

## **Your Health Unlocked Podcast Episode 50**

### **Voting in 2024 - Why it Matters and How to Do It**

0:00:01 - Adele Scheiber

All right, welcome. Welcome, Mel Gruver, to the Your Health Unlocked podcast.

0:00:06 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah, so glad to be here.

0:00:10 - Adele Scheiber

Sorry guys, I was a mid-swallow of this disgusting sludge that I drank for breakfast. Tell us a little bit about yourself and the work you do in advocacy and voting.

0:00:21 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah, absolutely so. Yeah, I'm Mel or I like to tell people Melissa for long and I am from Tennessee. I've lived in Texas, and now I've been in Indiana for about, I guess, 11 years now. And I've done work in all of those places in a number of different community organizing contexts, including helping people register and turn out to vote, specifically like focusing on communities where people feel like their voice has been shut out and folks that maybe are feeling less hope around what leaders I guess. Let me like cut that a little bit, but specifically helping folks who feel like their voice has been shut out in the communities that they live in and maybe sometimes feeling a little bit of hopelessness around whether or not participating in civic engagement is even for them.

0:01:35 - Adele Scheiber

Yeah, I'm glad you mentioned that, because we here at the network hear a lot from folks that they struggle to understand how their vote matters these days, seeing as everything is so polarizing, the money in politics. Maybe you know they don't like any of the candidates, right, so can you talk about why voting does matter today, broadly in 2024.

0:01:59 - Melissa Gruver

yeah, I mean, I think that, generally speaking, as a person from the South, I feel like there's so many people who have historically fought for, like everyone to have access to the polls, so I think that there's a sense around like we've been trying to defend our right to be able to vote and so sometimes voting is just a ritual that honors that labor that people have done before.

But I think, specifically today, as far as like what's the impact of our vote, I think that, as it can feel very isolating as one person like looking at your phone to try to figure out like who's on your ballot and does it even matter, and especially in a state where it feels like things are stacked against you in one direction but when we vote together, when we all come together to vote, we can win the world that we want, right?

And I think that you know it's like really important. Like for me, like voting is like kind of the baseline and it's just kind of a way for us to say yes, we're in the game, you know. So, like if I vote and these elected folks are seeing like oh, this is how many people care by how many people vote, and so when I'm trying to hold them accountable, whether they're people I like or not, later, I want to be able to say that I'm a voter, right, I want to be able to say I'm a constituent. So, even outside of the ballot box, later there is some power that it holds where I can say hey, I'm one of these people who has some skin in the game and these are the things that you need to do for me. But voting, of course, like should not happen alone, but it's a really good step into the game, so then we can start looking around and organizing together.

0:03:49 - Adele Scheiber

Yeah, no, I'm glad you brought that up. There's a lot of good things. You know, voting is ritual, as an honoring ritual. I mean, people literally died for this right and are still, you know, dying in voter suppression rallies and things like that, and so voting is an act of respect to that history and an act of defiance. I really gravitate to that idea personally. And then you know, voting is the gift that keeps on giving, which is so true, like I've done a lot of, you know, hill work and stuff, and people do they care, like how many voters are in your state, how many you know? That's like the first question they'll ask you like meetings right.

Even if it's not an election year, even if they still. They ask, like, how many constituents are there, how many? So that's true and then you know you're talking about - It's the baseline. So this is a follow-up, this is a fun little follow-up. But I hear from a lot of young people especially. They're like well, I don't want to participate in this game. This game is rigged.

I want to dismantle the game, and so can you maybe speak to how voting still matters, right, even if you feel that way, because I just feel like it does, but I don't have the degrees and experience you do.

0:04:59 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah, yeah, and I also feel like sometimes we have to hold contradictions at the same time, right.

So I think there's oftentimes I'm also like this is not where we get free. We get free in all of our spaces and places and in our communities, and when we show up for each other and one of the ways we can show up for each other is by voting is not the only way. But I also think that there's these little intricate things, right? Because, like sometimes we say in our organization, we've got to get our people in these roles, and so sometimes it means our members, sometimes it means people that are in strong solidarity with us, and so, as you work towards getting your people in those roles so that they can really work to improve the material conditions of people's lives, [Adele - I mean roles of office, in elected roles] exactly elected roles, especially in these elected roles, so things like city council and mayor and school board and things like that, Right, and but there's these little intricacies that if you don't vote, you sometimes can't run for these roles because you don't have a history.

Yeah, so for specific roles that are like party related, sometimes if you don't have a history of voting, pulling the ballot for that party, then you might not be able to be a precinct captain. And in some states like mine, Indiana, if somebody leaves their post in the middle of their term which is sometimes what activists are asking people to do, right, the precinct captains of the party are the folks that caucus them in, and so that's a space and a place where we can make really important change at a very local level, because sometimes that could be two people in that district. That's the precinct captains that get to decide who the replacement for somebody that leaves is.

0:07:05 - Adele Scheiber

So this is new information for me. This is fascinating, right? So basically, it sounds like voting isn't just like the act that you do for that election. Voting is almost like your credentials, your ID card for participating in democracy. It sounds like you know at the local level as well, and I think you know even the young people I talk to who are like are like federal elections, like I've never heard one say that local politics is futile ever like everybody, I think agrees that local politics, you know is very important for protecting the community.

Um, so that's fascinating actually. So all right, guys vote. And also, isn't it also about you know, if you're trying to activate even your local district? We have to get folks used to the behavior of voting right, because it's not like I'm going to say it's like it's not easy. You know what I mean. You do have to like take time, go to a place, go do a thing like it's. It's. It's not like you can click a button online, right.

0:08:01 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah, yeah, it's not. It's not as easy as I think a lot of people expect it to be or want it to be, including myself, and there's so many people that are working hard to make it even harder for some of us, right, and so I think that's like so true, and so I think that it is - People really care about like things global issues, national issues, and people also really care about the potholes when they're driving to work, right, those like very local issues or whether or not one of their community members and neighbors is going to be assaulted by the police at a pretextual traffic stop.

People really care about those things but oftentimes, the message you're only given is to vote in in a year like this year, a presidential election, and folks don't even realize always, like when, sometimes these local votes. You know, in some states, you know my home state, you know it feels like you vote three or four different times a year, like the mayor is a different month than the president, and in Indiana there's one whole year where we don't vote every four years, right, and so then it's hard to sometimes be like, oh, is this an election year? Like for the local things. So I think that oftentimes people that care more about the local stuff are not always voting in the local times.

And that's kind of interesting, because if you are more progressive and you want to change things, even if you want to change the existing parties, sometimes the existing party establishment will use that against you and say, "oh well, you're not one of us, so you can't change us." So it's like you are correct, like there is some credentialing that happens at the ballot box when you pull that ballot.

0:10:01 - Adele Scheiber

Thank you, cause I've actually never heard anybody talk about that before, so I think that'll be really enlightening. You also talked, you said, something that you know we're using in our campaign, but it's really true. In a way I don't think I realized, which is, yes, this can all feel horrific, but if we all vote together, we really can change everything, and that's not just a bumper sticker right? You have been so helpful to me in educating me about what's called the new American majority, so can you talk about what that means and why this group will be pivotal in shaping US government and policy, not only for the next four years, but for the next generation?

0:10:39 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah, yeah, and I'm not an expert on this and I'm not the one that came up with this for sure, but I am a member of it, right. So, I'm paying attention to it as well. And this is like folks of color, young people and unmarried women. And it's really interesting because when we founded our organization about eight years ago in Indiana, Indiana Task Force, one of the things that we noticed in our state is the least civically engaged people in our state were younger women, and so we were like, well, some of us were like, well, that's us, because we know people that are like us, we knew that that wasn't because of a lack of caring, you know. We knew it was like because of a feeling, that a feeling and institutional barriers to, to access, right.

And so I think that these are folks who are, you know, noticing historically, being historically cut out of decision making and in many ways, like we have historically been creating our own communities and systems to navigate the world. And these are folks that like, are saying like, hey, it's time for our leadership as well, right. So I think it's really pivotal, because this is, you know. I think it's like a pivotal moment to really decide. Do you want to continue to cut out like folks amongst us that are a part of our communities, or do you want to embrace and shift the world in such a way that includes all of us?

0:12:32 - Adele Scheiber

Yeah, and I mean it's the new American majority, right, because this is a new population, right, so it's particularly the young folks, the new voters, the newly 18, right this whole group I was reading about this, 64% of people eligible to vote, 64% fall into this new American majority category and I mean that's exciting, because, isn't it true? I mean, I think the 2020 election was something like the most participated election ever and wasn't it only like 60% of eligible voters came out, isn't?

0:13:05 - Melissa Gruver

That right.

0:13:07 - Adele Scheiber

So if the math is mathing in a way, that's really hopeful, actually, if we get our lives together and get to the polls, right, and I think a lot of like the pundits and stuff and the people that you see in the news, they've already counted us out, because, why? Because 200 years of history of only 40 to 50 of the population voting and it being the same types of people, right, but this is like I like to say if this gun goes off, it's really, it's going to change everything, right? Like?

0:13:34 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah, and then the most public- and I think it gets really, it's hard for people to believe because of you know, the people that we see so often are like people in these federal roles that have just been there for years, you know, like they've been there for so long. So it feels like, instead of like our democracy being this thing that ebbs and flows and moves like a river, it feels like it is like, um, like a television show that we just keep watching these like 10 seasons over and over [Adele - General Hospital season 37.]

Yeah, no like it's like Marina is still on Days of our Lives.

0:14:28 - Adele Scheiber

Yeah, that is so real. It's so real. It's like because the system, both, all the major parties have this system right. That has been going on since you know, 17, whatever right, and and yeah, I mean there's in groups and out groups in those systems, but where I feel, like you know when I was reading about this, we're finally at the age where we can change even the most you know how do I say this like entrenched of those systems, do you know what I mean like the. The truth is, yeah, Marina is still in days of our lives, but even Marina can't live forever do you know what I mean? Like, like yeah, time comes for us all and like it's just we do have it. Just it's hard to see because you're literally for our whole lives it has been the same.

What 25 people we keep saying that's so real, um, but we can't let that discourage us. That's how I feel, um, all right, so let's get down to the real basics. What does a person need in order to vote legally in the us?

0:15:29 - Melissa Gruver

yeah, absolutely. I mean the main thing is that it's different state by state. But the thing that everybody agrees with is that you have to be 18 by Election Day, and that you have to be a US citizen, and you have to be registered to vote. So, some states have same-day Registration, say states like Illinois. You can go to the polls. You're not registered, but you can register then. But many states have a voter registration deadline, so us in Indiana is typically October, early October. It's always on a Tuesday, and so you want to make sure that you check your state's laws and rules, and there's lots of really simple ways to do that. Vote.org is one of them, and your website seems to be is going to be a great place for people to check as well. And so you have to be 18th by election day, a US citizen and registered to vote, and then some states require you to bring a government issued ID, so you want to pay attention to that as well. Like what that government issued ID you must contain, usually a federal ID, like a passport or a military ID or work or a Photo issued ID state by the state that you are voting in.

That can be kind of tricky for college students, right?

So let's say you're from Illinois and you're trying to vote in Indiana, in my state, a state school's photo ID, as long as it contains an expiration date of where.

But really, especially if you're in college, it's really one of the things that's really unique about college students is you get to choose where you vote, whether it's your home county and state, or the place where you go to school. You just can't do both, but you can switch it

each election if you want to. So, if there's a referenda in your state that you really care about, maybe you'll register to vote there, in which specific place. But then the next year you really care about the mayor and the town that you're going to school in, and so you'll want to register and vote and which one that you choose. But you got to make sure that if it requires an ID, you have the appropriate ID. So, it's just like another one of those barriers that can get really tricky, right, like it's federally available, right and their right to vote, and then some states try to make it a little bit more difficult.

0:18:13 - Adele Scheiber

Well, because, if you think about it, the college I can you know somebody who lives in a notoriously gerrymandered state, New York. Gerrymandering, by the way, is when, like the powers that be, draw the districts, the voting districts, so that, like it comes out the way they want, basically is the way that you know. And so college students are a real wild card because you don't know what their affiliations are going to be. You kind of do, and they change the number of them and they change every year. You don't know what. So I can see wanting to control and suppress that vote if you're not a good actor in the system. And that leads me to another question I have that I forgot to put on the sheet. So, if you feel like, either on election day or before election day, your vote is being suppressed or somebody is trying to tell you bad information about this, or what is your recourse, what can you do?

0:19:04 - Melissa Gruver

Oh yeah, there's like election protection hotlines, which I'm sure you can. I can't pull the numbers in my in my head, but I'm sure we can put it in the show notes.

So I think there's election protection hotlines. I think the main thing that I -advice, that I would give someone in a number of situations is do not leave, you know, don't let people turn you away. One thing you can do is a request, a provisional ballot. Go ahead and fill that one out. It may or may not be counted, based on what folks find out. Sometimes you come, you think you're registered. They're saying you're not get that provisional ballot filled in because then, if you contest it, they find out you really were registered. Then they will count that ballot.

But if you do, yeah, if you feel like someone is impeding on your rights to vote, you can call the election protection hotline as well. I find oftentimes that poll workers are also really helpful if it's not the poll worker that you have a problem with, right, if there are people that



are trying to, you know, stop you or solicit you in the polls. And, again, different states have different laws about each of those things. So, if you're curious or concerned, you can call the election protection hotline.

0:20:43 - Adele Scheiber

Yeah, yeah, I think it's true, at least in my state, that the poll workers are all volunteers and I've only had good experiences, but I mean I also know -I mean I, I have a an unfortunate relation, that uh goes he, he goes to the polls. And this is just a citizen, private citizen, okay he goes to the polls he's like can I see your id? Can I see your id? Can I see your id?

That's harassment in my opinion, but like people don't know enough not to show you know what I mean this person doesn't have authority, right, so like basically so it was follow-up to that who has any authority, like if you're in the line to vote, who has any authority and who does not have authority?

0:21:25 - Melissa Gruver

Let's talk about that, yeah, knowing your rights going in is really important, because, like you said a lot of times, poll workers are volunteers but they are well trained and many poll workers do this every year and we actually have a poll worker shortage. So, if folks are wanting to know more about the process, demystify. If you're the kind of person who is like likes telling your friends how things work, you know, then maybe a poll workers for you, and oftentimes it is a paid gig. So I know a lot of high school students that are poll workers because they want to participate in the process, but they're not yet 18.

0:22:06 - Adele Scheiber

Looks good on a resume too. Trying to get into those Ivy Leagues. You're going to want to have that on your resume. Yeah, yeah absolutely, absolutely.

0:22:16 - Melissa Gruver

So. Oftentimes there's a poll workers and then there is like a poll worker supervisor and so you know they might communicate. They're kind of the first line of defense. If you've got a concern and they'll go and discuss it. There's different rules about where leafleting can occur, where signs can be outside of the shoot, which is the line you know and they'll share

with you. You know a lot of people don't know. You can bring things in again, state by state it changes. You can bring things in with you like a little piece, like a paper, piece of paper that has who you plan on voting for. Or you can bring your phone in to look people up and take all the time you need in that there's no time limit to cash your ballot.

0:23:06 - Adele Scheiber

That's good to know. I know I could see a lot of people getting anxious about that Right Like, but they have a time. I mean, if you've never voted for, they usually have a ton of those little like places, the little cubicles that are private it's private too. Nobody can see who you're voting for Right. Just in case. This is for the new folks you don't have to tell anyone who you're voting for. And I mean it's funny. If you live in a family where you're, you can lie the power of lies. I'm just saying. You know what I mean. You can vote and then you don't have to tell anyone your parents, anyone who you voted for. That is your American right.

0:23:40 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah, I will say for me I like to look up what's on my ballot. I like to ask people if I've never heard of someone. I like to ask people like hey, can you point me in the direction where I can learn more? What do you, what do you know? What have you heard and vote for one one is like such a great resource for like seeing what's on your ballot, where they stand on things and I come in with my little index card, you know of ready to go, of what I'm going to vote for, what I'm not, but it is really interesting and we're talking again. We're talking about this like everybody's experience is exactly the same, but there are some states that only have mail-in voting and there are some states that vote by caucus. So I guess at a caucus state, people will know who you vote for, but it's also-

0:24:32 - Adele Scheiber

What's a caucus state? I don't think yeah, it's one of those words you hear and it's like what does that even mean?

0:24:36 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah, so I have never seen it but I have visuals for it because I have friends from states where they caucus and everybody shows up- and again. Sometimes caucusing can happen

virtually, or I think some of the parties are coming up with different systems, but from what I can tell, historically, or traditionally, or typically, everyone shows up to a place and then they pick a corner of the room for the candidate that they vote for. And if it doesn't have, if their corner doesn't have majority, then they have a time where they run around and try to convince people to vote for them. So they kind of vote for them.

0:25:14 - Adele Scheiber

These are the voters, these are voters, yeah, the voters, these must be small states that do this, surely?

0:25:20 - Melissa Gruver

No, I think Iowa caucuses.

0:25:23 - Adele Scheiber

And this is how. So, the voters come in, they pick a corner and they've got people. That's OK. Where do you find out if you're a caucus state, because that is a whole different ballgame. How do you find that out?

0:25:35 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah. So I mean I think if you go to your state election website, you know it'll kind of talk you through kind of what the voting is like and you know there's some, I mean, and people are really people from caucus states are very proud of that, of about that process and you know it is. For me I think there is something really interesting about talking to your neighbor and having conversations, especially at that most local level. I mean, these are people that live aside and like next door, in having conversations that you know might feel a little bit tough but really thinking through together, you know what is it in your, in your collective self-interest, so in some ways they are able to see really clearly what it looks like when we all vote together and how it can change, you know.

0:26:24 - Adele Scheiber

It's very- it's messy, but it's very much direct democracy a la Deadwood the 1840s. Do you know what I mean? I mean this is that's cool.

0:26:33 - Adele Scheiber

I do think that people should be prepared for the very different experience, right? So you could probably you'll find that out and on our website we're going to have state by state lookups and stuff for all that stuff. So, speaking of things, logistics, the drama, the logistics the drama of democracy can't spell democracy without the drama. Anyway, not all of them can be winners, folks. Ok, so other than, the state-by-state registration deadlines are there any other key dates or like key deadlines. You don't have to know the dates, but like milestones leading up to election day that people should know about?

0:27:13 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah, I really like thinking about the civic holidays. So there is national voter registration day happens in September and this is just a really great day that let's say you care about voting and you really want your friends and family to also make sure that they're registered to vote. This is just a great day to bring it up. You know you can bring it up on any day, don't hesitate. But I feel like this is a day where there's going to be a lot of layered messaging coming from a lot of different places, and it's a really good day to turn to your roommate or Text your bestie or just like ask everybody that you're seeing at the grocery stores this is a Southern RIME and be able to say like hey, did you know today's a national voter registration day? And just say are you registered to vote at your current address?

And so sometimes people might say no, and you might be the one that helps them get registered. Sometimes they'll say yeah and that'll cause them to go home and double check, but there's some things that can happen around having those conversations. So national voter registration day is one um that happens in September and I think about um vote early day, which always happens sometime in October, and you know, you hear sometimes people say vote early and vote often, and I think they mean like often, like each chance you get, not like multiple times. Not like voter fraud.

Right yeah, not voter fraud. We don't do that everyone yes, Some people really like election day itself is the way they vote. For me, my ritual, my tradition is I vote early every year

around Halloween, whatever Saturday is the closest to Halloween and a big group of us there's usually about 30, 40 of us we dress up. We call it spooky stroll to the polls, I try to call it zombie walk to the polls, and so we can like move real slow and yeah but, people were very concerned about, like face paint and the voter id laws and the DNA.

So we changed it to spooky stroll to the polls and we meet like a couple blocks from our county building and we wear Halloween costumes. I have a good photo of my friend in a banana suit and we make our way we're putting that in the show notes.

Yeah, and we make our way to the county building and they like it just as much as we do. We stand there, we line up and even us just like standing outside the building waiting to go in and vote is another like. In some ways it's like PR for cars driving by, because they're like what's going on and we have our signs and say spooky, struggle. And so we're making a big show of it, we're voting together, we're going to get food afterwards, and so it's like it's an event and so I think [Adele - fun and making it and there's safety in numbers, right, it's a lot less intimidating to go in a big group of friends], absolutely so one of my friends the other day was just talking about the very first time we voted as a group.

She was a little concerned about her id situation because she was a college student and she was nervous about her um student id working and it was. But she was feeling the nerves and when she went up there she recalls feeling nervous but she thought, but that's okay because my friends are here and they have my back, so if there's any concern then I'm not here alone and I think there's something really fun about that. Like, oh, do you want to go vote together? What do you think? Get our I voted stickers in our selfie?

So there's like an opportunity to not just feel like accomplished, like I did this task, I'm claiming this voter identity, I'm participating in this thing that sometimes is, sometimes lets us down, but this thing where you're also when you go and vote together, you're participating in this other thing that never lets us down, right? Connecting with your friends and neighbors, thinking about the things that matter. And so this is kind of how we transform ourselves and our communities.

0:31:19 - Adele Scheiber

You're right. This is that's you're right. That does never let us down Right. Even if you know our candidate quote unquote doesn't win or our referendum doesn't go through, you still sat in community with those people and you still helped each other. You know participate and be part of this community and be part of this democracy and at the end of the day. That's how you dismantle whatever you want to dismantle or build whatever you want to build. It's together and it's those behaviors you know. So.

0:31:45 - Melissa Gruver

I always like.

0:31:46 - Adele Scheiber

To say, in anarchy, you're still going to have your friend group, right, you're still going to have that group, yeah.

0:31:52 - Melissa Gruver

Well, and, that's the thing, is that. What do those conversations become right? What possibilities does those conversations become? Because I'm never going to be the person that's like "You're going to vote. You're going to like it." I just don't think about it that way, like I think about it like how do I, how do I show up? I do the thing, that, like, how do we use every tool that's available to us to push change, and this is one of them, and it's also one of them that I can utilize later to say I'm a voter and I'm holding you accountable, right, but again, the tool of coming together with people and talking about why sometimes it feels tricky, sometimes it feels like the options aren't awesome, or sometimes you get in there, you're like I didn't even know about this role and now I want to know more about the coroner being an elected official in my community, [Adele - right that's a fun one to find out. I remember my first coroner election (laughter)] and to think about and like sometimes, and at one point before covid happened, we used to make this joke what's the democratic way of being a coroner and what's the republican way of being a coroner? What's the democratic way of being a coroner and what's the Republican way of being a coroner? What's the Democratic way of declaring someone dead and what's the Republican way of declaring someone dead. And then in COVID, we found out, we found out.

0:33:16 - Adele Scheiber

Right, no, I mean, it's funny how it doesn't seem to matter until it does right these differences in the importance of the people in these roles and what you wouldn't think. You know. One thing I encourage everybody to listen to is Serial Season 3, which is a deep dive into the Ohio justice system and how judges are elected and what that looks like, and how the district attorneys, how that looks different depending on who's elected, it can change. I mean, these little things that you forget about can change the entire fabric of you know, your society. And it's what you're kind of getting at here and it's funny as somebody who does a lot of theater, we talk about this a lot, you know, just trying to sound smart together, which is, you know, people accomplish the most and you, you, you gel as a community and you make new friends. When does that happen? It's when you're all working towards a common goal or participating in a common struggle right? It's always like, "we've got to play to put in, we got school to pass, we've got a sports team" and you know, in this case we've got voting to do, right? So, if anything, vote with your friends to solidify those bonds with each other and to learn more about the people you spend time with. And maybe you know, like I, just we just finished a show and now we're like all hanging out together. I mean, like I got a whole new crew of friends right, so you participate in one of these events. You don't know. You know it's- everything is so isolating on your phone these days. I just think you know there's the discipline and practice of community is something that we're slowly losing and eroding, and any opportunity to make that is important, I think.

0:34:54 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah, absolutely yeah, and I think about, like you know, one of the questions I ask myself like pretty regularly is how am I distancing myself from capitalism further and further away and towards community and moving towards community? And sometimes that's what kind of feels like kind of a heavy question for some people. They're like well, I don't think about that, yeah, whatever, but what happens is like [Adele - see the c (capitalism) word and all of a sudden they're like woaah! (laughter)] yeah, yeah, yeah but I don't want to be like beholden to consuming and so it's so interesting because any chance I get to move along that spectrum with others I want to take advantage of, and some folks, you know they might not show up to your book club, about certain topics, but they'll show up to vote with you. And now, after voting, you're talking about your complicated feelings about it and all of your politics are getting even better, you know. So, I never want to discount the things that seem like the things square people do, because that's another way that these folks keep those of us with perspective out of the spaces and places where decisions are made.

0:36:14 - Adele Scheiber

Oh, I'm so glad you named that, because I really do feel like don't sleep on the squares, you know what the squares know how to do? Organize. I'm telling you, man. So that's so real. And so we talked a little bit about this and we're going to do this and this is going to come out in July. The Network is going to be organizing these walk to the pole events where you can register and dress up as either your favorite historical woman or at least go in honor of your favorite woman, because we love this idea, we think it's great, you know, bar crawl without the alcohol or with it if you want, but after right? Haha.

So what are some other ways that you can really move the needle with your friends and family about voting? Like, let's say, you know some people who are voting. Like what are some strategies you can do to kind of activate these people?

0:37:05 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah, I mean, I think that the one of the main ways that anyone takes action is through telling our stories. So I think, like I've been saying now right, if I just kind of came on this show or to the dinner table with folks just being like, "you should vote and it's the right thing to do, and we should do it," and I was trying to put this or even try to like do some PR, like, "voting's cool, voting's great," you know, whatever, but that's just not my whole life. It's not all I do, I'm like that's not going to hit it but what I do is I know how to like tell my own stories.

Right, like, what does it look like? Why is it important to me to be a voter? And I think a lot about even just opportunities around the dinner table, or the local bar right of doing the check-in question. You know, I call these check-in questions when I'm having like meetings with my crew, but when it's in a social situation, this is that thing where somebody's like okay, let's go around the table. I have a question for everybody.

0:38:17 - Adele Scheiber

You know I do that all the time? My friends hate me [laughter]

0:38:20 - Melissa Gruver

Yes, one of the questions I love asking because it gets people to tell stories is, "when was the first time you voted?" And that could be like I voted for the pizza, you know what I mean.



Like you know, that could be like we did a mock election in my elementary school. For me, the first time I remember voting was I actually technically wasn't voting. I went with my mom to vote and she brought me into the polling place with her and closed the curtain behind her, and she let me kind of look at how the buttons worked and things like that. And she showed me as she selected the president and I remember thinking to myself I kind of knew who she was voting for, I knew who my dad was voting for and I just thought it was kind of fun to be a part of, to be there when she- because they voted for different people that year and I remember thinking, wow, you know mom's letting me see this because it's a secret, you know.

And so, I think- around the room one time we heard someone talk about voting for their state senator and the reason why they have voted for them when they were 18 is because the state senator helped their parents because they were children of immigrants. Their parents were having some issues with their immigration process and the state senator helped advocate for them and supported them. And so when you're sitting around the table or at the bar and you're asking people like when was the first time you voted for something, you're going to get like a lot of fun, cute stories and you're going to get some stories that are meaningful in other ways, and it's going to get people to tell their stories and to see themselves as people who vote. We have been people who voted everywhere you know in lots of different ways. Like, um, we're voting for our favorite label of a can of soup you know like whatever right.

And so I think, there's like- something emerges in that way where people they see themselves as someone who votes and then they might want to take action. You know as well as they can see. Oh, it has. It was important to me to vote for the pizza. You know what I mean. Like. And in that same way, these other things are even more important to me, like these potholes. Right? You can tell I've been on the road a little bit lately yeah [laughter].

0:40:51 - Adele Scheiber

Now there are a couple, uh, a real doozies here in Albany and, it's true, it's the only thing people care about in our neighborhood group is the pot holes. So, I get it. I really- I think that's brilliant, you know, get, get people to tell stories. Do some self-reflection on that, if nothing else, right? As you were speaking, I was just thinking about- this wasn't the first time I voted, but I did vote in the, whatever it was. The 2000, yeah, the, not the 2000 election, the 2000, you know, the, the one with the Obama and Carrie and all that stuff, oh, yeah, yeah, geez, I'm really bad with like years and stuff, but then [Mel- 2008.] I think yeah, yeah, there you go.

0:41:34 - Adele Scheiber

And then I went to Morocco for the peace corps and let's just, Morocco is a 99% Muslim country um, you know, really cared about the Iraq war, the war in Afghanistan, all that stuff.

Obviously, I'm the American in my little village, I'm the one American right. I'm getting a lot of questions and they're fair and respectful questions, like they are not. I was, did not feel harassed, I did not feel intimidated. It was very much like what's going on over there, or the Americans Okay, what's happening. And you know, one thing that was nice about having voted and participated was that I got to have those conversations with these people, these new people of a different culture that I didn't know, and really engage with literally my new neighbors right. For two years they were my neighbors and I mean, if I hadn't voted and really stayed plugged in, I wouldn't have been able to have those conversations and I would have been like, "don't talk to me about that!" and it would have, honestly, it would have affected my street cred, it would have affected my authenticity and, honestly, my right to be there as a guest in their nation. You know what I mean. So that's just one story about why voting is important to me, but you got to think about that.

0:42:41 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah, yeah, absolutely, and that's and that's lovely right, because they got you to think about that by asking those questions and then I got you to think about it now, and if we were sitting at a dinner table with four other people, your story would get people to think about their own stories and be able to say like, okay, yeah, this is a part of who I am. It's not all of who I am, it's not the only thing I'm doing to make my community better, but it is a part of who I am.

I also really love asking people things like if you were running for elected office, what would your campaign colors be on your signs? And then you know, then you kind of start like noticing campaign signs a little bit differently and I was and then sometimes, like for my friends who are pet lovers, I'm like, okay, the dog elections are coming up and what's your dog going to run for? So I have one of my friends, yeah, one of my favorite dogs in town's name is Huey, and Huey's always running for things like the clerk or something I can't remember. And I'm always commenting on Huey's Instagram saying it's not a clerk year, this is not the year to clerk, and Huey's always replying it's dog elections. It's different.

0:44:11 - Adele Scheiber

Well, that's also. That's brilliant. It's a great way to get kids involved too, right, is these little mock elections or these cute elections to get them used to the idea, and things like that. So that's yeah, that's interesting. I love that. Stories are just like you know, you're not trying to sell anybody anything. Just kind of sit in your identity as a voter and we've all voted on something. I like that because people think like oh, I've never voted, no, but we voted for pizza. We voted for homeroom chair. We vote. that's kind of how we Live our lives in this country, right yeah.

0:44:57 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah, like last week, you know, it's like where do you want to go eat dinner? Do you want to get Indian, Mexican or Thai? And there's like three of us and we're voting. That's a hard election.

0:45:02 - Adele Scheiber

The most contested election in national history is the girlies going to dinner election. All right, Mel. Well, what are some reliable resources, emphasis on reliable, where folks can go to further educate themselves about voting and the issues, because there's a lot of misinformation out there, but there are some really good sources too.

0:45:26 - Melissa Gruver

Yeah well, I assume your website is going to be a great reliable resource. I've gotten a little bit of a preview of what's going to be on it. I think I mentioned [Vote411](#) earlier with the [League of Women Voters](#) nonpartisan voter guides.

There is also, I think about "[All In to Vote](#)" has some really good resources especially geared towards younger voters, college students. Really good with that college student question of how to find things in your specific state and yeah, I would say those are really great places to start because they're going to link out to places and spaces as well.

0:46:16 - Adele Scheiber

Right, you don't need to go to 500 different places. You know, in full transparency, every tool that we're using on our website has been bettered, either by you, Mel, who is my, I like to say, my emotional support campaign partner here, and we're using trusted sources like vote.org and places that people have been using forever, that are nonpartisan right, that are just here to educate you about how to participate in the democratic process, which we want everybody to do.

We want everybody to do here at the network. So, all right, Mel, is there anything else you want our listeners to know about voting, you, your organization? Please plug anything you want.

0:46:55 - Melissa Gruver

One of the things I really want people to know is that if they are in places and spaces where they feel like they've been shut out, you know, the fact that you are there means that there are good people in the space that you live doing good work, and there are others like you. So, you know, I really want to give you encouragement to go and find them, if you haven't done so already. So, one of the ways that I found my people is through our organization called Indiana Task Force, and we're feminists organization and re-imagining civic engagement, and we love Indiana so much that we're invested in changing it so that it's a place where everybody can thrive. And I just think it's really important to know that in some of those spaces and places that people often discount, s\*\*t talk, you know the spaces and places that people sometimes want to say they should just leave. You know they should just leave our country.

Some of the best people are there organizing [Adele - Responding to that vitriol kind of there's always a resistance, as I like to say] Absolutely, absolutely, and one of the best folks to do this, as it relates to all of our rights to vote, is in the Black Freedom Struggle of the South, and so we've got to put respect on the names of people like Fannie Lou Hamer in Mississippi, and Ella Baker and other folks with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and STLs.

0:48:39 - Adele Scheiber

I did my whole- I did my entire undergrad research on the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Now you want to talk about them. They did a lot of voter registration. Y'all Go look them up, they did a lot of everyone. Oh, they're radical, they're so- they did voter registration yes you know.

So, elevate Fannie Lou Hamer, my favorite story about her she started a pig bank, a literal pig bank. So, she gave pigs to poor women in the south. So that they mean there's this really imaginative and revolutionary history in this, in this democratic experiment, and so we'll link to some of those stories too. But all right, Mel, well, this has been incredible and this is going to come out right in the middle of our July launch of our Get Out The Vote campaign. Uh, everybody go to [Nwhn.org/4her2024](https://Nwhn.org/4her2024). And, um, there's some giveaways, there's some education, there's something for everybody. And, Mel actually helped me with a bunch of it. So, you've met the, the person, the myth, the legend here.

0:49:52 - Melissa Gruver

I'm excited for my sticker.

0:49:59 - Adele Scheiber

Yeah yeah, the stickers are pretty lit, so please go check them out. If you do nothing else, go check out the stickers. All right? Well, we will talk soon, I'm sure. All right, bye.

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