

WEEK 2 | Monday, October 12, 2026 Hosted by Roxy Hall Co-Host: Judge Teresa Patton

Featured Guest: Dr. Andrea Oliver

Independent Scholar, Published Author & History Professor at Tallahassee State College

 WEEK 2: KNOW THE HISTORY. KNOW YOUR POWER. PARTICIPATE!

Week 2 of **LET'S GET ACTIVATED!** took the SisStars on a powerful journey through history—connecting the struggle for citizenship, voting rights, representation, and equality to the civic responsibilities we carry **right now**.

Dr. Andrea Oliver reminded us that although today's challenges can sometimes feel overwhelming, **we have been here before**. Generations before us organized, sacrificed, persisted, voted, advocated, and fought to move this country forward.

Her message was ultimately one of **HOPE and RESPONSIBILITY**.
We inherited rights that people before us sacrificed greatly to secure.

Now the question becomes:

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH THEM?

 FROM THE BEGINNING: HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Dr. Oliver began at the foundation of American democracy, reminding us of an important contradiction: the **Declaration of Independence proclaimed equality while slavery and political exclusion continued**.

The original Constitution did not establish a universal constitutional right to vote. Citizenship, suffrage, and equal access developed over generations through amendments, conflict, advocacy, organizing, and sacrifice.

Following the Civil War came three critical Reconstruction Amendments:

- **13th Amendment** — Prohibited chattel slavery.
- **14th Amendment** — Established citizenship for formerly enslaved people and people born in the United States and included important due-process and equal-protection guarantees.
- **15th Amendment** — Extended voting rights to Black **men**.
- And Dr. Oliver emphasized an important distinction:

WOMEN WERE STILL LEFT OUT.

It would take another **50 years** before the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920, extending voting rights to women.

And even then, having a constitutional right on paper did not mean Black women—or Black Americans generally—could freely exercise it.

THE WOMEN WHO BUILT CIVIC POWER

Dr. Oliver lifted up courageous women whose activism helped lay the foundation for the rights and opportunities women have today.

Sojourner Truth

A formerly enslaved woman who liberated herself and became a pioneering advocate for women's rights. Her famous “**Ain’t I a Woman?**” speech spoke directly to the unique experiences and struggles of Black women.

Ida B. Wells

A fearless journalist, anti-lynching activist, and suffragist who challenged injustice while advocating for Black women's political participation.

Mary Church Terrell

A prominent civil-rights and women's-suffrage activist whose work helped advance opportunities for generations of women who followed.

Gwendolyn S. Cherry

Elected to the Florida Legislature in 1970, she became an example of what becomes possible when women move from advocacy into positions of governmental leadership.

These women—and countless women whose names may never appear in a history book—demonstrated what it means to: **BUILD CIVIC POWER.**

A RIGHT ON PAPER WAS NOT ENOUGH

Even after constitutional amendments established voting rights, Black Americans encountered systematic barriers designed to prevent them from exercising those rights.

Dr. Oliver discussed:

- **Poll taxes.**
- **Literacy tests.**
- **Economic retaliation.**
- **Job loss.**
- **Intimidation.**
- **Violence.**

She shared the story of Florida civil-rights activists **Harry and Harriette Moore**, whose home was bombed on Christmas night in 1951 because of their activism, including efforts to register Black voters.

Their story reminds us that access to the ballot came at an extraordinary cost.

The struggle continued through the Civil Rights Movement and **Bloody Sunday in Selma**, ultimately contributing to passage of the landmark:

VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965

The legislation dramatically expanded meaningful access to the political process and was followed by increased voter registration and greater numbers of Black elected officials.

That history matters because it demonstrates something very important:

WHEN PEOPLE PARTICIPATE, POWER SHIFTS.

🔥 “IF OUR VOTE DIDN’T MATTER...”

One of the strongest themes of Dr. Oliver's presentation addressed a statement we still hear: **“My vote doesn't matter.”** History tells us otherwise.

If participation had no power, generations would not have worked so hard to prevent certain communities from voting.

If voting had no power, people would not have risked their livelihoods—and sometimes their lives—to obtain access to the ballot.

If civic participation had no power, there would not continue to be debates and battles surrounding voter access, districting, representation, and election laws.

OUR PARTICIPATION MATTERS.

And protecting that participation requires us to stay **informed, vigilant, and engaged.**

👤 FANNIE LOU HAMER: ORDINARY PEOPLE CAN CREATE EXTRAORDINARY CHANGE

Dr. Oliver brought history to life through the powerful story of **Fannie Lou Hamer**. Hamer did not begin with wealth, political connections, or prestigious credentials. She was an everyday woman who decided to **ACTIVATE**. Her efforts to register to vote and organize others came with tremendous personal consequences, but she continued.

Her testimony and activism helped expose voter suppression and became part of the larger movement that eventually produced meaningful federal voting protections.

Her life demonstrates one of the most important lessons of the entire SHE POWER series:

- **You do not need a title to make a difference.**
- You do not need to be famous.
- You do not need unlimited resources.
- You simply have to be willing to **participate**.

Dr. Oliver captured the spirit of Hamer's example beautifully:

PRAY—AND THEN GET UP AND GET TO WORK!

🏛️ CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IS BIGGER THAN VOTING

A major Week 2 lesson was that **voting is essential—but civic engagement cannot begin and end at the ballot box.**

Dr. Oliver challenged the SisStars to pay attention to what is happening in our own communities.

- Attend or watch city council and county commission meetings.
- Read meeting agendas.
- Learn who represents you.
- Contact elected officials.
- Pay attention to redistricting and representation.
- Understand proposed laws and policies.
- Ask questions.
- Hold public officials accountable.
- And remember: **“IF YOU’RE NOT AT THE TABLE, YOU’RE ON THE MENU.”**

Decisions are being made whether we participate or not. Those decisions affect our neighborhoods, schools, taxes, public safety, parks, utilities, businesses, senior services, families, and quality of life.

We need to know what is happening before decisions are made—not simply react afterward.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT = YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE

The conversation became especially practical as the SisStars discussed state and local ballot amendments and the potential consequences of policy changes.

The discussion demonstrated why we cannot simply vote for the candidates at the top of the ballot and ignore everything else.

Local decisions can determine how communities fund:

- **Law enforcement**
- **Parks and recreation**
- **Senior centers**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Schools and community services**
- **Other essential public resources**

Commissioner Dianne Williams-Cox reinforced the importance of understanding not simply what a proposal promises, but also its **long-term consequences**.

Her challenge: **KNOW YOUR BALLOT**. Ballots can vary even among voters living in the same city or county because of districts and jurisdictions.

Before voting:

- **Look up your sample ballot.**
- **Study every race and issue.**
- **Research amendments and proposals.**
- **Use trusted resources when something is confusing.**
- And most importantly: **DON'T SKIP THE BOTTOM OF THE BALLOT!**

 JUDGE TERESA PATTON: KNOWING HISTORY IS NOT ENOUGH

Judge Teresa Patton brought the evening's teaching directly back to **ACTION**.

Her message was powerful:

“Knowing history is important...but knowing history is not enough. You have to participate.”

And participation comes in many forms.

- **VOTE.**
- **CAMPAIGN.**
- **SUPPORT CANDIDATES.**
- **CONTACT ELECTED OFFICIALS.**
- **ATTEND MEETINGS.**
- **CONTRIBUTE.**
- **EDUCATE SOMEONE ELSE.**
- **RUN FOR OFFICE.**

She also challenged every SisStar to help at least **one other person** understand what is on their ballot.

For some people, the process is intimidating or overwhelming—particularly seniors or people who have not previously been engaged. Our knowledge should not stop with us.

ACTIVATE YOURSELF—THEN HELP ACTIVATE SOMEBODY ELSE!

 COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS-COX: REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Commissioner Dianne Williams-Cox shared a striking fact from her own experience in Tallahassee:

In the city's approximately 200-year history, she is only the **second Black woman elected to the Tallahassee City Commission.**

Her mission is not simply to serve or win reelection. She wants to ensure:
SHE IS NOT THE LAST.

Her testimony reinforced a central theme running through both Week 1 and Week 2: Getting to the table is important—but we must also **open doors for the women coming behind us.**

 THREE POWERFUL WEEK 2 TAKEAWAYS**1 KNOW YOUR HISTORY.**

The rights we exercise today were built through generations of organizing, sacrifice, courage, and persistence. Understanding that history helps us appreciate our power—and recognize our responsibility to protect it.

2 KNOW YOUR BALLOT.

Don't wait until you enter the voting booth. Research your candidates, amendments, referendums, judges, and local issues beforehand. **Don't skip the bottom of the ballot—the decisions closest to home often affect your everyday life the most.**

3 PARTICIPATION IS POWER.

Voting is only one part of civic engagement. Attend meetings. Contact elected officials. Support candidates. Advocate. Organize. Educate someone else. And when called—**RUN.**

 PRAYER REQUESTS

The SisStars lifted **Bobby Morris Sr.** in prayer as he navigates medical challenges related to diabetes and healing in his foot.

Prayer was also requested for his wife, **Betty Morris**, who had recently been released from the hospital and was continuing her own recovery while supporting her husband.

 CLOSING PRAYER — JUDGE TERESA PATTON

Judge Patton closed the evening by thanking God for another opportunity for the SisStars to gather, learn, and grow together.

She prayed for Bobby and Betty Morris and for God's healing, wisdom, and guidance through their medical challenges.

She also beautifully connected civic engagement back to the spiritual foundation of the SHE POWER HOUR.

- God loves **justice.**
- God loves **people.**
- God protects and cares for the **marginalized.**
- And we are called to do the same.

Her prayer challenged the SisStars to go forward with the **Spirit of Christ** reflected in the way we engage with one another and our communities.

And she closed with a powerful reminder:

“May we also activate to help keep each other, because we are our sisters' keepers.”

❤️ 🤍 💙 **THE WEEK 2 ACTIVATION CHALLENGE**

This week:

-  **Learn the history.**
-  **Pull up YOUR ballot before Election Day.**
-  **Research everything on it.**
-  **Find out when your local government meets.**
-  **Identify who represents you.**
-  **Contact an elected official about an issue that matters to you.**
-  **Help at least ONE other person understand their ballot.**

⚡ **Then bring another SisStar to Week 3!**

⚡ **WEEK 2 DECLARATION**

- **KNOW YOUR HISTORY.**
- **KNOW YOUR BALLOT.**
- **KNOW YOUR POWER.**
- **USE YOUR VOICE.**
- **PARTICIPATE.**
- **GET ACTIVATED!**

❤️ 🤍 💙 **YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING—BUT YOU CAN DO SOMETHING!**

SHE POWER + GOD POWER = POWERFUL CHANGE!