



Live the Legacy Podcast

Live the Legacy podcast captures bold conversations between civil rights icons and today's student activists. This season of the podcast will be a series of interviews with current members of AGF's network like Andrew Goodman Ambassadors, Alumni, and members for the This Gen Advocacy Network. The conversations will highlight the work and passion of young voters, especially from historically marginalized communities. Listeners will hear what connects young people today to the legacy story of Andrew Goodman, James Earl Chaney, and Michael Schwerner. We will also gain insight into what the true motivating factors are for young people exercising their right to vote. Listen today on our [website](#) or your favorite podcast app.

Season 3, Episode 1

We're kicking the season off by talking with Alexa Hoekstra. Alexa is a third year at Texas Woman's University, majoring in Political Science with an emphasis in Law and minoring in Business Management. We discuss strategies she and her team at TWU are using to get out the vote, the importance of safe access to abortion and other reproductive services, and the pros and cons of using social media to spread information about elections.

Transcript

Mo: Welcome back to the Live Legacy Podcast, a project brought to you by the Andrew Goodman Foundation. I'm your host, Mo Banks, and I am so excited for this season of the podcast. To catch everyone up to speed, if you haven't been with us since the start of the podcast, season one was all about connecting the past to the present. We had three incredible conversations with people who were advocating for voting rights over 50 years ago, talking with our current Andrew Goodman Ambassadors, and we were connecting how the fight from fifty years ago, the fight today is different, but also they share a lot of similarities. We got to learn from different tactics and techniques and just their powerful stories of how they fought for change. It was a really inspirational season. If you haven't checked it out, again, it's available now.

And in season two, we connected the present to the future. We were talking to current voting rights activists who are working right now to ensure that we have just an equitable democracy. And once again, alumni from our program as well as current Ambassadors were able to talk to current voting rights activists about what they were doing today to make sure that people had equal access to the ballot or as much as possible. Obviously, we've seen an increased attack on our voting rights over the past two years, with unprecedented amounts of bills and laws being passed that restrict our rights and our access to votes. So it was a crucial season, all six of those episodes are currently available on whatever streaming app you're currently listening to this on, as well as on our website.

This season, I'm really excited about it because it's all focused on current youth voters. We talk so much about the power of the youth vote. We've mentioned it for the past two seasons and this season I really wanted to dig into why youth are showing up in such powerful and record-breaking numbers. So I figured the best way to find out was to talk to young voters themselves. So the next six episodes are going to be real-life conversations with young people who are dedicating their time and energy to making sure their peers are registered to vote. They're showing up to the polls. They're doing everything that they can on their college campuses and beyond to make sure that young people go and make their voice heard.

So I think it's going to be a great season. I'm really excited that you all are here, that you're listening, that you're interested in it. And if you don't mind just going ahead and rating and leaving a review on this podcast so that other people can find it. And other people can join in the conversation about why the youth vote is so powerful and hear these incredible stories of young people who are making a difference today. So again, leave us a review. Rate us, subscribe, all of those things help other people find this podcast a lot easier. So yeah, thanks for helping out. Without further ado, I'm going to stop talking and I'm going to switch on over to this interview with our first guest.

Alexa: My name is Alexa Hoekstra. I use the she/her/hers series of pronouns. I'm a political science major actually with an emphasis in legal studies and I have a business management minor, and I am a student at Texas Woman's University.

Mo: Awesome. PoliSci majors. I was in classes with PoliSci majors and I always felt intimidated by how much they knew about what was going on.

Alexa: You know, it's funny because I am like credit wise, I'm a junior but I am only in my second year of college and I started off with a lot of business management classes and I was like, oh, this is really cool, this is great. And then I got into PoliSci classes because I got into my upper division classes and I was like, whoa, these guys are serious. This is intense but it's a great way to facilitate learning. But I was like, oh, PoliSci like a whole new level of like, these people are engaged, they know their stuff, we're going to talk about current events in every single class and I'm like, oh, I really need to read up on the news a little bit more.

Mo: Yeah, absolutely. That's how I always felt. I think I had to take one or two just to graduate because I was trying to get a minor in social justice and so some of that had to do with some PoliSci. So I was just always very impressed and I think I could hang now, but back then I was just like so unaware, which is like, I guess kind of the focus of the conversation we're going to be having today. I'm in my 30s now. I remember when I was in my early 20s, I was just in college. Voting, civic engagement, anything around that was just not on my radar at all. It wasn't something that I was passionate about or knew about. So I'm always so fascinated whenever I'm talking with folks who are in their twenties and in college and they're not only voting but they're like leading voting organizations on campus. So can you kind of tell me how you got passionate about civic engagement and why you're passionate about voting in the first place?

Alexa: Yeah, it's funny you mentioned that young people are just not being very; it's funny because PoliSci majors are in this bubble and everybody knows what's going on everybody's so engaged and they just know what's happening and you can have these really high level discussions about events going on. But you pull yourself out of PoliSci majors and you really get a sense of, like young people sometimes they're just not there all the time. And it's so important for us when we're leading this movement of engaged voters and making sure they know what they're doing even just as simple as knowing what's happening when you're at the ballot box. We had an event, it was called Party at the Polls here at Texas Women's University. And we had this little game, and it was, *Can you tell me what's on the ballot?* And if you do, it's like a bingo board, and we'll pull it off, and you get a sticker. And it was amazing that some people, and most often, like, we would ask them, hey, what's your major? We talked to them, and they'd say: PoliSci. They knew exactly what was on the ballot. They knew everything coming up, they knew the candidates, they knew the propositions local to our county.

But we would talk to students outside, and they were like, I don't know. And we're like, no worries, that's why we're here, that's why we're going to help you get educated. This last past semester, too, that our team. We went into classrooms. We actually got to talk to over 550 students, we got into 20 classrooms. And for our campus, we have about 13,000 on our campus. But that's between three campuses of Dallas, Deton, and Houston. So we're a very small campus. We got to talk to these students, and we would always ask in these presentations, the presentation was specifically about what was going on, voting, like voting procedures and things that you need to know going in when you're voting, like first time voters.

And then it was also what's on the ballot. We would always give away free swag for those who could answer what was on the ballot. But more often than not, we were the ones that were like, no worries, we're voting for the governor, yes, but we also need to know everything else we're voting on. So we would go in, we'd give them the answers, and then we would also talk about the two party system so the two candidates up between Republican and Democrats. And we would educate on what the seat actually does so they would know not only the candidates they'd be voting for, but also what the specific seat does in correlation to how it aligns with your political beliefs. And it taught us, we did such great work this semester, but it really taught us

that there's so much more work to be done, especially with young people, and we're doing great things, but we need more people. We need more people on our side that know what's going on. We need more people that are educated and really just know what's happening. And I think we did some great work, but there's still a long way to go.

Mo: Yeah, absolutely. I think that's such a cool event. I think if I were on campus and I saw something like that, it would totally get me hooked and I would want to know more about it. I don't even think I'm really trying to wrap my brain here and think if there was ever a moment on campus that I ever saw anything about voting. I didn't know how to vote away from home. I wasn't registered, because I went to a new state whenever I went to college. And so all those things are just, so many barriers for young people who are attending university to get to the polls in the first place.

Alexa: Yeah. And I'll tell you what: I live in Texas, Texas Woman's University. And this state does not make it easy for people to vote. We are one of the toughest states to vote in, we're one of the only states that doesn't have online registration, it's hard to change your registration status. It's difficult to go, limited polling hours. And just now, this year, Texas Woman's University was able to secure another polling site. We had lost it for three years, and luckily, when you have a team, that's just great... I could not be where I'm at without the team that's behind me, like administrative support and everything like that.

But we were able to get a polling location back on campus. But again, we're threatened with the issue of did we get enough people at the polling site to be able to keep it for the next election cycle? So it's definitely such a big thing with continuity and making sure, like, everything's sustainable and that you're getting enough people engaged. And so that's why we held events like that, to be able to like, hey, have you voted? If not, we got a polling site right there. If you're registered in Denton, go vote. Please vote. We would literally be on the mic. It was like a speaker system and be like, hey, you like, walk into class. Have you voted? If not, go to the polls. It was a big fun thing. We had our mascot and everything and some fun games, and we had pizza and it was a really good time.

Mo: That's really cool. I love that. So you kind of mentioned that you have a team of administrators and staff and folks who have been helping you out, but I know that there's also the Vote Everywhere team to the Andrew Goodman Foundation, which obviously is this podcast is for the Andrew Goodman Foundation. I remember whenever I first heard [Andy's story](#), how powerful and impactful it was to me. Do you remember the first time you heard about the story of Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner and James Cheney and how did his story and their story impact you?

Alexa: Yeah, so I first heard the story, actually from my Program Manager, her name is [Kaylee](#). And it was just as I was getting on boarded for Andrew Goodman to become an Ambassador. And she really took the time out of her day to share the story with me and really give an impactful meaning about why we do the work that we do and what I was walking into as

Ambassador. And I think for me, it was just really awesome in the moment to hear a story about someone who was just an ally standing up for those who had been historically oppressed and discriminated against. But I think it's a pivotal example of what coalition building and bringing people together can do and it sustains rights to vote.

And I think that the thing that impacts me so much now is that that story and that legacy has stood the width of time and it continues to empower so many generations, like my generation, like what, it was in sixties? And we're still talking about Andrew Goodman today and about his legacy. And he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and things like that, posthumously. It's just so important because generations and generations and generations are keeping the legacy alive solely by that story and the meaning of that story, which is just standing up with others and standing up as an ally and making sure that we have the responsibility of making sure people have the right to vote and that we continue that being a thing, especially right now. Because let me tell you, we're living through some historic times and it is just so important now more than ever to stand up for freedom.

Mo: You're absolutely right, like you're telling me. It's been nuts how much, I feel like I'm still processing 2019 and we're about to start 2023? There's been so much going on, which is why when I'm just sitting down and having conversations like this and I'm talking to the next generation of powerful voters who are taking things very seriously. I mean, we just saw the second highest youth voter turnout in recent decades with 27% of young people showing up, making their voices heard in the *midterm* elections. We're not even talking presidential, this is midterms. So I think there's something to that. But why do you think that more young people we're seeing more people, young people showing up to the polls, becoming civically engaged? What do you think is motivating your generation to get out there and make their voice heard?

Alexa: Yeah, I think young voters are ready. They're hearing the call and they're picking up the phone. Because I think right now in my life, civic engagement, I'm in my baby stages of civic engagement. Yeah, I'm leading and doing these things, but I'm a baby right now. I've not been doing this for decades and decades and decades like some other really influential people in this movement. But I don't think that discredits what, we are important and what we have to say because this is the first time in my life that I've actually seen government and the way it impacts me on a daily level. Like, we are seeing things being passed, we are seeing things being taken seriously. We are seeing activism and all those things are being filtered all the way down to young people. And we are the ones who in the future are going to be dealing with everything else that gets passed right now. Everything else.

So I think the most important thing is realizing, like, young people are looking ahead. And we're not just living now, but we're also living 20 years in the future when we know that climate change is a real thing that's happening and that voting rights are being threatened every single day and that student debt cancellation might be a thing. And so all these things are things that will be in our future for years and years and years to come. So I think young people are finally realizing, like, if you're not engaged now, you're not going to be engaged later, and you're just going to

keep seeing things being passed and done that you don't agree with. So if you really, truly have an issue that you care about, now, go vote, get involved, call your reps, make sure your voice is heard, because then we actually can see some real change and see *our* voices being included and being taken seriously because that's so important. We need to be at the table. We need to be having these conversations, and we need to be represented in all forms of government.

Mo: Yeah, absolutely. I think you touched on some major things there. I know it's one thing to kind of read some of these studies. It's like young people care about abortion access. Young people care about climate change. It's another to be a young person who's having conversations with their peers about things that they care about. What are some of the things that what are some of the issues that are really at the forefront of y'all's mind whenever you're going to the polls? Is it what the studies say? Or are there things that we're missing, things that maybe we need to be more aware of, that young people are really caring about and that are driving folks to the polls right now?

Alexa: Yeah, absolutely. So I think, number one, again, it's not a secret. I'm a resident of Texas, and Texas is coming after women right now sometimes. Not sometimes, a lot. And for me, I identify as a woman. I am a woman, and *man*, I do not agree with what Texas is doing. And so what motivates me is that I want my access to choose, I want my rights. I don't want to be considered like a second class citizen when it comes to making choices over my body, and I want to be able to have that freedom. And then also, too, Texas threatens diversity a lot in higher education, in schools, in the workplace. And I think that frustrates me too, because, again, women are not always represented well. So that's number one for me, it's changing the landscape of Texas, because I don't think Texas, for me, I don't think it's a red state. I think it's just a non-voting state. And that's the problem, is that we're not getting out and voting. And I think, like, historic turnout aside, we can do better. We really can. And it takes work every single day to be able to do that. Not a crunch time before an election, but work every single day to be able to get young voters out.

And I think more nationally. I'm a student as well, so I think I mentioned this before, but student debt cancellation is a really, really big thing for me right now. I mean, it's awarded me the opportunity to continue higher education. It's awarded me the potential of being able to go to law school and being able to build my generational wealth. Because I'm first gen, my parents never got the chance to go to college. My mom got pregnant at 16. My dad had to quit college to be able to support my family. And so first-gen here all the way. So navigating this process completely alone, I have my support of my parents, but alone in the sense of like, this has not been done before in my family. So navigating this process with the help of the government and help of being able to say, hey, we're going to let you go to college and let that be an actual opportunity for you rather than being crushed by student loan debt. And so for me, it's just those kind of issues that motivate me and really get me out there just to build the generational things, and being able to build on, and create a better future for myself and those around me.

Mo: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, something that I feel like I've been having a lot of conversations with lately and with people in my life has just been like these political games that our politicians are playing have real life impact on people. And it's ridiculous that our rights and our ability to access care or our ability to provide financially for our families, those things are just left up to the whims of whatever political stuff could get pulled. And so it feels really frustrating for me, like the generation right above you, and I feel extremely frustrated. I felt extremely frustrated for many years. And so I often wonder, like when we combine our frustrations and we go to the polls as Millennials and Gen-Z voters, how much we can really turn the tide with these things.

Something that I think has played a major role, for better or worse, and that's always up for debate, but it's played a major role in I think maybe getting younger folks and I would love your perspective on this to the polls has been the use of social media. We've seen the use of social media go really horribly when it comes to election information and disinformation. What have you seen, though, within your circles of the use of TikTok, Instagram, Twitter and things like that, where you are maybe getting some information about elections? Are you something that you see as useful? Are you and your peers using social media to provide information to other students or community members about upcoming elections or how have you seen that utilized?

Alexa: Yeah, for sure. So just within the small scope of Texas Women's University, we have our own [PioneersVote Instagram](#), and we were very diligent about providing information for our campus, too, like polling hours, making sure students know where they can go, where it is at, when it's open. It was only an early voting site, so making sure they knew on Election day, you cannot vote here. You have to go to the civic center. And then also, too, can you get transportation provided when we actually do go to the polls? Like, for example, we were early voting. Our voting site is pretty close, it's a walk, but we provided like, little go bikes. Have you ever gone to a baseball game? And the people sitting outside, they have the bikes, but they also have the wagons behind them. Yeah, that was what we had to be able to cart students to the polls on actual Election Day so they wouldn't have to take so much time out of their day because realistically, we're busy college students and you've got tests and everything. So we did that.

But social media was a game changer and making sure that people were informed specifically about our campus. If you ask me more, on a personal note, I think social media is very dangerous. I think we've seen that in the last couple of years. It provides a lot of people with misinformation, and I think it's not regulated to the point where it can be a reliable source now, especially for elections. But I think in the right hands, with the right responsibility and on the right information, it's very powerful, very useful. It gets out the vote, it gets out the effort, and it really motivates people because that is what's right in front of their face all the time. But that's also part of the problem. So, like, it's a double edged sword here. So it's right in the face all the time. So if you're going through that cycle of misinformation, then...

Mo: Yeah, I totally agree. That's so interesting. I threw that question in there, I know it wasn't something that I sent over to you. I'm just deeply curious because I just always feel like people

are like, oh, Gen-Z is always on TikTok and they all love it, and that's like, their thing. And while that may be true, it's just really interesting to sit across from you and hear you say, actually, I don't love it. I think it's dangerous. And like you asked, too, voting aside, like, I think there's more dangerous ramifications. Like if you talk about body image and you talk about self care and you talk about those things like TikTok, I love me scrolling on some TikTok, but I do not love reinforcement of here's how to eat healthy and here's how to do this and here's how to work out correctly. More personally, no, but I think in the right circumstances, with the right people. And that's just a problem right now, I think from top down, it's not regulated very well. You can get a blue check mark now for \$8.

Mo: Yeah, it's like a whole thing. I feel like every day I go to work and have an existential crisis because I work in social media, like am I good or am I not?

Alexa: And that's the thing, is people that are doing it well are doing it well, but the people are doing it wrong, way wrong.

Mo: Well, it's cool to know, though, that some campuses and in groups on campus do have their own social media stuff. And those things, at least, are controlled by the moderators of those accounts, which I would assume would be you and your friends, and like, you, who would be just posting information so that students could at least quickly scan a QR code on a poster and get their simple things like that. I'm just trying to think about if I had those resources to be available in my early 20s, how that could have affected my voter turnout on my campus. Just angles of thinking through those things, but on a larger scale, the way things are going on social media now is kind of like, it's hard to watch.

Alexa: Absolutely, yeah, it's tough sometimes. So in the presentations, too, we passed around an iPad and we had up the Texas Secretary of State website and people checked their registration status. We passed all the way around the room, the whole classroom, to make sure that everybody knew, if you're not registered, get registered with us today, because we're VDRs. I don't know if other states do that, but Texas does VDRs, Voter Deputy Registrars where there are people licensed by the state. It's like a real short certification process, and then you can actually register people to vote. So they fill out the forms with you, and then you take it to the county office and they're registered to vote. Yeah. So it's a really nice process for cutting out some of the lag time or things like that, but yeah. Making sure we had an iPad, pass it around, make sure everybody knows the registration status, because a lot of people are like, oh, no. And I'm like, look it up, please. Look it up, look at where you're registered, look up your polling site. If it's not here, go back home on that day. Let's get a plan going. Let's make sure you're ready.

Mo: Yeah, absolutely. I love those resources, yeah. Well, I mean, something that you and I both know and probably will shake our heads at is these misconceptions about the younger voters and the younger generations just not showing up to vote, misconceptions about who we all are as a group and as a generation. So this is your chance to people who are listening right now to

this podcast, what's something that you want older generations or people in general to know about young voters, what kind of things, maybe misconceptions do you want to put on blast right now? Or just like, what truth do you want to get out there about you and your friends and your community as a whole as young voters moving forward from this midterm election into the next one?

Alexa: Yeah, and I think I've said this before too, but we're here in the call, and we're picking it up, and I think that is end all be all like, don't count us out because of our age. And I think, really, honestly, I don't think age matters all too much, I really don't. I think it's about willingness to learn. I think it's about willingness to engage, and I think it's about setting forth the effort to really see the change happen where you want it to happen. I don't care which side you lie on, but if you're passionate about something, as long as it's not hateful, go for it, answer the call. And I think we have a perception that we're lazy and things like that, and I don't think that's the case. I think it's being more efficient in ways and cutting to the chase a little bit quicker. We'll be blunt about it. I don't like what's going on in my government, I don't like what's happening on the state level. I'm ready to hear the call, but will people listen to me? That's the problem. It's like I get discounted a lot because of my age, and I'm like, you know what? I am the one that will be dealing with this in the future, not you. So let's listen to me for a second, because I'm willing to listen to you.

And so it's just making sure that we are open minded, but other people need to be open minded as well, and we just all need to facilitate that, learning from each other and really grow from it. And I think, again, living in historic times where we're just so divided and so polarized, it takes all of us to make a movement old, young, black, white, everything in between like it really does. And so we need to build a coalition together, and that's where the change will happen. Everyone can vote, making sure everyone has their voice heard and making sure that we are amplifying voices that maybe need a little bit more amplification sometimes, because that's most important too. I'm a cisgendered white woman, I don't always need to be leading the call on diversity issues. I can have my voice on a women's campus. We serve 90% women on our campus, but that's not always a space for me. So, like, stepping back and listening to both sides, I think that's just the most important thing.

Mo: Yeah, I love that. I love the concept of let's figure out what we have more in common and less about what's different, because we do need each other. We need each other to do this thing right, to course correct from where it feels like our democracy is headed. And if I can build a coalition with someone who I might not have like, 100% agreement on every single view, but I can at least agree on the important things to move our democracy forward, I'm going to do that work with somebody. So I appreciate that that's at the heart, I feel like, of your generation. And I'm, like, low-key obsessed with how incredible you all are. It fills me with so much hope. Just any given day, whenever I turn on the news cycle and just see, like, gosh, there's just, like, so much happening. Y'all's generation fills me with a little bit of much needed hope. To that degree, with everything that is going on in the world right now, I love to end our podcast interviews, just talking about hope, talking about things that have been bringing you life lately, things that are

getting you excited, maybe like a nice playlist you've been listening to, a new video game that you've been down with, I don't know, a new flavor of coffee, but yes, this is it. Give us those tiny dose of serotonin at the end of this. What's been bringing you some joy, some hope lately?

Alexa: Yeah, I'll tell you what, I am a very workout junkie, so I get up, like, every morning. I'm also a cycle instructor, so I do cycle. And I'll tell you what, Lizzo's music is the best workout music you can literally get out there. For like three weeks now, that's all I've listened to while I work out. And it's so great because she has so many female empowerment songs. She has a song called *Like a Girl*, and it's all about, like the phrase *like a girl* has been, like, negative, but she construes it in a way. It's like, yeah, do everything like a girl, because that's how we do it, things like that. And oh, my gosh, like, I'm chills right now. I just but I'm working out or whatever. I'm like lifting weights, *like a girl*. It's so good. Lizzo is just top tier, so that is probably.

Mo: Thank you, I appreciate that. And I appreciate your time today. I think it's been a really wonderful conversation. I hope our listeners have appreciated it just as much as I have. Is there anything that we didn't cover that you kind of want to shout out at the end? Anywhere. If you want folks to follow Texas Women's Instagram, is there like, any handles that you want anybody to know about?

Alexa: Yeah, so we have our [PioneersVote Instagram](#) and also for other college students, we have a department called the [Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy](#), which is a mouthful, but we provide a lot of scholarships for Texas residents specifically to go to different seminars. And we're actually sponsoring students to go to Austin and be in the ledge session and everything, like, that. So those are really great resources from TWU specifically. And then I would also just add that, again, I've mentioned this before, but like, my team at Texas Woman's University has been absolutely essential to getting us to where we are today. The administrative support, the team support, my partner on the first vote presentations, Andy, he was absolutely essential to the success of that program and reaching as many students as we did. So thank you to everyone at TWU because, wow, we did it and we got more work to do. But it would not have been done without the team at TWU.

Mo: Yes, shoutout to the team! We'll drop those links in the show notes for this episode, but other than that, thank you so much for joining us. Thank you.

This concludes this week's episode of Live The Legacy podcast. If you enjoyed today's episode, help spread the word, share on social media, tell your friends about it, leave a review, subscribe, or rate us. A special shout out to Tabeeek Music for all the music that you heard on today's episode. Once again, this has been your host, Mo Banks. Thanks so much for listening.