

Forgot Everything From Civics Class?

So Did We.

A student-produced podcast on the foundations of American democracy, modern threats to civic norms, and one 18-year-old's data-driven solution to voter suppression.

01 · FOUNDING FRAMEWORK

How It Was Designed to Work

- **Popular Sovereignty** — power belongs to the people
- **Separation of Powers** — three co-equal branches
- **Checks & Balances** — each branch limits the others
- **Federalism** — shared power, federal + state
- **Bill of Rights** — ten amendments protecting individual liberty
- **Church & State** — government may not impose religion

02 · DEMOCRACY IN PLAIN SPEAK

What It Actually Requires

- Free and fair elections as the mechanism of sovereignty
- An independent judiciary — even the powerful must follow the law
- A free press as a watchdog and public informant
- Civil liberties are inherent — not granted by government
- Peaceful transfer of power defines democracy from autocracy

03 · MODERN THREATS

What's Straining the Foundation

The principles above are only as strong as our collective commitment to defending them. Several forces are currently testing that commitment:

- **Misinformation & disinformation** — social media accelerates the spread of false narratives
- **Media manipulation** — partisan framing and algorithmic echo chambers distort shared reality
- **Norm erosion** — politicians undermining independent oversight and rule of law
- **Voter suppression** — policy tools that systematically reduce participation in targeted communities
- **Declining institutional trust** — in courts, elections, and government itself

The Black vote is one of the most reliable Democratic voting blocs — making it a deliberate target of suppression strategies in Southern states and beyond.

What It Looks Like on the Ground

- Fewer voting booths at polling locations in Black neighborhoods
- Reduced voting hours — often during wage workers' shifts
- Fewer ballot drop boxes placed in Black communities
- Shortened windows for returning mail-in ballots
- Gerrymandered districts diluting Black voting power
- Supreme Court rulings weakening the Voting Rights Act
- Deliberate confusion about eligibility, deadlines, and rules

These disparities are not accidental. White neighborhoods consistently receive more booths, longer hours, and more drop boxes. The cumulative effect is the suppression of a specific vote.

Let the Data Speak

The landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* was won partly through the **Clark Doll Studies** — rigorous social science that proved harm quantitatively. The same framework can challenge modern voter suppression.

1

Commission a Study

Fund quantitative research measuring voter turnout before and after suppression mechanisms were introduced — in Black vs. white communities within the same jurisdiction.

2

Measure the Correlation

Statistically analyze whether reduced hours, fewer booths, and limited drop boxes produced significantly lower Black turnout. Numbers don't lie.

3

Invoke the 14th Amendment

Use that data in court to argue the Equal Protection Clause — the same constitutional tool that dismantled 'separate but equal.' Qualitative claims of 'no racial animus' cannot override documented statistical disparity.

4

Mandate Equal Access

Courts can require proportional or equal polling infrastructure across all communities: matching hours, booths, and drop boxes regardless of neighborhood demographics.

5

Correct Faulty Data with Accurate Data

When officials use flawed statistics to justify suppressive policy, independent rigorous studies become the rebuttal. Accurate data is the antidote to misinformation in court.

This podcast ends with one solution — from one 18-year-old. That's one problem out of many. Use this as a starting point. Sit with your kids. Ask: *what's your solution?* The next great idea may already be in your home.