

Curious Now with Jonathan Van Ness, Lala Wu & Lyzz Schwegler

JVN // Welcome to Curious Now, I'm Jonathan Van Ness. And every other week I sit down with a brilliant expert to go beyond the headlines. Today, we're speaking with one of my favorites, Sister District co-founders, Lala Wu and Liz Schwegler. We know from Sister District that our rights are often in state legislators' hands. From abortion to school curricula, these officials make decisions about our everyday lives all across the country and their elections don't always line up with midterms or presidential cycles. That means that we need to be even more attentive to who's running, when they're on the ballot, and what's at stake. If you cannot wait to hear that convo, head to the episode description for more info on how far to skip ahead. For now, let's get over to our news desk. Good morning, Jonathan. What's going on over there? [BRITISH ACCENT] Oh, thank you so much, Jonathan. This is Jonathan reporting live from my podcasting room. Here are our news stories of the week. In our first segment: headlines that even straight people are talking about. Former president Donald Trump is back in New York for a \$250 million lawsuit—oh, Jesus Christ I can't possibly do this British accent anymore. Former President Donald Trump is back in New York for a \$250 million civil fraud trial against him, his eldest sons, their companies and Trump organization executives. The suit alleges that Trump and his co-defendants repeatedly committed fraud by inflating their assets on financial documents. This trial is expected to last until December 22nd.

Wow, that's huge. So obviously we heard that this was an issue. I mean, Hillary Clinton was saying that Donald Trump was doing this on a lot of his financial disclosure forms for years. So I, I also just want to note here, it's interesting the ways in which, like, really rich people can commit crimes and then it literally takes, like 7, 10, 15 years for it to come back. Like, if you have money, you can just keep, like, kicking the can down the road by delaying justice. So go get it, Attorney General Leticia James. Patriot, honey. Moving on to our next story: Kevin McCarthy, honey, honey, honey, that's why we don't make deals with the devil, honey, because then they're gonna roast ya. Kevin McCarthy has been ousted as the Speaker of the House. The vote on the motion to vacate was 216 to 210, with eight Republicans voting to remove McCarthy. This is the first time in American history that a Speaker of the House was removed from a motion to vacate. Really interesting. Karma's a bitch. Maybe you shouldn't have like, sold all of the security tapes from January 6th to fucking Tucker Carlson.

Honestly, I think *former* Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy could listen to Pretty Curious to get some tips on how to, like, calm that skin. Of course, when you're constantly fomenting rage and transphobia and homophobia, it must turn you red. It's all I can guess. Moving on to our next story. A new California law raised the minimum wage for fast food workers to \$20 per hour. This new minimum wage will apply to workers at restaurants with more than 60 locations nationwide. It will not apply to restaurants that make and sell their own bread, however, like Panera. Interest! Panera escapes the grips of the state legislature of California, darling. And a New York State judge blocked Uber, Doordash, and GrubHub's attempt to prevent a new minimum wage in New York City for app-based delivery workers. The law will require companies to pay delivery workers \$17.96 an hour and it will be raised to nearly \$20 in April of 2025. Y'all, this is really good news and it also shows to me the ways that, like, our collective power can make changes. So let's get out to vote. Maybe we can do that in more states, come November.

These are the stories that made me go whoa! Simone Biles won her 20th world championship gold medal as the US women's gymnastics team won their seventh consecutive world championship title. She also became the first woman to land the Yurchenko double pike vault at an international competition. So that is now Simone's fifth

eponymous skill. It's going to be called the Biles Two because she already has another vault, which is the Biles One. She has two skills on floor. She has one skill on vault. I don't know if she's gonna get an uneven bar skill. I'm sure she's got cooking one up there. So go get it, Simone. We love to see it. I think we're set up really well for Paris next year. Obviously, if you listen to *Getting Curious*, you know, we're big Jordan Chiles fans around here. So she's on the Pan Am team. She didn't make the world team this year. So we hope to see her back on that Olympic team next year. We're gonna see what happens. There's, you know, only five spots and we have, like, a legitimate, like, nine gymnasts who could totally take one of those five spots. So we'll see who makes the Olympics next year, but stay up on gymnastics because it is a 'brewin.

In our next story, why can't a fucking Olympic year just have no drama, ok? There's always some fucking drama around an Olympic village every goddamn Olympic cycle. And this year it's fucking bedbugs. Bedbugs are crawling their way all over the gorgeous city of Paris. People are concerned after video circulated showing bedbugs on the Paris Metro. There have also been reports of bedbugs in cinemas and even at the airport. So city officials have made it clear that they will be putting an action plan in place to curb the spread of these pests. [FRENCH] It is not possible. That's what I always hear when I'm in Paris. I hope that it turns out ok. And I would also just say this, this is true. I got bed bugs when I lived in West Hollywood in 2011. It's a fucking nightmare. Like, it's expensive. You have to, like, either chemically treat your shit or, like, heat treat your shit. And so I did the heated one and then they only guaranteed that the heat would work for, like, a month. And then if it's, like, more than a month and you see bedbugs again, like you have to pay twice. Of course, like, 33 days later, I saw these, like, adult bedbugs because I insisted on keeping this, like, cardboard fucking box full of, like, old Aveda posters because I thought that the hair looked good and I just *had* to keep it from hair at school and they fucking lived under my bed and they reinvested my apartment and that was actually why one of the reasons why I left West Hollywood and moved back to Saint Louis in 2012 because I could not handle the bedbugs. So when they say that it's, like, a challenge, it's, like, taxing on your mental health. That shit is taxing on your mental health. It's fucking gross. And it's so expensive and it's so stressful. So Paris, get it the fuck together.

In our next story, our former guest Christina Hernandez, you will remember her from, like, our Mars rover, she was all up in there. She is one of the amazing engineers behind NASA's Psyche mission. Christina helped guide the team through the verification and validation phase of the mission to ready the spacecraft for the extreme conditions of space. The mission is to reach the asteroid Psyche which is in the main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. The Psyche is set to launch on the morning of October 12th. Girl, Christina Hernandez keeps getting it done. Go, girl, go! In our next story, ah! Mariah Carey, not only does she have, like, an infinity octave range, she also has a sense of humor that just doesn't miss. She says she's quote "defrosting" and getting ready for the holiday season as she announced a concert tour to continue the yearly tradition. Queens, get it together. Who has time for N'Sync when Mariah's on tour? I know that's right.

Let's get to the gay agenda. A new analysis showed that Google searches for phrases questioning sexuality and gender identity have increased by 1300%. Since 2004. Utah had the highest search volume for the phrases, "Am I gay? Am I lesbian? and Am I trans?" since last May that checks out Oklahoma had the highest search volume for the phrase how to come out over the past year. Oklahoma, the Sooners! Great NCAA Collegiate Squad. I will just say their gymnastics team is really good. In our next story, Laphonza Butler has been chosen to complete Senator Dianne Feinstein's term. Butler will be the first openly LGBTQIA+ plus senator from California, also the first Black lesbian in Senate, ever. I actually believe in Congress, ever—so major. Now that is all true, but I will say: some labor and

union organizers are calling out this appointment. Yes, she served as president of Emily's List and a labor organizer. But her resume also includes consulting work for companies like AirBnB and Uber during their disputes with workers. Politics, as we know, are all about duality. We need to keep our elected and appointed officials accountable and on the side of workers. And just because someone's in office doesn't mean we can't challenge them. If Senator Butler runs for a full term in 2024, voters will have the power.

That Gavin Newsom some really painted himself into a pickle with this whole thing by saying that he didn't want to tip the balance of anyone. Gavin Newsom said that he was not going to appoint someone who was already in the race and he was just going to appoint, like, a "caretaker" to the role. But then other people in California are, like, "Wait, so you're just gonna appoint a Black woman to be a caretaker who can't even run for, like, the full term." And then he was, like, "Well, shit, I'm gonna appoint someone who's not already in the race. But if they would like to run for a full term, they can." But Laphonza is only gonna have like five months because the primaries start like next March. So she really only has five months. And I think when you're getting into, like, a new role in the Senate and like, it's just a lot. So we'll see what happens here. This is gonna be a really tight senate race to watch. Another Senate race that we're watching that I think is we should all be keeping our eyes on. Is Arizona, what is going to happen with Carrie Lake going against Sinema? Who's also going through? Is it Ruben Gallego, I think, is running. He's a congressman from Arizona who I believe is running. So it's gonna be, like, a three way race with, like, independent Republican. I believe it's Ruben Gallego who's running God, you guys. So I just said that and I was like, looking at our producers on our, like, Zoom to be, like, "Is that right?" And they were, like—my, my memory really is an Iron Trap for, like, usually, like, it's, it's wrong a lot, but it's right a lot. And I just want to say that.

Anyway, in our next story, the Sixth US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in a 2-1 decision that Tennessee and Kentucky can continue to ban gender affirming care for transgender kids. This is a pretty consequential ruling because we had another Circuit court that struck down the gender affirming care ban. So now we have competing rulings at Circuit Court of Appeals in two different circuit courts. So this will most certainly send this to the Supreme Court. If you want more frequent updates on this as you know I do, be sure to check out our Instagram at @curiouswithjvn. We post a lot about topical issues in LGBTQIA+ community. So if you want more in real time updates past Curious Now, make sure you're following us over there because we are all over that. So my heart is with you kids in Tennessee and Kentucky and the parents over there. I do think it's interesting here when we have so many conservatives arguing for parents' rights about what books can be in schools about, you know, pronouns about any sort of anything, what can be talked about in schools. Yet parents of trans kids who have had doctors who have had years of experiences with this kid are being prevented from making the parental decisions that they need to with their kids. So I just think they're just so hypocritical, like, they're just so hypocritical.

So OK, for our next segment on your radar! Equality Texas is an amazing nonprofit political advocacy organization that works to eliminate discrimination targeting the LGBTQIA+ community. So I've been able to work with Equality Texas on several occasions. I protested with them down at the State Capitol here in Austin. They are an incredible organization, as you can imagine, for a nonprofit whose work is in eliminating discrimination targeting the queer community in Texas. You can imagine their hands have been quite full. There are so many gender affirming care bans that are going to be introduced into many different state legislators. So it's so important to support organizations like Equality Texas so that they can advocate for the LGBTQIA+ community on the legislative level. So let's support that Equality Texas gala. Let's support Equality Texas, let's get it together.

So now that was all the time that we have for our headlines for this episode of Curious Now we're going to be tossing it back over to our conversation studio, which is also the same studio that I'm in right now. So now we're gonna be tossing the mic to Lala and Lyzz from Sister District. Sister district is an amazing organization that helps to build progressive power in state legislators. Here's our conversation on the upcoming state legislative elections.

Oh my God, I... so many things to say: Lala; so many things to say: Lyzz. But I will just... I have to start off by saying this. Thank you both so much. I have learned so much from both of you. I love Sister District so much. I talk about you like still, at least, on like a two times a week basis; like if not more. I just, I love you so much. I know to be all up in Virginia's ass this year because I know that there is no such thing as off-year elections, there's just odd-year elections or off or—whatever. There's just never an off-year is what I learned. I forgot the exact words. But the point is, is that we're never off; every year, and I just love you guys so much. So, thank you for coming back. And it's Curious Now! How are you all?

LALA WU // We love you too. We're so happy to be back!

JVN // Also you guys, I didn't say this before we started recording, but I will just say Lala: since I don't know if y'all I, I follow, so I know, like, what the deal is. But Lala typically has, like, long layers and they literally have a lob. So I will just say we already talked about the style change, but I love it. It's like we cannot have extra length when we are literally going into one of the most consequential elections of our freakin' lives. We just don't have that extra drying time.

LALA WU // Thank you for the affirmation. All hair dry over here.

JVN // Stunning. I really do love the haircut though. Anyway, so we recorded an episode of Getting Curious together in 2021 just before that year's state legislative races in Virginia. Can you remind us how those elections played out? But I'm failing right now when I do that, like, 'Leslie Stall thing' where I ask questions that I know the answer to. I just want to say the one: Danica won! But, you know, she is up for reelection again and so we, you know, whatever. But anyway, how did the rest of everything go?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Yes, it's true. Danica actually is now running for the Senate, which we'll talk about, too.

JVN // She is??!!

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Yes, yea! So she's, so she's running for the next, higher chamber, which is awesome. We're very excited. I know. I know. I know. And she's doing amazing. So that's just like a little sneak preview for the rest of the episode.

JVN // She is, is she ahead of the polls? Do we know?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // It's a close race! I don't—we don't....

JVN // We're donating right now! Erica, go donate from the company card right now! No, but, like, wait, wait, ah, okay!

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Yeah, so to talk again about what happened in 2021: Jonathan, you and I had spoken when I was outside of a polling location in northern Virginia. It was pretty crazy times. It was raining. There were anti-trans people. There were school board crazies who were protesting literally at the polling location right then and there. And what ended up happening in 2021 was pretty heartbreaking. Democrats lost the house really narrowly

and we also lost the governorship to Glenn Youngkin, who's a pretty crazy Republican. He's, people might have heard of him because he's, people are saying that he might be running for president. Rupert Murdoch loves him—of Fox News fame—and he's a guy who is extra scary because he sort of seems really normal and seems like a nice guy you'd want to have a beer with. But he's actually a total crackpot with a lot of extremist views. And so what we ended up figuring out after the election in 2021, is that Democrats lost—in the three closest races—we lost by only 733 votes. Which I mean, is so narrow. That's, like, I don't think I have 733 friends I could call for a birthday party, but *almost*, you know? So it's really so few people and that's really, you know, what the stakes are for this year is: if we just turn out a little bit more people in these really, really narrow races, then we, we will hopefully be able to win. The one bright spot from 2021 is we did still retain control of the Senate in Virginia. So that meant that even though we did not have Republicans control the governorship and the House, we were able to block a lot of the worst legislation coming through over the last couple of years. Thank goodness!

JVN // So one thing that we talked about last time, Lala, is how like oftentimes Virginia can be a bellwether for, you know, the following year's election. So 2021 happened and then in 2022 we—as you know—narrowly lost the House in Virginia. We—shocker—we narrowly lost the House in the, our federal, you know, Congress. What was some of the other fallout from that election cycle in the state and beyond?

LALA WU // Well, so what we're seeing was that once Roe versus Wade was overturned, the stakes just got much, much higher. And I, I mean, just in terms of what's at stake in Virginia, this election: Virginia is the last state in the South without an extremist abortion ban. It's the only state in the South that hasn't passed new bans on abortion since Roe v Wade fell. And the only reason that's the case; the only thing standing between this faux-moderate Governor Glenn Youngkin and a 15 week abortion ban, is our single vote majority in the State Senate. So, without this extremely thin majority, Republicans already would have banned abortion at 15 weeks; passed 16 pieces of anti-LGBTQ legislation; installed MAGA culture warriors at statewide posts that control education, health, voting, more. And so this is a bellwether; Virginia is a bellwether for what's to come in 2024. It's always been a test state, you know, for extremist Republican legislation, like bills restricting transgender kids in schools and sports.

JVN // And we saw that in 2021! Like, I mean, because Virginia was one of the first places where that became, like, such a big thing. And then you, in 2022 and 2023 especially, like, when those state offices took hold. I mean, I was, like, I mean, I guess I was there, like, thrice in real life, but it feels like I was living at the State Capitol in Austin at least, you know, I mean, there's just so much anti-trans bills since the 2021 and 2022 elections.

LALA WU // So, so many—hundreds. And I think it's really important to make the point that this is really coordinated on the Republican side. There are a lot of folks including ALEC, which is the American Legislative Exchange Council who get together and think about what to pass. "What can we, ok, let's start a trend of anti-trans in schools. Let's start it with sports. Let's try it with bathrooms. Let's do these things, let's see what catches fire." And that's why, what happens in a state like Virginia.

JVN // it's, like, legislation into, like, Instagram virality, but with like laws of hate. It's like, "Oh my God, you know, when that one only got like 15 likes, let's see if we can go for, like, 30 pickups." Like, you know, like, you know what I'm saying?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // It's a great way to put it, yes!

JVN // Like, "Which one's gonna fucking stick—oh, that affirmation didn't work, let me try another one. Like, maybe I need to do more cusses, maybe it needs to be shorter. Maybe it needs to be more fucked up."

LALA WU // Exactly. And that is, I love it. State legislatures are the Instagram of policy, right? Like, they are the way that Republicans—I mean, Democrats too, there's a good side of this that we can all—progressives, liberals, conservatives—they're laboratories of democracy and unfortunately right now Republicans have gotten really, really good at weaponizing these bodies against, against all of us. And so, you know, if we lose this election in Virginia this year, millions of people are going to lose access to abortion. If we lose this election, Republicans across the country are going to take inspiration from all of the anti-LGBTQ laws that will come. And if we lose this election, extremists are going to roll back the progress we've made to expand the right to vote, access to health care, protect the climate. And so this is a really, a must-win election. It's not just about what happens in Virginia, but it really affects all of us across the country because everybody is watching; everybody is watching what's happening in Virginia.

JVN // So one reason—well, I mean, there's just so many reasons that we love you both that I just can't even get over it. And one thing that I think we probably would have naturally gotten to, but I just want to briefly stop for a moment and talk about Tennessee. And tell me if this has changed. But I think one thing that Sister District does is you have like the buckets are like the: keep it blue, like, flip it, or, like, prevent a super majority. And what super majorities in state legislators are, is we're, like, seeing that in Wisconsin from like extreme gerrymandering there, we also have super majorities I think in Tennessee. I think it's a super majority here in Texas. But that doesn't really matter because we have a Republican—well, it's never good. But really, like, what you really don't want is, like, a super majority in the House or Senate when there is a Democrat governor because then their veto can only go so far. And that has been the case, I know in Kentucky and in Wisconsin. Right?

LALA WU // And North, North Carolina is another example, too.

JVN // But in Tennessee, I think one thing that we've really seen there is—I think after the shooting that was at the Covenant school in Nashville, Tennessee, we saw really large uprisings in the State House and protests there. I've read a lot of articles about how Democrats are running on abortion everywhere, which I think is necessary. I think it's, not only is it important, but I think it's also really crystallizes, you know, the extremist views of Republicans. But also I think the Democrats have a, more of an opportunity to run on gun violence. Like, that is something that really unites Democrats. We—I feel literally unsafe where I live; not only because of, like, anti-queer extremists, but just, you could be at the wrong place at the wrong time fucking anywhere here. I mean, we just do not have reasonable laws to restrict access to guns and firearms from people who are killers. Like, there are loopholes for gun shows, there are loopholes for people. I mean, we just do not have smart legislation because Republicans' answer is no. It is, no. And I think that people are fucking sick of it. And we really saw that in Tennessee. So do you think—and I, I keep thinking about Tennessee, like, fuck around and find out! Like these Republicans keep pushing further and further expelling people. I think about that in Wisconsin with them trying, they're trying to, like impeach Janet Protasiewicz. I think Justice Janet Protasiewicz, I think I'm saying her last name wrong. But that was a huge election last year. So what do you think about Wisconsin? What do you guys think about Tennessee, is the point?

LALA WU // Yes! So, you're absolutely right, Republicans just continue to say, "No!" You know, we say, "There are children dying, there's people dying all the time from gun violence." It's something that we all care about so much. We just want the most basic of freedoms, which is to feel safe, right? When we go out in public, when we send our kids to

school. It shouldn't be too much to ask to say, "Ok, how do we figure out how to do this in a way that makes sense for everybody?" But you're right, they just keep saying, "No, no, no, no, no, we won't give an inch because then that means that they'll take a mile." I mean, look, I think what's happening in Tennessee is a great example of the contrasts that you see between Republicans and Democrats. After that shooting last year, there were, there was a protest in the halls of the state legislature and there were several state legislators that stood up and protested together with the students. And just for this act of exercising their civic voice, the two Black state legislators that stood up in protest with these students: they were *expelled*, meaning they were removed from their jobs in the state legislature! It's unbelievable, unprecedented—completely, I mean, also racist. Just absolutely unbelievable that that happened. I mean, thankfully, you know, they got their jobs back; they were re-elected back in. But I mean, it was, it just goes to show that they're gonna stop at nothing to even just let people make their voices heard. So yes, that's, that's Tennessee. And then as for what's happening in Wisconsin: Protasiewicz is how you say her name. I always have to remind myself; you say pro-ta-say-wits, like that: Protasiewicz.

JVN // So Justice Protasiewicz: they are literally trying to figure out how to impeach her because she had the audacity to say on the campaign trail that the extremely gerrymandered maps of the state of Tennessee; which were set up by Republicans, the Republican House and the Republican Senate. And they literally look like a t-rex, like, there are, like, triangles, there are all these angles, like it's no, you know, squares. It's like the most gerrymandered map you've ever seen. And now that this case is go, it could go back up to the Supreme Court, they're saying if she doesn't recuse herself, they're going to impeach her. Which I read that and I'm, like, do you think that the Republicans in states like Wisconsin could be going into a fuck around and find out moment, or do you think that their power is so entrenched, that these maps are so gerrymandered, that if she does recuse herself and it goes back to 3-3 or they do impeach her, which they could, and then the Senate could just pull a Mitch McConnell and not hold a vote and then they would just keep it at 3-3 until the election in 2024.

LALA WU // I think it remains to be seen what's going to happen. But what is certain is that the Republicans are so incredibly shameless in their ability and they just don't give a fuck about, like, what the voters think. I mean, the voters over and over again have either won as many votes as Republicans, or even more votes than Republicans. Yet, Republicans have consistently had majorities if not super majorities in the state legislature as well as in their Congressional delegations. This is not a democracy, right? Like, bringing democracy back to Wisconsin, is, like, is something that we should be trying to do and that's what Judge Protasiewicz could help us do, if she is given the opportunity. But yes, I mean, all of these shenanigans they're trying to pull, they're gonna use everything at their disposal to say, "Well, maybe we'll impeach you and just leave you in limbo for this whole time," or because they don't want to actually impeach you because if they do, then the Democratic Governor Evers will appoint a new, liberal-leaning justice who would be in place till 2031. So they're, they're very tricky.

JVN // But then they were saying that the Senate could just not bring that to a vote. Like, if they bring up articles of impeachment and, like, the House passes them and then they could just the Senate just, like, and then Tony Evers wouldn't be able to—I mean, these....

LALA WU // Exactly. And then, and then it's just a tie and then everybody just wants to tear their hair out. And then the voters of Wisconsin become even more dispirited. But I will say, since a lot of these shenanigans started coming out, the Democratic Party of Wisconsin has, has come out really strong, with a big public campaign to really just, like, shame the Republicans and say, like, "How dare you, you know, do this?" And so I think there has

been a little bit more hesitation on their part, which is promising. So, you know, it's still a pretty tenuous situation. And this is, is going to be something that we're really watching going forward because it has the potential to determine whether or not there's actually free and fair elections in Wisconsin. And, you know, if we can get new maps in Wisconsin, we're gonna be able to flip the Congress, you know, we're gonna be able to have majorities in the state of Wisconsin and get laws that work for everybody

JVN // Or at least, like, a chance at a majority, which is, like, right now, we certainly do not fucking have with the way these maps are drawn. So I'm gonna attempt to ask the question that I meant to ask, like, 15 minutes ago. But then I got so excited and my ADHD kicked in and then I didn't. So one of the many reasons we love Sister District is that you're not just watching, you know, these races in Virginia from the sidelines and just midterms, all the elections; you're actively supporting candidates who are running. So who are some of the Sister District endorsed Virginia candidates this election cycle?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // I will take that, Jonathan. And I just want to say that you were speaking about our, some of our approach which is to, to support some races that are in redder districts and redder areas, just because it's important to start to make inroads in some of those states. And when it comes to a lot of the southern states or a lot of the really heavily gerrymandered states, like Tennessee, Democrats—like the Democratic establishment—has really left a lot of the South behind. This year we have a general election in Louisiana and Mississippi, and it was difficult for us to even, even though we wanted to desperately support candidates in those states, it was really, really difficult for us to find any candidates that really made sense in terms of the seats that they were running for and the candidates themselves. You know, there are amazing legislators, like, the, the two Justins in Tennessee who were, who were protesting, who are really doing incredible work for folks down there. And, you know, we just, we can't leave them behind. So, you know, that's my, my little plug for not forgetting the South. But in terms of Virginia—which is part of the South—we've got 10 candidates this year in both the House and the Senate. Of course, there's Danica Roem; a fan favorite of us as well. This is our third or fourth time supporting her, and she's obviously incredible. She is raising a ton of money, she is doing the hard work on the campaign trail. Like I mentioned at the top of the show, she is now running for the Senate. So she will be moving up from the House and, you know, who knows? Maybe she'll keep going.

JVN // Oh, my God, I really hope, I really hope!

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // One can only hope, I know. I know. So she's been doing an amazing, amazing job. Another candidate that I would really lift up is Michael Feggans in Virginia Beach. This is a really, really close race; like, incredibly close race. People have literally called this race the most important one in the House of Delegates this year. It is seen as like: if we are able to take that seat, then we are probably trending towards taking the whole House. So, you know, if you're watching on election night in November, you know, if you see that Michael Feggans has won, it's, like, "Holy crap, this might be a moment." He's a man of color, he's an Air Force veteran, um he's really cool. He's in his thirties, like so pretty young and he is challenging a Republican delegate who is a total crackpot, anti-choice, anti-LGBTQ person. She's the driving force behind a lot of the legislation that's, you know, like, banning transgender and non-binary kids from competing in, on school sports teams that align with their gender identity. And that's one of the bills that passed in the house in this past session and the Senate was able to block it. So, so that's another really, really tight race. And of course, you can see all of our candidates on our, our website.

JVN // Yes, okay thank you so much for sharing. What are some of the issues that your candidates are championing on the campaign trail this cycle? Like, what's everyone talking about in Virginia?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Yeah, abortion is a really, really hot topic. As Lala mentioned, Virginia is the last state in the South to not have passed extremist abortion bans yet—knock on wood—and everybody knows that this is a really important issue. It is something that brings out people on both sides of the aisle. You know, if you're, if you're sort of on the fence or maybe you're a little purple, that it tends to be an issue that really pushes people to vote for the Democratic candidate. And, and, you know, a lot of our candidates, there's also, of course, a lot of school issues around um you know, LGBTQ kids, transgender kids. CRT! We there's been so much else to talk about, we haven't even gotten to the Critical Race Theory, but that has also been very high on Virginia policy agenda. And then of course, there's all of the issues that are really important to folks on a super local level. And one of the reasons that I love Danica Roem is that she is constantly championing really “mundane issues,” but that are really important for people's daily lives: traffic. I mean, she is constantly talking about traffic and that is something that literally affects everybody's day to day lives.

JVN // So how are voters responding to these issues and how are candidates dealing with voters who say things like, as far as, like, CRT, like, what are some of the talking points that some of your favorite candidates are using, you know, with constituents on some of these issues. Asking for a friend so we can use them, too.

LALA WU // I'm happy to talk about it. I mean, look, there's so many things that are wrong with even, like, the initial frame of this conversation, right? Like, CRT is an academic concept that is taught in grad schools and institutions of higher education. What we are actually talking about at the elementary school and the middle school, high school levels is of giving our kids a full understanding of the history of this country that is rich and varied and throughout it all has things that we can learn from and learn about, right? And so, in the end, we want to celebrate our accomplishments, celebrate our diversity, where we can all feel valued, we can bring our whole cells, you know, to work and to play and to school. And so that's what we're really trying to fight for and to how to reframe the conversation.

JVN // Mmm! Liz?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Yeah. And I would, I would also say that um a lot of these really extremist views are being pushed by the Republican, like, the GOP establishment and the GOP activist base, but they are not actually things that regular people care that much about. Part of the reason that the GOP tries to use, like you said, the, the viral moments, like, legislative moments to go around and try and see what can kick up more excitement and more urgency in their base. I really, really, really encourage people to get on the phones and call voters to go out and knock doors and you will see that most people out there are just normal people trying to get to work, trying to take care of their kids. You know, most people are not, like, super crazy extremists. We just need to make sure that the, the regular folks have the opportunity to get out and vote and, and make a plan and are able to show up on election day.

LALA WU // Can I just make a plug for one more candidate? Ok, so we are also supporting another one of our alum candidates we've supported before. But our candidate Joshua Cole, who is a young Black bisexual pastor—

JVN // Come on!

LALA WU // He is so awesome and so fire and you should check out his insta, he's super fun. And, you know, what's wild is that, you know, the first time he ran for office, he lost by like in 2017, I think by, like, 90 votes or something. And then he came back, we supported him in 2019. He won and then he was a great lawmaker for two years until there were a whole bunch of people who got it voted out in 2021, as we discussed earlier. But he again, you know, lost by only around 600 votes. And then this year we are supporting him again and we really believe that he can win. And that it's exactly voices like his that we need in the legislature. We need his perspectives, his energy, you know, we have many candidates, we love all of them, but just, I just wanted to plug another one.

JVN // And now if someone's listening to this and they're really inspired by some of these candidates, if they're, like, "Oh my God," like, can they just, like, go to Sister District and donate and then you guys will take care of dispersing it to them?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Yes! Come to us and you, you'll be able to learn more about the candidates, you'll be able to donate to them. You can text "JOIN" to 68998. And that will give you a lot more information. We will facilitate the donations to the candidates but we don't keep that money for ourselves.

JVN // Yes!

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // And we do that on purpose. You know, number one, because we think it's more ethical and number two because then candidates are able to show on all of their financial filings that they have all of these grassroots donations rather than, you know, we have a couple of candidates—

JVN // No, it's better, it's better!

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // I mean, we have a couple of candidates who are running against, um, like Russet Perry comes to mind, she's running against a guy who is the son of a billionaire who's just funding so much of his campaign. And, and there's a lot of examples like that. So we want to be able to show lots of grassroots donations even if it's two, three, five dollars you know, but yes, come to SisterDistrict.com, come to all. We're on all the social medias, text "JOIN" to 68998 and you'll get lots more information.

JVN // So beyond Virginia, you know, state legislatures are up for grabs and a ton of states in 2024 as well as a presidential election. So we know we're gonna be thinking a lot about, like, voting all the way down ballot because I remember the very first time we talked like in 2018, it was, like, about, like, the amount of people that like voted, like for like the federal ones and then didn't vote all the way down. It's like you're already there and make sure you're going all the way down. How are the, how are the purple states doing this fall? And, and for next fall!

LALA WU // 2024 is already here as there are so many important elections, it is gonna be an absolute blockbuster year. I mean, existential, really, you know, for, for us as a democracy. So here at Sister District, as you know, we focus on these democracy battlegrounds, like Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin. And every year, we're trying to build a portfolio of states where we can, as you said earlier, too, flip a chamber, hold a chamber, you know, make inroads into badly gerrymandered states and also, you know, prevent these supermajorities. And so how can we make sure that, that we're making this progress and how these states are faring is that it really depends on what happened in last year's elections. You know, elections have consequences as people say. And as we like to remind folks all the time here at sister district. And so how purple states are faring this year really depended on what happened last year. And so just good news, for

example, in Michigan sister District and many others across the country helped win a democratic trifecta for the first time in 30 years, over 30 years.

EVERYONE // [CHEERING]

LALA WU // Exactly, she's amazing. She's so badass, and now she has a trifecta which is where one party has power at the governor's mansion as well as both chambers of the state legislature. Um, and they are actually able to get things done. Michigan lawmakers were ready once the trifecta came to be. And what have they done? Well, they've become the first state in decades to repeal the so called "right to work" law, which was really anti union anti labor. They rejected, full throated, an abortion ban, protecting abortion in the state for good. They boosted low income tax credits to help society's most vulnerable in their state. They extended civil rights protections to gay and transgender Michiganders. They, also, you know, a, a gun safety so little movement on the federal level, unfortunately. But in Michigan, we saw real meaningful reforms like safe storage laws and universal background checks. And I could go on, but that's just some of the accomplishments, some of the really tangible ways that people's lives are impacted. People's lives are changed and improved by what happens in state legislative elections. So, you know, you mentioned, earlier Tennessee and these other states where supermajorities are preventing the Democratic governors from exercising their veto power. And unfortunately, North Carolina is one of those states. And this, this story is, I mean, for those who don't know it, it's really, really awful. So we came out of the midterms last year thinking, "Oh my gosh, thank goodness, we staved off a Republican supermajority in North Carolina by a single seat. Phew. Ok, great." Few months later, unfortunately.

JVN // Oh, that lady switches parties!

LALA WU // The lady switched parties. It's, not only was it a lady, which first blows my mind but second, was a lady in, like, a deep blue district. You know, but it really should cause some soul searching. She became a Republican. She, she walked over the Republican side gave Republicans the supermajorities that they needed to override the Democratic governor's veto and ban abortion in the state. And so the next closest seat that we needed to win to prevent all of this from happening was lost by just 354 votes. So 354 more votes in a single district in North Carolina. It means that millions more people in the state could have had access to abortion that no longer have that access or have it much restricted now. So, I, I mean, like the, the consequences are massive. And so when you ask me, "Well, how are things doing in the purple states?" Well, things are things, it's mixed. It depends. How did the elections go? But I, I don't want to end on a, on a sad note, I will end on a happy note, which is, for this question, which is that in Pennsylvania last year, we supported a candidate, Melissa Serrato whose single victory was very, very important, was critical to flipping the Pennsylvania State House for the first time since 2010, which is an amazing victory in and of itself. But even more important because it meant that Repub—Democrats were able to stop Republican efforts at a constitutional amendment that would have banned abortion in the state, stopped that in its tracks. And so that seat was won by just 63 votes.

JVN // Fuck me. Interesting side note that 2010 would have been the last time that the Pennsylvania House would have been Democratic because that was the same year that the blood bath happened that I think I learned about from you the first time I interviewed you when we lost, like, over the 1000 legislative seats because we just kind of, like, were asleep at the wheel. It was, like, pre-social. So I think that's why I didn't, I wasn't so politically involved because like the only social I had was Grindr. I was just trying to fuck, you know, I didn't know. Anyway, what a random turn that took. So I just got off three days on my tour

so I'm feeling, like, a little slutty. So, but, how is redistricting affecting certain electoral maps or is anything better? Is anything worse?

LALA WU // Yes. So again, mixed, right? Because we live in a country with 50 states and every state does redistricting a little bit differently. So there were some good news states and some bad news states. So, well, last year was the first year that we ran on these new maps and so we could see how they fared. And again, in Michigan, we were set up to have a fair contest. And it's because of the people of Michigan. In 2018, a majority of voters in Michigan passed a constitutional amendment that enabled the creation of what's called an independent redistricting commission. So that stripped the power of redistricting away from the Republican state legislature. So that instead of politicians choosing their voters, which was what was happening with these T-Rex, you know, Goofy and Daffy Duck kind of districts that are shaped all wild. We have now a situation in Michigan where there is an independent body of citizens that helps to draw the maps. And so with those new maps, there was the circumstances necessary uh and that enabled us to win big in that state.

Unfortunately, we already talked a little bit about Wisconsin, but, like, the story there is that gerrymandering is still so incredibly severe. The Gerrymandering Project at Princeton, you should totally check them out. They're really awesome, very nerdy, gives Wisconsin redistricting an F grade totally failing. You know, finding that their legislative maps are among the most partisan ones in the country, making it incredibly unfair and making it so that people's voices are not actually heard. People who are representing them in the legislature do not actually reflect the will of the people. But always at sister District at least, and many of us were looking for these opportunities, where can we build, where can we grow? And our North Star here at Sister District is building power every year this decade until redistricting again in 2031, because we want to maintain these fair maps that we now see and because we want to get fair maps for the future decade in these places where we don't have them yet.

JVN // Doesn't redistricting have to do with no—not state leg. That's only the federal Congress for census. Right?

LALA WU // No state, depends on the state. It totally depends on the state. But in most states, state legislatures control redistricting. And this leads to a situation where in most states, politicians are looking at the map and saying, "Which voters do I want in my district?" And then they are what's called packing and cracking. So, you know, they will pack all of, like, the people of color, the young people, the queer, the Democratic voters into just one district and then they will just take a few of them and then scatter them about the remaining districts. And so that's called packing and cracking. And so in Austin, for example, I haven't seen what happened in this last round of redistricting, I'm sure it didn't get any better, but Austin had, like, five congressional districts and Austin, Texas and only one of them was Democratic and all the rest of them were Republican. And why was that? It was because of gerrymandering, right? And so in a fairer situation, a fairer map situation, you'd see better representation, you'd make it so that there's more than one Democratic district in a democratic stronghold like Austin.

JVN // So, are we seeing any promising polling or political organizing any silver? Any?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Yes. Actually, we I don't know if we've spoken with you before about our State Bridges program. But we, just like we pick a bunch of electoral candidates every year. We also pick a bunch of organizations that are doing year-round organizing in the states that we have an eye on and when we're not supporting candidates, we are also supporting those Bridges partners. So people might have heard of the New Georgia project, Stacey Abrams' group. New Virginia Majority, Texas organizing project. Lucha in

Arizona. There's a whole lot of examples um that are folks that are, are working really, really hard on the around. Because our whole model is to take people from all over the country, especially in really blue areas and get their um their dollars, their, their time, et cetera into purple areas. But there's other organizations that, you know, we call "movement organizations" which are working on the ground year round in those communities. And so it's kind of a "both and" situation where we're trying to support them as well. But, you know, I mean, like I was saying before about the South, like, needing to continue to support democratic and progressive infrastructure in the South that is often where the best organizers come from. A lot of our staff, in fact, are from Texas, are from North Carolina, are from Tennessee and Georgia. Um And the reason is because the stakes are really high there. You know, like, I grew up in Los Angeles, like you Jonathan, like, I was not super politically active when I was a kid because I didn't need to be. And uh you know, and so there is a ton of amazing work going on in, in many of these states. So there, there's absolutely hope but they definitely need our help.

JVN // So if you didn't get to hear our episode um that we recorded last time with Sister District, a part of what Liz is saying that's so critical here. And Lala really taught me about this last time, which is that, like, people aren't just going to like, get up and go vote magically, like, you know, every two or four years if they're just, like, not connected. And so like with their communities, and so what these community organizers are doing is, like, through mutual aid, volunteer work, they're really reaching out. And so because it's kind of like, you're just asking people to show up and it's, like, "Well, what have you done for me lately?" Well, these, like, these organ organizers are the ones who are really, like, communicating, like the heart, mind will like the love, like, you know, really showing on the ground, like what, you know, what causes we are concerned about. So on Sister District. Does it work? Like, there's, like, the candidates page but then there's, like, the causes page and they just, like, go on the cause when you can donate to those ones, too?

So you guys! You better get your ass over there on Sister District and donate those dollars to some of these organizers in places like Texas and Lucha. Arizona is gonna be a huge place. Those, all those legislatures are really going at it and you know, you can really see it in states where you have, like, two Democratic senators. Well, anyway, I don't need to talk about Arizona anymore. I forgot that one's an Independent and I hope, I hope she loses and I hope that we get a new Democrat. I mean, I love bisexuals and I love people who do crossfit, but she is such a fail. I rooted for you, Kristen. I haven't talked to a girl like this in my life. We were all rooting for you. I—you know what I mean? No one's disappointed me this bad since Tiffany in America's Next Top Model and Tiffany doesn't even deserve that amount of comparison because that was reality TV, which is problematic in its own ways and fuck you, Sinema! But anyway, you nightmare. You special interest nightmare. I liked your shoulder pads and your kooky style. How could you let me down like this? Ah, anyway, oh yeah. Oh, OK! Wait, wait, where's the good stuff again? Are we going to be ok?

LALA WU // So I just want to say also, wait—one more bad thing before we go to good things, which is, I know, I'm sorry, which is that—

JVN // [UNCLEAR] Bad stuff. But tell me now because it's on the top of your mind.

LALA WU // Don't worry, don't worry, don't worry, there's lots of good news too. So there's been a little bit of news recently about how there's been a huge, just progressive donor drought, particularly in giving to organizations like the state bridges organizations, these movement organizations that we're talking about. Billy Wimstat, at Movement Voter Project has written about this. So if you're curious to learn more, check it out. But it's, it's really, really bad because people feel tired this year when it comes to politics. I totally understand that it's very, very understandable. And maybe they're kind of, like, saving their

time and their energy and emotional availability for 2024. But the problem is as Lyzz was saying, we have to organize all year round, we have to be talking to voters this year in order to win next year. And so, because of this, we, we it's very, very important now more than ever to be giving to these organizations to be checking them out to be supporting them. So yes, please come to sisterdistrict.com. Check out our State Bridges program. Give a few dollars if you can. These organizations really are doing the critical work that makes it a long term project that means that we can win next year.

JVN // Is there any, like, promising stuff? Like, are there any, are there any polls where we're really just kicking someone's ass? But we just hate all polls because they're just so cherry picked or what? Like is there, like, some good stuff happening or, like...

LALA WU // We can have a conversation about polling some other time but—in general—but what I will say is that, you know, at the state legislative level, there's actually like not, we say this all the time, but there's not enough attention paid to the state legislative level. So actually, there's not as much publicly available polling. But a decent proxy is seeing how folks are doing on fundraising. And what we can see is that the fundraising is pretty good. Democratic candidates have been outraising their Republican candidates. But unfortunately, Governor Youngkin is also a very first, wealthy man in and of itself and also a powerful fundraiser. So he's also been raising money into his leadership PAC. And he, it's unknown whether or how much he's going to spend it, whether he's saving it for maybe a last-minute presidential bid. But if he does choose to spend it, it could totally wipe out the Democratic advantage.

So, you know, we would love to be in a world where we don't have to raise political money at all. But until that happens, we still have to fight fire with fire. And that's why we go, we go full court press, not only on raising money with an emphasis on raising money early so that people can build strong campaigns, you know, from the ground up, if you've got the money early on in the cycle, you can actually hire staff, you can actually plan, you can actually think about how to build out your programs. And if you get it just the week before the election, which unfortunately is when a lot of money comes in, it's not as useful. I mean, you can do some things with it, but it's way more useful early. So we focus on early money. Um, and now really, like, we're really focused on talking to voters. A beloved figure in the progressive ecosystem, his name is Michael Podhorzer. He talks about this being in the "margin of effort." And so now, especially, it's all about who can talk to more voters who can turn out more votes, more voters who can get them excited about what is gonna happen in November. And early voting has already started. So if you are in Virginia, just just go vote, get your ballot in so that people will stop calling you. And, and vote early, we love early voters, getting that early lead is so, so critical and can really help us win up and down the ballot. So that's my positive note.

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // And Jonathan, I just got a note from our political director that Danica has actually outraised her Republican opponent in every filing deadline that so far this year. So that is amazing.

JVN // Come on! So how's voter access looking for states where that's an uphill battle?

LALA WU // Yes. So where Republican, we know that the Republican playbook is to prevent people from voting because they know that when young people, when people of color, when women, when queer people vote, that we will win, we will win if we vote. And that's why Republicans continue to try to pass laws to restrict voting access wherever they can. But there is hope because if we can win more power in these seats, we can eventually get the majorities. We need to reverse this trend and expand access to the ballot. So if we think strategically, if we think long term, if we think in terms of not just weeks or months, but

years and even decades, then we can get there. By the way, I should also mention that, you know, Sister District thinks about, "Well, what happens once you win and you become a legislator?" We've got a program called Purple District Network that is specifically for folks who have won their races in these close districts, that need some support thinking about, "How do I now govern? You know, how do I learn from other people in the same situation in different states? Like, I'm in a swing district in Wisconsin. I want to talk to somebody in North Carolina. How do we both commiserate? And then also think about how to build power even if we're not in the majority." So these are, these are just some of the different things that we do when we think about as we want to build this long term power.

JVN // I love Sister District. So you mentioned earlier that early voting has already started in Virginia and beyond. What's something that we can all do right now to make sure that our vote counts and to help those candidates?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Early voting has started. If folks live in Virginia or even if you don't go, to, [iwillvote.com](https://www.iwillvote.com) and you can check your registration status. That is something that you can do no matter where you live. That's really important to do ahead even of, you know, 2024 elections. If you live in a state that has easy access to mail in voting, I personally love an absentee ballot. I like to be able to fill it out, you know, over coffee, no judgment. Do my little research, listen to, you know, Jonathan's latest podcast, et cetera. So I will vote dot com. I mentioned before that you can text JOIN to 68998, which will give you more information about Sister District. You can follow us on all the socials. We are actively calling voters right now and I know especially for folks who have never talked to a voter directly, either over the phones or at the doors. It can sound terrifying. Trust me, it's fun. I actually do it every year even though I don't "have to" anymore, but I still do. Lala and I are gonna be in Virginia knocking doors this year. And if you call voters with Sister District, we make it super duper easy. We give you lots of training. Lots and lots of hand holding. We've got staff on the line with you the whole time. And the cool thing is that, in an election year like this in Virginia, for us, it's a huge deal; for average folks, it is something that they're, like, either just learning about now or, you know, it is not, they haven't had, like, the onslaught that people will have next year in 2024. So voters are genuinely often just lovely people. They're, like, "Oh, tell me more. This sounds great." Like, try a little bit of volunteering. It's surprisingly fun.

JVN // Yes. And you could also, like, influence the outcome of an election, which could be amazing in a legal way, which is so cool!

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // You literally could call one of the 733 people that we need to turn out. Yes.

JVN // Ok. So how—if you're listening to this, like, "I just really want to follow these races." How can we follow election night like a Sister District co-founder?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Great question. We will be posting everything on our socials. We tend to be pretty cautious, like, we are not going to announce anything that we are not confident in. I really, really recommend that folks don't, like, go for the Twitter—or X, whatever we're calling it now—the rumor mill, because there can be a lot of, of crazy stuff out there. So um I would follow our socials, you can take, you know, check, of course, papers or record like the New York times. Um If you really want to get nerdy, you can look up VPAP, V-P-A-P, like a pap smear. But VPAP, the Virginia Public Access Project, it is an incredible resource. Um That is only a Virginia thing. Most states don't have such a, a rich resource, but you can check all the returns that come in. And, you know, like I said, watching races like Michael Fagan's, who is gonna be a big bellwether race, That's a really great one but you know, just

take a deep breath and check in the morning, honestly, check Wednesday morning and don't get too, too wrapped up before all the results are in.

JVN // Yes. Ok. I hear what you're saying. You guys, this is so good. I learned so much. I love you both, so much. I respect you both so much. I'm so grateful for all the work that you do. We're gonna end on a rapid fire media moment. Are you all ready?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Ready!

JVN // Now, the first one was like, what was the story that you could not get enough of growing up? But I think I might change this to, like, shaped by as well. You know, it could be like for me it's like Magnificent Seven, Bill Clinton, you know, didn't love Doma did love the suits, the body, the swag, so just—

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // All that sax! [CROSSTALK]

JVN // It can be, it doesn't, it can be OK. So what's a story that shaped you or that you could not get enough of growing up?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // For me also definitiv Clinton. He came to shake a bunch of hands at my elementary school. So that was like a big moment in my childhood. I also, this totally dates me but, and just to get super dark, but I was 16 when 9/11 happened. So that honestly, was pretty big.

JVN // Yeah. Totally. Same and same. Except where I was, like, fourteen—whatever, We're basically the same age. I love that for us. What was, what was yours?

LALA WU // Oh my gosh. I have such amnesia when it comes to what happened during my childhood. But I do remember 1996 being just, like, a really powerful year. I was in middle school and there was so much happening, like, they cloned a sheep princess, Diana died, The Macarena was really big. Do you remember? I think, I don't know—

JVN // Wait, but I literally just Googled this! Like, Diana died in '97 and she died a month after Gianni Versace was murdered. She was at his funeral and then she died like not even a month later.

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Oh my gosh. OK. That is—

JVN // But '96 was huge! You had an election. You had dole, you had fucking Clinton, you had the Atlanta Games. You had the magnificent seven. You had the fucking bombing. The 96 was, like, a huge, it was huge.

LALA WU // It was wild. So I, I for some reason that I, I've conflated a few things it sounds like, but it's really, like, it was in that region also, music was way better, I have to say.

JVN // I was still really into, like, Jagged Little Pill. Even though that was '94. I just, I will never get—okay, what's your current pop culture obsession?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // The new season of Sex Education that just dropped.

JVN // Slay! Lala?

LALA WU // I am a little behind but I just started watching Beef, and it's so good.

JVN // It's incredible. You're so good. What's a recent "Today, I Learned" moment for you?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // OK. The, this is a little gross but I got my hands on some, some sea urchin the other night to cook at home and in YouTubeing, "How the hell do you eat sea urchin or, like, how do you cook it?" I learned that the yellow part that you eat is the gonads. It's not an egg sack,

JVN // Oh, it's the balls?!

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Yes. Yes!

JVN // Cool!

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // And I put that right in my mouth. So, yeah.

JVN // Yes, come on! I love! OK, Lala?

LALA WU // I swear, we did not coordinate our answers to this. But my Today I Learned moment is that the word avocado comes from the Aztec word for "testicle" because of its shape and reputation as an aphrodisiac.

JVN // Wow!

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // We're very ball forward today at Sister District, I guess.

LALA WU // We didn't coordinate it. I don't know what to tell you.

JVN // You guys, I'm, like, obsessed. He's, like, by far our best so far on that. It looks so good. What's a meme or a GIF that made you LOL recently?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Oh my God. I, I, I hate to say that I've been really indulging in all the Lauren Boebert memes...

JVN // You, you don't have to be ashamed. That's perfectly welcome here. Did you have a particular one that you thought was the best?

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // I, I have to say that, like, I really, you know, similar to Sinema, like, I want, I want to be, like, sex positive. Obviously, I want to be, like, I don't want to be here to shame anybody, but it just is so funny.

JVN // Yeah, it really is

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Beetlejuice! [CROSSTALK]

JVN // Yeah, it's not even Moulin Rouge, something, like, a little sexier, like, we just got wrapped up, you know? Yeah, it's so true. I really liked it when she said that she liked to—in that TMZ clip—that she liked to take, like, alleviate issues from her constituent shoulders versus, like, create burdens. And I was like, "Really, that's what you think you've accomplished in office is to alleviate issues from your constituents' shoulders? Like, get the fuck out of here. Gun toting fucking nightmare. Fucking," Jesus Christ. OK, but la what about you? Recent GIF?

LALA WU // Well, I feel obligated to say the Sister District social has been on fire with the election related Barbie memes this summer.

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // We do love ourselves a Barbie meme, yes.

JVN // Barbie was on fire this summer. She did so good. What's a moment of joy or queer joy that we can end on?

LALA WU // So I feel like this is a really appropriate one because it's about Tennessee. And are we, should we just share this one, Liz? Because it's such a good closer.

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Yeah, yeah, definitely.

LALA WU // We're just gonna share this one. OK. But Tennessee just elected its first openly trans person to public office. And this is just all in the context of state legislators banning gender affirming care, medical care for minors in March. You know, and, like, all of the other attacks on LGBTQ people and trans people in particular. So the fact that this state was able to elect Olivia Hill, her historic election to the Nashville Metro Council makes her the first transgender lawmaker in the state.

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // And that is a moment of love.

JVN // Yes. Come on, Olivia. Oh my God, Lala, Liz. Thank you so much for coming on. Thank you so much for everything you do with Sister District. And we just appreciate you both so much y'all. If you're not following them already, get it together, support Sister District. It's a great, just incredible organization. I learned so much from you all every time. I see you and just thank you again so so much. It's always such a pleasure.

LYZZ SCHWEGLER // Thank you. Thank you.

JVN // We love you.

LALA WU // We love you.