

Michael Tubbs—the former mayor of Stockton, California—on racism and disinformation | Columbia Journalism Review

By Akintunde Ahmad

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✖ **Last year, Michael Tubbs** was the focus of an HBO documentary, *Stockton on My Mind*, that followed his experience trying to reinvent the Central Valley, California, city as its first Black mayor. Within a few months, however—and with his campaign for reelection coming up—Tubbs found himself subjected to a targeted disinformation effort from a fake-news website called the 209 Times. Named for the Stockton area code, the 209 Times claims to be “an independent community driven grassroots news source.” In reality it has functioned as a misinformation machine, trading on relatively high levels of trust in local press outlets in order to play on voters’ racial biases and, in the run-up to November, to spread lies about Tubbs. On Election Day, he was unseated.

Tubbs joins us today on The Kicker, speaking with CJR contributor Akintunde Ahmad about disinformation, news deserts, racism, and what he’s up to now.

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