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- Local News
- Pacific NW News
- World News
- Opinions
- Jobs, Bids
- Entertainment
- Community Calendar

**SPECIAL ISSUE:
BLACK HISTORY**
Feb. 21



Opinion

To Truly Remember Dr. King, Political Action and Infinite Hope Must Outweigh Anti-Democratic Forces

Often lost in our celebra-
tion of Martin Luther
King, Jr. is his unwav-
ering testimony of hope
and his political action in the
face of despair and nihilism,
forces that have the potential
to thwart otherwise transfor-
mative movements. We often
remember Dr. King’s hope
as a more passive “dream”
instead of the definitive dec-
laration of “Normalcy, Never
Again” which was the intend-
ed title of his revered 1963
speech. Nonetheless, no time
is riper than 2018 to commem-
orate Dr. King’s true legacy
by exercising political action
and demonstrating unwav-
ering hope in the face of circum-
stances that naturally call for
the blues.

No doubt, anti-democratic
forces have penetrated Amer-
ican politics and those forces
have the potential to breed
widespread hopelessness and
political apathy. For example,
gerrymandering — the par-
tisan act of creating voting
districts in favor of one’s own
political party — has led to
situations like that in Virg-
inia, where 55 percent of voters
pulled the levers for Demo-
crats to only lose the House of
Delegates by the drawing of
straws. These Virginians, and
other marginalized voters,



Rep.
Gregory W.
Meeks
(D-NY)

NNPA
Columnist

could lose hope and sit out fu-
ture elections conceding that
their votes and voices matter
little.

Anti-democratic proposals
— including a bid by Jeff Ses-

“A number of democratic victories
reaffirm Dr. King’s call to ‘accept
finite disappointment, but never
lose infinite hope’

sions to require Census re-
spondents to answer self-in-
criminating questions about
their immigration status —
have the potential to discour-
age participation in a process
that determines the size of
each state’s congressional
delegation and each state’s re-
ceipt of federal funds for es-
sential programs like quality
public education. Such forces
do more to depress civic par-
ticipation, and they create a
disconnected class of Amer-
icans, rather than encourage
lawfulness.

Many pre-civil rights era

measures that suppressed mi-
nority voters, like poll taxes
and literacy tests, have despi-
cable descendants that plague
the modern-day electoral sys-
tem. Discriminatory voter
identification laws, voter roll
purges, limitations on early
voting procedures, and other
impediments to voter regis-
tration and ballot casting con-
tinue to suppress Americans
to this day.

Despite the times, if the
legacy of Dr. King means

anything, today’s challenges
are a call for increased in-
volvement in our democratic
process. A number of demo-
cratic victories reaffirm Dr.
King’s call to “accept finite
disappointment, but never
lose infinite hope.” A recent
federal court decision that
found North Carolina’s parti-
san gerrymandered districts,
which unjustifiably favored
Republicans 10 to 3, unconsti-
tutional provides persuasive
arguments as to why the Su-
preme Court should conclude
the same in two pending
cases. If the Supreme Court

adopts North Carolina’s rea-
soning, the result may be a
more leveled political playing
field during 2018 midterm
congressional elections, and
a more accountable Washing-
ton, as a result.

Democratic Senator Doug
Jones’ statewide victory in
Alabama is also an example of
why our infinite hope should
always trump finite disap-
pointment, especially in the
electoral process. If only a
few voters lost hope and de-
cided to sit out the Alabama
senatorial race, the result
could have been status quo
in the Senate during a time
where resistance to anti-demo-
cratic forces in Washington
is needed more than ever.

We must heed the words of
the great man we honor today,
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,
who warned us that “history
will have to record that the
greatest tragedy of this pe-
riod of social transition was
not the strident clamor of the
bad people, but the appalling
silence of the good people.”
As Chair of the Congressional
Black Caucus’ Political Action
Committee, I am inspired by
Dr. King’s infinite hope now
more than ever before. This
year, concerned citizens can
make Dr. King’s philosophy
real in the voting booth.

Blacks and Politics: Either Get Engaged or Get Left Behind

Okay, everyone, if you are
reading this, welcome to
2018. You made it, and
with that being said, I
feel that this is the perfect op-
portunity for us to be honest
about an important truth.

First of all, as I see it, it is
extremely clear to me, and
should be quite evident to
anyone who would just sim-
ply open up their eyes to see it
for themselves, that the Black
vote can either make or break
an election.

If you don’t believe me, I
would encourage you to take
a look at previous elections
where the Black communi-
ty was actively engaged and
driven to get out and vote in
a local, county, state or feder-
al election, versus the times
where they were not as excit-
ed or motivated to do so.

Take Alabama’s recent spe-
cial U.S. Senate election race
involving Republican Roy
Moore and Democrat Doug
Jones, where people were
overwhelmingly surprised to
see the exit polls that showed
that Black voters made up 29
percent of the overall voter
turnout in the entire election
— 18 percent of Black women
and 11 percent of Black men.
Exit polls also showed that 98
percent of Black women cast
their vote for Jones, while
93 percent of Black men cast
their vote for Jones.



Jeffrey L.
Boney

NNPA
Columnist

These were phenomenal
numbers, and definitely
the type of numbers that
Jones needed to pull off an
unexpected victory in a
historically and tradition-

“The Black community has grown
accustomed to not being respect-
ed, especially within the Demo-
cratic Party where they are the
most loyal

ally red state like Alabama.
It was exciting to see this type
of political difference making
by the Black community, but
that excitement was imme-
diately quenched and short-
lived, after reading reports
that a letter was sent to Jones
on Dec. 19 from the Joint Cen-
ter for Political and Economic
Studies and 16 other organi-
zations practically begging
him “to commit to hiring a
staff that reflects his constitu-
ents’ racial diversity.”

Why wasn’t this letter sent
before Jones won? Why not
get this type of commitment

from Jones before engaging
the Black community to come
out and vote for him, and do-
ing what the Black communi-
ty always does when it is ex-
pected to deliver the turnout
and votes necessary to secure
a victory for select candidates
or select issues on the ballot?
I believe it is, because the
Black community has grown
accustomed to not being re-
spected, especially within the
Democratic Party where they
are the most loyal. And be-

fore “loyal” Democrats come
for my head, because they
consider this an attack on the
Democratic Party or as an op-
portunity to try and have us
compare the Democratic Par-
ty to the Republican Party, I
believe the Black community
needs to ask itself some really
tough questions.

When it comes to the Black
community’s involvement in
the Democratic Party, how
are Blacks truly viewed with-
in the party?

Despite the Black commu-
nity having such a strong and
dedicated voting bloc across

the nation, how many Blacks
actually hold key positions
within the Democratic Par-
ty on a local, statewide and/
or national basis? How many
Black people are senior staff
members in county, state
or federal offices across the
country?

According to a detailed re-
port released by the Joint Cen-
ter for Political and Economic
Studies last year, the majority
of White Democratic lawmak-
ers in the U.S. Senate, who
have millions of Black con-
stituents, have no Black se-
nior staff members at all. The
report also found that while
Blacks make up 13 percent of
the U.S. population, they only
make up 0.9 percent of the
top Senate staffers. Is this by
design or just an unfortunate
oversight?

See, it is one thing to look
out at these local, county,
state and federal Democrat-
ic meetings and conventions
and see this sea of diversity,
with Black faces mixed in
with faces from all other rac-
es and backgrounds, but it
is an entirely different thing
to know that Blacks are not
given opportunities to have a
real impact in the Democratic
Party from within, other than
just voting.

Read the rest of this commentary at
TheSkanner.com