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# OPINION

## In This Movement, At This Moment

By E. D. MONDAINÉ JR.



As I consider the evolution of Black Lives Matter, it reminds me of the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. Given work left undone after the assassination of so many leaders, it seemed inevitable justice would return to bend the arc of history once again. For a time, I was deeply encouraged because it seemed like we would finish what we started over 70 years ago. And in many ways, I am still motivated. But I do have profound concerns and believe it is essential with all that is going on in our world right now that we ask ourselves an important question: Where are we in this movement, at this moment?

I pose this question in the context of this movement because I am concerned that we are losing focus. It is understandable in the face of pressing global issues like the COVID pandemic and the rising threat of climate change. But if we allow ourselves to be displaced, I fear that we will once again find ourselves relegated to the back of the bus. We cannot, and must not, allow this to happen again. So, I hope that the observations I put forth here will help us see our fight more clearly. To be dragged under the wheels of the

same systems of oppression that have bedeviled America's Black communities for centuries is not an option.

The most glaring example of where we need to place our effort and attention urgently is the voter suppression laws sweeping through our nation unapologetically. We must see this for exactly what it is - the resurrection of Jim Crow. I know many in both the Black and white communities understand what they see. I watch them talk about it nightly on news broadcasts, I read what they write in newspaper editorials, and I cannot avoid the never-ending glut of social media posts. And yet, I feel all of this will, in the end, avail us nothing. The only way to beat back the resurrected Dracula of Jim Crow is to organize. And so, in this movement, at this moment, with the 2022 and 2024 elections looming, I ask us all: are we ready?

Not unrelated to the attempt to erase black citizenship is the 2020 Census. In 2019, Governor Brown appointed me to serve on the statewide Oregon Complete Count Committee (Oregon's official 2020 Census advisory body). I continually cautioned the commission that the 2020 census could rival and even exceed the shocking failings

of the Census of 2010, which failed to count approximately 2.1 percent of Black Americans and 1.5 percent of Hispanics. Combined, the undercounting represented about 1.5 million citizens. The assuredness that launching an aggressive advertising and minority outreach effort would be made, just as there had been in 2010. However, those efforts failed again, just as they had in 2010, simultaneously pushing the total census costs to an unprecedented \$20 billion.

The reason for this tragic failure primarily flies under the radar for most Americans. As a standard practice, the Census places Black communities named "hard-to-count groups." The result is a consistent undercounting of Black communities who will remain underfunded for vital social services. Based on Census data, federal dollars allocated to districts across the country represent better than \$600 billion or as much as \$1.5 trillion for 10 years. Given these kinds of numbers, the long-term impact of undercounted African American communities will not just be unfair; it will be devastating.

We should also be aware that the

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