**Interviewer:**  **Jake Clements**

**Interviewee: Brandon Williford**

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**Location: University of Milwaukee, WI**

**Event: C21 Tabling Trust Event**

**List of Acronyms: BW: Brandon Williford, IN: Interviewer**

**File: Brandon\_Williford\_4.4.2024**

IN: Alight, we’ll have you just start with your name.

BW: Yeah, I'm Brandan Williford, community organizer here in Milwaukee. I'm also a former political candidate and also on the board of the Milwaukee Turners. So yeah.

IN: All right. And do we have your consent to record this interview?

BW: You do have my consent.

IN: All right. Thank you very much. Now when you think about the process of voting in the United States... here we have this scale. You slid it all the way to that trust. And if we were giving a number value to the scale, let's say the very most trustful end is going to be a one and the very most distrust end is going to be a ten, what number would you say you're at right now?

BW: Yeah, I believe I'm at a one for the most trust in our government and our voting process, just because the process, while it could be more transparent, it does work as far as bringing attention to important issues in our community and you know, holding our elected officials accountable, so yeah.

IN: All right. And can you share the story of why personally you put yourself all the way at that end or just a little bit more reasoning behind that.

BW: Yeah. So you know, being involved in the electoral process myself and being in a kind of firsthand hitting the doors, talking to people, learning about their issues, I think that it increased my trust in the legitimacy of the voting process because the voting process is super hands on. It takes community organizing, it takes working with folks in our community. It even it takes explaining certain issues on the ballot for us to actually provide those meaningful changes in our democracy. So yeah, I am very trustful in the process because of those reasons.

IN: All right. And so our next question is, where would you like to be on this scale? You're already out of number one for the most trustful. For those who aren't at one or are maybe leaning towards that distrust side, do you have anything that you would like to say to them, maybe encourage them to trust in the vote?

BW: Yeah. So I think that you know there is a level of cynicism in the electoral process and when it comes to voting. This can be due to just a lack of transparency sometimes that government has. Sometimes it can be a difficulty in language that we use upon the ballot. I think that in order to increase trust in order to move people from the zero to the one, we need to make sure people are involved in our community. We need to make sure elected officials are taking the time to meet at neighborhood block associations, going to community forums and just going to community events in general so they can have... so the community can have access to them and they can ask them the harder questions on why certain things are being done. So yeah, I think it's a hands-on process, you know, from our government to get involved, but also it takes community leaders and people who are very well and informed in the process and knows about the political process to go out and and also raise their voice to let folks know more about how to increase trust in government.

IN: All right, one final question. Do you have a message for those who maybe don't think that their vote matters or maybe they're just not inclined to vote? They don't think that it's something that they need to do?

BW: Yeah, you know, so every vote matters. Every voice matters. I think that, again, there's a certain level of political cynicism that happens in a voting process. The thing is that elected officials and political candidates use that data. They use that data that voters--that the words that voters are turning out on the issues that voters are voting for-- to actually make meaningful changes. If you do not go out and vote, the elected officials do not have that data. Sometimes people do think that there is a magical board out there that the police have that can, you know, or elected officials have that can highlight every issue. The tree just went down on your block and this signal just went off on this board to say like, “Hey, there's a tree that went down.” No, that is not the case. We need people to get out to vote, to raise awareness on these issues for elected officials to make those changes.

IN: All right. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

BW: We have a very important election coming up in November. This is an election on democracy. So, if you are very concerned about the state on which our democracy can head into, I encourage you to go out and vote in November. And also pay attention for local elections. We do have a local election happening in August as well, so be aware of that.

IN: All right. Thank you very much.