

TEN

REASONS WHY

#BLACK VOTES MATTER



- 1** EXTRAORDINARILY COURAGEOUS people in places like Selma, Alabama were attacked, humiliated, killed, and lost their jobs fighting for the right to vote and participate in the political process.¹ Their sacrifice was made to ensure not only their right to vote, but the right to vote of future generations.
- 2** VOTING IS A LEARNED BEHAVIOR.² If you do it as a young person, you're likely to do it for the rest of your life and have a voice in our democracy throughout your lifetime.
- 3** Voting means that YOU CAN HAVE A SAY in who gets elected. Elected officials make important decisions that impact your daily life like city management (Ferguson, Missouri)³ and redistricting to promote racial and socioeconomic integration in public schools.⁴
- 4** THIS NATION WILL BE A MAJORITY-MINORITY NATION BY 2050.⁵ Elected bodies must reflect the communities that they serve and the ever-growing diversity in our country.
- 5** MORE RESTRICTIVE VOTER ID LAWS THAT DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECT VOTERS OF COLOR AND YOUNG VOTERS are being passed in many states in the wake of the Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*, which removed a core protection from racial discrimination in voting.⁶ It is telling that elected representatives are working hard to restrict rather than to expand access to the ballot. Our vote, therefore, must be powerful.
- 6** You have the opportunity to vote UNLIKE THE NEARLY 6 MILLION PEOPLE WHO LOSE THEIR RIGHT TO VOTE when they are incarcerated, even for nonviolent offenses, and even though they still contribute to our economy and will return to it upon release.⁷
- 7** PEOPLE IN COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD are still struggling for the right to vote and to have free and fair elections.⁸
- 8** THE SUCCESSFUL ELECTION OF OUR NATION'S FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN PRESIDENT, BARACK OBAMA, in 2008 – more than 200 years after the first U.S. president took office in 1789 – was achieved primarily by the surge in voter turnout among young, African-American, and Latino voters.⁹
- 9** No matter how much money is funneled into political candidates' campaigns, they need votes to win. With the ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC*, VOTING HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT IF WE ARE TO COUNTERACT THE FINANCIAL INFLUENCE OF SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS. As Justice Stevens of the Supreme Court noted: “a democracy cannot function effectively when its constituent members believe laws are being bought and sold.”¹⁰
- 10** Recent literature reflects that “the gap between voters and non-voters breaks down strongly along class lines,” and “reducing these voting gaps and increasing democratic participation in the economy will force policymakers to consider the interests of the working-class.”¹¹ There continues to be a correlation between race and class in the United States¹² that also suggests that NON-VOTING MINORITIES WOULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON ISSUES THAT MATTER TO THEM SHOULD THEY TURN OUT TO VOTE IN LARGE NUMBERS.

¹ <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/eyewitness/html.php?section=2>

² <http://www.elections.org.nz/sites/default/files/plain-page/attachments/Youth%20Participation.pdf>

³ <http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/10/us/ferguson-city-manager/> and http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/07/ferguson-election-results_n_7020472.html

⁴ <http://www.fairvote.org/assets/Redistricting-Reform-in-the-South.pdf>,

⁵ <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/11/07/a-milestone-en-route-to-a-majority-minority-nation/>.

⁶ http://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=4053797526279899410&hl=en&as_sdt=6&as_vis=1&oi=scholar

⁷ <http://www.sentencingproject.org/template/page.cfm?id=133>

⁸ <http://www.fairvote.org/research-and-analysis/blog/new-constitutions-provide-opportunity-for-electoral-change-in-egypt-tunisia/>

⁹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/05/us/politics/05campaign.html?hp>

¹⁰ <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/558/08-205/cdinpart.html>

¹¹ <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/01/income-gap-at-the-polls-113997.html#.VUjORNIzfd>

¹² <http://inequality.org/racial-inequality/>