

Text Transcript of “Off the Shelf” Podcast Season 4, Episode 2, with David Walton

Augustus Wood:

Welcome back, everybody, to the first edition 2024 of *Off the Shelf: Revolutionary Readings in Times of Crisis*. We're back from a small hiatus because the world, everything, continues to happen. Struggles continue. But the revolutionary readings that we need to understand the liberation struggle of the Black working class, Black people, will never end. So that's why we are back with a special guest today.

First off, I'm Gus Wood, your host. And we are sponsored by the Humanities Research Institute. And I've been waiting to get this brother on for months now. And our schedules finally aligned. But I'm happy to welcome the good professor David Walton, here to *Off the Shelf*. Brother David Walton, thank you so much for coming, and it's an honor to have you on the show. Can you let the people know what you're currently doing right now?

David Walton:

Awesome. Well, thank you for having me, Brother Wood. I am the founding director of Global Black Studies, a Black Studies minor program here at Western Carolina University. So I'm teaching I'm an assistant professor of history as we speak. And as I said, the director, so I teach Black Studies and African American history, and also do a lot of programming and working with students in the community, related to the Black experience in the area.

Augustus Wood:

Exactly. And so again, this is somebody who you've often heard me if you you know, if you listen to previous episodes about the show, I'm often very excited when we have on...and people have used different terms, like the great Walter Rodney will say, guerrilla intellectuals, you had others that will say, scholar activist, but we often have people on who were not only simply trying to find intervention strategies via research, but also applying it to the work within our communities. And so this is very important for us to understand the dialectic of the research and the, for the lack of a better term, the organizing or the activism. So it's really great that you, being a director of Black Studies, which we're going to talk a lot about today, all thinking use your experiences and the work we're doing in our communities, to inform how you direct Black Studies, which currently, right now is going through a very important moment in our history today, right?

David Walton:

Oh, indeed, indeed, the genesis of Black Studies in a push that the Black Student Movement had to create Black Studies was actually to create those types of people with that expertise, those public intellectuals, those scholars, but who had praxis. It was to learn these skills, and bring it back to the community. It was to train them to be able to ameliorate the status of the Black community. So as a Black Studies scholar, from my purview, I'm just doing what we're supposed to do. But as you

mentioned, we are at a particular and peculiar moment in American history related to Black Studies. Black Studies, jumped on the scene institutionalized in 1967, with the student movement started in 60. I mean, I'm sorry, 69, with the student movement that started in 67. So you know, we're not talking many years. So we're talking about a half a century of Black Studies. And at this moment, Black Studies is under attack, but it's just part of the same old culture wars that we had in the 50s, 60s, and 70s. But unfortunately, many people have felt that the war ended or perhaps it went from a hot war to a Cold War to whatever, a frozen war, perhaps. But it's definitely now back at a hot war, across the board, and Black Studies is caught in the middle, appropriately or inappropriately, but unexpectedly. [Laughs]

Augustus Wood:

Most definitely.

David Walton:

It has been thrust into the limelight.

Augustus Wood:

Exactly. You know, often, we often talk about this in terms of the ruling class capital, they often play the long game, you know, they're thinking 10,15, 20 years down the line. It's kind of like the issue right now with the postal service and the deliver for America consolidation. Really, the destruction of the kind of the postal service for working class and rural areas, is that back when the postal workers went on strike in 1970, Nixon and the right wing were already like, all right, we about to privatize and destabilize. So they start passing stuff, knowing that 20 years down the line, it was gonna come back. And you can say the exact same thing about Black Studies, is that the minute that you had these powerful student movements that were calling for Black power, that was calling for proto nationalism, meaning that we should control the institutions that directly affect our lives and our conditions, that you had the right wing reactionary movement themselves already planning in advance that we're going to have that we're going to have to deal with this situation down the line. So I think you're exactly right. And that a lot of the roots of the stuff that Black Studies and the Black struggle we're dealing with right now were planted as a reaction to the work of the creation of Black Studies.

David Walton:

Yes, sister, Rooks, Dr. Rooks, Nowile Rooks, she wrote a book, I believe it was called *Black Power White Money* (editor's note: the book is titled *White Money/Black Power: African American Studies and the Crises of Race in Higher Education*). In that book, along with the later chapters of M Biondi's book, *Black Revolution on Campus*, and a study that Darlene Clark Hine did, I believe it was in the late 70s, early 80s. She did a study, it's a pamphlet, I believe, Ford Foundation, maybe when they published it, but we can see, looking at it what the Ford Foundation did under Bundy, who was the former director of the CIA, immediately went in, to control the fate and destiny of Black Studies, to have certain voices be silenced. It was an attempt to, to some degree, it may have worked, for others in the long run, it didn't work. But there's a lot of people's voices who were silenced.

You know, they sought to control Black Studies, to dictate the nature of departments and programs, the curriculum to omit people who had a class-based analysis, to omit people that were perceived to be too much Black power, or too Black nationalist, where they were trying to narrow it down to a particular

humanistic and/or integrationist discipline or field as they wanted it to be not even a discipline. But that didn't work overall. But it did work to varying degrees. And that's still the struggle.

That's the thing with the College Board, AP, I was in focus groups for the development of it. And the response by people like the DeSantis administration in Florida, as well as other states, including the attorney general here in North Carolina, who is now running for, I mean, attorney, the lieutenant governor, I'm sorry, I said attorney general, the lieutenant governor of North Carolina, who is now running, or just announced, he is running for governor of North Carolina. Their attacks on Black Studies, it's part of that same long struggle, the same tactics. And it's the same, the same ideological battles. So it's just a perpetuation and continuation of those culture wars, that people just for whatever reason, thought were over. It's mind boggling.

Part of the problem, too, is Black people themselves. Negroes ourselves act like we don't know the difference, or what Black Studies is, or the difference between Black Studies and Black history, Black Studies and Black literature, and we use it interchangeably and that further muddies the water. Further problematizes the situation, because, as has been done, opponents, for whatever reason, of the AP course, the AP African American Studies high school course, will say, well, why are they doing that? That's not Black history. Oh this is Black Studies, though, history is one component of it. So when we use that term, Black history and Black Studies interchangeably, we unknowingly also do Black Studies harm, and in particular to college. I mean, the high school AP courses and exam, you know, students who want to engage in all of that, we're doing them a disservice as well.

Augustus Wood:

And that is such a great point. That's something that we haven't talked about a lot on *Off the Shelf* is that that is a means of, for what you're stating, destabilizing the strength of Black Studies, is that when we again, I take this back to the issue of the long Civil Rights Movement situation, and then when you had that paradigm come about, you saw a collapsing of everything into this one big gelatinous monotone thing. And so yes, like you have a lot of confusion and not a lot of distinction about what exactly is something, as you mentioned, because when that transfers down to multiple levels in high schools and grade schools, then yeah, it gives it gives the right wing and the white supremacist more of leverage, because they can say that all this is this one thing.

And it's like, well, we, as scholars of Black Studies, we have to be able to maintain that leverage and be clear and understanding of what exactly it is that we're pushing, what our vision is, what these specific disciplines, subjects, etc., are. So I appreciate you saying that, because I think that is one of the key issues that we really have to work on if we're ever going if we're really going to defeat this garbage that DeSantis and these other right wing folks are also doing.

David Walton:

Yes. Because people will say, for example, if they saw a curriculum for the high school class, and they say, okay, they're discussing what they will call the great migration. So they will be like, well, why are they also reading this poem? And/or this novel? Because it's the Harlem Renaissance, which was a result of this migration, and then why are we looking at these leaders' statements? Because the Harlem

Renaissance was an artistic representation of the New Negro Movement? And then why are we now also talking about Black labor? Why do they have to talk about this labor union?

Right, you know, that that was started by A Philip Randolph. Why do we have to talk about that? Well, because that's two parts. So it's this montage facet. And then we're introducing other things just in this temporal parameter. And they'll say, well, that's not history. And I say, well, no, this is studies. This is a cultural studies, we look at history, economics, creative artistic production, gendered relations, labor relations and or class, we're looking at all of these, all of these things simultaneously, in conjunction with one another. So when we don't, when we're not clear with that, then it does make it seem that DeSantis will have credence on why are they engaging in notions of critical queer theory? What does that have to do with Black history? Well, when no one on the surface value, and particularly for high school, someone gonna say, yeah, that makes sense. But then when they understand it's cultural studies, then they say, oh, no, that is appropriate. These people exist, these people have contributed. Right.

So, it is important that we mention it, acknowledge that, give them an opportunity to become aware of their existence, and engage on and on their own further, if that's what they choose. So, I didn't mean to take so long on that topic. I'm passionate about that because one of the things, as a director of Black Studies and then as a Black Studies-trained scholar, and I have, you know, to do a doctor to two doctors in history, and Black Studies from Michigan State, is I have to clarify what Black Studies is and what it is that we actually do, and inform, so people can... if they want to oppose it, at least know what you're opposing.

Augustus Wood:

No, I appreciate that, though. Please don't apologize. I think that's one of the clearest examples of what exactly the stakes of this battle are. I think you laid it out perfectly what a lot of people who unfortunately get a lot of propaganda from the media about what's happening, if they hadn't, if they listen to this interview, that you just laid out perfectly exactly why, there were the argument against Black Studies currently now, is not only problematic, but it's manipulative, to confuse the masses about what it is that Black Studies is actually doing. So no, thank you for that. I think that's going to be a major point as to why we have to emphasize that people seek out this particular interview. So no, don't apologize. I think that was excellent.

But you know, you did mention that you have the dual dual doctorate. So let's actually dig into that, let's dig into your background, because... and the best part about it is you dropped all this really important knowledge, so people are feeling like what why, wait a minute where does brother get all this from? We got to hear how how Professor David Walton came to be and got to the dual doctorate system. So, so tell me how did you get involved in history and Black studies as a youth, like what was your what were your experiences that say this is what I want to do?

David Walton:

No, indeed. Fortunately for me, and it ties into my research, my parents came from particular types of background, my mom from a east side of Detroit, but born in Lowndes County, Alabama. And when she moved up with her mother, that probably would have been 57-58. You know, she was the youngest of

nine, so many of her siblings remained in Lowndes County, Alabama, so we've been connected to Lowndes County, Alabama. And then my father from Flint, who's older than my mom by seven years, he had already served in Vietnam, in the early stages as a Marine, so they had a particular type of consciousness of the time. It might not have been formalized to what we now call Black Studies, because it didn't exist for them, or that opportunity for them at that time.

So they raised me to have an interest in Black history and a sense of cultural pride and responsibility. And I say it because I'm trained cultural pride and responsibility, but Black pride and the responsibility to Black people, you see. So but you know, families happen, divorces, all of those things. And, you know, I got myself involved in the streets, as far too many of us young men, rebelling, going through problems because of divorce, and their fathers and they're there, or there as much or have, you know, just a lot of growing pains, that leads many of us to the street corners. And I was one of those kids and got involved in it, and got myself caught up in a pickle or two. And Black history actually helped me get myself out of that pickle.

My mother said to the juvenile probation officer, well, he likes to read these books, right? These Black books about Black people. Well, what kind of books? Books written by Bobby Seale and Huey Newton, you know, collections of speeches of Malcolm X. And, you know, they listened to these cassette tapes of Farrakhan and Malcolm X, right. You know, it was that era, I graduated high school in '93, it was just, it was that era. And so the probation officer saying, hey, well, you know, if he stays out of trouble and keep reading these books, you know, y'all won't have to pay any money, which was the most important thing to me, particularly for my mother, because I knew she didn't, she couldn't afford it. So that was going to start a whole nother spiral of mess, right. And then I wouldn't have to report, which doesn't seem like a big deal. But a poor family, with not a stable transportation. I mean, you can see how those things could keep someone entangled...

Augustus Wood:

Most definitely.

David Walton:

...over the justice system by just violating because they can't pay or they're not showing up to these meetings, and all of those things. So that was out for me to save my mom, so I did that. And you know, I always got good grades. So, you know, it came to a time very soon. And during that time, you know, what I had to figure out, so I chose college, right. You know, get out of the neighborhood that I was in, get away from some of the things I was doing, be able to kind of start anew, and with the real or imagined idea that it was going to be other Black kids at college who were interested in the same things I was. They too, had to been at home in high school reading these books, and listening to these cassette tapes, right.

So when I got to college, I, first semester, freshman year, I took African American Studies, and decided, all right, this is the type of stuff I want to learn about and majored in it. I later quickly learned to that very few of those Black kids were listening to those cassette tapes [LAUGHS]. So that got me interested in, well, how can... I got these great professors, for better or worse, but they're just, the students, unless the students know about them or take their classes, the students don't know. Right? So, you know, and

then seeing issues on campus with the type of mind I had reading those books, listening to those cassette tapes, I was probably more sensitive to some structural issues on campus, and even attitudinal issues from campus police or administrators or whatever. So, you know, I want to organize some Black students and then using the faculty to be able to come and talk to the Black students in our programs. So that allowed me to, you know, continue some students I mean, some community work I had started while and immediately after getting in trouble, you know, getting involved with Black liberation theology, religious groups and going into the community and trying to get the people off the corners. Not necessarily get them into the, because this was a Muslim organization, not to get them into the mosque, per se. But to get them off the corners. [LAUGHS]

Augustus Wood:

Exactly, yeah.

David Walton:

And then they figure it out from there, being involved in, in those types so it can allow me to can, to continue to do that. So for me undergrad was really just self-validation and validation of of my mission, and that I didn't know how I could make a living doing it, but I could help people in using Black history and Black Studies.

The things I learned in class, to at the very least not just tell the people, but know that led to what, being able to ask them better questions, to ask better questions. So, we as a group, in this case, a campus community, you know, we could come up with what our issues are and what do we think the solutions are? And how do we get from our issues to the solutions to come up with it together? You know what I'm saying?

Augustus Wood:

Let me stick, let me stick on that point, though, because I think you're raising something that's really valid here about getting to understand how to ask the right questions. Because, you know, I went to Morehouse in my undergrad, and probably a different experience because like you I had parents that were very adamant about every time Black History Month came on, every time Black History Month happened when they had A&E and all them other stations that showed the Black history movies and all that other stuff, we couldn't go anywhere until we watched them with our parents, and we had talks about it afterwards. And it was just a very culturally proud home.

So I get to Morehouse and a somewhat conservative atmosphere where you we want you to learn and be proud of Black history, but you're just not supposed to challenge the structure when there are problems, you know, and so, with me, no, excuse me, with you, you when you use your undergrad, helped you not just self-validate, but also trains you into, you know, honing how to ask the right questions to intervene in struggle. Whereas, in for myself, it took a lot more work in my community and after I got an undergrad, to where I could learn how to ask the right questions, and have that kind of mindset. I knew things were problematic, but I didn't have the, I didn't know how to hone in, like how to ask the right questions that could empower people until much later. So, I appreciate you bringing that point up because I do think that when we talk about our experiences when we're younger, and the kinds of things that get us to the point of being organizers and organizing, the idea about how to ask the

right questions in relation to not just putting out the problem, but having a critique so that people can connect to you and connect to the question, I think that's such an important skill that you use and had, from your previous experience, to what you're doing in undergrad. So, I just want to emphasize that before we move on, because I really appreciate you bringing that part out.

David Walton:

And thank you, and I think that it is important. And sometimes, you know, based upon our own experience, we may forget how important something is. Because for us, it might just be that was just my experience, or that's just what it is. But right, but that came from hearing other young people before me have the courage to ask questions, right. You know, so we, we get from how it was presented to us or is presented as youth, and for me as youth I can only speak to directly of how Martin Luther King or Malcolm X were presented to me. You know, they weren't asking questions. And if they were, it was questions that weren't questions, but it might have had questions. It was affirmation, so we didn't get to see that development, that side, right. Maybe if you read the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, you saw a transformation, but you didn't see the process. But with the youth movements of reading the works of people like Stokely Carmichael, even Eldridge Cleaver, Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, excerpts of people like Fred Hampton, the young people, where you saw the process, you saw them asking questions, and then you can see if you had any chronological acumen to yourself to try to even put it in a chronological development, you can see how they were asking these questions. And then a year and a half, these were the answers that they were proposing. Whether they were good answers or not, or if I agreed or not, but I'm seeing okay, they were asking these questions and that led to these answers. So as opposed to me having a view of I agree or disagree with somebody, let me first look at the questions. And then if I come up with a different answer, then that's the basis of our disagreement, or the or the basis or the beginning of our dialogue.

Augustus Wood:

Very true.

David Walton:

But if we, just like everyone don't get the same facts, I mean, don't get their own facts. It's one set of facts. But, the opposite is, there's not one set of questions.

Augustus Wood:

Yes. [LAUGHS]

David Walton:

You know, and questions lead to more questions that lead to answers to answer those questions. So, you might have a problem and the answer to that problem is based upon a question that you have, that you're yet to even ask. You know. And I think that was the spirit of the students who fought for Black Studies, right?

So then that leads to then second part of.. so all right, without going into humdrum about life and my time between undergrad and grad school, besides, I would mention, I did do elementary school teaching for like three years, did not like that. I like teaching, but I don't like, I like teaching adults, or

people who think they're adults. People thought they were but no they are, this was elementary, they were just too grown.

And then I'd so some time in the military. But without really getting into that, I will mention about being a K-12 teacher, an elementary school teacher. I did it in my small town outside of Detroit, Romulus Michigan, right. So, I knew things about these kids' home life that other teachers didn't know. Some teachers did, small town. So, a significant amount of the teachers that when I went there, they had graduated from our same high school. So, when I went back and taught, like myself, a significant amount of teachers had graduated from that high school. We got one high school, so you know, that's basically the school district. Right? So, but I was one of those teachers that knew what was going on at home with these kids. And it was, it was too emotional for me, it was too heartbreaking. It was too, it was too much. Because I had moved back home with my mom. So, I'm living in this small community, teaching in this small community, I see these kids in school, I see them outside of school, and I know the shit that they living there, outside of school within their homes. I know what's going on, you know, I know why this young boy is mad as hell in class as a fifth grader. Other teachers don't know why he mad. I know why, I know what's going on at home. I know what the kids his age, and one or two years older than him, the younger siblings of some older kids who are engaging with unsavory and destructive behaviors, were his model. You know, addiction, and the trade that goes along with it, without getting into details. Right, you know, you can only imagine. We've heard the songs, your mom was on crack. We've, like I lived through that reality, right? So, knowing that, like, I know why this kid is mad. You think he's just exploding on this other kid. But these other kids will say some real slick that to you on the surface value is meaningless. But it ain't meaningless. You know, and that's why... so it was too much for me, so I say I don't want that. So, I ended up joining the military, got out of the military and said, what am I gonna really do? Teach, but I wanted to teach adults.

So I said I'll go back to school, I'm good at school. I think I had a gift of connecting with students, even if in that I might not have been the best teacher for that elementary, you know, but I connect with students. But you know, when you go to grad school, and I did a master's in history and a grad certificate in Black Studies at Eastern Michigan, where I went to undergrad, you know, you got to do research. [LAUGHS] So it's different in a way. You got to do two things: you got to learn for content, that's the undergrad way, but then you got to do research. So, then you're learning about research, how to research and then conducting research. And the number one thing is, well, what the hell am I gonna research?

Augustus Wood:

Exactly.

David Walton:

That's always the toughest question. Graduate students, new graduate students, don't realize that we all have been there. It is the toughest thing to figure out. They don't realize it, for whatever reason, because they were good undergrads, that i.e. good high school students, everything's come so easy for them maybe that when they have a challenge, they don't know how to respond. But it's a good thing, right? Because one, you got to be able to do it. Two, right, it's a reason why you chose that topic.

Augustus Wood:

Oh, yeah.

David Walton:

Right? And then lastly, wouldn't, what's the purpose, right? Which is different than the reason, right? So, I had to figure that out. So, I first thought...

Augustus Wood:

It's gotta be something you love.

David Walton:

Yes.

Augustus Wood:

You got, you got to dedicate so much time and energy and sacrifice to that one nugget that you really care about.

David Walton:

Yes. And so if this is just a master's thesis, you got to dedicate at least a year, year and a half just to that. And then a dissertation for a PhD or disquisition for Ed, or whatever. Right now, you years, now years. Now you're dealing with a book project, if you write. Yes. You got to have some connection, some love for it, right? So, you know, I say, well, what? Well, my first inclination was something personal. And I tell all my students, graduate students in particular, you chose your topic for a reason. It's a personal reason. It may be ugly, you may be ashamed of it so you play games, with itself, or you may be proud of it, right, but it's a reason.

You choose your topic, right, you know, and my first topic for my masters, I wanted to do it on my small town, the Black community in my small town of Romulus, Michigan. It was a mural on a grocery store in downtown Romulus, IGA, and it was a Black history mural. And I would see it all the time in elementary school. And one day, it dawned on me that this just isn't a mural. Like when I looked at the mural, and the names, they said, and the locations, I'm like this, this is the local Black history that I'm not being taught in school. My mom and dad moved us there from the east side of Detroit, when I was maybe one years old, they're not from here. They don't know this history. You know what I'm saying? My dad knows Flint history. My mama knows Alabama and Detroit history, because that's where they grew up. Right. So, I was always interested. So I say, hey, I'll do something on Black Romulus. And then that, by researching and I took a class, Michigan history, so that was my project for that. And, and I did a project on it and then I realized how big and sprawling the project could be. Because it ended up being the community that Black Romulus grew out of, ended up being the first Black community, not Black person or Black people but Black community in the state of Michigan, right? Now, no one talks about it.

Augustus Wood:

Yeah, I didn't know...

David Walton:

It was a Black community there in the 1910s and 20s and 30s. Right. Black community in Detroit. We're talking decades and decades later, Black people were there but not a Black community.

Augustus Wood:

Exactly.

David Walton:

And there's a huge distinction involving and relating that, right? So, then I realized and say, all right, this project will be too big for me to do for a master's thesis. All right, I was good to do some rudimentary stuff for a class paper. Right? You know, a 25-30 page paper for grad class, right? You know, if I tried to make that a journal article, after deleting all the BS in it, I mean, that'd only be like seven pages in a journal article. That's nothing, right. But it feels like it when you're doing it, exactly. Student Yeah. Right, because it's double spaced and drawn on and all that. So, it shrinks really much. Right. So, I ended up saying, well, what's my best thing, next thing that I could do for a master's thesis that really speaks to my heart? And I say, hey, man, South Africa was a big deal in my household growing up. Nelson Mandela, but the hero in my household was not Nelson Mandela. It was Hugh Masekela. My dad loved jazz. So it was Hugh Masekela and his Stimela, that's the train song about the workers working in the mines. You know, this is the discourse, you know, Miriam Makeba, Miriam Stokely Carmichael, you know, these were big things, and making those connections in my childhood, you know. And then Robert Sobukwe in the PAC, and the more radical ones and Andrew Young, when he was in prison, taking his children in and raising them in Atlanta, Georgia, like these were things being discussed. South Africa, Detroit, solidarity. I was of a certain age, I remember Free Sun City, the concert, I remember in the Black music, R&B and hip hop: Free South Africa, down with apartheid. This was a real thing to me, to my life, helping me ground myself. And I was, you know, just about to graduate high school when Nelson Mandela was released, and then came and gave his US World Tour, but his US tour, and he came to Tiger Park in Detroit, Michigan, and gave a speech there. So, this was real impactful to my life, so on me learning about Martin Luther King and listening to Stevie Wonder, happy birthday to you, it was always in the context of South Africa. Yes, Civil Rights Movement, I had my "Eyes on the Prize." Yes, that context, I'm from that era, they, we will watch the "Eyes on the Prize" on our local PBS. They have played that shit in school, the DVD, "Eyes On..." That's right. So yes, that but then, South Africa, right. It was in the context of all of that, it's all together, how my lived experience was. So I said, I want to do some on Black people in the USA and South Africa.

Augustus Wood:

There you go.

David Walton:

That's how I chose my master's thesis. And it was a comparative, not comparative, actually a macro and micro analysis of the Black Power movement in the USA and South Africa, that timeframe, because I concluded that they were the same movement. And then they just had different locales. So, there were some differences, like the civil rights movement, or the Black Power movement in the US domestically. Alabama wasn't the same, Birmingham and Montgomery movements weren't the same. They weren't the same as Fayetteville, Arkansas. They weren't the same as Chicago, Illinois, they

weren't the same of as Watts, LA, they weren't the same. I mean, right. But they were part of this larger movement. But...

Augustus Wood:

But you had those local, yeah you had those local distinctions, though.

David Walton:

Yes. Yes. And the national, right, that shared ideas, common canon, common strategies, commons common suggested solutions, right, these things. So that's what I did my MA thesis on, Johannesburg as a case study. I mean, uh, I didn't make it that narrow, I'm jumping ahead of myself. So for my master's thesis, I said, that's what I'm going to do, right. My advisor said, that'd be a great dissertation, that ain't gonna work for MA thesis. I said damn, you already shot down Romulus, you already...I wanted to do the Congo, they shut that down at the first mention and they was like, yes, you won't even be able to go over there or get information because what was going on. Mobute had just came out of power. I'm like y'all shooting this down. I said, you know what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna do it on the South African labor movement. I'm from Detroit. We labor people. So, so my advisor, a Ugandan guy, said good, and he said, of all the ones you tried to do, this is going to be the hardest. And he said, not for research, it's because you're gonna have to read all these labor people. And they don't agree on nothing. [LAUGHS]

Augustus Wood:

That is so true.

David Walton:

Yes. So I ended up doing my master's thesis on the independent Black labor union movement in South Africa. I saw connections between the USA and South Africa from the beginning. Going back to Garvey, the ICU to UNIA, the African Methodist Episcopalian Church. Some of the stuff that that's a good one, what was my brother's name, Campbell. No. James T. Campbell has a book that covers some of this, those connections, and Vinson, Trent Vinson, right. Those two, those are good books, if you're interested in looking at all right, how do these diasporic connections happen? How do they become meaningful for these different groups? And how do they contribute to a global identity, their local identity contribute to a global identity, potentially a global movement? Right, because that's where my stuff led me to.

So, I did that, did really good, saw the connections even when I had to do stuff setting up other stuff. I saw a connection between the civil rights movement, the anti-apartheid movement, the Black Power movement, the anti-apartheid movement, down to the founding of the Congressional Black Caucus, a whole bunch of those interrelations, right?

Augustus Wood:

Is that is that Campbell book *Songs of Zion*?

David Walton:

Songs of Zion.

Augustus Wood:

The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa.

David Walton:

Yes, yes, yes. And the Trent, and the Vinson book, the Trent Vinson, what is that? Is it called the American or something?

Augustus Wood:

It is, it's American something but I, because I had that book somewhere in my office.

David Walton:

The Americans are Coming! Yeah. And he goes back to the 18, the late 1800s, all the way up, just on the that South African hope that the Black people, because of what Garvey was laying down, was gonna come back from the west and liberate them from what was then segregation in South African colonialism. That Ethiopianism that Garvey, and Dubois both argued. You know what I'm saying, and both books deal with that Ethiopianism as well, right. So, we see that hybridity we can see how Mark Malcolm X's parents, both of them, we don't talk about Louise enough, how they both were super bigwigs in the UNIA. And he was AME Pastor and she was the first wife, like we can see how that can happen. And them being West Indians themselves, right, we see this global thing. So, you know, then when I said, all right, I'm teaching community college, I'm adjunct at Eastern Michigan, where I went to undergrad and got my master's, right, in Black Studies, and in history, community college, I'm like, this is cool, and all, but I'm not getting paid.

Augustus Wood:

Yeah, I gotta pay rent, man, you know?

David Walton:

Exactly. I'm like I'm teaching at multiple schools, it'd be easier if I can combine them. But more importantly then metaphorically getting paid, I get some benefits. Health benefits, and retirement benefits. I mean, I got guaranteed amount of money, because, you know how it go when you're adjunct and, you know, you might get a lot of classes this semester, but the next semester, you might not get a lot. So it's very unstable. And those people in our field that's out there, struggling and languishing, in that what I will call, we will, colloquially say, slave labor, but it's definitely second-class wage labor in our profession. No doubt people who are stuck in the adjuncting and lecturing life, because there are multiple schools, no benefits, very low pay, you know. Little to no support, you know, right. And they got all these responsibilities. And in many schools, from community college to four year schools, they may be the ones teaching the bulk of those general ed or Liberal Studies, whatever y'all call em at ya'll school, level courses. The bulk...

Augustus Wood:

That's, that's the rising trend now is that most schools are hiring more what they call specialized faculty, because of exactly what you said is that you can keep them at a, at a kind of a disadvantaged position in their labor, so that they have to go to multiple schools, you don't have to give them benefits and

they're not unionized. There's only like maybe three specialized faculty unions in academia and the entire US, but everybody else is like you said, they're, they're basically swimming trying to find a raft in the ocean. So yeah, it's a trend that's becoming very disturbing, that that's going to be the dominant form of instruction and we don't, you know, organize against that.

David Walton:

Indeed and simultaneously what, they coming for tenure. So, they tried to destroy the tenure structure. And we see the model for the replacement because we see it happening as a G league or a second class, the, in our profession, already. So, we see where they heading with it. So I want to break free of that and I said why I do a PhD? And I say, well, I want to do African history and Black Studies. That's what I initially set out to do. Because I did you know, the African stuff, I wanted to follow up with the South African stuff. And then I was like, man, it's not a lot of people teaching African history. You know what I'm saying, there was one professor at Eastern Michigan who taught African history. Many taught American history, many taught European history. One person and he is a full-time lecturer. You know what I'm saying? I'm like, I want to get into African history. So I applied to some schools. They all said no, so I didn't get to apply to African history, they all said. So I waited to the next cycle. I said this time, I'm gonna apply to some Black Studies programs and some African history. I got accepted to one school for Black Studies, and that was Michigan State University. Dr. Rita Kiki Edozie much props and love to Dr. Edozie, because she saw the potential in me, and she admitted me, and then I got admitted with funding. So, they had committed it sounded like a lot of money, it sounded like it when I got that letter, but they had committed to \$250,000, a quarter million dollars. Literally I know that that was over like five to seven years. So I was going to get pieces of it. Exactly, yeah.

Augustus Wood:

Exactly, yeah. Like you got a Patrick Mahomes contract, man.

David Walton:

Not gonna have the rookie contract, because what was coming out of that money was a tuition waiver.

Augustus Wood:

Exactly.

David Walton:

So I got free classes, a minuscule paycheck, but I got medical insurance. And we got in, and they started there might start right before I got there, we got a graduate student union. And so for the people that do GA and TAing, you know what I'm saying? Every graduate student can join but 90% of the work we do is to support the GAs and TAS of the Union, the GEU, right, nonetheless. So, I, you know, I'm taking I took some Black Studies classes, we had to take our first semester, everybody, my whole cohort had to take that, right. But then you can start getting into, because you got fill your requirement, and to your sub-field. So Black Studies is your discipline, and then you got a sub-field. And mine was history. Somebody might do sociology, literature, rhetoric, whatever it is, philosophy, or you can mix and match. But you know, I didn't want to mix and match. History, that's what I was trained in and what my MA. I knew I wanted to do historical stuff. So, I took some, I took two classes a African diaspora

history class, and an African history class. And at the end of the semester, these two white dudes came up to me, the professors, they was talking to each other, and I'm just walking by. And they called me over and they asked me, well, why aren't I in the history department? So I played the poker face with them, Brother Wood, and I looked at them saying, wow, that sounds like a good idea. In my mind, I said, because y'all white people told me no, twice. Like, what do you mean? And then they say, oh, man, we'd love to have you in the history program. I say, well, I'd never leave Black Studies. And they said you could do both. I said, I could do both? And one of them stuck out his hand, he was a department head of the history department, he said welcome to the history department. And on a handshake I was admitted into the history PhD. So I finished with African Studies with Black Studies and African American history. But all of my non-Black Studies classes were history classes. So, it just depends on the afternoon because my transcript reflects it. I mean, I could apply for African history, professorship, Af-Am history professorship, a Black Studies professorship, my transcripts reflect it, you know, I have, because I had to do more coursework. Luckily, one dissertation, but I had to take a lot more coursework to do both at the same time. And I said, well, I know what I'm going to do for my dissertation. That stuff I saw when I was doing the master's thesis, I wanted to see the connection of the Black Power and Black consciousness movement in South Africa. And in case studies, I say I wanted to look at the community, so I had case studies of community organizations. I wanted to look at students, so I have case studies of student organizations and student movements. And I wanted to look at labor, which initially people didn't think I could do. Because they like, well you... and I'm like, no, there gotta be a Black power union out there. Somebody that was screaming Black Power and organized a union of Negros. It has to be. I wouldn't show, but I said it has to be.

Augustus Wood:

You knew there's something out there, now, I'm gonna find it.

David Walton:

It ain't stop with the Sleeping Porters union, it ain't stop with A. Philip Randolph. They didn't stop there. I'm like, nah. And I was like, because I studied the labor movement in South Africa, I was like, I saw bits and pieces of that they were Black consciousness labor unions, but they were ignored by the South African labor history historians, this historiography, because they weren't Marxist Leninist. So they didn't view them as real working class movements or labor movements, right. So it was that how they got a minute. So I said, that's what I'm gonna do. I said, I'm gonna look at Detroit, because I'm from Detroit. I'll be studying my mommy and daddy generation. I think that's important when we're talking about the field. And I explain this now to a lot of scholars. I kind of started maybe last year, and I've been on it at conferences since then. It's telling them like, the next wave, like, right, y'all studied y'all's parents' generation, right? I studied y'all, y'all my parents' generation, you know. The next generation of scholars, and they bout to start hitting this grad school, they're gonna want to study my generation, their parents' generation. So unless we want them to go haywire with it, and God knows lead us anywhere, we got to do like what was done before us, we got to lay a historiographical foundation for them to build on. That's what I'm saying. So I said, we got to start researching and publishing about the transition from the Black Power movement, the death of the Black Power movement, and to the Reagan era. And we got to start producing scholarship, you know, on on the Reagan era, you know. Yeah, but what I did, I did on my parents' era. And I discovered that Black labor union, the League of revolutionary Black Workers. And they was linked to my student organization that I used as my case study, the Black

Student United Front. So it was like bam, was led to my community. So then I was like, wow, this is integrated. And I'm looking around and I'm like, I'm not seeing many of these Black power labor unions popping up. Some, but not as many. So this is even rarer gem. I found one book, right? At the time, one book. *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*.

Augustus Wood:

Yes, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*.

David Walton:

That was the only book. The only book when I wrote my dissertation. The only book I could only find mention of the league and other stuff. Literally just mentioned, no discussion. Just said oh, and it was the thing out there they did that.

Augustus Wood:

Yeah. That was this this offshoot thing that was happening somewhere. Yeah.

David Walton:

Yeah, yeah. And all of them were relegating them to either being Black Panther Party pawns, or being a Marxist Leninist robots, which is not true because they use Black nationalism and Pan Africanism just as much as they used Marxist Leninism, they probably used Maoism more than Marxist Leninism. But nonetheless, that class-based structural analysis, right, you know, and it helped me explain a lot of missing pieces in my life.

Growing up downriver Detroit, these working-class white people, they worked, they parents worked in the auto factory, just like most of my most of our parents. You know, they were in the same unions, is most of the Black men who had jobs in the Black in those Black communities in Detroit downriver Detroit during this time. But why are these white folk and these Black folk ain't getting along? Why can't they see eye to eye? Why are these people voting in support of Ronald Reagan? Why are they opposing new Black people moving into the neighborhood, our neighborhood in the 1980s, which was ironic, because I told you about Romulus was the first Black community, but they was there before the white people came. And then two, in the neighborhood my dad bought our house, we was like the fifth people to buy a house in there. We was there before the white people even in this new neighborhood. Because these white people move in, and then more Black people working in the auto industry, buying these houses as these houses get built, and their response to them, I couldn't understand it. But studying illegal revolutionary Black workers, I was able to make sense of it. I could make sense how a certain segment of the white working class at the time and perhaps now have for certain, but perhaps will, for the foreseeable future, choose race over class. And then admonish Black people, like the authors of *Detroit, I might I do*, I mean, *I Do Mind Dying*, that's my criticism with them. They admonished the league because the league instituted race first policies, but ignored the fact they they had to because the majority of the white workers had adopted race first policies. And the UAW itself at the time adopted race first policies to the point where the UAW Local 300 was actually in cahoots with the Hamtramck police and fire department, where they were underwriting them, like literally giving them loans. You know, what I'm saying, that they paid back to the union to operate their police station. Like these are real things that happened, and then that they began to make sense to me, seeing that

transition of against man... Ok, that that that's why, that's what I was hearing on the television as a kid, Ronald Reagan, Walter Mondale. There were the adults were arguing about what these two old white men were on TV arguing about, right. It was the culture war, it was that battle, and I'm seeing the adults being mad like I thought we was all supposed to be UAW. But they, the white boys, as my uncle would say, the white boys, they voting for Reagan, though. And Reagan... the unions right. You know it, right. So me being able to study, because remember I was a child, seeing the FFA, the FAA union break, that Reagan did, it was trying some automotive, I mean, some locomotive workers, like I watched him as a kid bust up several of these unions. You know, so it was not a leap for me to empathize with the adults, my uncles and their drunk friends saying, when they off work, complaining about what I'm just saying. So, it was that connectedness, right. And then learning more about the Black Power movement and Civil Rights movement. And my uncle, a automotive guy, may he rest in peace. He just passed away a couple years ago, but he was an alcoholic, Vietnam vet got his brain scrambled in Vietnam. Never was really right ever since. But he used to tell me when I was going through that transition I told you about, I got into all that trouble. I got the probation officer. I'm convinced she was a white lady but she could have been mad, mad, light skinned, but I thought she was a white lady. She tricked me. She said, I bet you don't think I'm Black. But I'm Black.

Augustus Wood:

Was it like, was it like that Sanford and Son episode where Fred had that doctor over that had the kind of curly hair and the doctor, Fred was like, you know, I'm good doctor, but would you like some ripple? And the doctor was like ripple, what's that? And Fred Sanford was like, What, if you got to ask questions, you can't be one of us. He said, you must be trying to pass. [LAUGHS]

David Walton:

No, indeed. Indeed, indeed, right. But to bring it back to you know that, so when I was going through that, and he'd see me reading these books, listen to these cassette tapes. And one time he had me out, he heard me, I was listening to Stokely and he coming by. He was staying with us. He used to get in a lot of DUI stuff and all that other stuff. He was an alcoholic but he was an auto body mechanic guy. We used to work in the auto factories, Dodge main and work for the school board DPS, painting school buses or whatever, right? Until he couldn't keep jobs no more. But that's a whole nother story. Right? So he was staying with us. And he was walking by upstairs by my bedroom and he heard Stokely's voice. So he busted in and was like, oh, Stokely. There, that jive turkey. He used to sleep in my bed. I used to have to sleep on the floor. Old jive turkey. He's like, Yeah, but Stokely, no? Stokely, no? I'm just thinking he drunk talking, just trying to connect with me, help my mom out, help his sister out with her smart but out of control son or whatever, right? Well, I read this book, Dr. Dagbovie's class, Pero Dagbovie, he's the immediate past editor of the *Journal of African American History*. So I had this Black Power seminar with him, he signed his book, he signed Kwame Jeffries book *Bloody Lowndes*. I'm like, yeah, my people from Lowndes County. I thought every Negro in Detroit was from Lowndes County till I was about 12 years old. When we lived in Detroit, and every time we went to Detroit, everybody on the east side, everybody on the whole block was from Lowndes County. You see, and that's all they would talk about was what was going on with in Lowndes County, Billy Ray, Bobby Sue, blah, blah, blah. The latest gossip, y'all call it tea, not the latest gossip. Everything, Lowndes County, everybody was cousins. It was I thought every Black person named Troy was from Lowndes County, Alabama, right? So I'm like, oh, yeah, it's a signed book. Oh, yeah, yeah, Lowndes County. I read the book, I started

crying halfway through the book when I started reading the names. And I was like my Uncle Buster with his drunk ass, was not lying to me. He was telling me some stuff. And the whole time I'm studying Black history, Black Studies, Civil Rights Movement, Black Power movement. And this fool is trying to tell me that my family history is, is that and ain't nobody wrote about it yet. Well, luckily, Hassan Kwame Jeffries found out about the story. And he went down there and then he wrote about it. So my Uncle Buster, his daddy was David Hunter. His brother was John Hunter. If you read the book, you see how prominent John Hunter is. My cousin, Regina Moore, Dr. Regina Moore, she in Alabama State in Political Science. Same department as Dr. Bertis English, the new journal editor. You know, her mother, my Auntie Audrey, my mother's sister, right, she, her stepmother and her father are the Moores. So we read them, and they talk about the Moores and Maddie Moore and all them. That's them... you know my grandmother had nine kids with like five different men, so don't judge. So you know, you got the Rushes, the Rudolphs, the Hunters, the Moores. Who else? Even the McCords, like them are all like direct relatives and that's, they the bulk of the book.

So I just started crying and I'm like man, like this is wild. You know what I'm saying? This is wild, you know. And then comparing that and my father's people. His mother was born in Yazoo County, Yazoo City, Mississippi. They could have passed for white. They got mad at my grandmother, according to my father, because she not only didn't choose to pass for white, but she did the next best worst thing, she made the blackest Black as oil as Black as Black is Alabama Negro that one can find. You know what I'm saying, up there in Flint, Michigan? You feel me? So they disowned for a long time, basically. But you know, but you know Stokely Carmichael, he left Mississippi and went to Lowndes County, he left Yazoo County and went to Lowndes County. He and Ricks, Ricks came up with Black Power. I mean, the Black Panther for their emblem based upon folklore in Yazoo County, that there was a Black panther in the swamp and all he ate was racist crackers. So he chose that as that going against the democratic cock and Alabama for the Lowndes County Freedom Party. And he had his joke the Black Panther will beat the white cock any day.

Augustus Wood:

Yeah.

David Walton:

That's a double entendre in there somewhere. And then I was just like man had like these family histories. And then I thought about it and said, bro, just people don't know. But a lot of them got these family histories. Just like I didn't know, they didn't know. And they don't. You know what I'm saying? If we trace these migration patterns, so you know my work up until this point in many ways this has been trying to tell the story whether I knew it directly or not... but I do know now...of my family, i.e., Black people, our experiences, our struggles, you know, you see the success in certain social movement approaches. And you see the failures, you see how they were squashed or strengthened by broader structures. And broader, you know, machinations. You...

Augustus Wood:

Because that's part of the, that's part of the the analysis. That's part of the study that we we, you know, especially a lot of more contemporary works, post-2005 books, you know, that they're so adamant. And again, we always must be emphasizing agency. But there's this kind of bit to always trying to have a

triumphant narrative about Black struggle, that often feels way too fantastical. Because most of it is typically gazing into the community instead of actually being on the ground to understand that this... Black struggle is not a triumphant narrative. There are ebbs and flows, you have triumphs, and some organizations and movements, but you also have the structural backlash, the reactionary racial oppression, capital, etc., all this stuff happening, that hinders the resources of building movements. You know, again, like you can't talk about 2020 and George Floyd, without talking about the backlash by the corporations that came in and coopted and destroyed, anything that the working-class folks wanted to have, you got to talk about all the elements that were involved. So I'm glad you brought that up. And that's something that we have to understand is the building of the of the community, the movement, etc., is important. But it's also important to understand what the opposition either did or tried to do to subvert or crush the organization. Because when we're trying to intervene today in our movements, we need to understand what our opposition is thinking and their historical practice.

David Walton:

Because it's real dangerous in 2024, and lord, it's 2024. In 2024, you know, when when these politicians and these power brokers and these different political actors, and they get on TV, and they say exactly how they feel and what they gonna do, and they're using the language of the code, I mean, the culture war, and then you got Black people across the board, regardless of their status and their, you know, how they engage, and they can't make that out, they can't make that connection. And that's dangerous, because I'm like, I see why we're losing ground, I see why we have the potential to lose, because we don't even know the battle we in, we don't lost sight of the war itself. You know, and these young people, they active. So what they're looking for is what my generation—I'm not gonna say we was the last—but it feels like it, well, we might have had the last of, we did have some of that prior movement's knowledge readily accessible to us. I don't know if because, besides hip hop as a social movement, and I agree with Dr. with Jeffrey Ogbar, O G Ogbar, on that. I teach his hip hop as a social movement. But besides hip hop, like we really haven't had any until Black Lives Matter came. Any post-Black Power era social movement, not none that I can really say hey, this was, you know, we had the million man march, and we can say the million man march movement, but I it'd be a stretch for me to say it was a social movement. And the verdict is still out, in my opinion about Black Lives Matter. It's a moment, and it's a movement, but we got to see how it plans out I mean, how it plays out. The young kids how they work on it on top, not necessarily the organization, I'm not talking about the organization at all.

Augustus Wood:

But the ramifications...

David Walton:

...Black Lives Matter protests, and they never even talked to the organization one day, and they lied, before or after, what day was...

Augustus Wood:

It's like, it became like a kind of unifying term for everything related to Black struggle protests, is that you have somebody hashtag Black Lives Matter. And then all of a sudden it is now considered to be a Black Lives Matter protest. But then when you actually go to the neighborhood, you go to Washington

County, Mississippi, and they're like, I don't know about that now, but what I know is that they try to close our local grocery store, which is in our Black neighborhood, and we want to keep that because we have, we need access to a grocery store and food. So yes, exactly. Yes. It's a totalizing thing, which is also part of like you said, the structural backlash, but you know, yeah.

So, so Brother David, man, you know, we crept past the hour, man. And this has been one of the most insightful discussions because what I love about what you talked about is you not only talked about the scholarship, but you talked about your process to like, because a lot of people really want to know what it is like to make that type of commitment, that jump to I want to do this kind of work, I want to study history, I want to study, I want to study Black folks, I want to study the Black struggle, not just in the US, but across the world, and the steps you took and the kinds of avenues. Because again, this is not something that's easily accessible, or, you know, readily something that you hear teachers talk about to high school students, and a lot of undergraduate students don't get this process either, you know, so I appreciate you talking about that, because it's really going to give insight as to on the ground, guerilla intellectual scholar activist type of work that you've been doing for so long. And so really what you kind of like, the last thing that I think we want to hear from you is, like, what are you currently reading today? At? Or do you recommend today that really plays into your scholarship, and your work, both in the community and Black Studies? What are things that you really been getting on, and don't have to be just books, articles, it can also be any movies you've seen, or music that you rockin' with right now that really kind of points to the spaces that you feel we need to be moving towards?

David Walton:

Awesome, awesome, that's a great question. That's a real good question. I would say, balancing doing my research and teaching, I haven't had the opportunity to read a lot of new books in the last, I'd say two years. But I'd say one that I would recommend, and I'm gonna giggle, because some people gonna go why. But it's a very, very important book. And it speaks to a lot of what we were talking about, I'm going to say Frederick Douglass and *Fugitive Pedagogy* by Jarvis Givens. That book, I think, is probably going to go down as probably one of the most important top 10 books in our fields of this moment in time. I'm going to be honest with you. Because it sets the stage of the type of mindset that we had to reclaim to educate our people in this, this, this political climate. About Black people, you know, what our families and independent institutions need to do, the type of mind state that they have to teach to perpetuate Black history in our community. I'll definitely say that. I like a lot of the work a lot of the articles and chapters that Charisse Burden-Stelly has been dropping recently. I mean, she's been doing a lot of good work, particularly for those who are interested in the Black radical left, and some of the theorizations and reasoning behind their approaches that people may be curious about or unclear about.

Augustus Wood:

Most definitely, shout out, you know, good friend and good comrade of mine, good friend of *Off the Shelf*, been on here, too. So yeah.

David Walton:

Indeed indeed. So you know, that has been the most. I am going to read that new Bayard Rustin book.

Augustus Wood:

Oh, yeah, I haven't read that yet.

David Walton:

Yeah, I'm going to read it. I'm waiting on it to arrive. They said in about two weeks, I get it. So I'm gonna read that as soon as I get it. I'm interested, you know, in his, his approaches to organizing. What he did, you know, he had organized and go ahead, you can speak, Martin, on many different local movements. and at the million man, I mean, that the March on Washington, he did that for Martin Luther King. But local movements, he was the gather- em-up guy. Let me gather up the Negroes, put them where they need to be, and I think a brilliant thing so I'm eager to read more about it, is then he was able to put together a philosophy that people will buy in, and this is how I need you to behave while you're here though. Right? And all kind of civil disobedience. So we ain't just gathered them up, he also convinced them to behave in the way that he wanted them to, for the sake of the movement or what he felt would be a good direction for the movement to go, you know, so I'm very eager, he doesn't get the props he deserves, so I'm glad this biography is coming out.

I mean, he works so close with Asa Randolph, but if people don't know about, he worked so closely with Martin Luther King, even after Martin Luther King had to pretend like he ain't know him, because it came out that Bayard was a homosexual. But he's still, you know what I'm saying? Yeah. So so I'm here with that. But I can never forget the old, classics, my peoples, though. My old classics because to me, I think this whole process in the West, when we're dealing with race, it's all about identity. They had to change our identity from our identities in Africa, no matter what they were, into a slave. And then we've been fighting identity war with them ever since all the way up to the new Negro, Black, African American, even the N word. In many ways we analyze it, right, it's part of our identity battle that we got going on. And that's what's been going on for us. That's... our arguments, I mean, if you really want to, what's the main argument that Candace Owens or Thomas Sowell have against whoever we could pick on the west, Marc Lamont Hill, I mean, on the left, Marc Lamont Hill, and then nahh whoever, we'll say, Cornell West, right, not equating Marc to Candace, my bad. But you get what I'm saying, though.

Augustus Wood:

Oh, yeah. Yeah, most definitely.

David Walton:

Right? I mean, it really is, right, it's a battle, it's still the debate over identity. The Black identity, what is the Black identity, the soul of Black Folk, double consciousness. I mean, it's nothing new. So the old classics for me and will never steer me wrong: *Souls of Black Folk*, Dubois; Carter G. Woodson *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, Cheikh Anta Diop, I mean, what is it, the *African Origins of Civilization*, and *The Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon. They all in conversation together, I can even throw in Nathan Hare's *Black Anglo-Saxons*, but they are all in conversation together. And then we see the macro macro and historical sophistication of understanding this identity war, the battle for the Black mind, the Black identity. You know, when we get too far away from that? I'm always, it's always peculiar where scholars end up.

Augustus Wood:

Oh yeah, well, we've seen some fine examples of that already last year. So I think I think you're exactly right about that. And that you really, and I think you're what you're honing in on is that those of us who, who publish research, etc., we have to understand what our vision is, if we're going to be contributing to the understanding of Black struggle, the Black liberation movement, whatever you want to call it, there has to be a vision that's associated with and which is important that you did a lot of, that you'd be that you that you got in the history, is that we have to understand the history not just of our people, but of our current, but of our position as scholars, as intellectuals, as folks that actually are responsible for publishing what would be the scholarly approach to understanding struggle. We have a responsibility to know that. And a lot of times you have people who skip over that. I can't tell you how many people I know that have gotten degrees in African American history, or Black Studies, whether it be masters, etc. that skipped a lot of Black history courses, or Black Studies courses, because they may have heard they were too difficult. And you know what I'm saying, I know you want to talk. I know you know, because you're the director. And so again, this is why again, like I'm glad you put this out there because we really have to get up, be on, be even more cognizant of taking control of the responsibility that we have to build the Black Studies, the scholarship that we want, that's going to translate to what we want in struggle and liberation. So no, this is so important that you're saying these points that we have to hone in on, Brother David.

David Walton:

Well, thank you for having me and giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts with your listeners. I thank them for listening and taking the time as well.

Augustus Wood:

Well, we're definitely gonna have you back in the future. Because again, we got to do a part two, because especially since you got some you got some, you got some, so many set of irons in the fire right now. And so once those fires blaze, then we gonna have you back to talk about that stuff, because I'm really excited about the work you're doing, not just in your scholarship but again, like I said, you're very adamant and into your community work as well as your work as the director of Black Studies. Because we really need people like you who have a vision for what it is that we want to make Black Studies. And so that has to become the model. So we appreciate you, brother, for being one of the ones setting the model for where we need to go.

David Walton:

Oh, I thank you and appreciate you, because you're doing the same as well, good brother.

Augustus Wood:

Yeah, I'm trying. So thank you again, Brother David Walton, Professor. We will, we're closing this episode of *Off the Shelf: Revolutionary Readings in Times of Crisis* with a revolutionary episode. I'm your host Gus Wood, sponsored by the Humanities Research Institute. We will see you next time. Free the land, always power to the people.