

The Politics Classroom
Host: Professor Floros
Ep. 2023.06: Ja'Mal Green Runs for Mayor
In the Classroom: Ja'Mal Green (Chicago mayoral candidate)

Professor Floros 00:00

While the midterm elections were only three months ago, residents of Chicago are being asked to head for the polls yet again, this time to vote for mayor, as well as for aldermen in the city council, and a few other municipal offices. Most people think holding an election in Chicago in February is stupid, myself included, but the date is set by state law and the fourth Tuesday in February is when it's set. First term incumbent mayor Lori Lightfoot is facing eight challengers in her bid to remain in office. News organizations host mayoral forums and publish voter guides to help voters make a choice. Today on the podcast, I'm going to interview one of the candidates who is challenging the sitting mayor and is vying to lead the US' third largest city.

So, let's get started in The Politics Classroom, recorded on February 17, 2023.

Intro Music: Three Goddesses by Third Age

Professor Floros 01:42

You're listening to The Politics Classroom, a podcast of UIC Radio. I'm Professor Kate Floros, a political science professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. You can find me on Twitter and TikTok @DrFloros. You can find the podcast on Instagram @polsclsrn, and at thepoliticsclassroom.org. While I strive with this podcast to make politics more understandable, it's not often that I have an opportunity to speak to candidates about their plans if they are elected. Therefore, when I got an opportunity to interview today's guest, Ja'Mal Green, I grabbed it with both hands. However, since many of you who do not live in Chicago, I'm going to include bits of explanation throughout the episode to keep everyone on the same page, but I also challenge you to see whether the issues faced in Chicago are similar to where you live, and whether Ja'Mal Green's proposed agenda would be attractive in your city or town.

For those of you who do live in Chicago, the election is Tuesday, February 28. Early voting sites are open all over the city and vote by mail ballots need to be postmarked by election day to be counted. Eligible voters can register to vote at their election or early voting site and vote the same day. For more information about voting locations and the types of ID you can use to *register* to vote, go to chicagoelections.gov/voting. Registered voters in Illinois do *not* need to show ID to vote.

Professor Floros 03:17

Now, on to my interview with Chicago mayoral candidate Ja'Mal Green. So, Ja'Mal Green, thank you so much for joining me in The Politics Classroom.

Ja'Mal Green 03:26

Yeah, I appreciate you for having me.

Professor Floros 03:29

So, you are an actor, an author, an activist, an entrepreneur; what led to your desire to run for public office generally, and specifically, for mayor of Chicago?

Ja'Mal Green 03:42

Well, you know, I come from a very impoverished neighborhood where I saw many of my friends killed. Going to school havin' silent days, because my friends that were killed the night before. And when I go into the neighborhoods, and I have friends that were living in abandoned buildings, right, that didn't have homes or homeless, and folks in the neighborhoods have mental health problems and substance abuse problems. And, you know, these are my neighbors. These are the people who I saw each and every day that were barely making it through, right. And I was privileged to have a mother, who was a single mother, who was just working all day in doubles, trying to make sure that we at least had everything that we needed, right. And so, a lot of my friends didn't have that.

Ja'Mal Green 04:40

And we still needed a lot, right because she was, she obviously couldn't do it by herself. And what happened was, is that you know, I just saw so much despair and so much discouragement that I said, "Listen, if I make it to the age of 21, I'm leaving," right. And that was just a sad reality of a hopeless, lil' young boy who, you know, was acting out in class because he just hated just everything about how life was growing up in the neighborhood or not even being able to spend time with Mom, because Mom was always working. Just all these terrible experiences that really shaped my worldview of, "I want to leave the city and never come back." A lot of young people in the neighborhoods today feel the same way. Right? And they didn't, they don't see a politician coming in the neighborhood just as I didn't. And I think that's one of the biggest problems is that we don't see our leaders come and make sure that the most vulnerable people have the support that they deserve and a resource that they deserve. So, I grew up, and I have mentorship that, you know, helped put me on the right path as I was troubled kid, kicked out of many schools and always acting out because of a lot of the things that I was going through and the trauma that I was facing, family, both per family personal lives and in the neighborhoods. And it showed me that I could use my gifts for good, right. Started my first company and I was 15 years old, my history teacher in control of the youth program and leading peace marches and getting involved. And I think it was around that time I said, "Wow, okay, well, maybe I can actually help change the neighborhood. And then I can make things better for people who are my age and younger." And that's what propelled me into organizing. Laquan McDonald video came out, helped lead the Laquan McDonald movement over young boy was shot 16 times, which brought forth a lot of reforms and a police department, body cameras, tasers, etc. You know, when kids were being killed in our neighborhoods, you know, help families and was a spokesman for many families to really get the awareness needed to bring folks to justice and move for reward money, and helped businesses during the looting. And when Chase Bank redlined communities in 2020, we fought them and got them to give back a billion dollars and they were redlining communities. And they gave back a billion to the South and West sides. So, I just became one who rebelled against all the systems that I suffered under, right. All of the systems that the folks in my neighborhood suffered under. And I stepped up, fought all these systems, got major results. And now I'm here. I'm here because we need someone who's not just another regular politician, but someone who

really cares about all people, who really understands what goes on on the ground level, who is never going to forget how it feels to live under these conditions, so that the folks who are living on these conditions can be brought out of them. That's why I'm running to make an impact on them. And the next generation of young people, from my three boys, for everyone's children, so that they can have a better life and grow up and thrive in any neighborhood in the city.

Professor Floros 08:04

Hey, this is Professor Floros, and I want to give some quick background information about some of the incidents mentioned by Ja'Mal Green. The first is about Laquan McDonald. Laquan McDonald was 17 years old on October 20, 2014, when he was shot 16 times by Chicago Police Department officer Jason Van Dyke as he was walking away from officers. Video of the encounter contradicted the initial police report and showed that Van Dyke's first shot hit McDonald in the back, and the next 15 shots were fired as McDonald lay on the ground. Van Dyke was charged with first degree murder and official misconduct, and he pled not guilty. Van Dyke was tried in 2018 and was convicted of second-degree murder and aggravated battery with a firearm, but cleared of official misconduct. He was sentenced to 81 months in prison. He served most of his time in federal or state prisons outside of Illinois and was released in February 2022 after serving 39 months of his 81 month sentence. The City of Chicago reached a \$5 million settlement with Laquan McDonald's family.

Professor Floros 09:21

The second issue that we talked about was about his conflict with Chase Bank. So, a June 2020 collaboration between WBEZ and City Bureau revealed that while Chase Bank had loaned \$7.5 billion for home purchases in Chicago from 2012 to 2018, only 1.9% of that money were for houses in majority Black neighborhoods, while 79.57% went to majority white neighborhoods. Green and other organizers began protesting outside Chase Bank locations, calling for Chase to invest \$1 billion in grants, and \$10 billion in loans to Chicago's Black neighborhoods. Chase subsequently barred Green from all of its properties.

Professor Floros 10:11

You became a surrogate for Bernie Sanders in his 2016 and 2020 campaigns. How did that come about?

Ja'Mal Green 10:21

Well, Senator Sanders saw my work in regards to my organizing, and the Laquan McDonald video and things of that sort. And, you know, they asked me if I would join the campaign and support Senator Sanders. And I saw it as a unique opportunity to really put a lot of these issues on a national stage. And I joined his campaign. I asked Senator Sanders to denounce Rahm Emanuel at the time. He denounced Rahm Emanuel, with me standing right there by his side. And he really started to speak about the issues that I asked him to speak about. And that's what really motivated me to be a part of his campaign and travel with him and speak all over the country about his leadership and what it will look like if he was in the White House. So, was a beautiful thing. I had a lot of fun, really making sure that we uplifted the progressive values of everyone having health care and getting rid of student loan debt and legalizing cannabis and, you know, just all of the many progressive causes, \$15 minimum wage that you know, all

of those things that weren't popular at that time in 20-, when I joined his campaign in 2016. None of that stuff was popular, right. And it was that movement that really brought it to everyone's attention. And, obviously, we got some of it, right. Or we got some cities to implement some of it, but we're still fighting for that, still to this day, and a lot of those policies I'm gonna implement when I'm mayor,

Professor Floros 12:01

Professor Floros again, Rahm Emanuel was the mayor of Chicago from 2011 to 2019, after serving as President Barack Obama's Chief of Staff from 2009 to 2010. He is criticized by Chicago progressives for closing half the city's mental health clinics, eliminating the city's Department of Environment, raising water and sewer rates and refusing to help homeowners to replace lead pipes after his claims of safe lead levels were disproven, battling the Chicago Teachers Union to the first teacher strike in 25 years, vastly expanding the presence of charter schools in the city, closing 50 Chicago Public Schools mostly in Black neighborhoods, while opening 40 charter schools in the same period, proposing a \$55 million subsidy for (private) DePaul University's basketball arena, investing in downtown Chicago while starving the neighborhoods, fighting the release of the Laquan McDonald video, and resisting implementation of a consent decree issued by the Department of Justice to reform policing in Chicago.

Professor Floros 13:15

So, this is not your first run for mayor; this is your, your second run,

Ja'Mal Green 13:20

Technically.

Professor Floros 13:21

Technically, right.

Ja'Mal Green 13:23

I withdrew before the ballot.

Professor Floros 13:25

Yeah, I want to ask a question about that, but you are the youngest candidate in the race. There are nine candidates, and you are the youngest at age 27. So, what do you say to those who question your potential effectiveness because of your age? What is your response to that?

Ja'Mal Green 13:43

Well, my response is that, number one, every movement that has been propelled in this country, even from the Founding Fathers to the Civil Rights, I mean, I don't care what movement that you look at, they were all led by people my age. And so obviously, young people get things done. And they have a different perspective, because they understand the time that we're in. Number two is that if you look at experience, I'm more experience than everybody in this race getting results. And so, I'm willing to put all of my, the results that we've gotten, garnered for the communities against every politician in this race combined. A lot of these folks have just been politicians sitting in seats, not accomplishing anything, but

just saying that they got the title. I've been out in the community doing the work. Billions of dollars back to the communities and so folks can own their home; so that folks can open up businesses; so that young people have opportunity; creating safe spaces; mentoring young people. I mean, from every sector, from making sure that folks have groceries; given away thousands and thousands of dollars in groceries in food deserts for many years. You know, we've done the work.

And the reality is that we need somebody in these seats, who is going to execute and do the work for people, not just someone else's going to use it as an ego project. So, my answer is that, you know, young people have always led movements. Number two is I have the experience getting things done. I've also, I also have management experience that majority of people don't have in this race, from managing employees, managing multimillion dollar budgets and business. And you know, the reality is that I know that on day one, we're going to be able to assemble a team. And the mayor is not a dictator here, right? The mayor has thousands of people that helps them fulfill their agenda. And because I've done the work in these communities in every sector, I know the people that are doing the work all throughout the neighborhoods, and all of these different things, whether it be in environment, food access, young people, education, mental health, down the line, I know the people who are actually doing the work, so I'll be able to have an administration and a team of people who really understands this city and understand how we can fulfill this agenda and be the best administration that ever graced this city.

Professor Floros 16:06

I forgot to follow up with Ja'Mal Green about his 2019 run for mayor. But here's what happened, according to press reports. Though Green entered the 2019 race for mayor, he withdrew his candidacy before Election Day. In Chicago candidates have 90 days to collect 12,500 valid signatures on petitions to prove support for their candidacy. Other candidates can then challenge the legitimacy of those signatures, in an attempt to have enough signatures thrown out that the candidate falls below the 12,500 needed to secure a spot on the ballot. Willie Wilson, a Chicago businessman and perennial candidate for elective office challenged Green's signatures. To fight a signature challenge, a campaign needs volunteers to engage in the lengthy challenge process, which involves combing through every signature, and a team of lawyers to fight the challenges in court. This can be a huge cost in time and money that less established campaigns can't afford, including Green's 2019 bid. He withdrew from the race because the challenge process became too onerous.

Professor Floros 17:21

Let's take a break. You're listening to The Politics Classroom, a podcast of UIC Radio.

Music interlude: Miss U So by Midnight Daydream

Professor Floros 18:05

Welcome back to The Politics Classroom, a podcast of UIC Radio. I'm Professor Floros. And I'm speaking with Chicago mayoral candidate Ja'Mal Green. In the work you have done in the activism you've done, you have not emerged from that unscathed. You mentioned a couple of the, you know, the Chase Bank, and activism in the wake of Laquan McDonald's killing. You've been arrested, you've been fined, you've been banned from

Ja'Mal Green 18:36

Everything.

Professor Floros 18:37

You had your Chase bank account closed.

Ja'Mal Green 18:41

Yeah, yeah. I was closing that anyway.

Professor Floros 18:44

I figured. Has that, and I just want to be clear, these were all peaceful demonstrations that

Ja'Mal Green 18:51

Yeah.

Professor Floros 18:52

When, when you were arrested, etc. Has that, do you wear that as kind of like your calling card, your badge of honor or

Ja'Mal Green 18:59

Yes, I do. Yeah.

Professor Floros 19:00

Okay. And has it negatively impacted your ability to continue running your businesses, etc., to have faced these brushes with the law for your activism?

Ja'Mal Green 19:14

Well, you know, that's, that's a good question. I wear it as a badge of honor, has not really affected me, but one time. And this one time, it was because I was getting a loan for one of my businesses. And they came back and was like, "No," and I'm like, "Why?" Like, you know, I'm like, I got everything that's needed. And I know I'm over, I'm overqualified as long. And they said, "Well, we pulled a background check, and we saw that you were charged with all these things." I was like, "But I was never convicted of these things." And he's like, "Well, it's still popping up as arrests, so you're a risk so we can't give you the loan." It was insane to me, right?

Ja'Mal Green 19:52

And it really, it really made me think about all those people who actually have real records, right? You know, me, I don't have a, I was, I got misdemeanor arrests on my background for my protest. So I don't have a record, but there are a lot of people who have records of real crimes or have been convicted, right. And what happens is when they come home, they are already looked at as less than everybody, right? And they're not able to get a house because they do a background check. They're gonna deny him, they're not able to get a loan if they want a business, because they'll deny him because they

background. They have all these barriers put in front of them, and we wonder why the recidivism rate is so high.

Professor Floros 19:52

Yeah.

Professor Floros 20:32

Yeah.

Ja'Mal Green 20:33

And, you know, it's insane to me. And that's not, that's not okay. And, you know, I went into the prison to have a program to, you know, we were teaching folks who are transitioning home about their business plans or resume building and affirming them and inspiring them, and a lot of those graduates of our program, we have free housing and job opportunities, and they're out on the streets right now and has not engaged in any more crime. And so, the reality is, I know that it works, right. But we got to make sure that the city removes barriers for people who, you know, return home, or have any sort of arrest or background, and this was an arrest for me, right? It wasn't like, a conviction. It's like, "Oh, you, you have multiple arrests, so therefore, you're a risk and you can't get a loan." So, but other than that, no, I wear it as a badge of honor. Right? Like, yes, being kicked out of schools and banned from Chase Bank and arrested at protests and banned from the Daley Center, arrested by the Feds and marsh-, the marsh-, the US Marshals for protesting in a federal building. These are badges of honor for me, and because I've always lived my life, like, you know, nothing can stop the movement. And I don't care what they do to me. You can't stop our voices and you can't stop the message. You can't stop us from executing what needs to be executed for the neighborhoods. And I'll make a lot of sacrifices and I'm okay with that.

Professor Floros 22:05

Hey, this is Professor Floros, popping back in. Ja'Mal Green pled guilty for resisting arrest in 2016 after an anti-police brutality demonstration. He was charged with five felonies involving violence against police, all of which were dropped. In 2020 he was banned from Chase Bank property as mentioned previously, and in February 2022, he was arrested for protesting inside a federal court building in an effort to get federal charges filed against Jason Van Dyke, the former Chicago Police Department officer convicted of second-degree murder in the death of Laquan McDonald. Van Dyke had been released from prison the previous week. Green was fined \$200 and required to stay away from the federal courthouse for 60 days.

Professor Floros 22:54

You have a very comprehensive plan for your agenda when you, if you become, are elected mayor. Election, February 28. Please don't forget to vote, Chicagoans. And I want to talk about some of your programs. But I want to do two questions before that. So one is, and I'm sure you hear this all the time., that a lot of your programs are, you know absolutely amazing for people who need help, but they're going to cost money. And several of your proposals would actually reduce the amount of money that the city collects, largely on the back of its poor residents in tickets and boot fees on their cars and red-light

cameras and speed cameras and all these things. So, if you want to get rid of some of the moneymakers for the city and you want to increase social spending, what is your proposal for building the city's coffers enough to afford the programs that you propose?

Ja'Mal Green 24:03

Yeah. Well, you know, I think that we spend money where we want to spend money already. The police costs. We spend \$3 billion a year, \$2 billion on operating costs. We spent \$35 million in June alone on police overtime. \$35 million.

Ja'Mal Green 24:23

We spent hundreds of millions in overtime, we spend \$100 million on police misconduct a year. We spend, we have hundreds, millions and more pensions as we keep increasing police officers. So, you know, I don't really want to hear what we can't do. Because whenever we want to have a political agenda, we spend it. And the reality is, you know, COVID, right? We'll spend whatever to get out of COVID, right? Our migrant crisis, which I'm, you know, Harold Washington made this a welcoming city, and I understand it, but when they were dropped off here, we spent \$50 million just like that in two months. So, all the things that I'm saying is not...It ain't like we don't have the money, we do have the money because we have the money for everything else. It's about prioritizing it. And making sure that we start to invest in what's working. No, it does not make sense that we're keeping increasing a police budget when it's not working. So why would I was fighting Rahm Emanuel, just, you know, six years ago, how many years ago, the budget was \$1.2 billion for patrol. And now it's 2 billion, not even five, six years later.

Professor Floros 24:23

Wow.

Professor Floros 25:35

Yeah.

Ja'Mal Green 25:36

So, that means that you are continuously throwing hundreds of millions of dollars at police thinking that it's going to work and it's not going to work. So why can't we spend 100 million for a department of social workers, right, to respond to mental health costs? Why can't we spend \$150 million to have a year-round jobs program for thousands of young people 13 and up? Why can't we open up all of the school buildings, have massive programming and for students and parents throughout the day and on weekends? Why can't we have a reentry program and make sure that every person who comes home have housing and job opportunities? Why can't we institute trade programs and tech hubs to have a pipeline to manufacturing jobs? So, you know, it's...What I'm talking about doing, a lot of this stuff is minimal. I'm not talking about billions and billions and billions of dollars. I'm talking about maybe 150 million here, 100 million here, just a refocus of the priorities. And we can, we can, we found easily a billion dollars in efficiencies in the budget of just waste, and of privatizers and corruption. So you know, we have the money, we just need to prioritize the right things.

Professor Floros 26:54

Okay, and so how much can a mayor do without the city council? Because, again, you're, you're not, the mayor is not a dictator. And, you know, I will admit that I know less about city government than I should, but I am assuming that all of these programs would have to be passed by the council. So, do you anticipate that there would be a majority of council members who would support these initiatives? Or is there work that the mayor's office can do even if facing a recalcitrant City Council?

Ja'Mal Green 27:37

Yeah, no, I think that, you know, the city council would like a lot of our ideas. The reality is, is that that's not who you go to. Right? You go to the people.

Professor Floros 27:51

Okay.

Ja'Mal Green 27:51

And, you know, I come from Senator Sanders' campaign. And so I know what it means to rally up the people and rally these policies throughout the communities and, and show that there is a vast majority of people who believe in them, and make them contact their officials to get their votes. So, you know, some of our, our policies like public bank, and, you know, doing some of the more innovative things that create new systems are things that we're going to have to lobby, sometimes the state, sometimes city council, and I think that we'll be able to get the 26+ votes, I think we'll get the majority of the votes in the city council. But we're going to have to have a populace, you know, movement to really get people to rally around these ideas. And I think we're going to do it.

Professor Floros 28:45

So, I want to talk about some of the programs that you are advocating to be part of your agenda. I especially liked your response to public safety concerns. You have an acronym E.P.I.C., which stands for Economic prosperity, Prevention, Intervention, and CPD reform. So, I'm not going to ask you to go through every single item on your agenda, but there were a couple of things that I was especially interested in. And the first is what you just mentioned, a Public Bank of Chicago. Only North Dakota has a public bank, to my knowledge. Are there other cities that have this and can you just talk a little bit about what the benefit of a public bank would be for Chicago?

Ja'Mal Green 29:39

Well, you know, Bank of North Dakota is one that we used a lot in our view, because, you know, we really think that it works very well. And basically, we would have our own institution that invest in most under-served communities, in mortgages, small businesses, build public housing, etc. And all of that profit that comes back from the bank goes right back to city services. So, you know, I think that this just makes sense, right? Because the banks are not being a partner and investing in communities. And, you know, we fought Chase Bank, because they were redlining communities, and made them give back a billion dollars to the South and West sides. And instead of trying to keep forcing these banks to do the right thing, why don't we just create one, and have a democracy of board members that are elected, that

you know, oversee the money, all of the money that comes back is transparent, every dollar that go out, every dollar that comes in, and then we put the extra profit to some of the programs I'm talking about right? Or increasing affordable, affordable housing, right? It only makes sense. So public bank is is just an amazing thing. I think we could do and and be another source of revenue, and it'd be an extra, it'd be an economic engine we can use to really start to develop neighborhoods in a rapid time. So, you know, Bank of North Dakota did it and then they came up with a lot of money over a bill-, you know, I believe it had like a billion dollars in profit in 10 years. We're bigger, we would serve more people. So, we can have billions of dollars in profit, that can really serve the rest of the city, helped to lower taxes, and invest in a lot of the programs that can really help sustain neighborhoods.

Professor Floros 31:40

With that, would we need a state law for that to be allowed?

Ja'Mal Green 31:44

Yep.

Professor Floros 31:44

Yeah. Okay.

Professor Floros 31:47

Yeah. I, when I read that, I was like, yeah, why don't we have public banks? I imagine because the banking lobby is very, has a lot of money to put into that. But you also talk about affordable housing and trying to transform vacant buildings into either permanent housing or temporary shelters. And, you know, helping, like single story stores build housing on top of them, which I never understand why everything isn't a high rise. But I don't know anything about architecture, either. Can you talk a little bit more about your affordable housing policies and what difference that will make in the city?

Ja'Mal Green 31:47

Yeah, we will have to lobby the state.

Professor Floros

Yeah. I, when I read that, I was like, yeah, why don't we have public banks? I imagine because the banking lobby is very, has a lot of money to put into that. But you also talk about affordable housing, and trying to transform vacant buildings into either permanent housing or temporary shelters. And, you know, helping, like single story stores build housing on top of them, which I never understand why everything isn't a high rise. But I don't know anything about architecture, either. Can you talk a little bit more about your affordable housing policies and what difference that will make in the city?

Ja'Mal Green 32:37

Well, you know, we have to increase our affordable housing supply. Right, I think that's one of the biggest things we must do. And we got to do it in record time. And the reality is, is that we can have, we can incentivize that we do have to have more density in the city. And so, we can have single floor

commercial buildings build affordable housing units on top as well as like, you know, when the, when they build a new grocery stores and box stores, instead of just being one floor, we could build units on top, loosen up the single family ordinance so that folks can use their basements as garden units, or convert their single families to add a unit. This must be a super priority for us to increase affordable housing. We also got to have a single, use of single-family mortgage bond to back home loans in these neighborhoods so that folks can own homes in the neighborhoods and that's where public bank can come in to, to really invest in the, in homeownership and affordable homeownership, some of the things that I've been doing as of recent.

Ja'Mal Green 33:41

And, you know, we got to look at all the buildings that we have, right, we got a lot of buildings that need to be repurposed, and they're not, you know, they shut down all these schools 10 years ago, didn't repurpose them. You know, we could be transit-, we can move those to temporary housing, or affordable housing units, as well as start to acquire a lot of the private buildings that are sitting bank, vacant for many years and moving them into, repurposing them into spaces as well.

Professor Floros 34:13

All those schools are just sitting empty?

Ja'Mal Green 34:15

Yep. All the schools are just sitting empty.

Professor Floros 34:19

Well, speaking of schools, I saw multiple references to Chicago Public School students, public school housing to help the homeless youth population. So, can you talk about the tension between the public school system and the increasing number of charter schools in the city and what your philosophy is between those two different types of schools?

Ja'Mal Green 34:49

Well, you know, a lot of why our schools have been terrible over the last decade or so, or couple of decades, or really since beginning the time. But, but definitely over the last couple of decades is because they kind of use these charter schools as a way to say, "Hey, here's a better option for your kids." And the schools are based off of enrollment. So, whenever kid leaves a public school, go to a charter school, then that takes money away from the school, goes to the charter school. But what we found is, these charter schools are corrupt entities that spend their money, how they want to spend it. And the education is poorer than the public schools, are most of these charter schools. And so, that was just, you know, one of those ways for them to get the public money into private hands, so that the private hands can do what they want with it and give contracts and contributions and have, you know, a quarter of a million dollar office spaces and take trips and things of that sort. So, that's what's been going on.

We have to shift from an enrollment-based formula to needs-based formula so we can invest in every public school, our selective enrollment system is just like, you know, basically, you have to test in to get

one of these eight schools, and if you don't test to get into 'em, then you have to go to a school that doesn't have as many resources or programs. And that's not okay. Every school in the city of Chicago should be invested in so that no matter what neighborhood, you're moving in, you know, there's a quality education in a neighborhood, and we got to have equity, we have to invest in those schools who really have the biggest need right now. And create institutions that can serve students and bring back those students that went to other schools, to the neighborhoods, increase the home ownership, and make it to where folks want to send their kids to the neighborhood school. Listen, a lot of folks wouldn't, you know, are paying for private schools, and a lot of folks would love to have a public school that can serve the best needs, so that they're not spending that money as well. So, we have to invest in making sure we have a high-quality education in every school.

And that money that comes from the state got to come down, you know, it is not trickling down to the schools, we're not getting 30,000 per kid in these schools; we're not seeing that in the books and wraparound services, the ratio between counselors to students, I mean, we're not seeing it in after school programs. And we got to make sure that that happens. The privatizers are getting rich, those earmarks and the folks who control the food and control the cleanliness of buildings. You know, they're getting rich, while our students aren't getting served. And we need to get rid of the privatization and get rid of all the corruption in the CPS budget, and make sure that every dollar is spent investing into our young people.

Professor Floros 37:30

And so, the money that comes from the state and from local taxes for the schools is distributed based on the enrollment and not equally across. So, it's per student. But if you have a small enrollment, that's not very much money.

Ja'Mal Green 37:48

Right. Exactly.

Professor Floros 37:49

Oh, wow.

Ja'Mal Green 37:50

Exactly. So as kids leave the school,

Professor Floros 37:52

Sure.

Ja'Mal Green 37:53

Money leaves the school.

Professor Floros 37:54

Right.

Ja'Mal Green 37:54

Right.

Professor Floros 37:55

And yeah,

Ja'Mal Green 37:56

And that's not fair.

Professor Floros 37:57

I have never understood why we fund our schools, not just in Chicago, but like all over the country on property taxes and things like...it's like, you're asking for an inequity. That's what you're asking for.

Ja'Mal Green 38:10

Yeah.

Professor Floros 38:11

Okay.

Ja'Mal Green 38:12

And that that must change.

Professor Floros 38:13

Yeah, I agree with you on that. Absolutely.

Let's take another break. I'm Professor Floros in The Politics Classroom, a podcast of UIC Radio.

Music interlude: Miss U So by Midnight Daydream

Professor Floros 39:02

You're listening to Professor Floros in The Politics Classroom, a podcast of UIC Radio. Today I'm speaking with Ja'Mal Green, one of nine candidates running to be mayor of Chicago.

Professor Floros 39:14

Okay, so I saw that you want to leverage technology to make city resources more available for residents. And I saw that you want to create a city app. And I guess I never realized there wasn't a city app. Why don't we have a city app?

Ja'Mal Green 39:32

Yeah, we definitely, I think that they've tried to do some stuff before, I don't know. But we definitely need one. And we need one that's really robust and making sure that it's easily accessible for resources; easily accessible to submit applications, whether it be for businesses or a city app that has job postings

all throughout the neighborhoods of our small businesses and corporations so it's easier to find job opportunities as well. We got to make sure there's a pipeline, from city resources to people. And I think a city-owned app would do that as well as having mobile type city halls around the city, where folks can come in and get the resources that they need instead of City Hall being all the way downtown and detached from the rest of the city. So, those things I think are important.

Professor Floros 40:21

Yeah, I mean, I have the ability to maneuver the city pretty easily, and I still find it really annoying when I have to physically go downtown for some service.

Ja'Mal Green 40:31

Same, same for me. But I'ma have to go downtown much more after I win, so. [both laugh]

Professor Floros 40:39

Okay, that's, that's true. [Green laughs] Okay, so one of your platforms of E.P.I.C. is CPD [Chicago Police Department] reform. And I was actually, I don't know why I was surprised, but I was surprised that a lot of it has to do with recruiting, making being a police officer more attractive to a wider group of people in order to make the folks who serve as police officers more diverse maybe, or just different backgrounds. Is that, is that the idea of like establishing a youth pipeline helping officers buy their first homes?

Ja'Mal Green 41:20

Yeah, it's more of diversity, right? And I think that, here's the thing, the thing is, is that our focus, which is why we made this last, in our plan, because our plan does not revolve around CPD.

Ja'Mal Green 41:34

So, we made this last because we, we want to make sure that we're investing into people and into neighborhoods. And I know, if we invest in people and into neighborhoods, then we would, we would need less police, right? Like you wouldn't really need all of the police that we have. And so, another thing that community members always talk about is the fact that people don't want to be police, or Black people don't want to be police. And you know, the only way to do that is to take the load off of police officers and put it where it needs to be in regards to making sure we have mental health responders, as well as making sure that we have a youth intervention department to deal with young people. And then if we do those things, and police are just merely a support system. And I think that's what's important that they're just supporting, and only tackling violent crime. And that's our focus is to make it a job that is more just supportive and not this model, this slave-catcher model of policing, where people are, think that they can join a police department and it's a video game and we're just, you know, running and chasing down people and killing people. Like, no, that's not going to be the type of policing in our city.

Professor Floros 42:56

Right. It is very strange that the answer to every problem is, "Call 911." Even you know, and the police may not be the answer.

Okay. I think I first met you, correct me if I'm wrong, during the UIC United Faculty strike here on the UIC campus. And you were there to lend support to the faculty union. So I wanted to ask you a quick question about unions, especially because one of the reasons why police reform of police departments not just in Chicago, but all over the country is a function of a very strong police union that frequently stands in the way of reform. So, could you just talk briefly about how like, because one of your proposals is to have a four day a week work week with days off, so that people can like, rest mentally before going back out on the street. How do you think working with the police union will be to try and implement some of these things? Or how would you choose to work with them?

Ja'Mal Green 44:12

Well, look, [laughs] I don't know how do you work with a very racist board? But I mean, the best thing that we could do is move forward the platform and get the buy in from communities, as well as a buy in from police officers. I think there are some things in there that police officers thought were, is good, were good for 'em. And you know, they're gonna be some things in there they're not gonna like, like, let's put liability insurance on them so that they're paying for their own police misconduct settlements, instead of us spending \$100 million dollars a year. Like we're gonna hold accountable everyone that is affiliated with a hate group or a Proud Boy organization. We're going to fine police officers up to \$5,000 who misuse their equipment, you know, so there are a lot of things that they they're not going to like.

But I think some of the other things are sensible, right, being a police officer. We have one of the highest suicide rates in any police department in the country. And so, making sure that they have mental health, you know, support in their districts, you know, so some of the things I think are just common sense. And, you know, obviously, as mayor, I can't just be one who just says, "Everything is against the police," we obviously have a police department, the best thing we could do is start to invest in what works and start to move, change the model of policing, and then, you know, we will have a safer city, and then we won't need to keep increasing the police budget. And under my administration, I'll never increase the police budget, because I just know that that doesn't work. So, that's kind of where I stand.

Professor Floros 46:00

Okay. As I mentioned, the election is on Tuesday, February 28. And I imagine that your message resonates widely in the city, but maybe has a special resonance with younger folks. I think it's ridiculous for an election to be in February.

Ja'Mal Green 46:22

Yeah, they do that on purpose.

Professor Floros 46:23

I know that's a function of like Machine and lower turnout. And I think it's crazy.

Ja'Mal Green 46:27

Lower turnout; there you go.

Professor Floros 46:29

How have you com-, been work, how's your campaign been trying to combat that systemic attempt to only have the party stalwarts vote? So, what have you been doing to get people excited?

Ja'Mal Green 46:44

Yeah, we push our young people to Vote from the Crib, we're doing these pull-up and vote rallies are starting tomorrow with, with celebrity influencers, you know, so that folks can come and vote. And we're going to give them rides to the polls on a bus. So, we're going to actually go and get them. And we're going to college campuses. We've been to UIC many times. We got a mascot that goes around to college campuses to really start to really get young people informed and involved so that they can vote.

Professor Floros 47:16

Okay, and if people want to learn more about your candidacy, you and your candidacy, where should they go?

Ja'Mal Green 47:23

GoGreenChicago.com; they can go to gogreenchicago.com and learn more about our candidacy.

Professor Floros 47:29

Okay, well, Ja'Mal Green, thank you so much for being on The Politics Classroom and good luck on Tuesday, February 28.

Ja'Mal Green 47:36

Thank you so much.

Professor Floros 47:37

Thank you.

Ja'Mal Green is a candidate for mayor of the City of Chicago. The program he mentioned Vote from the Crib is an effort to encourage the use of mail in voting. No excuse voting is available to all Chicago voters and voters can sign up to be on the permanent vote by mail list, which triggers the Board of Election to send a vote by mail ballot every election cycle automatically.

After the interview, I read a WBEZ story from 2015 that I was sure would confirm that the February election date was a Machine politics plot to suppress the vote and only have party stalwarts go to the polls. Much to my surprise, the article, linked in The Bookshelf section of thepoliticsclassroom.org, argues that the February election was an effort to *increase* voter turnout. Municipal elections have almost always been held in April, but party bosses picked the winners and the vote barely mattered. In the Progressive Era open primaries were introduced and held in February in advance of municipal elections in April. By the way, mayors are always sworn into office in May. Reformers continued to push until consolidated primaries took the place of partisan primaries. Now, if a candidate receives a majority

of the vote in February, they become the mayor and are sworn in in May. If no one receives a majority, a runoff will be held in April.

Professor Floros 49:12

So, then I looked up some data about voter turnout. And the numbers that I was able to get are a little outdated, but I think the trends remain the same. So, while Chicago's 2015 election turnout was a low 33% of eligible voters, turnout in the 2014 municipal elections in Washington, DC was around 20%, and the 2015 municipal elections in Dallas, Texas, had an abysmally low turnout of 6% of eligible voters. Perhaps the expansion of vote by mail practices in some states will lead to higher turnout in future elections, even if they happen in February.

Professor Floros 50:01

You've been listening to The Politics Classroom, a podcast of UIC Radio. I'm Professor Floros. And I'm so glad you joined me for today's interview. If you like what you heard, please subscribe to the show on your favorite podcast platform and rate and review the podcast on Spotify or Apple Podcasts. I'll be releasing a special bonus episode this week that you won't want to miss, so please don't forget to subscribe. You can follow me on Twitter and Tiktok @DrFloros and you can follow the show on Instagram @polsclsrn. You can also check out the show's website at thepoliticsclassroom.org. While you're there, check out The Bookshelf section, where you can find links to many of the topics discussed on today's episode. You can also use the contact form on the landing page to tell me what you think of the show.

This is Professor Floros in The Politics Classroom, a podcast of UIC Radio. That's all I've got for this week. Class dismissed.

Outro music: Three Goddesses by Third Age