



## **So You Think You Can Vote?: Full Transcript**

\*\*GFX Cards

\*\*[01:00:05:14] TITLES: *Do you REALLY have the constitutional right to vote?*

[01:00:10:06] NARRATOR: America's founders fought for the right to elect their own leaders—so much better than having a king! Now our precious right to cast a ballot is protected for all time in the United States Constitution. Right? Err...right?

[01:00:24:10] ALEXANDER KEYSSAR: The Constitution does not contain any explicit and affirmative guarantee of the right to vote. It's simply not in there.

[01:00:32:08] NARRATOR: What? We don't have the right to vote? Isn't voting what makes a democracy a democracy??

\*\*[01:00:39:19] TITLE CARD - *SO YOU THINK YOU CAN VOTE?*

[01:00:44:04] NARRATOR: Turns out that back in 1787, when the U.S. Constitution was drafted, the 13 colonies each had different ideas about voting.

[01:00:52:04] NARRATOR: And in order to get all the colonies to agree to sign the Constitution, the Founding Fathers deliberately left out anything about voting rights and just left it up to the states. Nice work, guys!

[01:01:03:20] NARRATOR: Because today, there are over 7000 local jurisdictions inside 50 states and 5 U.S. territories that regulate and administer the vote in their own ways.

[01:01:13:23] NARRATOR: And the problem with so many local election standards is that some states used to be like Alabama, before 1965.

[01:01:23:10] THERESA BURROUGHS: I was born in Greensboro, Alabama, and I've lived here all my life. We went to the courthouse the first and third Mondays of each month trying to register to vote.

[01:01:41:04] THERESA BURROUGHS: Every time, they would ask ridiculous questions—recite the third line of the second paragraph of the Constitution. And in a minute you'd say, "Well, I don't believe I need—" "Well you just, you don't pass, you don't pass, you just get on out".

[01:01:57:20] BRYAN FAIR: And it took enormous fortitude and courage for Theresa Burroughs and others to sort of stand up to those forces. I've been in Alabama for 25 years, and each year, we celebrate the sacrifices that Alabamians made on Bloody Sunday.

[01:02:15:11] NARRATOR: Bloody Sunday, March 7th 1965, when police attacked unarmed civil rights

protestors, was a tipping point in the struggle for equal voting rights for African Americans.

[01:02:25:11] BRYAN FAIR: Bloody Sunday led directly to the enactment of the Voting Rights Act, which was the broadest protection of voting ever in our country.

[01:02:32:12] NARRATOR: The Federal Voting Rights Act finally enforced the 15th Amendment, which made it illegal to deny the right to vote based on race.

[01:02:39:14] THERESA BURROUGHS: The first time I voted was for the governor. I never will forget that. It was a joy for me. I'm a registered voter. How 'bout that?

[01:02:50:17] NARRATOR: Over the next four decades, Africans Americans would register and vote in ever increasing numbers.

[01:02:56:07] ALEXANDER KEYSSAR: The impact of the Voting Rights Act was extraordinary. If you look at the presidential elections of 2008 and 2012, you see a dramatic consequence, which is the election of Barack Obama, which would not have been possible with the electorate that existed in the United States in 1964. Barack Obama's margins came from minorities and from young voters.

[01:03:20:00] NARRATOR: And we shouldn't forget that those young people wouldn't have been allowed to vote if it weren't for the 26th Amendment, signed into law by Republican president Richard Nixon. That reduced the age of voting to 18 rather than 21.

[01:03:32:15] NARRATOR: Yes, much of the history of voting rights has been about the expansion of suffrage. But in recent years, citing potential voter fraud, a number of states began enacting voter ID laws.

[01:03:42:14] NARRATOR: Back in 2012, you could cast a ballot in states such as Texas, North Carolina, Alabama, and Wisconsin without a government I.D. But starting in 2016, you might not be able to vote, unless you have the time and the resources to get the required documents.

[01:03:57:16] NARRATOR: Okay, so what if you need a government issued I.D. to cast a vote? Who doesn't have a photo I.D.? ... Well, 11% of the voting population, that's who. 21 million people!

[01:04:09:17] NARRATOR: Judges struck down some of these ID laws. And some states are making it easier to register and to vote.

[01:04:15:09] NARRATOR: But at the same time other states are cutting down on early and same day registration. Certain districts are reducing the number of polling places and cutting down on early voting hours.

[01:04:24:21] BRYAN FAIR: It's partly partisan; it's about power. If you can restrict the number of

people who vote, it might be easier for your party, your candidate to get elected. People have to be very motivated, very committed to voting, in their local communities, uh, in order to fully realize their right to vote.

[01:04:45:20] ALEXANDER KEYSSAR: Voting matters. Elections matter. That's why there has been so much conflict over it.

[01:04:52:16] NARRATOR: Now you know that the Constitution doesn't guarantee that voting will be easy. And that new laws and budget cuts make voting harder for some people in some states.

[01:05:01:00] NARRATOR: So, what should you do? Know the voting rules and polling places in your town. And work to change the laws IF they bother you. But to do that you've got to make sure you can vote. It might be harder than you think.