

Why I Wrote “How We Win the Civil War” final.wav

Sharline Chiang [00:00:13] Welcome to Democracy in Color with Steve Phillips, a color conscious podcast about politics. I'm Sharline Chiang, the co-host of this podcast, and I'm thrilled to say that our special guest today is none other than Steve Phillips himself. Today's episode is the third in a four part series focused on the themes of Steve's new book, *How We Win the Civil War*, which comes out folks on October 18th. Mark your calendars. I just wanted to give a little background in terms of how I met Steve. I was first introduced to Steve in 2014 by Almaz AbiNader. She's the co-founder of an amazing organization called Voices of Our Nation Arts Foundation. It's a national network of writers of color. And I was referred to her by her friend Amy Allison. Many of you may know Aimee Allison is the founder of *She The People*, and she used to be president of Democracy in Color. Amy was working with Steve also at that time, and she had really been encouraging Steve to write a book because she realized that his perspectives on what was happening in our country around politics and race were just there was nobody writing about that at the time, and there was nobody saying what he was saying, and there was nobody who had the analysis that he had, namely how the demographic shifts in our country were impacting politics. So Aimee reached out to Almas, knowing that Almas knows a lot of writers, and Almas reached out to me. I had been involved in the organization for a long time. Almas said, There's this guy, he's brilliant. He's got a book in him. He has to get his book out, but he needs somebody to help him on this book project, someone to be kind of like his editor or book coach and almost knew I was a journalist in my first lifetime. As I say, I'm a writer and editor by trade. But what Almas maybe didn't know or she didn't really ask me about the time was I didn't really have either a background in politics, and I didn't actually quite have that much interest in electoral politics, to tell you the truth. But she does encourage me to meet up with Steve. So Steve and I met for the first time in Berkeley by where I live at one what used to be my favorite. I used to call it like my private. Not so private office is called the Imperial Court is this lovely Chinese teahouse near where I live and it shut down recently. I think Pandemic kind of hit it hard. So our IP and Pulaski Court and I sat down with Steve and the first thing I said, as I said, listen, I've never written a book. I've never been a book coach. I'm not that into politics. I don't know if I'm really the person for you. But I remember Steve saying, You know what? I've never written a book and I like that you don't have specific political experience, but I do like that you have journalistic and edit, you know, an editors experience. So let's try this and let's do it together. And if and if it doesn't work out, doesn't work out, and if it does great, two years later, Brown is the new white. His first book came out. It became a New York Times bestseller. He went on to found democracy in color, went on to national TV and elevated his sort of impact and reach in terms of a national thought leader in politics. So I will say it definitely worked out, and that is the short story of how we met. So Steve, let me know, is that also how you remember it? Because those are all the like the parts of our story that stand out to me when I think about when we first met.

Steve Phillips [00:03:44] Well, first, I just want to congratulate the podcast booking team for being able to get such an amazing guest for today's podcast that I hear he's wonderful. His mother has said that he's brilliant. And so I think you guys are very lucky to have today's guests.

Sharline Chiang [00:04:00] Yes. Thank you for making the time. We know your schedule's very busy, especially now that you're coming out with your new book. And so we had to really work hard on your sketch.

Steve Phillips [00:04:08] Yeah, I'm excited to turn the turn the microphone and.

Sharline Chiang [00:04:12] Then have this conference. Now, this this is so great. I've been wanting to do this actually probably since the beginning of the two of us doing this podcast. I'm like, I really want to just interview Steve. And now organically, there's perfect timing and reason. Speaking of that, I never want to assume that anyone who is listening isn't listening for the first time. So for those who might be listening for the first time, I wanted to give a little bit of background on who Steve is. Steve is a national political leader. He's a bestselling author and columnist. He's the author of a New York Times best seller. *Brown is the New White*, as I mentioned, and the forthcoming book, *How We Win the Civil War*. Steve is a columnist for *The Guardian* and *The Nation* and contributes to other publications. He is also, as I mentioned, usually the host of this podcast. He's founder of *Democracy in Color*, which is a political media organization dedicated to race, politics and the multicultural, progressive new American majority. Pre-pandemic, you could often find him at a local Phil's coffee shop in San Francisco, working on his book, manuscripts or articles. But these days, he's often found in his home office enjoying a delivery from Chipotle that may or may not include the correct order of chips and salsa. Much to his chagrin. Welcome, Steve.

Steve Phillips [00:05:29] But actually, it's I still have Phil's coffee every day, but it's still delivered. So it was somebody that had a note. They actually had a sign on the door during the pandemic that during the height of the pandemic, saying, do not ring the doorbell unless I married you, birthed you, or ordered food from you. So I have kept the Phil's tradition alive. But as the whole interesting thing about trying to create a structure in a ritual, in the context of writing a book and in the context, obviously, of a global pandemic. So that was an important element of.

Sharline Chiang [00:06:00] That, actually. Let me ask you real quickly, how does it feel so far to be on your own show?

Steve Phillips [00:06:04] Well, it's it's a different kind of preparation that makes sure I'm going to be able to do all the questions. And that is kind of fascinating. The you know, you're often in your own head so much. And so it's like it's it's, you know, intriguing, amusing around what parts of the story are interesting to other people. So I'm looking forward to the conversation.

Sharline Chiang [00:06:27] Yeah, so am I. So let's get into it first. First question's got to be inquiring minds want to know, why did you write this book? Why now and why title it *How We Win the Civil War*?

Steve Phillips [00:06:39] Well, in some ways, it's a I mean, it's you remember it. So Mark Fabbro, as our editor at *The New Press*, which has been, you know, a great partner on this journey as well. And so they published the first book, *Brown is the New White*, and that one I did because I was quite a lot, *Wolf*. And it just seems so obvious to me that Obama had won because of an extension of the civil rights movement. And, you know, is as with maybe a drinking game now my mentions of Jesse Jackson, but that was a formative experience. It was illuminating experience and that he increased his vote from three and a half million to 7 million people from 84 to 88 brought all these people of color into the process, expanded the electorate, showed the potential. And so it was just pretty clear that when Obama won, you had a continuation of that movement, this, you know, small R, small C rainbow coalition and people of color, progressive whites, just, you say, when the old minority has come together in the new majority. And so I just thought it was a given, but people did not understand that. And there was all this, you know, reverting to the

traditional form of politics was trying to court swing white swing voters. And so I wanted to make the case and that was why I wrote. Brown is the new way is to really explain that Obama's election or reelection was an extension of that. And so Mark came to us around writing, Do we want to write a second book? It was as if the March, April 2020 and I was like, Well, yeah, let's use the Civil War as a metaphor. And then like, you know, seven, eight months later, people stormed the U.S. Capitol carrying the Confederate flag, chanting racist slurs and whatnot. So fundamentally, I think it's to understand the the severity and the intensity of what elected Trump, the forces behind him, the level of attacks and fight that we were in. I think people were still not understanding the severity of it and seeing it more as just part of the normal give and take of politics or it's not that at all. And so I really wanted to ring the alarm bell around the severity of the intent of the fight that we're facing. And so that's why I titled How We Win the Civil War. And then the second part being about the how we actually win and looking at the places where we where we are, we've been winning.

Sharline Chiang [00:08:59] I remember actually when you did go back to Mark and said, this is the framing that I'm thinking is something around the fact that the Civil War never ended and that we are in a civil war. And again, this was in early 2020, and I'll admit even I kind of were, ooh, that feels a little bit that has a certain charge to it. It feels a little bit extreme to me at the time that I just wasn't so sure about that phrasing. Like, we are in a civil war. But now it's like, you know, like you said, since especially January 6th, but throughout this year, if you Google Civil War, far more articles come up about our current politics than the original Civil War in terms of, you know, on Google that the.

Steve Phillips [00:09:42] January six insurrection has had actual sweatshirts. MAGA, Civil War January six, 2021.

Sharline Chiang [00:09:48] Speaking of history, I wanted to give listeners a little insight to your personal history a little bit more. One of the things I love about what I learned in your first book, Brown, is The New Way, is a little bit more about your own childhood and how you grew up. You had written about and you've talked about in the past how you grew up in Ohio. In the sixties and seventies and how your parents were only able to obtain a home in a certain neighborhood with better schools because a white friend of theirs offered to purchase it for them first. And that, I'm assuming, was because it was nearly impossible at the time for African-Americans not only often to get loans, but to get loans and to purchase homes in certain neighborhoods. And I love that story and I love the way you tell it, because it gives me insight into not only you and your family, but it represents something about American history and that time. What were some of the influences from your childhood that have inspired you to take this particular life path of work in the area of racial, social justice and politics and activism? And for you to continuing to be a vocal champion for multiracial democracy. You're often the only voice in the room. Not only often you're the only person of color in a room, but even in democratic and even progressive politics, you're often the only one saying what you're saying. And and specifically, let's say, in this current era, this current year or past years, that you're one of the few people specifically calling out whiteness in saying that that's what the main thing that we're up against, including in politics in America.

Steve Phillips [00:11:23] Yeah, no, I'm I am quite literally a child of the civil rights movement. Right. Born in 1964, that story that you talk about, we moved in 64 to our home and, you know, 26, 37 Dartmoor Road in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. And they would not sell the house to my parents because they were black and so they would get all white. Lawyer Byron Krantz, as a civil rights and fair housing lawyer to buy the house and then deeded

over to our parents. You know, my mom slept in her clothes when we first because she was free of the house being firebombed. They had a meeting across the street of some of the neighbors to talk about. And what my dad like crashed the meeting, but I didn't know he was that. He didn't like, you know, confront. But he went to the meeting and someone was saying, what are we going to do with Byron Krantz, the man who had sold the house, string him up? So my actually my dad told me that story. Election night, 2012, when Obama won reelection.

Sharline Chiang [00:12:17] Oh, wow.

Steve Phillips [00:12:18] We were at dinner with my father in law, and my dad was trying to show my father in law how to use Facebook. And my father in law had no interest. So there was that piece. So the whole fair housing movement, the civil rights movement was very much in my DNA from an early stage. One of my earliest memories is my father took me to see Martin Luther King when he came to Cleveland, 1967. And I read every single biography of Martin Luther King in elementary school library. So I had that dimension. And then my grandfather was a minister, Glenville Church of God in New York. COCHRANE And that whole and it's funny, the different things I asked my mom was want to get the church to hear the singing in the choir, in music. I wanted to hear the sermon like the words, the preaching, you know. And so that was very much part of my tradition as well. And I always loved politics. And so, like, I think like some people like gardening, I love politics. And got talked on a prior podcast about our next door neighbor. Art Brooks ran for state legislature on the house, eight years old, and we're going to the victory party next door. So those are like the lot of the streams. And so that is in fact, why I feel that the 84 presidential campaign and Jesse Jackson in particular in that vehicle were so resonant for me at that point in time. You know, 20 year old black man in this country having a direct title civil rights movement, somebody who had been there of Martin Luther King having political campaign. And the audacity of that campaign was been an inspiration to me in terms of the boldness of it. Bold leadership, new direction and wrapping it all in religious metaphor spoke to me very, very, very deeply. Right now, one of the first times I heard Jesse speak was in 1984 in East Palo Alto, and the election was on June 5th. And he concluded with this whole analogy and this metaphor around that the movement had been through crucifixion and that King's assassination of 68 and Robert Kennedy's assassination, that was crucifixion. Their blood ran, our tears flowed, but some waited upon the Lord and they renewed their strength. Like Eagles 68, it was the crucifixion. You Shall Come Alive. June five, it's resurrection. So he was able to hide all of that together in ways that almost 40 years, 40 plus years later still resonate with me. But that's what set me on the path to see how all those things could be injected into the U.S. politics continue, the civil rights movement continue the struggle for justice, and do that in the political sphere.

Sharline Chiang [00:14:49] Speaking of movement and justice, you write in your intro to how we win the Civil War that this book, your new book, is a love letter to the folks who have done the work, who are doing the work and want to do the work. What did you mean by that.

Steve Phillips [00:15:04] At this stage of the game? I've done all sides of this. In terms of social change in politics. I Have you been a candidate and an elected official? I ran for one school board in San Francisco around four. Lost the state legislature in 2002. I've been a donor to a lot, a lot a lot of campaigns, every almost literally every other text or call I get from a candidate asking for money. And I've been an organizer who's done the work, organizing precinct walks, contacting voter, turning out voters and getting them to the

polls, etc.. The organizer work is the most important and it's the hardest, but it's the least appreciated as well. And so somebody asked me what I was excited about, about the book, and I said that people of color, period were always like patronized and turned the men and places of our politics as well as like, yeah, yeah, yeah, that people of color and stuff, that's important. But we have to win. So we have to do this other stuff over here, downplay people of color stuff. But I'm like, No, we're winning the places where we are actually winning. Georgia, Arizona, nine out of ten elections in Virginia, flipping the Harris County government in Texas. But there are signs bigger than many of the states within this country flipping the entire county. San Diego, California, which is bigger than many states in this country, that's the winning. But we're not listening to those people. We're not doing that work. Right. And so, you know, people you know that and I try to feature those folks in the book right now. Trammell win for most real. Bless Alejandro Gomez. I'm Andrea Guerrero. Tomorrow I'm Judy Goldman that were these are the leaders. So not only are they incredible leaders, but they're also amazing entrepreneurs who started organizations from scratch and built them up into multimillion dollar powerhouses that are flipping these different areas. But it's still not respected. I mean, Stacey Abrams isn't even still respected the extent that she should be, given the enormity of the the impact she's had on this country's politics. But doing the work to flip Georgia, to flip the whole United States Congress. And so I wanted both for the world to know that this is, in fact, how we win. But I also wanted these leaders and these organizers to know that I see them and that I appreciate them and I value and recognize. And so it is a love letter to those particular people, but to everybody who's doing that kind of work and there are lots of people doing that kind of work, but it's very unappreciated in our society, which is the height of irony, because it is in fact the very most important thing we need to do to change this country in our direction.

Sharline Chiang [00:17:41] Okay. So speaking about the book, I want to just dove in more and just ask you, what are the main central messages and arguments of how we win the Civil War?

Steve Phillips [00:17:49] So we touched on a little bit, but just to to crystallize it. So there's two parts of the book. Well, there were going to be three, but I took I it was two long stuff. The third was originally the topic was going to be after we win the Civil War. And I remember that very much. I had shared that. And that was going to be I was.

Sharline Chiang [00:18:06] Going to say, you're just telling me that the book you know, your book, which now I.

Steve Phillips [00:18:11] Think was going to be called Once We Win the Civil War, I will file my computer call. And once we win the Civil War.

Sharline Chiang [00:18:16] Another book?

Steve Phillips [00:18:17] Well, yeah, I got it. Know that was going to be like the policy agenda and the vision for what we could actually do. So that is, in essence, what the epilog of the book is. I try to, you know, tease out what that could look like, but it took a lot to make these two points and come to your original remarks about the the visceral reaction like, oh, Civil War, that's very, you know, provocative, etc., and it's uncomfortable for people. And so but I had to explain in incontrovertible fashion that the Confederates have never stopped fighting the Civil War and to really understand the severity of the attacks that we are under and to contextualize them by showing the through line from the Civil War itself all the way up through the current Supreme Court, just disregarding, you know,

decades of settled decision making and trying to undo all these changes. There's a lot of dismay because there's a lot of surprised there were. How could this be happening in the in our country and how could it be happening in democracy? If you actually understand that they used to on the regular round up people, take them out and hang them from trees. Civil rights activists Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney in Mississippi in 1964, when we were trying to bring democracy to Mississippi, were murdered, and nobody in Mississippi who had a position of authority would investigate. They had to have the federal government come in and investigate to actually then find their bodies, and then they couldn't even prosecute the people who killed them for decades. And again, that was another piece. And then you have when Ronald Reagan ran for office in 1980, he went to where Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney were killed and kicked off his campaign. And so when you. More appreciate the intensity of those fights, then we're be disabused of the idea that we're all operating from the same set of rules, the same social contract, and if they would, we could just get them to listen to reason they don't care about reason. Therefore, they went to war and killed hundreds of thousands of other Americans because they wanted to keep it as the white country. And so I really wanted to drive that message home to contextualize this moment and so that we would see that the true ferocity and nature of the fight that we're facing and gird ourselves for that battle. And then the second part is how we win. And some of my friends, but I've expressed I hope it's a hopeful book. And then my wife has said it's intense and the first part is very intense. And at that point, I, you know, as a black man in America trying to recount those stories, I felt an obligation actually to bring home that history in ways that would resonate. But as I said before, we are in fact, winning. Right. We had a white nationalist in the White House when we ousted him and then we flipped the entire United States Congress because the man who preaches from where Martin Luther King preaches won an election, the US Senate. And then we were able to do a whole very significance that we passed the first climate law ever basically in this country because of all of that work. But somewhat similar to the brown is the new white period. We're not looking to the leaders and the organizations learning the lessons, the places where we are winning. And so that's the second half of the book is to really try to make that point crystal clear. And that that's when you had encouraged me to brand the the strategies and what we call a liberation battle plan.

Sharline Chiang [00:21:56] That's right.

Steve Phillips [00:21:56] And so that is the way that we go about winning. But it's not conventional wisdom. And so that's why it was important to tell that part of the story.

Sharline Chiang [00:22:05] Yeah. I love I mean, I love the whole book. And it is so powerful, the history that you lay out. But a lot of your low key plug, the books are more, which is that I think the second half of the book for me, what I really love about it is the storytelling of the people today, including arguably a lot of young people. A lot of people, you know, a lot of them are younger than us, if not maybe all of them. But the incredible stories of how different leaders in the progressive movement, progressive political sphere, how they have year upon year built up to these recent wins. And you just break it down. You make it really clear. And you also tell in such a moving way, personalize way, their personal stories, their family's stories, and it just humanizes them. It makes you realize each one of these people could be ourselves, could be a friend. You know, these are just regular people who are very dedicated and have been able to create and influence sort of our democracy in such positive ways.

Steve Phillips [00:23:12] Yeah. And I want and that point, I want to actually make sure I give the whole shout outs to last week a word like the appreciation to my wife, Susan,

because obviously it's not only the, you know, been my greatest partner and cheerleader, but she's a voracious reader. And so Susan reads like a book a week, two books a week on a regular. Well, then she'll be like, I finished my book, right? So I'll try to scramble to get other recommendations. So she is you really drilled home in me the importance of stories to be able to communicate. And so not just telling, but showing and being able to have things be more accessible. So be accessible. For every part of the book, I've tried to find and illuminate and tell a story from the history parts through the the stories of the leaders in the book. We're talking about, you know, traveling in Virginia's parents who were, you know, refugees from Vietnam. But the amount of incredible determination and courage to, you know, flee in a in a boat, to flee from a prison camp in Vietnam and be able to. So I think that lends a level of engagement, intensity, accessibility, etc.. But that really is from that framing in that focus is really a direct result of how Susan has helped me to become a better writer and storyteller.

Sharline Chiang [00:24:37] Great advice. Thank you, Susan. It definitely comes through in the book, the history part, a bunch of great, amazing stories that you lay out with the leaders. What are you hoping will happen once the book is out again? The book comes out on October 18th. What do you what is your deepest wish in terms of the resultant impact of the book in the world, namely on politics in this country, on our democracy?

Steve Phillips [00:25:04] I hope we will start doing what we need to. Do to win. And so that means looking to learning from and following the leadership of the people in the places who are winning. And it means and understanding those strategies, embracing those strategies moving forward. And so it's is fundamentally the shifting progressive politics and policy, because policy is important. Part of politics is it inspires people. And the thing that was quite surprising in a good way was the Biden decision to go bigger on the student debt relief. And the reason that they wanted to do that, they knew they need to send a message to young people and people of color and to inspire them. So that's a critical part of it. And so the question is, who are we focused on and what are we focused on? And so are we, in fact, trying to address justice, inequality and moving this country towards being more fair, just an equal multiracial democracy? And are we backing the people leading those fights and then are we moving the resources towards those people? So hundreds where actually it's actually literally billions of dollars get moved in the politics every cycle. But the people who are doing the best, most important work always have to fight and scratch and claw to get funded. So one of the part of liberation battle plan is strong civic engagement organizations. Those organizations are always hand to mouth. Trying to get some resources they've been built up towards is very effective. But they should they should have literally ten times as much money as they are. Those are the three. Most have \$30 million we could easily was that easily we could definitely flip Texas the way that George and Arizona have begun to move and flip. If we invested the right amounts of money, the right scale, we had community organizers all over the state. Organizations like TARP had 30 million instead of \$3 million. If you had a massive investment in civic engagement in all of the faith organizations that there's a staff person to get everybody out we really maximized. Texas is only 30% white at this point in time. And, you know.

Sharline Chiang [00:27:16] It's such a little known fact. Yes. I remember today double, triple checking that out for you when you wrote that in your manuscript, because I was like, wait a minute. Is this number right?

Steve Phillips [00:27:26] Exactly. Majority of people in Texas are black and Latino.

Sharline Chiang [00:27:30] I can't believe it.

Steve Phillips [00:27:32] But that's not how our politics flows. And so that's what I'm trying to I want people to see. And that that's the is really to follow the example of Georgia. Right. When we talked, we think before on this podcast, whether we met Stacey ten years ago and Stacey said at that point in time, she said, we lose in Georgia by 200,000 votes. There's a million and a half people of color who don't vote. I'm going to go get them registered to vote. And she set about doing that over the course of a decade. And then we ousted Trump and then we flipped the whole Senate because of that work that can play itself out if we are smart and invest that it could happen faster if we moved the amount of resources. And so I'm trying to affect conventional wisdom around strategy. What are the places in the people we should be backing? What does leadership look like and not look like? And so those are some of the outcomes that I'm hoping for.

Sharline Chiang [00:28:23] I've now worked with you on two books. I've been just from the beginning, so incredibly impressed and sort of to me, it's mind boggling how you're just you're so focused on these projects and you're so disciplined and you just crank it out. And I have to laugh because in the beginning of both the first book and this current book, you would say, Well, I don't. I wonder how many pages I can get out and and a little nervous, like, do I have enough to say this book, by the way, for everybody, it's over 300 pages, which is very readable. But, you know, you've got so much, you pack it in. I want to ask you, what's your process like from beginning from a blank page to writing a first draft and then like getting it down to a manuscript, you know, in in short, like, can you I'm as a writer myself who has still not written up my own book. I have book projects, but I find it I'm just, you know, kind of like wanted to get a little insight to your your process.

Steve Phillips [00:29:20] Well, this fear of the blank page is profound. I would live in terror of the blank page. And I've probably had a conversation with some of my another writing buddy friend of mine, Jennifer Posner, in New York about this and that she very much takes the time to go through. So there's the writer and Lamont as his book Bird by Bird. And of.

Sharline Chiang [00:29:45] That book.

Steve Phillips [00:29:46] Yes. And so but she has this kind of which was the shitty first draft in that just get something done and then you can go back and edit it and improve it. And just getting that first draft done is psychologically, emotionally relieving to me. So when I do these drafts, I use the writing software Scrivener because it can it can divide your screen. And so I can have notes on one side and. And I could do the text on the other. Mm hmm. And then just getting it down, it really relieves my stress, like, okay, now I have something to actually work with here. And there was not just this blank page piece. And so then you go round and round and then and and then sometimes you were in a process of writing a book where you have an editor, where you send a draft to your book, coach an editor, and they send you back, which I did not know until this book that they have. Microsoft Word has this has this feature where it tells you the number of edits and you open up and it says 300 edits were actually made by Sharline Chiang out of chapters.

Sharline Chiang [00:30:50] It's a little bit of a of a disease, but I like to think that it's a sorry, not sorry the choice.

Steve Phillips [00:30:58] Yes. There's definitely a sense of the quality of the product. It is a valuable contribution in terms of the emotions in the moment. That's a whole other issue. But we are still here together eight years later. Yes.

Sharline Chiang [00:31:12] Thank you. Thank you for putting up with what I call my my red pen, even though it shows up, probably, you know, I don't know, yellow highlights in track track changes. Speaking about the book process, you know, what has it been like? I know you've talked about you often felt this, especially with this book project. I think that this spiritual connection you have felt with the authors in books that you had surrounded yourself with while you were writing, that you were delving into while you were writing. Just wondering what that journey was like to get to this point with having absorbed so much writing as a lot of the other other black writers from the past and present. And who were some of the key writers that inspired you for this book project in particular?

Steve Phillips [00:31:59] Yeah, no, I've always writing has always been a thing for me and in my life. My Uncle Rienzi was a journalist and he consulted to get the details of the story, but he was a reporter, one of the first black reporters to cover the White House back in the fifties, I believe, was the Washington star paper. And then one formed his own paper. He formed a black paper, Amsterdam News quickly on that story. And so back to the thing about my process, I one point I storyboarded out and kind of took index cards around here. You should tell this in this chapter. And I had and I put them on this piece of cardboard and then I print.

Sharline Chiang [00:32:37] I love it. By the way. It's so analog.

Steve Phillips [00:32:39] Well, yes. Then I turned the cardboard over and what it was I had forgotten I had this. It was the actual newspaper that my uncle had created the Amsterdam News, and thought that he had laid it out. And so I actually still had that. And then I was laying it, laying, you know, writing my book out this in this way book.

Sharline Chiang [00:32:59] About the ancestors talking to us.

Steve Phillips [00:33:01] Seriously. It was a very deeply that was very, very powerful. And then, you know, I was an English major in Afro-American Studies major at Stanford and the very much into books and writers. And so I have a lot of books, so I have hundreds of books in that because it was Pandemic and I wasn't it fills and I was in my attic. I was surrounded by all these books and all of these writers in general. And so there was a point in this book part of it originally I was kind of like, this information is not there. People need to know who's doing the work. Let me just get it out there. And that's the most important thing. And then somebody someone with Brown as the new way, right? I reached the point where I was like, yes, the content needs to get out there, but I also can try to make it as good as possible, which is another level of energy, effort and time, frankly, in terms of being able to move the thing forward. And apologies to the new press for missing the original deadlines and so on. That process, I guess, is back to being about stories, though. One of the probably the best thing I've ever read in terms of compelling stories is visible work. Wilkerson's book Caste. And she just has these amazing, amazing metaphors that illuminate the I won't even try to capture them here, but I really commend that. And so I whenever I need to get inspired, I would read some of caste and then I would go see, okay, what can I try to do, my attempt to tell this? Sorry about, you know, the anthrax being released in the Antarctica and how that's equivalent to what Trump has unleashed in this country. And so think about her experience with the plumber who came to her house and draws this larger is white guy and they funds connection point so that just being I felt

like in relationship with Isabel Wilkerson and then the other very moving experience for me was June Jordan is one of my two favorite writers of all time. Jim Jordan and James Baldwin are my two favorite writers, and I have a niece, Leah, who is at Barnard, and I had forgotten that June had written this essay called Notes of a Barnard Dropout. And so I ordered this book that had her essays, and I sent a copy, Talia, with an inscription about this was very impactful to me, etc.. And the other thing about it, because you mentioned a top columnist, The Guardian, the Foster, New York Times, etc., and I've had these issues around identity and my platform big enough, etc., etc.. June wrote for The Progressive magazine, which was not very well known at all, but she wrote amazing work. And so that was part of my thing. I was like, Well, let me just try to do work as good as possible. And then maybe 30 years from now, somebody will send my work to their nicer nephew the way that I did to mine. And so that was a part of that pattern of passing the baton or historical context.

Sharline Chiang [00:35:48] I love it. Okay. So before we wrap up, I definitely want to let people know how to get the book. So can you tell us when can people buy the book and how can they buy the book?

Steve Phillips [00:36:00] So book is out October 18th and people can order now. And actually, some people who have preordered are actually getting the book and actually putting and surviving before that. But so people should order it. And we are asking people to, you know, get it. Think about it. Are any friends or families or coworkers that may be interested in the book? It'd be helpful to be able to get, you know, copies for them. And I know that we've been down this road before in terms of how to become a best seller, in terms of it's like how do you kind of coordinate and organize and channel all the energy and support networks that you have? And then that whole process is actually recorded by the numbers of books sold leading up to and during your launch week. And they look at all the different outlets where it actually comes from. So what actually would be most helpful for us, for listeners of this podcast, is for people to go to Amazon and buy the book. And so I know a lot of people sometimes feel like Amazon doesn't have good morals, actually spent like 10 minutes looking at Barnes and Noble to see where they like a more virtuous company and whatnot, and they actually aren't in terms of who actually controls them. And so we are doing a lot of buying from independent bookstores and we are trying to spread this around. But Amazon actually, just in terms of the best seller formula, frankly, is a key part of this. We need to have people buying books from them. So that would be very helpful if people could do that and for a for a good cause. So you can just find it on Amazon, how we won the Civil War and we'll have a link in the show notes around that and we would deeply appreciate it. And I think the other thing about the you know, this isn't I didn't spend two years of my life doing this just so that I could have another book and just so that I could be, you know, whatever interviews or whatnot I want why I wanted this country to be more just an equal place. And so I'm trying to tell that story and trying to lift up the lessons and leaders who are not respected and not sufficiently respected for us to win. And so I do feel that the success of this book will help to impact US politics by elevating the prominence and the significance and the credibility of the people in it, and that that will hopefully impact strategy and spending and the political direction of our movement. So that's why we really need everybody to do what they can in terms of buying it in in their friends and family to buy it, buying it for friends and family, etc..

Sharline Chiang [00:38:27] And that's it. You heard it, folks. Go to Amazon, preorder the eBook. We appreciate you all so much. He'll make it a New York Times best seller so that those who are in decision making positions really pay attention to notice. And so before we wrap up, I know, you know, we do a lot of you and I do a lot of like ribbing each other and

joking around a lot of times on this podcast. But I wanted to take this opportunity to just let you know how much I deeply appreciate you for inviting me on to this journey. I tell people all the time, it's like Sliding Doors, that meeting at Imperial Court, when you decided to trust me and take me on as your book coach and book editor, it changed my life. I have had an amazing journey and experience in and I've learned so much from you and have had the chance to work with amazing people from the incredible teams that you formed. Namely the democracy colored team. And to be on this podcast with you. And so I just continue to have so much gratitude, appreciation, and I've had a front row seat to watching you grow exponentially as both a writer and national political thought leader. It's been an immense privilege and I am looking forward to continuing on the journey. And here we are about to launch another book. So thank you so much as you've it means so much to me. And I also you and Susan have just been so inspiring to me as a human on this planet.

Steve Phillips [00:39:52] Well, I appreciate that. And I do want to say that, you know, for all the joking that I do and about your process and your level of focus, that I absolutely believe that the quality of the products that we have put out in the world are immensely better because of your contribution and your partnership. And so I'm deeply grateful for that. And I do want to just take the moment to thank the other people on our team that really been blessed, to have an amazing team of people who play critical roles in all parts of this one just kind of putting up with me, but also lending the talents of the whole democracy colored team in all of your purple on Friday. And it was Akuma and Philips that are people Julie Martinez Ortega, which her data chops and expertise have all been critical and instrumental to being the success I you know an impact able to have period and also I think in terms of the of this book as well and it's it's successful everybody has pitched in to that whole process. And I want to also I think just maybe this is the wrapping piece of, you know, I mentioned terms of Susan's contribution to the book itself in terms of telling the stories and that it's and I do dedicate, you know, the book to her. And I just wanted, I guess, to reflect back to people kind of the significance and importance and what this means. You know, some people like it may have referenced them. Susan is a cancer survivor. October 11th would be six years and one month. But it's obviously it's the journey has ups and downs. And all of us have to grapple with this question of the legacy and impact and meaning of life. And then cancer actually, you know, accelerates that conversation and makes it more front, front of mind. So that was part of some level of the urgency. And I really feel like the book is also part of the legacy. Well, for me and for Susan, I mean, something I didn't even realize finishing the book is that it's also a illustration of Susan's philanthropic genius and Susan's that was that Stacey Abrams was first donor. Susan was the first donor to this alliance San Diego work and has really had the instinct and the commitment of a white person with resources to back the right people. And the results of have played have played themselves out in ways I've tried to capture in the book. That's also part of this. And I just want to say that out loud in terms of legacy and impact, you know, thanking and, you know, saluting her for her role in all of this.

Sharline Chiang [00:42:14] Absolutely. Thank you, Steve. And thank you, Susan. And as Steve likes to say. That's all we have time for today. Thank you for listening to Democracy Color with Steve Phillips. Everybody, again, be on the lookout for the final episode of our special How We Win series, which will be recorded live and hosted by my fellow jersey and Steve's good friend, New Jersey Senator Cory Booker. Please help us get the word out about this podcast by subscribing wherever you get your podcasts, sharing with your friends, tweeting at democracy, color, and at Steve, Pete tweets and finding us at Democracy in Color on Facebook or subscribing to our newsletter at Democracy in Color dot com. Democracy in Color is also on Instagram. You can follow us at Democracy in

Color. And if you listen to our podcast on iTunes, please do take a moment and leave us a rating and comment. This podcast is a democracy and colored production produced by Olivia Parker with support from Fola Onifadei and April Elkjer recorded virtually with the assistance of the podcast studio of San Francisco, Keep the Faith.