

## From the Hood to the Holler

Political campaign documentaries at this time in the electoral cycle are to be expected, just like the new film “From the Hood to the Holler.” The surprise is this movie, depicting the bid of Democrat Charles Booker for a Senate seat in Kentucky in 2020 (held by Mitch McConnell), traces the story of a **loser**; Booker lost in the primary that year, but the vigor of this charismatic politician and the singular momentum of his efforts make for an especially striking documentary (to be fair, this is Mr. Booker’s show and his opponent and her campaign are barely shown).

Booker, a Democratic member of the Kentucky legislature since 2019, is an openly liberal candidate in a solidly Republican state with aims of unseating one of the Senate’s most intractable pols, McConnell, running for the seventh time. But winning the primary was no sure thing, with Amy McGrath, an ex-Marine fighter pilot, standing in the way and anointed by her party.

While Booker plainly appealed to the Black vote in his state, he knew that that constituency would not be enough for him to win, and he worked strenuously to expand his election staff and voting base. His aim was to try and tap voters all over the state, including the small towns and the farm counties (e.g., the “hollers”). Booker was attempting one of the biggest upsets in U.S. political history by challenging establishment-backed McGrath.

“From the Hood to the Holler” follows Booker’s campaign across Kentucky, from its urban centers to the most rural settings, with he and his team rewriting the campaign playbook. Instead of exploiting divisions in a most divisive political climate, they emphasized the idea that average Kentuckians have common bonds in one of the nation’s poorest states, united by their shared everyday struggles to survive.

Booker aimed to represent Kentuckians, both Black and White, who feel alienated from or left out of the political process. His campaign message was clear: Whether you are from the city’s “hood,” like Booker, (he’s a lifelong native of Louisville) or from the Appalachian “holler,” you are worthy of a politician’s attention and commitment. His inclusive nature was shown in the fully integrated nature of his personable and loyal staff, several of whom are interviewed throughout the film and present a humane and rounded picture of their candidate.

It turns out that the story of Charles Booker is not yet done. This spring (2022) he won the Democratic primary easily and will face quirky Sen. Rand Paul in the general election.

*(This film is rated “PG-13,” runs 142 mins. and after a brief run in theaters, is now available in a series of streaming services.)*

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