



Live the Legacy Podcast

Live the Legacy podcast captures bold conversations between civil rights icons and today's student activists. These conversations bridge the past and the present in order to move forward together. Listen today on our [website](#) or your favorite podcast app.

Season X, Episode Y

What do STEM students and a passion for civic engagement have in common? In this case, it's Hayley Piazza! Join us for Episode 4 of this season of the Live The Legacy Podcast as we hear from Hayley, a second-year student at Pace University majoring in Health Science. We also discuss important topics like the overturning of Roe v. Wade, gun control, and climate change. Listen to Hayley's interview on your favorite podcast app or on our website. Happy listening!

Transcript

Mo: Welcome back to the Live The Legacy podcast, a project brought to you by the Andrew Goodman Foundation. I'm your host, Mo Banks, and we're halfway through the season y'all! It's been an incredible season so far, we've had three guests who I think have shared incredible stories, we've gotten really cool insights into why the youth voters are turning out in record numbers. We've heard personal stories of why people have gotten, you know, involved in civic engagement, we've even had an Instagram live with one of our coalition partners at the [Students Learn Students Vote Coalition](#). It's been an incredible season so far and we're only halfway through. So buckle in and settle down cuz we've got another great episode for you this week. I had the pleasure of sitting down with [Hayley Piazza](#), who is a sophomore at Pace University. Hayley is majoring in health science on a pre-physician's assistant track.

She is passionate for civic engagement because she started young and it's only grown over time as she's been involved in various clubs and organizations on her campus. As a STEM major, one of Hayley's goals during her time as one of our Andrew Goodman Ambassadors is to motivate her fellow STEM and pre-health majors to be civically engaged. So if you're wondering to yourself, what do STEM majors and a passion for civic engagement have in common? Well,

it's Hayley Piazza. I hope y'all enjoy this episode and again, if you do, leave us a review, rate us, subscribe, all of those things help other people find our podcast that much easier. Happy listening, ya'll.

Hayley: Hi, my name is Hayley Piazza, my pronouns are she/her, I'm a health science major on the pre-PA track at [Pace University](#), the New York City campus, and I'm gonna graduate in 2025.

Mo: Nice, all right. So you're in health, you said you're health services?

Hayley: Health science, yeah.

Mo: Okay. Yeah, that's really cool. What kind of got you interested in going into that field?

Hayley: Well, honestly I've always been really into politics, but I also really liked, you know, like health related things. Like I really like anatomy, biology, stuff like that. So coming into college I was really torn of like what I should do until I found health science, which kind of relates like policy and health together. So I'm thinking of maybe going into like, um, like health policy, health advocacy, stuff like that to like, cuz it's kind of like a combination of the two things that I'm really passionate about.

Mo: Yeah, that sounds incredible. I know that so much about our like healthcare system is so political, I think we need folks like you who are wanting to go and advocate for a more equal and just healthcare system, so that's awesome. I really appreciate you sharing kind of what got you interested in that. Well as you know, like this is the [Live The Legacy podcast](#) and so, we're connecting the [story of Andrew Goodman](#), [Michael Schwerner](#), and [James Earl Chaney](#) to what's happening today, 50 some years later, or I guess we're almost at the 60 year anniversary actually, which is wild to think about that it's already been that long. But you as a young person have heard the story of Andrew Goodman. I would just love to know kind of what that, what, how did that impact you? How do you see yourself living that legacy today? And yeah, just kinda like in, in general, how, how did you hear about Andrew Goodman and the story and how did it impact you?

Hayley: So before I started working as a [Vote Everywhere](#) Ambassador, I was volunteering with the office, [The Center for Community Action Research](#) at Pace University as the vote everywhere, like PACE leader. And so we received trainings on how to register people to vote, anti-racism, and during one of our trainings, we learned the story about Andrew Goodman. And at first I honestly didn't know anything about it before I received the training, which I like, I honestly was very surprised that a lot of people don't really talk about it. And so I feel like it's definitely something that should be taught more to people like just in history classes and stuff like that. And it also really made me wonder like how many other stories are out there, just like that, that we don't know about?

Mo: Yeah, absolutely. I agree. When I first applied to this job, I hadn't ever heard his story, which is astounding to me 'cause it's such an integral part of my life and my work now. But it's, it's, it's true that some folks out there haven't even heard the story. So, you know, you've become an Andrew Goodman Ambassador with the Vote Everywhere Program at Pace University. What kind of drew you to that? What drives your passion for civic engagement? I know as a college student, you have so many things that are like buying for your attention and I know for sure for myself when I was in my twenties and in college, voting and getting my peers to register to vote was not on my radar. So tell us a little bit about how you've become so passionate enough to dedicate some of your time as a young college student to do the civic engagement work.

Hayley: Well, like I said before, I've always been very into and passionate about politics and civic engagement. And I guess that really started around the 2016 election, but I was a little younger then, so I wasn't that into it. And then over time, just through experiences in life and seeing other people's experiences, and listening to other people's stories, I started to become more and more involved, more and more passionate. And then, coming into Pace, I found out about the program and I knew that I wanted to be politically involved in college. Just because I came in like studying science doesn't mean that I can't be politically involved at the same time. So I came in and I already had like, you know, my eyes set on being involved, and then yeah, I started volunteering and then working with the Andrew Goodman Foundation.

Mo: What are some of the issues that kind of got on your radar of things that you really do care about? What are some of the things that are impacting you as a young college student today that would motivate you to kind of go to the polls and make your voice heard?

Hayley: This kinda relates to the last question and this question, so I'm taking STEM courses, I'm like a STEM major and what I've realized like as my time over my time here as a student at Pace is that a lot of STEM students, a lot of science-based students don't really understand the importance of civic engagement and voting and stuff like that. So what I've tried to work on as a Vote Everywhere Ambassador is reaching out to those students because one of my passions is healthcare and healthcare accessibility, making it more accessible, making it more affordable. And so I think if STEM students understand and know how voting affects them in their future, even in their day-to-day lives or even in their workplace, I think that's one reason that I really am trying to target STEM majors. And also just some other passions of mine are reproductive justice, climate justice, gun violence. There's a lot of things that are really driving me out to go vote.

Mo: Do you think that that's kind of the same motivating factors for your peers? Like we just saw the second highest youth voter turnout in recent decades for a midterm election, which is really something because normally people are like, oh, I only vote every four years, but like, y'all really showed up for the midterms. Do you think that your peers, like other young folks, are also being motivated by things like, you know, safe access to reproductive healthcare, like student debt, gun violence and control? Are you having conversations with your peers and is that something that's also motivating people?

Hayley: I definitely think so. I think after Roe v Wade was overturned, I think more young people started to realize the turn I think our country is starting to take and, you know, just becoming a little bit more extreme than young people like, which I think is definitely motivating them to get out to the polls. Just things that I'm seeing online of people really afraid for reproductive rights and it's definitely a reason why I felt a little bit more motivated to go out and vote. And just the candidates that are also on the ballot who are openly uh, anti-abortion, anti-choice, I think also motivates students to get out and vote. And also just, you know, the climate justice, the climate change, a lot of young people are scared for their futures because this is something that is going to impact *us*. So if we're not voting, other people are going to be making those decisions for our future for us. Which yeah, I think ultimately was one of the reasons of the high Gen-Z turnout in the midterm elections.

Mo: Yeah, for sure. I mean that's, that seems to be a very common thread whenever I'm talking to, to young voters is that we have to save the earth. Like literally we're trying to save the planet from this older generation who screwed it up for us. So yeah, we're gonna go to the polls 'cause we need politicians to take things seriously.

Hayley: Yeah, I also did find it very inspiring, I saw statistics saying how so many Gen Z and young people turned out to vote that it literally canceled out like an entire demographic's vote.

Mo: Dang, yeah. There's so much power in these youth vote. I love it. I getting to talk with young people too about why they're choosing to really show up in these huge numbers. You know, you had mentioned kind of briefly seeing things online, how, how often, whenever you are online as a young person, are you seeing things that are political in nature or like, or things that are about elections or voting? Because I know right now there's a huge conversation obviously about the massive amounts of misinformation that's online, and I was having another really good conversation with somebody else who I interviewed for the podcast and we had like this tangent conversation about social media and the impact that it's having. So I would love to kind of ask you the same question of like, what are you seeing online as a young person about politics and voting and elections?

Hayley: I'm definitely seeing a lot. It might be due to my algorithm because I am, I'm interacting with a lot of those posts and stuff. I'm also on Twitter a lot, which I feel like is a lot of where the misinformation is spreading. And now it's just becoming a little bit more crazy on Twitter, so I feel like, uh, that's definitely a concern of mine. And also what I've noticed, so in New York was the Governor's race and then a lot of smaller offices. And since they are smaller offices, I'm not seeing that many people talk about them, but the governor's race in New York was very close and a lot of people I feel like weren't talking about that when it should have had more of a conversation around it. And even other offices in New York, like the House of Representatives, I feel like there wasn't many conversations about that, which I would've hoped to see more of. I was trying to, you know, get people like, you know, like there's an election, you go out and vote, there's this many offices that are on your ballot. There's these ballot measures, which I did see

people talking about the ballot measures on social media on Instagram, which was reassuring. A lot of people don't really know that they're there. So I think social media, from what I see it could, it benefits and also raises some concerns over, you know, the impact of voting.

Mo: Yeah, that's so interesting. Um, there's a healthy cautiousness that I feel like y'all, y'all's generation is really approaching social media with, which I feel like is not highlighted in the news or the news that at least I see as somebody in my thirties. Like I think the common misconception is that y'all are always just like consuming social media and you're not really like thinking about what you're taking in, but it's like that's not true. Like, y'all know that some of this stuff is whack and you know, like, this is actually not great, but we're gonna still utilize it because we're in the age of technology now. So that being said, how has social media helped the team at Pace University kind of get out the word about voting? Do y'all use social media to do outreach on campus?

Hayley: Well, definitely. I think social media is a very, very impactful way of our outreach. We have a very large commuter campus, like a computer commuter population. Um, and we also have a large number of out-of-state students. So we're trying to reach a large number of people that aren't necessarily voting in the same places. So social media really helps us. We will follow some other accounts and if we know we have a lot of students that are voting in a certain state, we'll be posting about that state as well just to help other students who aren't voting in New York. We also recently started a TikTok account, which I found has been actually very helpful. We've done some fun TikToks about voting. We've done some educational TikToks and we've been getting a lot of interaction. We've gotten a lot of views, a lot of likes, some follows. And we're also like, on our Instagram, we recently posted something saying why your vote counts, we had all of like, some of the elections that were very, very close during the midterms and showed people that like literally your vote really does count. Like it can make the difference in an election, and we were getting a lot of likes on that. Just a lot of stuff like that and also some more followers, so it's definitely very impactful. And before I came here, I don't think we utilized it as much and now like over time we're slowly building on it and we're really starting to see the impact.

Mo: I think there are, I had already kind of named one, but I think there are some misconceptions about y'all's generation, especially when it comes to voting. You know, something that I'm so tired of hearing 'cause I know it's not true is that young people don't care and that's why they don't go vote. So is there something that you want older generations to know who might be listening to this podcast that you want them to know about young voters?

Hayley: I want older demographics to know that young people are very powerful and that even like political parties during their campaigning to know that we, our vote is very, very powerful and we can sway elections and it's been shown time and time again. And I think when having conversations when campaigning to include us in those conversations because I feel like young people are a demographic that is often neglected during campaigning and things like that. So I

think just during this election we really showed how impactful and how much of like a blockade our vote is and that we need to be included in these conversations.

Mo: Yeah, absolutely. There's power in the youth vote. I love that. Thank you for summarizing that so clearly and effectively. You know, we've, we've talked about issues like, you know, abortion access, gun control, the climate. Like obviously there's a lot of *really* difficult things that are weighing on all of us right now. And I love ending the podcast the same way every time. I've done this for like three seasons now, so I love to end it on a hopeful note, something that kind of leaves people feeling a little bit inspired just because it is so easy to get down and feel like things are too much. So what is giving you, what's something that's giving you hope recently? What's something that's bringing you life? Like, is it, is there a playlist? Like I know Spotify just dropped their rap playlist. Is there like a new TV show that's bringing you life or maybe some conversations with friends? Like what's giving you hope? What's, what's helping you, uh, push kind of back against all the stuff that's happening in the world right now?

Hayley: On the political side, like we mentioned before, the very high Gen Z turnout definitely really made me very hopeful. I remember after I cast my ballot on Election Day, I went straight to watching election coverage just because of the anxiety that I felt there was so much at stake. And once I started to see the numbers come in and the amount of Gen Z that showed up, I started to feel very, very hopeful for our future. And, you know, hopefully those rates increase over time in more elections. And then just on a more personal note, during break I'm going to Ireland, so I'm very excited about that, yeah.

Mo: That's awesome. I love Ireland.

Hayley: I'm Irish, I've never been there, so I'm really looking forward to it.

Mo: Really cool. When I was in college, I went to Ireland as well. That's where, I have family roots there as well as Scotland. I had a great time, I hope that you do too. It's really, really cool. Yeah. Okay. I, I'll have to follow up with you personally, how that goes. Thank you for sharing that. You know, we've had a lovely time talking. I think this has been really great. I've loved getting to know you, getting to know your heart and passion for civic engagement. Is there anything that we didn't cover before we end our time together that you just wanted to give a shout out? Any like social media handles you want people to follow, or websites that you want folks to visit? Just like basically any last minute info, we'll put all that stuff in the show notes, iif it includes links or anything,

Hayley: Definitely follow the [Pace Votes Instagram](#), it's @PaceVotes and our [TikTok](#), we're working on putting some really fun content out in educational content, which is @PaceVotesNYC. And I guess if anyone's interested in me personally, my Instagram is @hpiaz.

Mo: Nice, thank you. I appreciate it so much. This has been a really great conversation. I really appreciate it.

Hayley: Yeah, thank you so much for having me. It was really fun.

Mo: This concludes this week's episode of the Live The Legacy podcast. Thank you so much for listening. Once again, if you enjoyed this episode or any of the other episodes, please consider leaving us a review, rating us or becoming a subscriber. All of those things help other people find our podcast that much easier. A special shout out to Tabeeq music for all of the music that you heard on today's episode. Once again, this has been your host Mo Banks with the Andrew Goodman Foundation. Thank you so much for listening.