

when they SEE US VOICE



EPISODE 7 TOOLKIT & RESOURCE PACKAGE

**“Beyond Voting: What Comes After
the Voting Booth?”**





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

- Bree speaks with Stephon Whitley, an Organizer with One Wake and Robert Dawkins, Political Director for Action NC
- They discuss the work of community organizers, concrete steps for building power within our communities and the complexities of political advocacy
- They also examine the importance of local elections and how it connects to organizing ourselves between election cycles

QUESTIONS:

- Why is it not enough to simply elect people who promise to represent our interests without a plan to make sure those people follow through?
- How do you view the relationship between civic participation, economic development, community safety and self-defense, protest and other forms of organized resistance?
- Do you agree with the concept of “inside/outside strategy”? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Why is it important to be “consistent and persistent” when it comes to civic engagement, organizing and activism?

DID YOU KNOW?

There are very important elections that take place every year, outside of the 4-year presidential cycle. Key federal offices are on the ballot during the midterms. Local and county government offices also wield a lot of power over things like schools, policing, transportation and housing.

• NOTES

KEY QUOTE

“Power is the ability to do and to act. We have two types of power-- organized people and organized money. If we can have these two things, then we can start to really gain power. But we have to be relational in order to do it. We can’t just think that everyone is going to come together on whatever date we say we’re going to do something and nobody knows each other. We have to be relational and understand each other’s interests and also understand the interests of the people and who we’re trying to hold accountable.”

- Stephon Whitley

KEY TERMS

- **Mobilization** - when people assemble as a unit to take collective action
- **Power** - the ability to do or act in a particular way or to influence the actions of others
- **Direct Action** - any action that seeks to achieve an end directly and by the most immediately effective means, rather than negotiation, to achieve one’s demands. It includes things like strikes and boycotts or other forms of public protest. It can be either violent or non-violent.
- **Inside/Outside Strategy** - a model of political reform based on the idea that we shift power by organizing both inside existing political structures, such as elections and government offices, and outside existing structures, by building grassroots movements that challenge those existing structures
- **Institutionalized** - when an individual takes on the characteristics, beliefs and behaviors of an established institution

NEXT STEPS

- Read **Voting for Mayor Is More Important Than Voting for President** by Becky Kip
- Read **Action Strategy: A How-To Guide** from The Ruckus Society
- Read **Building Community Safety: Practical Steps Toward Liberatory Transformation** by Ejeris Dixon
- Read **The Case for Black American Self-Defense** by Rob Cameron
- Read **Armed Self-Defense Was Woven Into the Movement** by Emilye J. Crosby
- Watch and discuss **Negroes with Guns: Rob Williams and Black Power**
- Listen to and discuss **Planning for Disaster** by Kelly Hayes

ACTION STEPS

- Develop a safety plan for your household and family for surviving the pandemic and in the event there is violent backlash following the elections. Involve your neighbors in a joint plan if possible.
- If you haven't already, identify an issue or issues that you would like to help organize around.
- Connect with an organization that's working on an issue you care about. If one doesn't exist yet, consider forming your own group.
- Continue to study. Consider joining or forming your own political education study group.
- Research when your next municipal (local) and county elections will take place and what offices will be on the ballot.

Stephon Whitley



EPISODE 7 - GUEST

Stephon Whitley is an Organizer for the non partisan organization, ONE Wake. With over 50,000 members, ONE Wake consists of faith based and non-profit dues paying institutions in Wake County.. Stephon contributes to ONE Wake's efforts to fight against social injustice, and make the world as it is, closer to the world as it should be.

Born and raised in Newark, New Jersey, Stephon knows firsthand what it's like to experience mistreatment. It manifested in deep anger, resulting in Stephon spending 20 years in prison. However, through religion and education, Stephon was able to graduate from Rutgers University with honors while still in prison. Stephon has not only turned his life around, but has also found a way to use his experiences and education to organize other people, build power and make change. Stephon's mission is to bring people, institutions and organizations together to fight against all forms of injustice.



Robert Dawkins

EPISODE 7 - GUEST

Robert Dawkins is the Political Director for Action NC and the founder of State Organizer for SAFE Coalition NC which is a project of Action NC and made up of over 15 community-based advocacy groups working to end discriminatory profiling and promote civil liberty protections for all North Carolina residents.

Before starting SAFE Coalition NC, Robert worked for 7 years with Democracy North Carolina as the Western NC Field Organizer where his work centered on organizing communities of color on the issues of voter rights, voter access and ending voter disenfranchisement. Robert was the Head Organizer for the Charlotte chapter of ACORN for 3 years where he worked in low to moderate income neighborhoods building neighborhood capacity, neighborhood power and on leadership development.

Robert has a B.A in Political Science from the University of South Carolina and a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management from the University of North Carolina Charlotte.

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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