

ANNOUNCER: The following is a CSPN Media Podcast Presentation.

(upbeat electronic music plays)

NEAL CARTER: Good afternoon, good morning, or good evening. My name is Neal Carter, this is the Wheelin' and Dealin' Podcast. With me on this trip down the CSPN Network, we have a brand-new podcast, and with me, I know her really well, but you guys, she's more well known than me, actually (laughs). Her name is Vilissa Thompson. Vilissa, how are you this fine weekend?

VILISSA THOMPSON: Wonderful, Neal. It's so nice to be here, nice to be a part of the CSPN family, and doing the Wheelin' and Dealin' Podcast.

CARTER: I am excited to take this trip with you. We are gonna be touching on a lot of different subjects, discussing living at the intersections, for both of us, intersecting race, politics, disability, and so many other important topics and we are so excited to be a part of the CSPN Network, and as always, before I continue, please go to the CSPN website and click the "keep this podcast free," 'cause we wanna make sure, not just our podcast, but every other podcast on the network, because there are such a wide range, from sports to wrestling, to pop culture, so many wide-ranging podcasts on this network and in order to keep them free, in order to keep the lights on in the network, we have to stress that you visit our sponsors. And there's a slew of sponsors, not on the same subjects, so please check them out. Keep this and all of the rest of the podcasts free.

THOMPSON: Exactly, there's a little something for everybody though, check it out.

CARTER: Exactly, exactly. This is Neal Carter, the Senior Partner of Nu View Consulting, one half of the Wheelin' and Dealin' Podcast. I've been in the political consulting space for 17 plus years. I'm a proud member, along with my co-host, of the Harriet Tubman Collective, a group of organized Black and Brown disabled folks to agitate and disrupt a predominantly white disability space.

THOMPSON: And I am Vilissa Thompson, who is the other half of the Wheelin' and Dealin' Podcast. I am a social worker and disability rights advocate, consultant, and writer from Winnsboro, South Carolina. I am the founder of Ramp Your Voice, which is a disability rights advocacy space that promotes the experiences of disabled people, particularly the voices of Black disabled women. I created the #DisabilityTooWhite hashtag that tackled the erasure and exclusion of disabled people of color in the disability community, and I am a proud trouble maker.

CARTER: So, let's get started.

(intense music plays)

THOMPSON: What did the 45 administration do this week?

CARTER: Obviously, with the political climate being the way that it is, the way that this show is kinda gonna go is going to be pretty much straightforward, blunt, in your face, but we're also going to bring a sense of reality that, in my opinion Vilissa, I don't know if you agree or disagree, but I think is missing from the public discourse. This is the first podcast of its kind, and I think we're going to reach a ton of people, and obviously how things are going in the White House are pretty stressful from day to day. It seems like every Friday (laughs) someone's getting fired.

THOMPSON: (laughs) yes.

CARTER: During the course of the week, a range of things are happening. First on the docket is what did the 45 administration do this week, and where do we even begin? Obviously, this past Friday, Steve Bannon got fired, even though he said a week before, he resigned. Amazingly enough, Reince Priebus said the same thing when he was fired.

THOMPSON: Right.

CARTER: He said, I resigned a week before but I'm staying the whole week. And it seems like that seems to be a recurring thing, with this administration. Not just the firings but also the backpedaling of "I resigned the week before but I stayed on to save face with the administration."

THOMPSON: I don't think anybody's been quote unquote fired, and has stayed for over a week at the same job. I thought that that's not how it worked, at least that's not how it worked during 45's show, when he fired somebody he was gone, and they leave forever, and then "oh, I resigned." No, being fired and resigning are not the same. So I'm a little confused as to what is the truth here.

CARTER: And not just that, but obviously the administration was under a tremendous amount of pressure after what was happening in Charlottesville, but not just what was happening in Charlottesville but what has been kind of the temperature of the country for a very long time, before even the Trump administration was in the White House. There was, you know, this country has a history of systemic racism and white supremacy and now all of the sudden, because of the events in Charlottesville, now all of the sudden so many more people are paying attention to it.

THOMPSON: Right.

CARTER: They weren't paying attention to it during the campaign, they weren't paying attention to it before the campaign, they weren't paying attention to it during the 400 years of chattel slavery!

THOMPSON: (laughs) I think-

CARTER: And now all of the sudden--

THOMPSON: Exactly. I think right now, they're forced to pay attention because I think throughout our history, they've been willfully ignorant to the situation and now they changed, because it's in their backyards, and it's everywhere. It's on social media, it's on television. It's everywhere now, and you cannot say you don't know what's going on and now what really gets me, Neal, is that people are feigning just shock and awe of what's happened. Like this is what's happened the whole time! So what are you really shocked at? What are you really just amazed at the temperature of this country? You know, what are you really shocked at? Are you shocked at the boldness of people to be out here with the tiki torches without a hood on, because if that's what you're surprised at, then you shouldn't be. So I really don't understand what is the shock and the sudden interest to do something at this point, because you weren't doing anything when 45 was riling these people up last year during his campaign. You wasn't doing anything when the temperature started to get hotter and hotter up to this point and it just got hotter after this point. We have not seen the heat of anything at this point, and that is the scariest thing to imagine, but we have not even scratched the surface. So I wanna understand these people's level of just ignorance and not seeing what we have all seen this whole time.

CARTER: And not just seeing--

THOMPSON: Right.

CARTER: And not just seeing, but experience.

THOMPSON: Right.

CARTER: I mean, I don't know about you, but my, I've had conversations with my paternal grandparents and my maternal grandparents and I remember having conversations when I was younger and then as an adult, where a lot of the experiences that they experienced growing up, I'm experiencing now just in different forms, and you know, there's the old adage of we are literally, as Black people, fighting our grandparents' fight. And I know there's a trendy shirt right now that a lot of Black kids are wearing that says I'm not my grandparents. Which I think, first of all, that is a ridiculous shirt, you're never gonna see me wear that shirt.

THOMPSON: (laughs) No, I'm not gonna wear that shirt either, no, no, no, no.

CARTER: But it's not a matter of respecting elders, but it's a matter of shared, lived experiences and all due respect to the folks who made that shirt, but I think that the messaging behind that shirt is kind of misdirected, but before I get off track, obviously with the events in Charlottesville,

there were three statements, three contradictory statements from the administration within the span of what? Three or four days, it seemed like?

THOMPSON: Yeah, yeah.

CARTER: Initially, the president did a press conference and said when he was in New Jersey, and said both sides are at fault, and then the next day, he was still in New Jersey, a little bit more tempered because he was reading from a teleprompter, and he basically condemned white supremacists, or quote unquote white supremacists, and then the day after (laughs) he literally took it upon himself to renege on both those statements and say that not only were both sides at fault, but there were good people on the side of the, "good and just cause" behind the people who wanted to keep the Confederate statues in place. Now here's the thing about those Confederate statues. Obviously, they need to come down, right?

THOMPSON: Right.

CARTER: There are systems behind those statues that also need to be toppled as well. Obviously white supremacy, obviously systemic racism, obviously the prison industrial complex, are all pieces to the same statue that has been erected, that is affecting Black and Brown people and has been affecting Black and Brown people for millennia. But now all of the sudden, again, more non-Black and Brown eyes are paying attention to these issues, or let me scale that back. They're not necessarily paying attention to these issues, so much as they are making a case against the idea of these issues being pushed to the forefront. I mean the media, for a long time, has been pushing this narrative of the white working class, the white working class, the white working class, oh let's talk to a remorseful Trump voter, let's talk to a remorseful Trump voter on the East Coast, the West Coast, the middle of the country, the South. Or let's just find out the temperature of how they feel based on this thing that the Trump administration did or didn't do and let's see how they feel.

THOMPSON: Right.

CARTER: And for me, I don't necessarily want the pulse of people who are the least affected by the Trump administration's actions. I want to talk to the Black women who voted en masse one way to the tune of 96 percent, Black women like yourself, Vilissa.

THOMPSON: Yes, yes, I am part of that number.

CARTER: Yes, exactly (laughs). And I think it's ridiculous that we are consistently in a place where the administration is not only neglecting Black and Brown folks, but taking it upon themselves to kind of frame this narrative of the white working class and it's not just the Republicans who are doing this, the Democrats are doing this as well. Not just on the Federal level but especially on the local level. There seems to be this hyper focus on quote unquote

winning back the white working class voters, as if Black and Brown working class voters don't even exist.

THOMPSON: Exactly, exactly. And that's the thing being here, for me, in South Carolina, I see that a lot, and you see the headline about the election and post-election what happened, you see these stories that always talk about the rural South or the rural areas and they always feature white people. And I'm like, I live in a small town. It's not like the Black and Brown people aren't affected either. They really are disproportionate, particularly in liberal spaces, of wanting to focus on the rural class and they still leave out people of color. Like you can't do that, how do you expect to win back anything if you're still ostracizing and ignoring a key voting demographic? That makes no sense, and in liberal circles, it really bothers me that we act all shock and awe about what you said earlier about 45 releasing his statements. I'm like he does off the record things all the time on his Twitter account!

CARTER: Exactly.

THOMPSON: So why would you be surprised that he will renege, particularly when we can tell when he has a statement that he is forced to say and when he's just doing off the cuff and saying something that's very ignorant and embarrassing, we know the difference between that. We've had over six months to kind of gauge which is his words and which isn't. So I really don't, again, understand the shock of him reneging, him recanting, him insisting that he still takes the side of those who voted for him and those who he know that he owes why he's in this office. He knows that he owes these people to be on that side and if he doesn't continue that, he's going to not have that fan base. So I don't understand why people are surprised at the loyalty that he's still having towards these people. You know, I don't get that, I don't get the liberal being shocked at anything. I just don't understand what world are you living in, because the world I'm living in, I'm not shocked by any of this. It's just the same issue day for me when I look at the news, or when I follow it on Twitter, it's like okay, this is what happened today? Alright, and I just keep it moving because it's always a revolving door of nonsense and until we truly start getting over being shocked at what 45 does or the continuous turnovers of the administration, we are not going to get at those systemic issues that Confederate statues represent or that this administration's trying to push and put on our radar because we're distracted by all this other noise.

CARTER: Exactly, exactly. And for me, and thank you for bringing all those important points up because I think while there are certainly liberal voices who are trying to subdue and silence the voices of Black women, there are also some that are saying "well we should've listened to Black women in the first place," and they want cookies for doing so.

THOMPSON: (laughs).

CARTER: They want attention paid to them for saying “listen to Black women now, listen to Black women.” Well no, you should’ve done your due diligence and not said a word and lifted up Black women’s voices--

THOMPSON: Exactly.

CARTER: In the first place.

THOMPSON: Exactly.

CARTER: Instead of silencing them and then projecting them when you see fit. That’s not how that works. That’s not public discourse.

THOMPSON: You don’t get an ally cookie after the fact. You know ally cookies? They will not be in stock anymore, so I am sorry, you missed the line for that. But no, it’s ridiculous. I don’t understand how everybody’s like, “oh, Black women were right.” Yes, we are usually right, you guys don’t pay attention to us and now, the ish hit the fan and now you’re trying to clean it up, and it’s everywhere. You can’t clean it up. And now you’re looking at Black women to do your work and I’m like no, we’re not doing the work! We just told you, we did what we had to do, and we’re gonna look after each other as Black women tend to do, and we’re going to allow you guys to clean this up, because you made the mess.

CARTER: Right.

THOMPSON: And that’s just my stance as a Black woman. But I’m not sitting here trying to work with you all when you guys weren’t trying to hear us last year. You weren’t trying to hear us before, and it’s frustrating. And it’s frustrating when these quote unquote liberal circles, I’m not focused on that, because liberal circles are very gifted at that. I’m not in conservative circles, so I don’t know what the Black women in those spaces have to deal with, but as a Black woman who is in liberal circles, I see the ridiculousness of white women, white men, who are not up to speed with what’s going on and fail to really enact and check their P, when they need to check it, before everything hit the fan, and not after.

CARTER: Exactly, exactly. And you know, before we continue, and I should’ve mentioned this earlier, that we obviously want your feedback and your two cents, so please, don’t forget to follow us on Twitter @wheeldealpod. Obviously follow all of the CSPN shows, follow Vilissa on Twitter, follow me on Twitter, but also send us email at wheeldealpod@cspn.us if you have questions, if you have concerns, if you have guest suggestions. Obviously, in future episodes, we’re gonna have a ton of guests that are gonna be exciting and exhilarating. They’re going to bring a ton to the table, not just so you won’t just hear from Vilissa and I (laughs), but Vilissa, keeping on this subject if we could, about kind of white liberals either kind of parking the bus, so to speak, or not doing enough, obviously we saw I guess on Thursday, Saturday Night Live recently aired their, I guess during the summer they’re doing “Weekend Updates” during the

week, and during this recent episode, Tina Fey who was a Saturday Night Live alum, was on this week's episode of "Weekend Update" and took it upon herself, obviously she is a UVA grad where Charlottesville is, and she took it upon herself to basically, she used a lot of puns, one of which was white progressives, liberals let this, sit at home, let what happened happen, and just eat sheet cake.

THOMPSON: (laughs)

CARTER: And then not just that, not just that! But let's talk about how she disrespected the drag community by saying these are just "Black men in drag" which is incredibly transphobic.

THOMPSON: Yes.

CARTER: But then she took it a step further, and I'm not gonna repeat the joke at the, the quote unquote joke that she used, but she made a statement, or she tried to pass off a joke which was basically an incredibly ridiculous rape joke about Sally Hemings, who was owned by Thomas Jefferson. She tried to pass it off as some sort of light skin thing, and obviously Tina Fey is a bastion of liberal comedy, and not just liberal comedy but white liberal comedy, and I'm curious, obviously I thought it was a little repulsive. I thought the entire bit was incredibly repulsive. I don't regularly Watch Saturday Night Live, so I didn't obviously see it live, I saw the clip that people were posting on Facebook, and obviously there's been a number of great articles written by the folks at Very Smart Brothas, The Root, HuffPo Black Voices and other spaces that have written at length about how ridiculous that bit was and just how out of place it was, and I'm just curious if you felt the same. I'm sure you felt the same way I did (laughs).

THOMPSON: Yes.

CARTER: After watching it, so yeah, what was?

THOMPSON: I don't understand why Tina Fey is still looked upon in the light that she is, because she always does this. She always does something that's offensive and they have to back up and apologize. And she is one of several white women that is the epitome of white feminism, and I pay them no mind, none of this surprised me, because it's Tina Fey, this is her niche. She likes to be provocative to the point that she goes from being provocative to being just outright offensive, and displayed her true self, which is racist, transphobic, all that great stuff. So it doesn't surprise me, and I see people making light of the joke and I'm like no, this is not the space to do that, because making light of things is how we are in the predicament that we're in. And also her whole ideal of just not doing anything but eating sheet cake is ridiculous. Us not doing anything is again, why we're in the mess that we're in, so why do you think continuing to ignore the Nazi and the hate is going to fix things? I don't understand that type of logic, even from a comedic sense. I don't understand how that makes any type of sense to say that that's the message that people should be doing, is to just ignore it and hope that it goes away. That is the problem in this country that we ignore things until it boils over. Like I don't get that. No, Tina

Fey, (sighs) she's just a distraction and she just needs to stop doing all these things. She needs to stop speaking on that platform and really I don't watch Saturday Night Live either because of this stuff but I guess sometimes Saturday Night Live does get it right. But most of the time, I don't want to look to them as my conscience, a parameter of what I should feel about an issue, and I hope that others don't do the same. I just don't understand why we need to have a metric that like that doesn't provoke action in a positive way, that doesn't showcase that what we're dealing with is no laughing matter, and people need to get serious about it because it's gonna get worse as time goes on. So I really feel that that skit was very irresponsible, it was very irresponsible for that platform to frame things in that way, kinda make it lighthearted and make people complacent with what's going on.

CARTER: Right.

THOMPSON: And it's not funny, and it's not cute. It's very offensive. I need people to stop looking up to white women like Tina Fey and stop giving them credit, because they are the problem. White liberals that do that stuff is a part of the problem, as is the other side, and I think we need to start calling the white liberals who hide behind their -isms and -phobics and sugarcoat it in a way to where it's lighthearted. It's not lighthearted. This is serious stuff that we're dealing with. You cannot express those type of views without there being some type of consequences.

CARTER: And keeping on that serious note, talking about action, talking about not being complacent, obviously, ADAPT, which is a national advocacy organization, run, led, and organized by persons with disabilities, was literally on the front lines on Capitol Hill during the height of the repeal of the ACA fight, with the draconian Senate bill that was being introduced. And there were numerous folks that Vilissa and I both know that have organized with different capacities not just with ADAPT but in other capacities as well, that were arrested, that were turned into memes, that were turned into whether it be inspiration porn, or on the right side of the aisle they were turned into scapegoats and villains and obviously with the action of National ADAPT to literally be on the front lines when Tina Fey three weeks later is talking about, you know, we should just sit down, be lazy, and eat cake, it's like well, that's easy for you to say because you're in multiple positions of privilege. You have money, power, and the space to eat sheet cake at home in your loft in New York. And sit in your UVA shirt and be huddled in, and put your head in the sand and wait for things to end. She's in a position of privilege to be allowed to do that. And because she doesn't recognize it and because she tries to, as you so eloquently said, Vilissa, to try to pass it off as I don't know any better, or different people will apologize for her, and others in the same space. Because we're not doing a good enough job of calling that out and when we do call it out, we get labeled out as quote unquote social justice warriors or any one of those other terms, "snowflakes" or whatever else it is, marginalized people and especially persons with disabilities, because we are literally the most marginalized community in the world, don't have the luxury of being a snowflake or a warrior or anything else because y'all are too busy framing us as less than or propping us up to be your inspiration to do better when we didn't even ask for that. So everybody needs to do frickin' better.

THOMPSON: Exactly, exactly. And I do wanna touch on something that other people do not understand, what inspiration porn is, just to give it some context. Inspiration porn is when, I like to say you make a big deal about a disabled person doing something that's ordinary. You see those pictures all the time online, particularly like you said in the setting of disabled people, there's one in particular disabled woman getting something, she's in the store by herself, and you see a picture of her in a wheelchair in the store by herself, and people are like oh my gosh, she's able to get about, you know, however she wants to. And I'm like what the hell does that mean? Why is that such a big deal? So when we talk about inspiration porn and we talk about how the media views us and what these systems do to us, we do not have the luxury to sit around and eat sheet cake and not do anything, right? We don't do anything, we would die. That's our reality.

CARTER: Exactly.

THOMPSON: And that's the reality that ADAPT through their resistance really projected, particularly during the healthcare battle. Like disabled people do not have the luxury to be like Tina Fey and be cozy and comfortable. We have to fight out here, we have to put our very bodies on the line, we have to be subjected to the, particularly online, and in my work that I do, to really proclaim our right, and not just our rights but our very humanity. People do not even see us as human, see us as their equals.

CARTER: Right.

THOMPSON: So we as disabled people, and when you break that down further with other identities such as being Black and other people of color, we do not have the luxury of just sitting on our behinds and just looking out the window. We don't. We have to fight each and every day, we have to call people out, we have to say this is wrong, whether it's directly influencing us, or may not directly influence us, we have to speak out tirelessly against the oppression because if we don't, nobody's going to come save us. So when we look at the work that ADAPT and other disability organizations and individuals are doing, this work is not only gonna save disabled people, it's gonna save you too. And I think that's what people need to realize. Like, the work that's being done, the resistance that's being had by disabled advocates and other communities, are going to save us all, no matter what your privileges are. Like yes, Tina Fey is very privileged, but she is still a woman. You know, there's still women's issues that she needs to fight to protect for herself and for other women out there who need those rights, who need those services and supports. So sitting on our behinds is not an option at this point because things are just getting too much to really just be neutral, to be lukewarm. Being lukewarm is going to kill us all.

CARTER: Exactly, and speaking about oppression as someone who spoke up on oppression that recently went on to glory is Dick Gregory, and I did want to, he passed late Sunday night and I did want to make mention and give him the space to be honored, because he spoke about

oppression and lived experiences not just that he went through but other folks that he knew in his same work, were able to do with a comedic lens, and he was able to do it throughout his entire life, not just when he was young, but especially when he was old, and I do wanna take a moment and give a brief moment of silence for Dick Gregory.

(sustained silence)

CARTER: Thank you. Now obviously we, on this broadcast we are gonna do our best to cover a wide range of issues as we talked about, we're gonna have guests from all walks of life and talking about a wide range of things from things going on in politics to just general life to other topics as well, and they're going to be as engaging as we are (laughs). At least, we're not gonna hold their feet to the fire, but we do intend to be real and be honest and blunt.

THOMPSON: Exactly. And to give you guys a perspective that you may not hear about, because some of you may not have heard disabled people, particularly Black disabled people, talk about these type of issues and talk about disability in a way that isn't stereotypical, isn't inspiration porn-y, isn't negative, so that's something that we really are seeking to bring to the table, and to really share what disabled Black people care about and what we as individuals care about.

(energetic orchestral music plays)

CARTER: Now, one of the greatest quotes that I like to speak to as far as politics which is where my bread and butter is concerned, is all politics is local.

(music intensifies)

CARTER: All politics is local and obviously, with so many things going on at the federal level in this country and worldwide, we don't do a good enough job, in my opinion, as a country of paying attention to what's happening at the local level. We try to hyper focus on what's happening at the federal level, be it in the White House, the U.S. Senate, or Congress, and we're not talking about what's happening in governors' mansions, in state houses, city councils, sheriffs' offices, and things of that nature, and we're gonna do, if you want that focus, that local focus, this is where you're going to get that important, pertinent information. So on that note, speaking of something that happened locally not actually in the United States, but actually in Canada, Bruce Parry who is an elected official in the Canadian government, went on record this past week and said, quote, "mental disabilities shouldn't be accommodated with extra time on exams." Huh (laughs).

THOMPSON: Hmmm.

CARTER: Now, I don't know that much about Bruce's politics. I am not well versed in Canadian government elected officials, but from what I do know, I think Bruce, first of all, he's clearly

wrong and he should be condemned, obviously. He should, any Canadian official with any kind of semblance of respect for persons with disabilities should refute his statements outright, and I know a number of people, officials in Canada have already done so, in Canada's parliament, so I'm curious how things are going to progress. Obviously with what's happening not just in the world, recently the terror attacks in Barcelona and the mudslides that are killing thousands of people in Sierra Leone, there are a number of things going on internationally that kind of fall off the radar and don't get enough focus, and this is frankly, one of those things. And because it affects the disability community, obviously people aren't paying attention to it. So we're gonna do again, our best job of bringing these situations to light. I'm curious, Vilissa, what you, did you get a chance to read an article?

THOMPSON: I've been hearing more of the commentary and I do wanna say that this isn't surprising that this came out of Canada. Canada has been in the news for its immigration laws when it comes to disabled people are not wanted, disabled people who go to Canada, but Canada is not the happy, friendly place that we tend to think it is as Americans. So I'm not surprised at this, I'm not surprised at the ableism, and ableism is the social prejudice against disabled people, for those who may not know. But I'm not surprised about the ableism or ableism that comes out of certain officials. We see it here in our own country, so it doesn't surprise me to see it anywhere else. I think that here in the United States, yes you do have laws that protect disabled students' rights to receive the accommodations that they need, but we also should realize that disabled students' shouldn't have to fight the system to be able to access those accommodations and to have those accommodations needs respected. So I think that this is an example of how systems and those within those systems seek to oppress people. And I think we also need to realize that Canada doesn't have their own version of the ADA, which is the Americans with Disabilities Act, so I think that, and I hope that this pushes Canadians with disabilities to really continue the fight for that legislation to be had, so that they can have their rights protected and continue to hold officials to the fire who make damning, ableist statements like this one. I think that we have to continue to hold people accountable and to really have them not ostracize people because of what they need. If a student needs accommodations, they should get their accommodations, and there shouldn't be a second thought to that, and to say anything else is just very, being ridiculous in my sense, so I'm not surprised that politicians in Canada have these thoughts, but I hope that more outreach is being done to really hush this person up so that they will not be able to put what they say into actions.

CARTER: Agreed. So Vilissa, question for you: what is happening, what is up with Senator Lindsey Graham and Senator Tim Scott? I saw these conflicting reports from both of these Senators this past week, obviously the U.S. Senate is home on recess right now and they're getting ready to come back and Senator Lindsey Graham always seems to find himself in the news-

THOMPSON: (laughs)

CARTER: Consistently, whether it's a quote about 45, whether it's a quote about himself, he's not even running for reelection in 2018, so I don't know why he's trying to be in the news so much. You know, he could be preparing for a presidential run in 2020, who the hell knows? But God forbid that Tim Scott is thinking about it, when I saw that he was initially running for Senate, I thought that he was, as a U.S. Senator, trying to be the second coming of then-Senator Barack Obama, at least a more conservative version of him. And he's now being perched up as the token Black senator, because he is the token Black senator.

THOMPSON: Yeah, he is.

CARTER: (laughs)

THOMPSON: He plays that role very well.

CARTER: Yes, yes he does. So what is going on with them two?

THOMPSON: (laughs) Sadly, they both represent me, so I have to keep up with their shenanigans, that is Lindsey Graham, Tim Scott.

CARTER: Of course, of course you do!

THOMPSON: (laughs) And so today, well, earlier this week, someone shared with me a column from the Post and Courier that was written about both of them putting out statements, surprisingly, holding 45 to the fire of his kind of reneging, going back and forth about what happened in Charlottesville. Which surprised me a little bit, I was like oh! You guys actually wanna be on the right side of the issue. And this particular column made it seem like oh, Lindsey Graham and Tim Scott are on the right side of the issue, this means that this could for one, put them on the right side of the issues. I'm like hold on.

CARTER: Wait a minute.

THOMPSON: Hold up. A broken clock is right twice a day doesn't mean that it works for the rest of the time. No, no, no. Everybody have a good day, and they had a good day and they said what they needed to say, which were correct. Tim Scott said in a quote, "I'm not going to defend the indefensible."

CARTER: (as a cough) Bullshit! Excuse me, I'm sorry.

THOMPSON: (laughs) Go ahead! It's fine.

CARTER: I had to clear my throat.

THOMPSON: Lindsey Graham pleaded with the president by saying, for the sake of our nation, as our president, please fix this. I'm like, how can he fix this when these are the very people who voted for him, but whatever, you know, I'm not gonna nitpick over details. But it really kind of surprised me that this person who wrote the article was praising Tim Scott and Lindsey Graham when if we remember, these people voted for the skinny repeal of the ACA and they voted for.

CARTER: They didn't even read.

THOMPSON: They didn't even read it, they didn't even read it. Like, Lindsey Graham did a little better than Tim Scott, he did not vote for the first repeal which was the replace and repeal, but he voted yes for the other two, and Tim Scott just voted yes for everything. So I'm not gonna give them a pass just because they said something right for once. You need to be on the right side of things every time. Tim Scott is a disappointment, I'm just gonna be blunt about that. I know people who live in his district, no, specifically who have seen him doing town halls and were not moved by him at all, who really felt that he's just regurgitating what people have been saying to him. And I feel like if constituents feel that way, then that means they don't have faith in you. So I don't have much faith in Lindsey Graham or Tim Scott to do the right thing. I'm glad that they had a do the right thing moment, but it's just that, a moment. I'm not going to give them praise when they supported Betsy DeVos as the Secretary of Education. I'm not gonna support, I'm not gonna give you a pat on the back when you were enforcing or supporting avoidable policies or keeping positions that's gonna harm children, that's gonna harm disabled children, that's gonna harm disabled people, that's gonna harm the elderly and everything else. So no, I'm not going to give you a cookie because you spoke out rightfully for once. So I think that in South Carolina, you know, the only politician that I count is Jim Clyburn, and he's not in my district, so, and I hate that, but he's the only one that matters to me, everybody else I'm just like, the same mess, new day. So Lindsey Graham, Tim Scott, it's, I'm not going to give them praise for speaking up when they need to and I'm not going to think that South Carolina is veering to the right side of history when we're still far over to the left and left of wrong and loud and wrong still. I just think that we need to hold our elected officials, whether local, state, or federal level, to the fire now. We do need to watch folks for what they're saying, we need to call their offices, we need to write to them, we need to email them, Tweet to them, and really ask them to speak out more, and if they're not doing what you want them to do, then when it's election season, whether this year, 2017 or mid-election season next year in 2018, then you need to vote them out. So for me, I plan to use my right to vote when the time comes to vote, but Tim Scott and Lindsey Graham, they are saying what they feel like they need to say to save their seat. They see the mess that goes along with following 45 and they dodge it when it's convenient and I'm not for people dodging when things are convenient for them.

CARTER: And speaking of dodging and speaking of Senator Lindsey Graham, and Senator Tim Scott, obviously with the Charleston shooting that happened a few years ago, if my memory serves me correctly, I do believe that (chuckles) both Tim Scott and Senator Lindsey Graham in their infinite wisdom, took it upon themselves to not call Dylan Roof a domestic terrorist. They

waited until it was politically convenient to do so. We're talking about a government that for decades has had the, they call them the stars and bars but let's face facts, it is a Confederate flag, it is a flag of an oppressive regime, it is a flag of the people that came in second place, it is the flag of people who wanted to keep slaves, it is the flag of tyranny, and so many other hateful things and it has a hateful history and this is a state and really a state government that has uplifted that flag, as not just a part of the state flag, but literally it's been a symbol of that state for so long.

THOMPSON: Yes.

CARTER: And it took Bree Newsome in South Carolina to pull the flag down at a state building in order for then-Governor Nikki Haley to realize oh, now we need to take it down. Now it might be time, oh. And again, when the Charleston shooting happened, even Nikki Haley didn't even call Dylan Roof a domestic terrorist. She didn't call out the police department that took Dylan Roof to McDonalds after he murdered nine people in a church.

THOMPSON: (scoffs) Yeah.

CARTER: They took that scum to McDonalds and got him a Big Mac, french fries, and a drink after he killed nine people.

THOMPSON. Yes, they made sure he was okay and he had nutrition after he had murdered people and being here during that time, having friends who were directly affected by that massacre, it shouldn't have taken that massacre to get that flag down. It really bothered me that that's what people remember about that incident, is that the flag was found taken down after years of boycotting, the state was boycotted for years, is what some people may not know. It had been boycotted by NAACP and other groups to not come here because of that flag, was happily, proudly flying on the state grounds. So for me, it's a little sickening that it took Black bodies, Black death to really get people to be like oh, maybe it's time we need to take the thing down. Oh, maybe we need to call things what they are. And to have Nikki Haley, who was the first woman of color governor in South Carolina to be complacent in a lot of things that happened to Black and Brown people in the state and for her to stand up for once, and even then, long overdue, wasn't, it wasn't revolutionary for me. It was long overdue, but it really just felt like South Carolina just always, the state is the little step sibling that you don't wanna pay attention to, but they end up doing stuff you can't ignore. That's just how I feel to be in this state sometimes, where our politicians, our leadership don't do anything until their backs are literally against the wall, and they cannot not do something. So it just, that's why for I guess me I have the attitude of not giving people a pass on things because I see when they should step up and when they do, it's like, (sigh) you have to use this moment to do that.

(orchestral music plays)

CARTER: Right, exactly.

(music intensifies)

THOMPSON: All politics is theater.

CARTER: And speaking of giving passes and creating really warped narratives for what could possibly be, I recently read an article in Bloomberg News that was entitled “The Liberal Case for President Pence: Mediocre and Conservative Beats Vile and Crazy.” Now first of all, let me say this: crazy is an ableist slur, so we’re gonna just forget that that is a part of the title, first.

THOMPSON: Right.

CARTER: Second of all, second of all, mediocre and conservative. Let’s talk about that for a second, because white mediocrity is not only running this country, but it’s running this country into the ground, okay? This, whether it’s white liberal mediocrity or white conservative mediocrity, it’s still mediocrity and it’s not doing the country any good.

THOMPSON: And I don’t want my president to be mediocre. Like why would I want, why should that be the low bar standard for a president or vice president?

CARTER: And not just that, and not just that, but let’s take it a step further. Not only is quote unquote the likelihood of President Pence mediocre and we can sit here and decide that, but to not call Mike Pence, who not only took Indiana from a thriving economic structure to a rudderless ship, but then his policies on the disabled community, he wants to euthanize the LGBT community and wants to literally, not just, he believes in therapy that will erase their identity and attempt to erase their sexual identity, and this (laughs) is the person that is supposed to be, obviously he’s the heir apparent as vice president and he’s the next person in line for the presidency, but he’s more than mediocre. And to suggest that he’s not vile and not just his policies leading up to being vice president, but as the governor of Indiana, and not just dissecting what he did to that state and how much of a stop that he was to progress in that state, you wanna talk about all politics are local all you want and you can beat that into the ground, but then-Governor Pence didn’t do the state of Indiana any favors in terms of being an economic powerhouse, in terms of being an educational powerhouse, in terms of leading the nation in education, in jobs. Indiana wasn’t doing that. There were no, there are no cities in Indiana that are in the topmost cities to live in in the country. They don’t, they’re not there. So this idea, this fairytale land that some white liberals are trying to create where they’re trying to imply that, oh, well let’s create this liberal case for Mike Pence and try to pass him off as a moderate Republican, he’s far from that, and to suggest otherwise is ridiculous, and it doesn’t make sense (laughs).

THOMPSON: (laughs)

CARTER: No, it doesn’t make sense.

THOMPSON: It doesn't. I feel like when people treated to the idea, what would you rather have, whether it's 45 or Pence, I feel like with 45, 45 has a very violent temper. He would just spew off anything that's ignorant, but you know he's not running the show. That's the thing with 45. But with Pence, Pence, he's sneaky, and if he was getting power as president, for me, he would be far more dangerous because he would know what he wants to enforce.

CARTER: Right.

THOMPSON: He would have the team in place to enforce very hurtful, damaging, damning, and life threatening policies and strip us of our rights and humanity that we have. So for me, Pence is a far more scarier reality to have than 45, because like I said, we know 45 isn't running the show, but he has, because he's on Twitter all day and I don't even know anybody who's able to be on Twitter all day and watch the news all day and do the nonsense that he does. His volatile nature is what scares me, but Pence, I'm just as leery, and I don't understand this whole lesser of the two evils. I don't want either option, I don't want none of these people in the administration, whether it's 45, Pence, or whatever. I don't want any of them there. So I don't get this whole choosing an equally as destructive option as what we already have, I don't get that whole mindset that some white liberals have in trying to make Pence look better, when he's not at all. I don't get that.

CARTER: Well I think what it is, what this stems from is people who don't understand local politics and aren't affected by it and are in this kind of, that are at this kind of elitist 30,000 foot level, kind of like when President Bush flew 30,000 feet over Louisiana during Hurricane Katrina, that same 30,000 feet.

THOMPSON: Yes.

CARTER: It's that kind of elitist attitude, frankly, that doesn't help the country. It's the same elitist attitude that President Obama, when he was calling, when the Baltimore uprising was happening in reaction to Freddy Gray being murdered and he had the audacity to call Baltimore residents, Black Baltimore residents thugs. Consistently! At least President Obama was consistent in his ignorance and you know, Trump, 45 is all over the place, we know that, and this idea that we're going to create this liberal case for Pence when as you said, he's not going to put different people in place if he becomes president. The cabinet is going to stay the same, there are still 333 ambassadorships that need to be filled across the world that have not. Last week, the FEMA director was installed, and this FEMA director has no background in emergency relief and now he's been sent to take care of the natural disaster that's happening, once again, in Louisiana. And again, we're kind of in this spin cycle where we're constantly being fed BS articles like this as far as, that are frankly, intellectually dishonest, and they do a disservice to not just people who have common sense, but anyone who knows what is actually happening and doesn't have horse blinders on to what is happening every day in their life. Yes, people want jobs. Yes, people are struggling day to day. Yes, there are issues going on facing

people daily that they think, you know, 45 can fix. There was a poll, I don't know if you saw it Vilissa, that was released, I think it was Friday, or it may have been Saturday, that said 60 percent or six out of 10 Trump voters, no matter what Trump does, they are not going to change their opinion of his presidency, whether good or bad, whether it affects them or not, they are still going to support him. And I'm sure that if that same poll was taken of a majority of Obama voters in 2008 or sorry, 2009, 2010, many of them would probably, and this is not a knock to a majority of the Obama voters but it is a reaction to this idea that the presidency is not a celebrity position. You are a leader of the free world, and you need to act as such. You don't need to be on Twitter in between watching your stories and Maury and you're watching the news and you're watching DeVry ads, and things like that, and then you flip, and then you go on Twitter and go on a rant. That is literally what the person who is occupying the highest position in the land is doing. Every day. So this idea that he went--

THOMPSON: He's not doing as much as we do every day.

CARTER: Exactly.

THOMPSON: Like what he's doing isn't as much as we're doing, but he's supposed to be running the country. And I just want to know where does he find time? Because I have work time. I have two separate jobs, nine to five, and my advocacy work, and I don't have time to be on Twitter like that all day, to be fighting with people and just acting a fool. And I wanna know, where do you have the time to be president? Like when do you have time to look at executive orders or to know what's going on? Like I just don't understand all this free time he has to do nothing and I'm like any of us could be president then, because if that's the standard, then how low can we even go at that?

CARTER: And not just that, not just how low can we go, but considering there's so many positions that have yet to be filled that affect not just America, but the world, and the fact that world powers that are not the United States are taking advantage of the fact that these positions, that especially these international positions are not filled, economically especially, it's mind boggling to me that we are at a point as far as this country is concerned that while 45 is doing what he is doing, I'm sure you saw it Vilissa, because I sure as shit did, the Democratic party took it upon themselves to release their plan to the world as far as how they're gonna go into 2018, the midterm election year. And their literal slogan was we're better than the other guy, or other guys.

THOMPSON: (sighs)

CARTER: And how does that help, how does that help me, how does it help my family, how does it help my loved ones, how does it help you, how does it help people who are living day to day struggling when the only thing you have to offer is we are literally, is we are better than the other guys, and that's it. That's all you have.

THOMPSON: See, that's it. That's why we lost. To me, that's why we lost. We want to focus so much on us being better than the other side, and what do we have to offer that is better? Cause I need to know, like you're saying, I need to know exactly if you say you're better, what do you have to offer? What is your leadership going to do to protect my rights, to make sure that, you know, children have the education that they need, the elderly have their resources, disabled people have their resources, that our economy is gonna continue to be on the up and up, that you're gonna do something about there's a loan debt crisis that nobody wants to handle. What are you gonna do that different? Because I need to know that. I don't need to know that you're shinier and newer, and you're prettier, I need to know what the hell are you gonna do! Because telling me, I'm just gonna be like, okay, whatever. It's like the Democrats, I don't understand why we keep doing the same thing that doesn't get us elected, that doesn't get us taken seriously and doesn't really show people that we are, our plans are better, and this is how. And even with that, we have our own dysfunctions in our party.

CARTER: Yeah.

THOMPSON: We don't listen to Black women and elected officials, we have still Bernie bros that are still upset about Bernie Sanders not winning the candidacy, so we still have all this dysfunction that we're not focusing on so that we can be a healthier machine in 2018 and then in 2020. We are not in a good position as a party. Why are we not fixing what's broken? I don't wanna hear about us being better, we're just as dysfunctional as the Republicans.

CARTER: And not just that, and let me just say this for the folks that are listening: we are not going to be the card-carrying Democratic Party champions that you may think when you listen to the show, that may be the case? No. You're not gonna get that here. We are gonna call liberals, progressives, leftists, moderates, alt-left, whatever they wanna frame, whatever the flavor of the month framing of the left side of the aisle wants to frame themselves as this week, we're gonna call them out just as hard and just as bluntly as the other side of the aisle.

THOMPSON: Right.

CARTER: Because our bluntness is intersectional, how about that? Hashtag that.

THOMPSON: Exactly. And our vote is not free, my vote isn't free just because I am a Black woman. You need to earn my vote. Don't think you're gonna get that vote or my support just easily just because you're the quote unquote better side. Like that's not enough, and I think that liberal spaces need to understand that Black vote, the Black vote is not something you need to take for granted, and I feel like liberal side takes people of color, particularly Black folks, for granted. And they need to be held to the fire just as everybody else, and they need to be held to that fire and made to do right or not have our support at all, and that's to me, that's the situation that we as Black voters really need to critically think about as we get into these election seasons. What has the Democratic Party done for us recently? I'm not talking about past, what they've done for our grandmothers and mothers, what have they done for us recently where

they deserve our support, where they deserve our money, where they deserve our vote, and if we cannot answer that confidently, then we need to self-evaluate why are we aligning ourselves with a party that doesn't do anything for us.

CARTER: Exactly, exactly.

(intense orchestral music plays)

THOMPSON: An unsung hero of the week.

CARTER: So as we're coming to the close of the show this week, we're gonna do our due diligence to highlight every week an unsung hero of the week or the month, depending on how often the shows are gonna be. If you like our content, if you want to hear more of our shows, please send, again, suggestions our way. Hit us up on Twitter @wheeldealpod. Email us at wheeldealpod@CSPN.us, and let us know your thoughts. Give us your opinions, good, bad, ugly, whatever. We will hit you back, because again, our intersectionality is blunt, hashtag that!

THOMPSON: (laughs) Exactly.

CARTER: And our unsung hero this week is someone who rightfully deserves it, someone who took it upon themselves to be instrumental in the recent removal of a Confederate monument in a southern state, I believe it was North Carolina, Durham, North Carolina. Takiyah Thompson who is a Black, Queer woman and she was not only instrumental in the removal of that statue, but she also didn't want to center herself in the removal and the community, the activist community and the city residents rallied around her after she was detained and went down to the police station, and literally, all in unison, there was a line out the police station to get arrested alongside of her. It was the largest showing of solidarity that I had seen in a very long time, and I was moved, I was shocked, because Tekiyah deserves that.

THOMPSON: She does.

CARTER: She deserves to be lifted up, she deserves support. She's on Twitter, she has a cash.me for schooling, so if you hit her up on Twitter or if you see her profile, please send some money her way, but obviously, there were two quotes that stuck out to me when she was interviewed, and I'm gonna read them both. The first was, "I chose to pull down the statue because I'm tired of living in fear," she told reporters shortly before her arrest. And that fear is that same visceral reaction that I hear when living in Maryland, people still sing Dixieland. Our flag, you know, the Maryland state flag is still a representation of the Confederacy because it literally is a literal compromise. People don't know the history of the flag, the Maryland flag is a little compromise between the Union and the Confederacy. The state song sings the praises of the Confederacy, of Maryland. So if you wanna talk about fear, that's the visceral fear that Tekiyah was talking about. Vilissa, I'm sure you can speak to

THOMPSON: Oh, yes.

CARTER: The daily things going on in South Carolina, not just tied to the Confederate flag, but anything else.

THOMPSON: Exactly. There's areas here where you still have two sides of the town. You have the white side and the Black side. Even here, where I am, you have the public school, which is the Black high school, and then we have the private school, which is still white folks. When you're living below the Bible belt, you see that fear all the time. You see it in the monuments, you see it in symbols like the Confederate flag. You see it in knowing that there are places that you should not still go in 2017 by yourself. So that fear is there and for me, she represents Black women saying screw it, I'll do it. You know, Black women are just tired of living in fear, and we are gonna try to save ourselves, and when we save ourselves, we're gonna save you all too. So she really represented the fearlessness that Black women have in not wanting to live the fear and wanting to be like damn this, I'm going to proclaim my humanity and save myself, and save those who look like me, and you know, living in the southern states, you feel that vibe every day. And it is not southern states, I wanna make that clear, because I know, even though I live in the South, I have not experienced some of the extreme racism that I've heard people who do not live in the South experience. So do not think that all these issues are just in southern states because it happens in Durham or Charlottesville. This is happening everywhere. I think in the South, because of the history, it's felt more in a different way, but if you go past the Mason-Dixon Line, you see it there too. You feel that same type of cold, it's just manufactured in a different wrapping, but it's the same crap, which is BS. So we are really in a time to where how much fear are we going to live in? And if we're not gonna live in that fear, what are we going to do, and I think that what she did in tearing down that monument, tearing down that statue, is declaring that I'm not going to continue to be living in a state of uncomfortableness. I want to make you uncomfortable, and you understand what that feels like.

CARTER: And let's be clear: Black women have literally been cleaning up the dirty-ass diapers, shitty diapers of this country for decades. This is not something

THOMPSON: For centuries, for centuries.

CARTER: This is not something that started in 2017. This is something that has been going on for a very long time. And the idea that, just seeing that solidarity was a sight to see, but in that solidarity, there were still, I'm sure, 53 percent I always go back to this, and we're always gonna help this home, 53 percent of white women, Democrat and Republican, voted for 45. And I'm sure many of those same remorseful Trump voters were in that solidarity number just like they were wearing those ugly-ass pink pussy hats a few months ago in DC. So,

THOMPSON: Yes.

CARTER: The more things change (laughs), the more they stay the same, and obviously white supremacy and systematic racism and the prison-industrial complex and ableism, racism, transphobia are not going to go away overnight. These are not new concepts, either. And the fact that there are people in this country and around the world that think that these are brand-new concepts that they were quote unquote created on Twitter, I don't know how many times I've seen that idiotic statement, on social spaces. I've seen friends say it, and it just, first of all, it's not rooted in reality.

THOMPSON: And it shows y'all don't read at all (laughs).

CARTER: Amen!

THOMPSON: Y'all don't read! One of my followers, Anthony Williams is always talking about, y'all don't read, and you guys really don't read, because if you read things, you would know that none of these concepts are new, these issues are not new, they're just repackaged in a new way. That's all it is.

CARTER: Exactly. So we wanna thank you all for listening to our inaugural episode of the Wheelin' and Dealin' Pod. My name is Neal Carter,

THOMPSON: And I am Vilissa Thompson,

CARTER: And see you next time.

(upbeat electronic music plays)