHERIFF

McDonnell

Currently, Police Chief of Long Beach Police Department / Career law enforcement officer with Los Angeles Police Department. Served on County Commission on Jail Violence – body that issued more than 60 recommendations on changes needed in jail administration and treatment of detainees. Stated that role of Sheriff is to build safer streets, jails and neighborhoods; to increase and improve deputy training; the new sheriff needs to set the standard and tone for the department and all its personnel. Claimed his focus will be on “restoring public trust, accountability, and mutual respect.” Also stated that, “Most of the other candidates are insiders trying to be outsiders. But I am a true outsider. I am the only candidate who has experience as a police chief (Long Beach PD).”

Tanaka

Tanaka was an Assistant Sheriff in charge of the jails under Sheriff Baca. He stated that he “will be uncompromising with hiring practices.” Must be accountability for people collecting checks. Commitment to “hire the best.” Claims his focus will be on making jails safer.

2. TICKETING FOR ALLEGED FARE EVASION AND STOP AND FRISK OF YOUNG PEOPLE OF COLOR ON MTA TRAINS AND BUSES (#1 CAUSE FOR YOUTH CITATIONS IN LA COUNTY – 10,000 TICKETS A YEAR - FOR YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 18):

McDonnell

Willing to have stats regularly released on stop and frisks, based on age, race, gender, zip code, location on stop. Came close to endorsing YJC call for free student Metro pass by saying that the MTA should be basically free.

However, as Chief of Long Beach Police Department, McDonnell had a “fare evasion task force.” Doesn’t think there is enough enforcement of fare evasion. “There are no turnstiles on the Metro. It is based on the honor system. There is an inordinate amount of fare evasion.” Does not support decriminalization of fare evasion. Stated “That would be “surrender. And can we can never surrender. Free passes for students is a different issue, although the fees from fares are important to the county’s budget. So I don’t know how to make that happen.”

Tanaka

Gave no answer to this question.

3. LA FOR YOUTH CAMPAIGN – SUPPORT FOR INTERVENTION AND TRANSFER OF 1% OF SHERIFFS FUNDS TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (JOBS, PEACEBUILDERS/INTERVENTION, YOUTH CENTERS):

McDonnell

No commitment to move funds from Sheriffs budget, but did say he felt youth programs were “an important component of public safety.” Further stated that, “Policing and detention are a reflection of the society in which we live. Some neighborhoods are heavily policed because they have high rates of crime, violence, and dysfunction and people in those neighborhoods are not financially equipped to deal with these problems. It is cheaper up front to prevent with education than it is to rehabilitate on the back end. We need education, prevention, intervention, and re-integration; but especially high quality education.”

Tanaka

Gave no answer to this question.

4. SHERIFFS’ USE OF FORCE INCLUDING SHOOTINGS OF CIVILIANS AND JAIL VIOLENCE:

Regarding YJC’s question on deputy shootings of people in community and involvement of state and federal departments of justice to monitor Sheriffs Department:

McDonnell

Believes that there has been excessive violence in jails, and stated that LASD needs systems of accountability for misconduct. Condemned tattoos on deputies including use by some sheriffs of tattoos earned by killing people. Said that any sheriffs that participated in Sheriff violence within the jails need to be terminated, observed, and investigated. However, he also used the word “predators” to describe incarcerated people.

Regarding sheriffs’ violence in the community, stated that “A very small percentage of interactions with officers result in use of force, but they get a lot of attention from the media. The department needs to explain the case to the public better. Currently the dept is too secretive.”

Regarding YJC's call for State Attorney General to Appoint a Special Prosecutor to investigate law enforcement use of force, McDonnell stated that there are both training issues and some people needing indictments. Argued that Sheriff must set the tone and needs to be transparent, but stopped short of calling for outside, independent investigator. However, did say that he reported abuse in jails to FBI and welcomed their investigation of jail violence.

Tanaka

Acknowledged that he has witnessed many incidents of use of force, but has "never tolerated bad behavior excessive force or bad behavior." Stated, he would "not tolerate Sheriff gangs." Also stated that most sheriff groups are not neo-Nazi gangs. As part of Vikings (Tanaka has a Vikings tattoo on his ankle), said group was formed to "build comradery among sheriff deputies."

5. GANG INJUNCTIONS:

McDonnell

Supports injunctions. In Long Beach, McDonnell claimed that he "ensured notification to enjoined people and of youth's parents, and developed a model appeal process system." Recently wrote an article in *Police Chief Magazine* about injunctions.

Tanaka

Gave no answer to this question.

6. CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT OF SHERIFFS:

McDonnell

Highlighted that he served on the LA Commission on Jail Violence to investigate conditions and made 63 recommendations for change. Agrees that LASD needs a Civilian Review Board. Said, "We need civilian oversight, because we don't have oversight from within."

Tanaka

Stated that deputies can and should only be managed by a strong management from within the department that includes his "commitment" to set and enforce clear "ethical standards." Blamed previous problems on Sheriff Baca despite the fact he was the manager for jail personnel directly under Baca.

7. ALTERNATIVES TO JAIL DETENTION AND INCARCERATION, MORATORIUM OR LIMITS ON JAIL EXPANSION, AND REDUCING / CLOSING PROBATION CAMPS:

McDonnell

Agreed to look at split sentencing as a way to reduce length of stay in jail for those convicted to county time under AB109 realignment. Also suggested implementation of a pilot program to release 500 "low-risk offenders" and do a follow-up "risk assessment" on the impact on crime and recidivism.

Upset at Governor's implementation of AB109 without "adequate resources," believing it gutted Parole and overwhelmed Probation. Believes that AB109 has been a failure with no guidance from the state on uniform regulations. He is in favor of voting rights for people under community supervision if they don't have a felony. Claims that people with felonies should lose right to vote.

Also stated his support for proposed 2.3 billion dollar jail expansion despite numerous proposals to downsize population and calls for reduction before construction.

Tanaka

Gave no answer to this question.

8. DECRIMINALIZATION OF UNDOCUMENTED STATUS / PROTECTION OF IMMIGRANTS:

McDonnell

Agrees to continuing the Department's work with Federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in the jails and streets, including document background checks of detained and incarcerated people. Also stated his support for the recent vote by the County Board of Supervisors to participate in ICE's 287(g) program - a partnership with ICE, under a joint Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) – giving the Sheriffs Department authority for immigration enforcement within their jurisdictions.

Also stated he "understands the challenges facing immigrants" as the son of Irish immigrants to Boston.

Tanaka

Gave no answer to this question.

9. DECRIMINALIZATION OF MENTAL HEALTH / DIVERSION FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS:

McDonnell

Stated that 20% of people detained in county jails are suffering from mental illness. Argued that his administration would work more closely with Department of Mental Health and mental health court, as well as to advocate for funding increases for mental health clinics. However, he did not make a commitment to redirect some of sheriffs funding or jail expansion capital funds toward the building or operation of mental health clinics.

Tanaka

Stated that there are "Too many people locked up with mental health problems."

10. THE YOUTH JUSTICE COALITION SUPPORTS PROP 47 TO REDUCE 6 LOW-LEVEL FELONIES TO MISDEMEANORS WHICH WILL ENABLE AS MANY AS 10,000 PEOPLE TO BE RELEASED FROM STATE PRISON AND PREVENT FUTURE STATE PRISON INCARCERATION FOR POSSESSION OF DRUGS FOR PERSONAL USE AND PETTY THEFT CHARGES. **BOTH McDONNELL AND TANAKA ARE OPPOSED TO PROP 47.**