

when they SEE US VOICE



EPISODE 2 TOOLKIT & RESOURCE PACKAGE

**“The System Isn’t Broken--
It’s Rigged”**





About #WTSUV

At a critical time in American history with a tumultuous census, a national election and an atmosphere of both heightened activism and racist backlash, *When They See Us Vote* is a limited series talk that seeks to engage and educate the many people who are becoming politically conscious and active in this moment with an analysis of how we build resilience and Black political power at the voting booth and beyond. The show is co-hosted by Bree Newsome Bass and Ajamu Dillahunt. The accompanying toolkit can be used to deepen individual understanding around the issues discussed and serve as a guide for hosting conversations and study groups.

EPIISODE SYNOPSIS

- Ajamu and Bree speak with Desmond Meade, voting rights activist and Executive Director of the Florida Rights Restoration Project
- The group discusses ongoing efforts to use the prison system as a tool of social control and a way of suppressing the Black vote
- They also examine how dehumanization is used to justify systemic oppression

QUESTIONS:

- How has the prison system in the United States been used to maintain racial inequality after Emancipation and to disenfranchise Black voters?
- Why are policy reforms necessary? What are the limitations of policy reform and what does it mean to have more revolutionary change?
- What are your thoughts on “respectability politics”? How does it help or hinder efforts to build Black political power?

DID YOU KNOW?

5.2 Million Americans cannot vote because of felony conviction. 1 of every 16 Black Americans has lost their voting rights due to felony disenfranchisement laws!

Source: The Sentencing Project

• NOTES

KEY QUOTE

"[We often] rally around politicians instead of rallying around our people and our issues... What brings people to the polls is their loved ones more than anything else. When you're able to connect issues to their loved ones, you're able to stimulate greater civic engagement particularly in communities that historically do not engage in voting."

- Desmond Meade

KEY TERMS

- **Voter Disenfranchisement** - the process of revoking someone's right to vote
- **Respectability Politics** - a set of beliefs holding that conformity to prescribed mainstream standards of appearance and behavior protects a person who is part of a marginalized group from prejudices and systemic injustices
- **Dehumanization** - to deprive others of human qualities, personality, or dignity and the cruelty and suffering that accompanies it
- **Systemic Oppression** - the intentional mistreatment of a group of people that is supported and enforced by the society and its institutions
- **Prison Industrial Complex**- the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems. (source: CriticalResistance.org)

NEXT STEPS

- Read **The New Jim Crow**
by Michelle Alexander
- Read **Let the Incarcerated Vote**
by Clint Smith
- Read **The Other Swing Voter**
by Ibram X Kendi
- Read **The Politics of Black Aspiration**
by Jelani Cobb
- Watch and discuss **American Prisons Are Designed to Dehumanize**
- **Research what the current voting laws are in your state regarding people who've been convicted of felonies and ways you can support local organizations doing work to expand voting rights**



Desmond Meade

EPISODE 2 - GUEST

Desmond Meade is currently the President and Executive Director of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRRC). Meade is a graduate of Florida International University College of Law and a Ford Global Fellow. In 2019 he was recognized by Time Magazine as one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World. He is recognized for his work on issues such as voting rights and criminal justice reform; which resulted in a successful passing of Amendment 4, an initiative that restored voting rights to over 1.4 million Florida residents with past felony convictions. Today, Meade continues to lead the charge across his home state of Florida, to motivate communities to revise policies on local, state and national levels.

THE #WTSUV TEAM



BREE NEWSOME BASS

is an award-winning activist and artist best known for her historic act of civil disobedience in 2015 when she scaled a 30-ft flagpole at the statehouse grounds in South Carolina to lower its confederate flag in protest following the racially-motivated shootings at Emanuel AME church in Charleston. Bree currently resides in North Carolina where she works as an artist while organizing for housing justice. She is a nationally-recognized public speaker on topics of racial and economic justice as well as the intersection of art and activism.



AJAMU DILLAHUNT

is the Outreach Coordinator at the North Carolina Justice Center in Raleigh, N.C. Before joining the Justice Center in 2004, Ajamu served as President of the Raleigh Area Local of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) for 18 years, where he was also Director of Research and Education for the North Carolina Council of the APWU.



NATALIE BULLOCK BROWN

is an award-winning and Emmy-nominated producer, a Teaching Assistant Professor in Interdisciplinary Studies at North Carolina State University, and a producer on award-winning filmmaker Byron Hurt's upcoming PBS documentary, *Hazing*.

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