

Meet presidential candidate Pam Rucker: She's transgender, wants free cars and legal marijuana

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Pamela Rucker draws attention.



As she sat in a window seat at a Dunkin Donuts in Cincinnati, the cashier came over and asked if he could take her picture.

It's not every day a presidential candidate comes into the store in Cincinnati's Westwood neighborhood.

The clerk, noting an Enquirer reporter there to interview her, passed along his top issue for her to address in the White House: taking care of the 100 spam calls he gets every day.

Rucker, 35, hopes to be the first transgender black female president in history. And she thinks the nation is ready to elect a transgender black woman from Cheviot. She's running for the Democratic nomination.

Pam Rucker outlines her platform in an interview at Dunkin Donuts (Photo: Provided/Arykah Carter)

"I just didn't want to sit on the sidelines," Rucker said. "I was unhappy with the outcome of the 2016 election. Hillary, she inspired me. She lit something inside me. She opened the door for women and trans women of color to run."

But it's not just Rucker. It seems more and more people want to be president.

Most you'll never hear of and won't raise a dime in money. President Trump won't tweet about them.

Filing 'statement of candidacy' for president

As of April 9, Rocker and 670 other presidential candidates have filed an official "statement of candidacy" with the Federal Elections Commission for the 2020 election. In 2016, 1,775 people filed for president, more than the previous four elections combined.

The ease of filing online has spurred some of this growth, [experts have suggested](#). It doesn't cost anything to file a statement of candidacy.

This year's group of candidates includes 22 Ohioans. The only one elected to federal office is Tim Ryan, congressman from Youngstown.

One candidate, Ali Noor, lists an address of Bradley Hall dorms at The Ohio State University. Noor shares a name with a famous Pakistani rock singer and has a campaign dubbed, Noor's Campaign II: The Squeakquel.

There are two Cincinnatians, Rocker and John Fitzgerald Johnson, also known as JFJ. JFJ lists his address as Sycamore Township and is running as an independent.

Rocker said she's going to Iowa this month, then to New Hampshire. Trips to early primary and caucus states still won't likely get her on any presidential polls near Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders or former Texas U.S. Rep. Beto O'Rourke.

Yet she doesn't see her presidential campaign as a lost cause.

"It's just like playing the lottery. You take your chances," Rocker said.

Well, if the presidential race is a lottery, a ticket costs at least \$300 million. President Donald Trump's campaign spent \$325 million in 2016. His opponent, Hillary Clinton, spent \$563 million. Those figures don't count the money spent by outside groups.

Rocker has never run for office before. She's unemployed, she said.

[#LGBT#transgender](#) Candidate Pam Rocker is running for President of the United States of America #2020 [#politics#FreeCar#LegalizeIt#Marijuana](#) lifting the Federal Ban [@politico#OneHumanRacepic.twitter.com/nRlqp4yTfl](#)

— PAM ROCKER (@Pam4America2020) [January 13, 2019](#)

Trump's election a 'nightmare'

Why not start smaller, like Cheviot City Council?

Trump's election played a role.

Rocker described watching the election of Nov. 8, 2016, as "living a nightmare." She loved Hillary Clinton and was excited at the prospect of the first female president.

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A screen grab of Pamela Rocker's campaign web site (Photo: The Enquirer)

Six months later, in April 2017, while on vacation in Washington state with her husband, she decided to

run for president. Rucker and her husband, Victor, hiked two hours up the side of a mountain. Faced with a breathtaking view, she made up her mind.

"Was the country ready to elect the first African-American president?" Rucker said. "It just came by surprise. If a person is presenting themselves as a candidate who's very seriously running for public office, why not?"

She once wanted to be a rapper

So who is she? Her past is difficult to verify. She said she grew up in Cincinnati among 10 different foster families. She graduated from Robert A. Taft High School.

In high school, she said she was out as a gay boy and was bullied for it. She would dress as a woman on weekends, what she described it as "baby steps" to becoming the woman she is today.

When she moved to Los Angeles in 2005 she found people more accepting. That's when she started to make the transition to be a woman.

"I was getting comfortable in my own skin," Rucker said. "When I moved to California, it was like, why not? Just be yourself."

She had dreams of becoming a rapper when she moved to L.A.

She recorded some hip-hop songs under the name Pam Jones, figuring if the name Jones worked for two other rappers, Mike Jones and Jim Jones, it might work for her. She landed one song, "Eat Sushi," on the soundtrack of the 2008 romantic comedy, "Noah's Arc: Jumping the Broom."

In the chorus, she extolls, "I eat sushi and get my nails done" and declares it's the "new national anthem."

But the rap game wasn't easy. She said she also worked odd jobs, "doing office work" and studied office administration in the Job Corps. She said she moved back because Los Angeles is "overpopulated" and "takes the fun out of living."

"I'm going to the grocery store every day, I've got to look over my blind spot, in my rearview mirror there are people riding motorcycles, people pushing baby strollers," Rucker said. "There are people everywhere."

When asked what she did for a living in Cincinnati, she said she's worked organizing gay-pride events. Cincinnati Pride board of directors President Brooklyn Steele-Tate said she had never heard of her.

Rucker didn't give names of friends or associates she's worked with on Pride events, and later said she just attended the events and bought merchandise. She said people would have to take her word for it about her past. She did give two names of people she worked within the Job Corps in Los Angeles, suggesting they could be reached through Facebook. The Enquirer couldn't track them down.

"Right now, I'm running for the White House," Rucker said.

Free cars, reparations and recycling

What would she do if she gets in the White House?

She'd give every household access to a free car. Called a Freedom Car, she said she'd pay for it by lifting the federal ban on marijuana. The federal government can make a lot of money off marijuana, \$23 billion a year she believes.

Rucker didn't cite a source for that figure. Democratic members of Congress on the Joint Economic

Committee released a report in [December estimating the national cannabis industry will generate \\$23 billion by 2022.](#)

She also wants to make recycling mandatory. How would she enforce it?

"That's a really good question," Rucker said. "If anybody has any ideas that we can bring to the table, I'm all ears."

A President Rucker would also make reparations to descendants of slaves, something like a \$100 check to every black person.

Regardless of what you think of Rucker and her plan, expect to see her around. So far much of her campaign has been online, including a steady stream of videos in the [Greater Cincinnati Politics Facebook group.](#)

She plans on raising money and appearing at events. She spoke on Fountain Square on March 31 during the Transgender Day of Visibility.

"I want them to know I will fight for the American people," Rucker said. "I will fight to rebuild our reputation around the world and be more hospitable to immigration and stuff like that."