



THE HOLLER

FEBRUARY 2024

**DOWN HOME
NORTH CAROLINA**

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Above: Jayne Williams ran for office in her hometown of Kannapolis, turning local politics upside down.

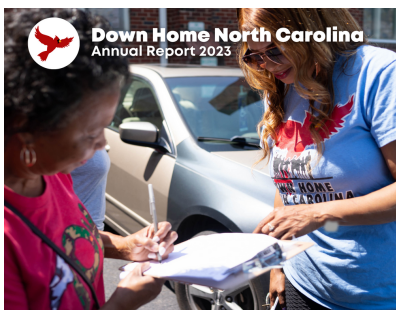
“PEOPLE ARE TRYING TO PAY FOR GROCERIES, TRYING TO PAY RENT.”

THE WORKING CLASS CANDIDACY OF JAYNE WILLIAMS

MEDICAID EXPANSION ALREADY HELPING OVER 300,000 IN NC

In our biggest win to date, Medicaid expansion went into effect in North Carolina in December. In two short months, over 300,000 people have already enrolled-- proving that we can organize for real wins with immediate impact for poor and working folks like us.

★ **Get involved! Join our Health Justice Working Group to help guide our next fight.** Contact Kate at kate@downhomenc.org



SCAN ME

Read Down Home's 2023 Annual Report

It's not hard to find Jayne Williams. She drives a bright yellow Dodge Neon, and she'll tell you she's surprised it didn't break down on the way here. On the side of the car is a large pink magnet that reads: VOTE FOR JAYNE WILLIAMS. Her laugh is the loudest in the room, her smile is huge. Simply put, Jayne is not shy.

It's also not hard to find Jayne because she is, rather literally, everywhere. She's a familiar face at every City Council meeting, every County Commission meeting, the weekly Neighborhood Watch meeting, and when delivering Meals on Wheels.

These are some of the reasons Jayne Williams pulled in just over 13% of the vote in a six-way race for Kannapolis City Council last fall-- everyone knows her. 13% wasn't enough to win, but that doesn't mean Jayne's campaign wasn't a big deal for this small town.

North of Charlotte and straddling the Cabarrus and Rowan County line, Kannapolis is an old textile town. Like most places, the mills here closed years ago and working folks get on at the distribution plant or in the service industry these days. "People here pay \$20 on this bill, \$30 on that bill, as they can," explains Jayne. "They are trying to buy groceries, they are trying to pay rent."

It's the fact that Jayne knows this and kept it front and center during her campaign that caused such a stir. "People don't talk about these things," she explains. "I mean, regular people do-- that's all we talk about. But people running for office don't."

A single mother of five, Jayne had been moving every year trying to find a safe place to land with her children. She would move somewhere that seemed okay, but "like an apple, it would get bad," she explains. Finally, she moved to Kannapolis, where she had extended family.

Continued next page



Above: Cabarrus County members meet up before heading out to knock doors during municipale elections. Down Home members endorsed Jayne Williams.

She moved into a trailer on her great-grandmother’s land. That was 25 years ago. “Kannapolis is now my home,” she says. She rented her current home for 20 years and recently purchased it. She loves it here.

There was a time when Jayne didn’t think that people like her could run for office. “If you had told me ten years ago that I’d be doing this now,” she laughs “I would have told you ‘You’re drunk!’” Still today she finds that some people don’t take her seriously. “When I’m around well-off people, sometimes I feel like a damn idiot. And they seem to think I’m not educated and don’t look the part,” she says. She is interrupted by her phone ringing- her ringtone is Petey Pablo’s “Raise Up”. She does a little dance to it before turning it down.

But Jayne has something that makes her more credentialed than most people in office: Experience. “I’ve worked for a living. I know what it's like to struggle to get off welfare, I know what it's like to start at \$2.05 and try to build it up. I know what it's like to be hungry and to eat my children’s scraps.”

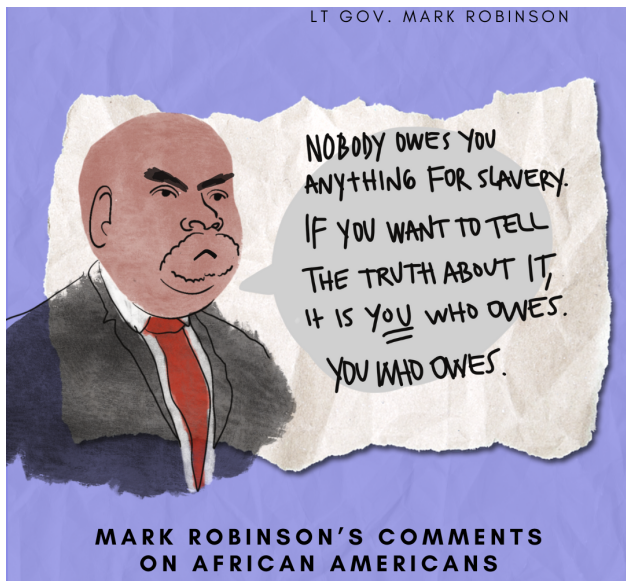
Her eyes momentarily fill with tears at this memory, but she shakes it off. “I’ll pick up a penny and dust it off,” she continues. “Tell me that doesn’t qualify me for helping a town like Kannapolis.”

Kannapolis has big challenges and the people here have big needs. The town has nearly doubled in size in recent years and is struggling to keep up with the growth. Jayne says when she first moved here rent was \$600 a month, but now it's \$1,200 or more. “But wages have barely grown,” she points out.

Jayne’s political platform was simple and direct: “We need afterschool programs for kids, we need senior centers, and, by God, we need affordable housing.” She is mystified why Kannapolis’ representation isn’t representative of the town, which is overwhelmingly working-class. “We need leaders who are biracial, who are LGBTQIA+. We need Black and Indian and Jewish leadership. How can you govern me if you don’t know me? That’s what I ask.”

Jayne recently ran into a woman in Walmart who recognized her and said she had voted for her. The woman asked if she would run again. “Hell yeah,” Jayne told her “The problems are still there, so it's not like I can give up. You just can’t give up on people or stop before you are done.”

“It’s not easy, look at me. A single, biracial mom. You may not win the first time. You may not win the second time. But the people are still here. The hope is still here.”



MARK ROBINSON IS NOT “OUR NATIVE SON”

“Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, has repeatedly denigrated the Civil Rights Movement at large and even our hometown heroes specifically. He has said the Civil Rights Movement was a communist plot to “subvert capitalism” and used “to subvert free choice” and that “so many freedoms were lost during the Civil Rights Movement.”

Robinson is running for governor this year.” writes Down Home's Black Constituency Organizer, Rev CJ Brinson.

Read Rev. CJ’s OpEd here

★ Get involved!
Want to write an OpEd or Letter to the Editor about Mark Robinson? Contact Gwen at gwen@downhomenc.org



A HUGE, GROWING BASE OF SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION



In 2020, the far-right took aim at our public schools, trying to undermine them and replace them with for-profit models.

In 2021, extremists manufactured a litany of outrages, including fury over online schooling, diatribes against Critical Race Theory, and all-out anti-trans hysteria to undermine our confidence in one of the most essential systems we rely on.

In 2022, School board meetings became heated battlegrounds where a vocal minority attempted to take charge at the expense of our schools and our children.

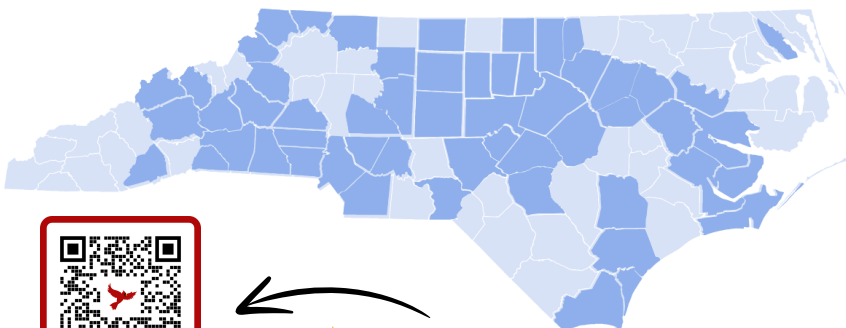
But in 2023, we decided to organize.

Learn more about the work of Public School Strong and Heal Together NC on our blog: www.downhomenc.org/news



CURRENT NC COUNTIES WITH PSS TEAMS

ALAMANCE-ASHE-BUNCOMBE-CABARRUS-CATAWBA-CLEVELAND-CRAVEN-FORSYTH-GUILFORD-IREDELL-JOHNSTON-UNION-WAKE-WATAUGA-ALLEGHANY-BEAUFORT-BRUNSWICK-BURKE-CALDWELL-CARTARET-COLOMBUS-CUMBERLAND-DAVIDSON-DUPLIN-EDGECOMBE-FRANKLIN-GASTON-GRANVILLE-HARNETT-LEE-LINCOLN-MADISON-MARTIN-MCDOWELL-MOORE-NASH-NEW HANOVER-PAMLICO-PASQUOTANK-PENDER-PERSON-PITT-POLK-RANDOLPH-RICHMOND-ROCKINGHAM-ROWAN-RUTHERFORD-STANLY-SURRY-TRANSYLVANIA-VANCE-YANCEY

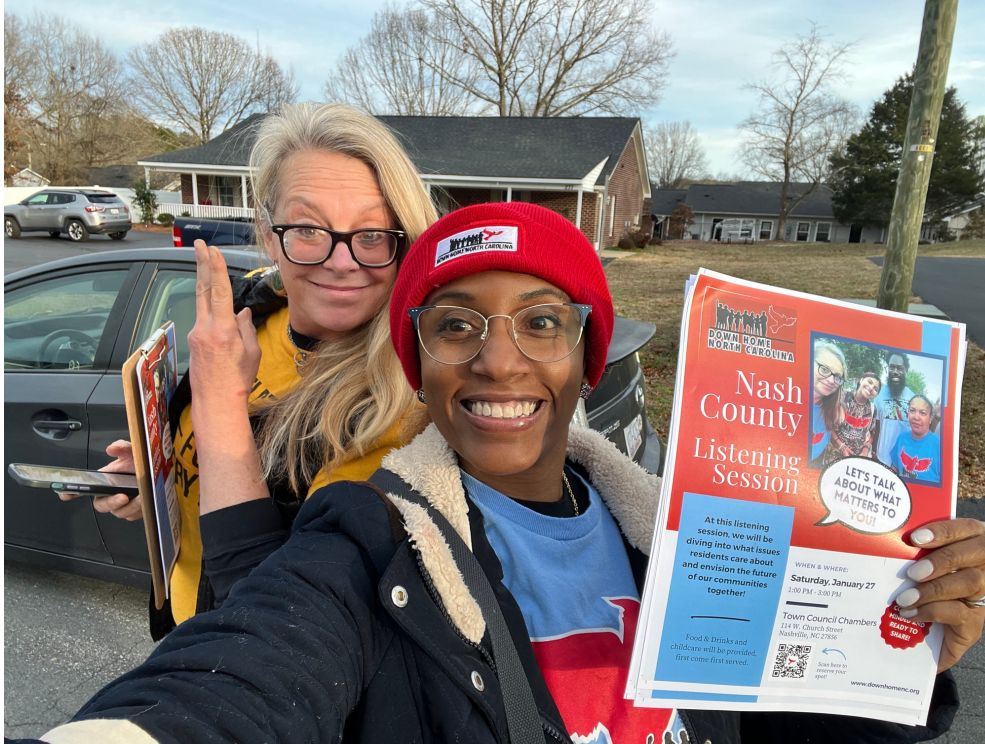


SCAN ME

★ Get involved!

Scan to find the next Public School Strong training

GROWING OUR REACH: WE TRUST THE PEOPLE OF NORTH CAROLINA



Down Home is on the road, learning from rural folks. Stay tuned for an event near you in:

- Chatham County
- Franklin County
- Harnett County
- Iredell County
- Rockingham County
- Rowan County
- Transylvania County

★ **Get involved:** Find all our upcoming events (and keep checkin' back) here: www.mobilize.us/downhomenc

Down Homies are putting miles on our cars as we zig-zag across the state on back roads. We are rolling into places where we believe the people have something to say. One stop away was in Nash County - a rural place filled with hard-working, good folks who know their community best.

We have long made it a foundational practice in our work to learn more about the concerns and values of rural communities through deep listening. This is rooted in our belief that poor and working people are the experts in our own experience and hold the knowledge and know-how to improve our communities. All too often, we don't have a seat at the table to truly be heard.

In Nash County, three major themes quickly surfaced: Issues with water quality and affordability, concerns about rent and home prices, and a lack of public transportation in the county. All three are connected to a feeling that poor and working people aren't being valued or getting the real, tangible support they need.

"We need more affordable housing," explained Martha Hill, who has lived and worked in Nash County for years. "It used to be 500 a month to rent and they have doubled the price." Many in the room echoed this concern, saying that wages haven't gone up at the same rate as the cost of housing and utilities.

"Why am I paying a 900 dollar light bill?" asked William Peete, who is new to the county. Prices like this are taking up too much of working folks paychecks, causing working families to have to cut back on food and other essentials to make ends meet.

Conversations like this happen all the time at Down Home: We know what the issues are. We know what needs to change. We are the majority- most of us live in these conditions that so often do not work for us.

"What is getting in the way?" asked Bridget Parrish, a retired police officer who came out to the gathering. "People don't have a strong way to get the issues out to the community and address the issues."

Down Home wants to build a structure in places like Nash County to do just that: Get the concerns of working people addressed in the halls of power. We want to bring the investment and capacity so that local working-class people can build the multiracial formations needed to not just lobby for change but to be in positions of power themselves to make decisions for our own communities.



Above: Participants at the Nash County Listening Session in January. Below: Conversation in Johnston County.



FEBRUARY EVENTS

Find our events and sign up here:
mobilize.us/DownHomeNC

ALAMANCE COUNTY

Monthly Chapter Meeting
Tuesday, Feb 27, 6:30 PM

ASHE COUNTY

Monthly Chapter Meeting
Tuesday, Feb 13, 6 PM

CABARRUS COUNTY

Monthly Chapter Meeting
Thursday, Feb 22, 6 PM

GRANVILLE COUNTY

Monthly Chapter Meeting
Wednesday, Feb 28, 6 PM

JOHNSTON COUNTY

Monthly Chapter Meeting
Thursday, Feb 29, 6:30 PM

NASH COUNTY

Power Building Workshop
Thursday, March 7, 6 PM

PERSON COUNTY

Monthly Chapter Meeting
Monday, Feb 26th, 6 PM

PITT COUNTY

Chapter Launch!
Saturday, Feb 17, 12 PM

VANCE COUNTY

Chapter Launch!
Saturday, Feb 24th, 11 AM

WATAUGA COUNTY

Chapter Meeting
Saturday, Feb 13, 6:30 PM

Medicaid Information Event
Saturday, March 2nd, 1 PM

SCHOOLS

Public School Strong Training
Tuesday, Feb 13, 7 PM (online!)

HEAL Together NC Statewide call
Thursday, Feb 29, 7 PM (online!)

TRAINING, WORKSHOPS, AND SKILLS

Boards and Committees Meeting
Thursday, Feb 15th, 6:30 PM

Say it in The Holler!

The Holler is the monthly newsletter showcasing the work being done by Down Homies across the state! Send us your updates about your chapter, photos, their opinion pieces about your campaigns and your community!

Gwen Frisbie-Fulton,
gwen@downhomenc.org
(336) 253-4649

WE GOT A PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION!

(Big, legal words that are good news for rural voters)

A WIN FOR RURAL VOTERS

A federal court BLOCKED a key portion of North Carolina's latest voter suppression law.

Last fall, Down Home joined Voto Latino and the Watauga County Voting Rights Task Force in suing over the Undeliverable Mail Provision of SB 747-- now a court has blocked that portion of the bill.

In plain words, SB 747 could cause anyone with a nontraditional or hard to find address to have their vote thrown out if a piece of mail is returned undeliverable.

We think our votes are more precious than that... and we know you do too.

Down Home Members Running for Office in 2024

Down Home members across the state spent last year training, gathering, and preparing to run for office. Our member candidates will support working class needs in rural North Carolina. The following have filed:



Antoinetta Royster
Person County Commission



Nancy Weaver
Ashe County Commission



Kim Lewter
NC Senate District 34



Sabrina Berry
NC House District 82



Ingrid Nurse
Cabarrus County Commission



Tanya Robinson
Ashe County Commission



Sam Solminson
Johnston County School Board



Ann Rose
Ashe County Commission



Rev Donna Vanhook
NC Senate District 25



Tameka Harvey
Alamance County School Board



April Lee
Johnston County School Board



Keshia Sandidge
Cabarrus County Commission



Norma Harris Allen
Granville County Commission



Joshua Biggers
Ashe County Commission

Get daily DHNC updates at:

