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OPINION

Cynical Attempts to Blunt Our Political Power

Turing back the clock on voting rights

BY MARIAN

WRIGHT EDELMAN

Barbara Arnwine has long been sounding the alarm about 21st century efforts to turn back



the clock on voting rights. She recently founded the Transformative Justice Coalition after serving for many years as executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and head of its Election Protection efforts, the nation's largest non-partisan voter protection coalition.

Under her leadership the Lawyers' Committee created a "Map of Shame" highlighting states where new or pending legislation threatens to suppress the right to vote—which, as she says, remains under attack in 2015 by forces who still believe the right to vote should stay in the hands of a precious few.

Many of the new laws making it more difficult to vote appear to be cynical attempts to blunt the political power of rapidly growing populations of people of color as our nation confronts the changing reality of who is a "minority" and who is a "majority." Others specifically appear to target younger

voters, the poor, and the elderly.

Alabama made some of the latest headlines for its decision to close a wave of driver's license offices in disproportionately black, rural areas in October, leaving eight out of the 10 counties with the highest percentage of non-white registered voters without a Department of Motor Vehicles—making it much more difficult for residents in those counties to get their li-

paying fees, or going through other hoops.

Not even voiceless children are exempted from assault. The Children's Defense Fund has filed a friend of the court brief in the U.S. Supreme Court case, *Evenwel v. Abbott*, in which some citizens are suing the state of Texas seeking to change the answer to a fundamental democratic question: Who gets counted as a person when states determine proportional represen-

But the *Evenwel* case is challenging the state of Texas's current traditional use of total population measure for redistricting in its state Senate, and seeks instead to count only citizens of voting age when drawing districts. Attacking that long-standing practice is part of a broader effort to diminish the rights of certain—especially non-white—groups and powerless groups, including children, reminiscent of other efforts to suppress

never did and it never will."

Barbara Arnwine adds: "All of us have to be involved in this fight, because we are in an entrenched battle. The United States can't do anything about the fact that demographic change is coming. It's a reality, and it's one that we shouldn't run from. Whoever heard of a nation being ashamed of its demographics? . . . What's more beautiful than having people of many multiracial populations and ethnic cultures? What's more beautiful than having the mash-up of all that, and the creativity that flows from it when we work together as one? . . . This notion that it's 'our' country, a 'white country,' that notion is dead. It's railing against the wind to think you can stop it, but people think they can do a South Africa and have a minority rule a majority. That's just ridiculous. It's not going to happen in the 21st century. It's not going to be tolerated. So we have a real fight for those of us who are justice-loving people. Our fight is to help our nation to transition from this really racially unjust nation that's been for years into a much more just, equal, inclusive, and celebratory society."

Find out where your state stands—and stay vigilant, educated, and ready to fight for that just, equal nation for all.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund.

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censes and fulfill the state's strict photo ID voter requirement. Voter ID laws are just one of the dangerous new kinds of laws threatening to disenfranchise voters. The problem they allegedly address, voter identity fraud, has been documented to be nearly nonexistent. But people of color, immigrants, poor people, and old and young voters, including students attending college away from home, are less likely to have the forms of identifications required by states' laws and more likely to have trouble obtaining birth certificates,

tation?

There is a constitutional principle that elected officials represent every individual in their district, including non-voters, and the majority of states currently count all people who live in a district when drawing district boundaries. Most people are represented directly because they are voters, but those who can't vote—children, non-citizens, formerly incarcerated people who have not had their voting rights restored, and others who are disenfranchised—are all represented indirectly.

voting rights. Children's health, education, and economic security depend on healthy state budgets and good public policies. Our nation has a vital stake in the well-being of its children. But all these efforts to subvert the democratic process continue and we must fight to stop them in every form.

There has never been a safe time in America to drop vigilance about attempts to deny people the vote or fair legislative representation. As Frederick Douglass taught us more than 150 years ago, "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It

Intervention Is the Problem, Not the Solution

With military force, war begets war

BY PETER CERTO

A café. A stadium. A concert hall. One of the most horrifying things about the murderous attacks in Paris was the terrorists' choice of targets.



They chose gathering places where people's minds wander furthest from unhappy thoughts like war. And they struck on a Friday night, when many westerners take psychic refuge from the troubles of the working week.

The message was simple: Wherever you are, this war will find you.

The same could be said for the 43 Lebanese civilians murdered only the day before, when a bomb exploded in a crowded

marketplace in Beirut. Or for the 224 vacationers who died when their Russian airliner blew up over Egypt a few weeks earlier.

The Islamic State, or ISIS, claimed responsibility for each of these atrocities. But that's not the only thing they have in common. In fact, all of them occurred in countries

Russia started bombing ISIS targets and other Syrian rebels last month. Hundreds of Lebanese Hezbollah fighters have fought and died defending the Syrian regime. And France was the first country to join the Obama administration's war on ISIS last year.

Indeed, scarcely a month before ISIS attacked the French capital, French planes were bombing the Islamic State's capital in Raqqa, Syria—dropping bombs that "did not help them at all in the streets of Paris," as a grim communiqué from the terrorist group gloated afterward.

These horrific attacks on civil-

ians are part of a calculated effort to bring the war in Syria home to the other countries participating in it. And our bill could come due next.

Washington's funneling millions of dollars' worth of weapons to its proxies in Syria. It's dispatching special forces to "advise" an array of the Islamic State's enemies. And in an air war totally unauthorized by Congress, U.S. warplanes have launched thousands of strikes on alleged ISIS targets in Iraq and Syria since 2014.

But you can't simply bomb extremism out of existence. And as governments from Moscow to Paris to Beirut are learning, you put your own people's lives on the line when you try.

Military intervention has succeeded mightily in breaking things and killing people, but it's done nothing to wind down the greatest factor fueling the rise of ISIS: Syria's wider civil war. An international arms embargo and

a deal between the Syrian regime and other rebel groups—jobs for diplomats, not drones—would go much further toward curtailing the threat of ISIS.

Yet France has responded to the carnage in Paris by pounding Raqqa with yet more air strikes—reportedly bombing medical clinics, a museum, and a stadium of its own, among other targets.

Leading U.S. presidential candidates aren't proposing anything smarter.

Hillary Clinton declared that ISIS "must be destroyed" with "all of the tools at our disposal." Ted Cruz called for "overwhelming air power" and condemned the Obama administration for having insufficient "tolerance for civilian casualties." Ben Carson called for "boots on the ground," while Donald Trump swore he'd "bomb the s— out of" ISIS-controlled oil fields and hand them over to ExxonMobil.

Virtually all GOP contenders,

along with a gaggle of Republican governors, agreed that they'd close the door to Syrian refugees, too—as though they can evade the consequences of war by making life more miserable for the innocent people fleeing it.

None of this bravado makes me feel safer here in Washington, where ISIS threatened more Paris-style bloodshed in a recent video. When I imagine those cold-blooded killers running roughshod through the bars, restaurants, and concert halls my neighbors and I frequent, my stomach drops.

But that's the lesson, isn't it: When your government answers every problem in the world with military force, war begets war. And eventually there's nowhere left to hide from it.

Peter Certo is the editor of *Foreign Policy In Focus* and the deputy editor of *OtherWords*, a non-profit editorial service run by the Institute for Policy Studies.