

Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now Dudley and Mosley on their Black communities' top issues in the midterm elections 01GFP867A6ZSFV45PDDGP9YMFA

CATHY WURZER: This is *Minnesota Now* on MPR news. I'm Cathy Wurzer. The midterms are less than a month away. In the next few weeks, we're going to check in on community leaders across the state about what they're hearing and their communities about the candidates and the issues for this midterm election.

Joining us right now is Classie Dudley and Adair Mosley. Classie Dudley is the President of the Duluth NAACP. Adair Mosley has been the leader at the nonprofit Pillsbury United Communities, but has just taken the top job at the statewide African-American Leadership Forum. Adair, congratulations and welcome back.

ADAIR MOSLEY: Thank you. Glad to be back. Thanks for having me.

CATHY WURZER: And, Classie, welcome.

CLASSIE DUDLEY: Yes. Thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

CATHY WURZER: Nice to have you here. Well, let's talk about the election. Now, as you both know, polls are indicating that some of the key issues in voters minds include dealing with crime, protecting abortion rights, dealing with inflation. Are these the issues that are resonating in the communities where you live and work? Classie, I'm going to start with you.

CLASSIE DUDLEY: Yeah, I would say that there's hot topic issues and single voter issues that we've always had in our community. I would say based on our demographic that we have in Duluth specifically, that we're mostly a blue city. So our issues here are finding out more specifically of local politics, how it affects us personally, how the tax levy affects us, how they interact with our nurses and our social workers.

So it's a little more personal than just the hot topic buttons that we see across the country. It's definitely pinpointing more issues that focus on the citizen directly.

CATHY WURZER: Mm-hmm. Adair.

ADAIR MOSLEY: Absolutely, I would agree with that. And I'd say the dialogue, I think, will continue to be centered on public safety measures and a holistic approach in ensuring kind of broad spectrums of solutions are brought to the front. Our communities are seeking kind of both economic justice, whether that's investments in small business, workforce development, strategies, ensuring that we can create the pipelines for black enterprises-- we're not myopic in our view. There are things that are more proximate to us in terms of public safety and economics.

CATHY WURZER: What are other issues that need to be on the radar but are not, Adair?

ADAIR MOSLEY: I would say most of our communities are really strongly looking for public safety efforts-- increasing access to jobs and employment for black Minnesotans, supporting re-entry efforts. In our view of holistic approaches, increasing out of school time program and activities, and then improving police interactions. Coupled with that, we certainly need to be thinking about economic revitalization and development. Are we making sure that dollars are flowing to main street to support black enterprises and businesses as well?

CATHY Classie, what are the other issues that need to be on the radar but are not in this election cycle?

WURZER:

CLASSIE You hit a lot of the things that we're working on locally as well. I believe that the issues that we aren't talking about that could be really impactful in this upcoming election is our social determinants of health. So we don't hear a lot about talking about solution-based efforts in our community.

DUDLEY:

We know the issues. We know the statistics. We know the data. We can see it affecting our community. But what is the solution? And I haven't seen a lot of candidates or a lot of rhetoric around that.

CATHY Say, what races are you both paying the most attention to? Classie.

WURZER:

CLASSIE Local elections. I can't stress that enough. In our community, the greatest impact that we see is with our city council, is with our state representatives. And of course, we're watching very closely the Pete Stauber and Jennifer Schultz election candidacy as well.

DUDLEY:

CATHY And that would be in the 8th congressional district. Adair Mosley, what races are you paying the most attention to?

WURZER:

ADAIR MOSLEY: Yeah, certainly the governor's race is heating up. And we know that women's rights, and economic prosperity, and education are on the ballot. The attorney general's office, will it continue to protect the most vulnerable?

And I would also say the secretary of state-- it's oftentimes, perhaps, something that's overlooked. But if we are to be a state that ensures kind of fair and free elections and remain at the heart of democracy, we have to be able to protect this seat. There are some hyper-local, in terms of the Hennepin county attorney. And there's a divide in ideology a little bit there. And so that's a race that I'm paying close attention to as well.

CATHY Say, here in the Twin Cities, there's this effort spearheaded by Twin Cities media personality Shaletta Brundage where she asked 20 pastors at Black churches in the metro to not yield the pulpit to politicians who don't buy ads in Black-owned news outlets. And she feels that politicians are taking the Black vote for granted-- that they'll gladly hand votes, but then there's little follow-up. Do Black voters feel the connection with lawmakers outside of the election season? Adair?

WURZER:

ADAIR MOSLEY: In this election cycle, people are going to be holding those that assume office more accountable, saying, you just can't show up during the election cycle. And are you delivering on the platform that you promised in order to gain our vote?

CATHY What do you think, Classie?

WURZER:

CLASSIE DUDLEY: I believe a lot of our election efforts this cycle is just to get people out to vote. You see the resilience in voting rights and the conversations that surround it. But when they're in office, we often don't see them representing us as we would like, or we don't see any representation at all.

So it's been a huge impact in our community, and not just getting the black vote out, but getting the youth vote out as well, to really find candidates to support us.

CATHY WURZER: Vice President Harris has been traveling to historically Black colleges and universities to energize black young voters. And on National Voter Registration Day, Black women leaders of advocacy organizations were out with campaigns geared toward mobilizing Black women voters. Classie, do you see those efforts making a difference?

CLASSIE DUDLEY: In my community, I haven't seen it. Yes, we need to get candidates out there-- we need to get more candidates of color. We need to see more representation because we're just not seeing it. But we also need to see representation that is impactful to the Black community.

I can have a Black elected official here that doesn't support the Black issues. I could have indigenous efforts here that aren't transferring over into what we're seeing in our elections. So it's not just showing up, it's also being accountable to what you're showing up and to who you're showing up for. It might not always be the popular thing to do, but we need it.

CATHY WURZER: Say, Adair, I know that you've just started this new job, but going back to your role at Pillsbury United, what efforts are being made to mobilize Black voters?

ADAIR MOSLEY: A significant amount of efforts are being activated to ensure that our communities are both kind of well-informed and knowledgeable of the candidates and their policy priorities. And this is from get out the vote measures, registering individuals to vote, re-education around the election process.

And this is just not a one-time thing. I think both the African-American Leadership Forum and Pillsbury United communities have taken this as ongoing efforts, because we know that we need to constantly be talking to our communities. And so I think that that's where the power lies.

CATHY WURZER: OK, both of you have done this work in the past. I'm curious-- Classie, what do you think voter turnout is going to be like here next month?

CLASSIE DUDLEY: Well, I'm really hopeful that we'll get a good voter turnout this year.

CATHY WURZER: And, Adair?

ADAIR MOSLEY: Yeah. Hope has to be and optimism has to be at the center of this conversation, certainly. Because I think, given the polarization that's happening in politics, so much at stake in terms of our civil liberties, that each and every election becomes more consequential.

CLASSIE DUDLEY: Yeah. And I am hopeful, but I would also say my people are tired. They're exhausted. We're often expected to be the voice for a lot of different issues, not just the Black issues and not just the BIPOC issues, right? When we do show up, we're often not heard.

So while I want to be optimistic, it is a realization that we have a long way to go if we really want voter turnout. And we need to show up on the off years of election cycles.

ADAIR MOSLEY:I completely agree with that. And, man, we're just tired of being tired. So, Classie, thank you for lifting that up. But I want to make sure and ensure that apathy doesn't win. Frankly, I think we need to continue to tap into this and harness this energy that things can be better, that our communities can be better when we're fully represented.

CATHY It was a good conversation. Thank you both for your time today.

WURZER:

CLASSIE Yeah, thanks for having me.

DUDLEY:

ADAIR MOSLEY:Thank you.

CATHY That was Classie Dudley and Adair Mosley. Classie is the President of the Duluth NAACP, Adair is the new CEO of
WURZER: the African-American Leadership Forum.