

>> SLIDE 1



# Elevate

Campaign Training

for People with Disabilities

The National Council on Independent Living presents –

## Harnessing Your Power To Advocate For Change

>> SLIDE 2



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## Guest Speaker: Vilissa Thompson

Vilissa Thompson, LMSW is the Founder & CEO of Ramp Your Voice!, an organization focused on promoting self-advocacy and strengthening empowerment among disabled people. Being a Disability Rights Consultant, Writer, & Activist affords Vilissa the opportunity to be a prominent leader and expert in addressing and educating the public and political figures about the plight of disabled people, especially disabled Black women and femmes.



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# Harnessing Your Power to Advocate for Change

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>> SLIDE 5

# My Origin Story

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# My Journey Into Political Spaces

- Watched state and national debates on TV; as well as well Sunday morning political talk shows with my Grandmother
- AfAm Studies minor
- Model UN delegate in undergrad
- Discovered macro social work in graduate school
- Secretary for county Democratic Party for 5 years
- Consultant for Sen. Warren's disability policy in 2020

>> SLIDE 7

# Barriers I Observed in Political Spaces

>> SLIDE 8

# The Barriers

- Being “the only” or a handful in these spaces
- Disability issues not centered or considered at all
- Ableism within the political sphere
- Lack of support and protection provided to/for disabled candidates
- Lack of diverse, inclusive disabled narratives



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# A Lesser Tapped Group

- A powerful voting bloc
- Our issues are deep within the social and political issues you and your candidate care about
- Retaining and supporting disabled candidates can no longer be an afterthought

>> SLIDE 10

# Local/State vs National Campaigns & Politics

- Failure to engage disabled issues and constituents fully
- Discussing and understanding disability issues with an intersectional lens
- Not all of us - disabled candidates or constituents - are white, cishet, Christian men

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# What Can You Do?

>> SLIDE 12

# What Can Be Done to Improve Engagement & Representation?

- Do you understand the issues of the community from the intersectional disability lens?
- Even if you're a part of the community, that doesn't automatically mean you "get" it - privilege is a heck of an obstacle to push beyond
- Are you intentional about your engagement with the community at-large and within your constituency?
- How are you tackling ableism within your campaigns, talking points and issues centered, and among staff?

>> SLIDE 13

# Where You Can Find Me Making the “Good Trouble” in Activism



<http://rampyourvoice.com>



[Vilissa@rampyourvoice.com](mailto:Vilissa@rampyourvoice.com)



[/RampYourVoice](https://www.facebook.com/RampYourVoice)



[@RampYourVoice](https://twitter.com/RampYourVoice) & [@VilissaThompson](https://twitter.com/VilissaThompson)

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## Harnessing Your Power To Advocate For Change

Presented by: Dom Kelly

Senior Fundraising Manager and Disability Council Lead at Fair Fight Action

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## Trainer: Dom Kelly

Dom Kelly is the Senior Fundraising Manager at Fair Fight Action, a voting rights organization founded by Stacey Abrams, and a passionate disability justice advocate. He also founded and leads Fair Fight Action's Disability Council composed of prominent disability advocates and policy experts from across the country. Dom is one of a set of triplets with Cerebral Palsy and has been involved in disability advocacy since he was four years old.



## >> SLIDE 16: Agenda

- What drives you?
- Identifying the problem
- Building your case
- Getting buy-in
- Understanding power
- Making the ask
- Effecting change



## >> SLIDE 17: What drives you?

- What wakes you up in the morning?
- How would you like to see the world around you change?
- Who are the people doing the work you care about?
- Why should other people care?

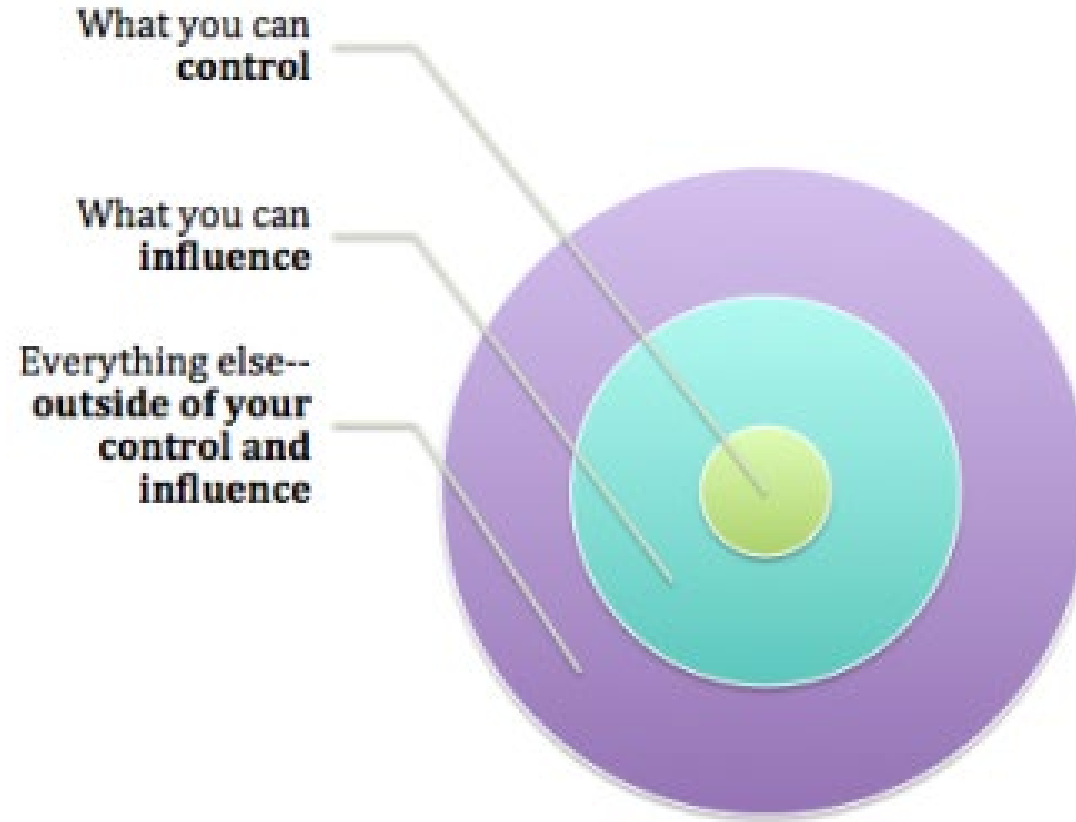
# >> SLIDE 18: What drives you?



## >> SLIDE 19: Identifying the problem

- What's inside your sphere of control or influence?
  - These are things that should ideally be solvable
  - They should have solutions that are attainable
  - Data to back them up

# >> SLIDE 20: Identifying the problem



Source: [Education Week](#)

## >> SLIDE 21: Identifying the problem

- What's inside your sphere of control or influence?
  - These are things that should ideally be solvable
  - They should have solutions that are attainable
  - Data to back them up
- Try to focus on one problem or issue
- You shouldn't have to tackle it alone

# >> SLIDE 22: Identifying the problem

2 → Are you currently or have you ever been employed with or volunteered for a political campaign, elected official, government office, or political organization?

*Description (optional)*

Y Yes

N No

3 → Have you ever faced ableism or lack of accessibility in that work or volunteer experience? Please explain.

*Description (optional)*

Type your answer here...

Shift + Enter to make a line break

OK ✓ press Enter

7 → Please rate the following statement:

"If a political candidate or elected official uses language or exhibits behavior that I perceive as ableist, it will stop me from voting for that candidate, regardless of party affiliation."

*Description (optional)*

1

Strongly Disagree

2

3

No opinion

4

5

Strongly Agree

## >> SLIDE 23: Identifying the problem

- 86% said they faced barriers to inclusion in political and nonprofit spaces
- 89% said they wouldn't donate or volunteer to an organization that says or does ableist things
- 80% said they would reconsider voting for a candidate who says or does something ableist, regardless of party affiliation

## >> SLIDE 24: Building your case

- Change doesn't happen overnight
- You want to be able to give evidence that what you are advocating for is worth the resources
- Build up a solid case for why stakeholders should care about your issue



## >> SLIDE 25: Building your case

- Find smaller opportunities that you can point to later when you make your big ask.
- You can advocate for seemingly smaller things while you're building your case for more.



*Hello, I'm Stacey Abrams.*



# >> SLIDE 26: Building your case



Fair Fight   
@fairfightaction



GEORGIA: @RealNatIADAPT is on the ground providing access to the polls for any voters needing accessible transportation.

If you are in need of transportation assistance, fill out this form below. Thank you for voting!  



CLOSED - Accessible Transportation to the Polls - GA Runoff  
Please complete this form to share your needs with our coordinating team. We are a non-partisan 501(c)3 Coalition...  
[docs.google.com](https://docs.google.com)

8:59 AM · Jan 5, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

394 Retweets 28 Quote Tweets 559 Likes

## >> SLIDE 27: Getting buy-in

- Find your allies internally
- Don't go it alone – bring other people into the process
  - Strategize, plan, and run your ideas by them
  - Be open to feedback and criticism
- Share your progress with those people as you strategize

## >> SLIDE 28: Getting buy-in

- Find people outside your workplace to buy in
- Build your team of trusted advisors – friends, mentors, former colleagues.
- Don't be afraid of starting again from scratch

## >> SLIDE 29: Understanding power

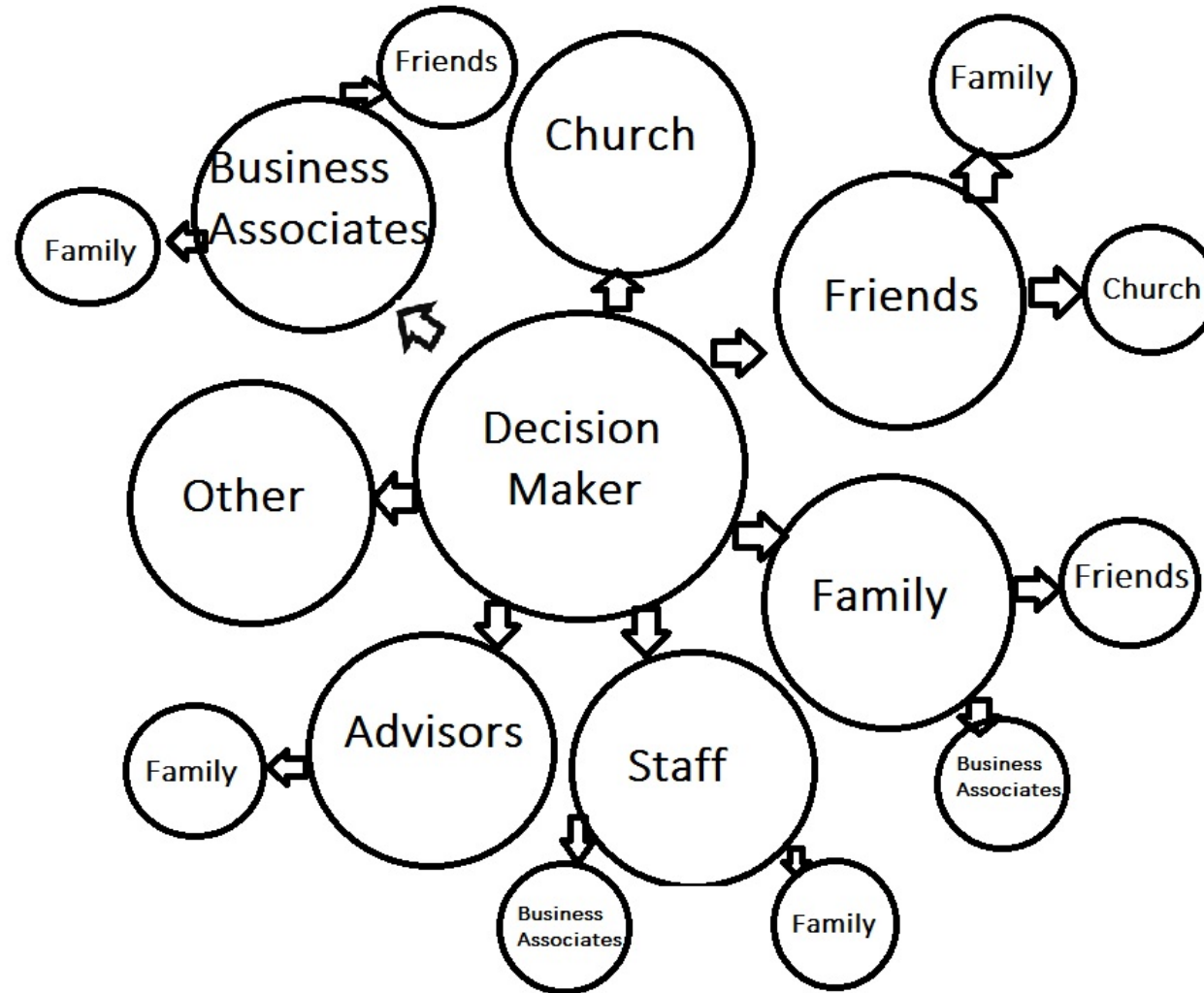
“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any.”

–Alice Walker

## >> SLIDE 30: Understanding power

- Every one of us has power and influence and people who influence us
- When advocating for change, it's helpful to know who you're targeting and who their influencers are
- **Power mapping** is a tool that helps identify key decision makers and leverage their relationships to help advocate for change

# >> SLIDE 31: Understanding power



## >> SLIDE 32: Making the ask

- Be clear about what you are asking for
- Have all your data and evidence prepared and ready to present
- Clearly articulate your Why Statement



# >> SLIDE 33: Making the ask

*your contribution* ↓

To \_\_\_\_\_

*so that* \_\_\_\_\_

*your impact* ↗

Source: [Hubspot](#)

## >> SLIDE 34: Making the ask

- Be explicit about what you are asking for; don't leave anything up for interpretation
- Be prepared to answer questions, especially around resource needs
  - For example, if you're advocating for hiring ASL interpreters for all your candidate's events, press conferences, etc., be prepared to come with estimated costs

## >> SLIDE 35: Effecting change

- Bring others into the work
- Build a coalition/collective impact (if applicable)
- Make sure you are managing up effectively
- Don't be afraid to reassess and change course if things change

# >> SLIDE 36: Effecting change



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## Fair Fight Action Disability Council: The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act Protects Disabled Voters

📅 August 20, 2021

ATLANTA — Members of Fair Fight Action's Disability Council, comprised of disabled activists and policy experts from around the country, are calling on Congress to immediately pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (HR4), legislation that would restore, update and strengthen the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) to prevent states and localities across the country from enacting discriminatory voting rules.

U.S. Representative Terri Sewell (D-Alabama) introduced the groundbreaking voting rights legislation on Tuesday in Selma, Alabama in front of the

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LETTER: Legislators, Voting Rights-Focused Organizations Ask UC Irvine to Remove Pro-Election Subversion Brad Raffensperger from Anti-Election Subversion Event

>> SLIDE 37: Contact me

**Dom Kelly**

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