

# THE Skanner®

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**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 celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. is his unwavering testimony of hope and his political action in the face of despair and nihilism, forces that have the potential to thwart otherwise transformative movements. We often remember Dr. King's hope as a more passive "dream" instead of the definitive declaration of "Normalcy, Never Again" which was the intended title of his revered 1963 speech. Nonetheless, no time is riper than 2018 to commemorate Dr. King's true legacy by exercising political action and demonstrating unwavering hope in the face of circumstances that naturally call for the blues.

No doubt, anti-democratic forces have penetrated American politics and those forces have the potential to breed widespread hopelessness and political apathy. For example, gerrymandering — the partisan act of creating voting districts in favor of one's own political party — has led to situations like that in Virginia, where 55 percent of voters pulled the levers for Democrats 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 future elections conceding that their votes and voices matter little.

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

measures that suppressed minority voters, like poll taxes and literacy tests, have despicable descendants that plague the modern-day electoral system. Discriminatory voter identification laws, voter roll purges, limitations on early voting procedures, and other impediments to voter registration and ballot casting continue to suppress Americans to this day.

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

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

sions to require Census respondents to answer self-incriminating questions about their immigration status — have the potential to discourage participation in a process that determines the size of each state's congressional delegation and each state's receipt of federal funds for essential programs like quality public education. Such forces do more to depress civic participation, and they create a disconnected class of Americans, rather than encourage lawfulness.

Many pre-civil rights era

anything, today's challenges are a call for increased involvement in our democratic process. A number of democratic 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 partisan gerrymandered districts, which unjustifiably favored Republicans 10 to 3, unconstitutional provides persuasive arguments as to why the Supreme Court should conclude the same in two pending cases. If the Supreme Court

adopts North Carolina's reasoning, the result may be a more leveled political playing field during 2018 midterm congressional elections, and a more accountable Washington, as a result.

Democratic Senator Doug Jones' statewide victory in Alabama is also an example of why our infinite hope should always trump finite disappointment, especially in the electoral process. If only a few voters lost hope and decided to sit out the Alabama senatorial race, the result could have been status quo in the Senate during a time where resistance to anti-democratic 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 period 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 opportunity 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 simply 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 community was actively engaged and driven to get out and vote in a local, county, state or federal election, versus the times where they were not as excited or motivated to do so.

Take Alabama's recent special 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-

ally red state like Alabama. It was exciting to see this type of political difference making by the Black community, but that excitement was immediately quenched and short-lived, after reading reports that a letter was sent to Jones on Dec. 19 from the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies and 16 other organizations practically begging him "to commit to hiring a staff that reflects his constituents' 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 doing what the Black community always does when it is expected 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 respected, 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 opportunity to try and have us compare the Democratic Party 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 within the party? Despite the Black community having such a strong and dedicated voting bloc across

the nation, how many Blacks actually hold key positions within the Democratic Party 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 report released by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies last year, the majority of White Democratic lawmakers in the U.S. Senate, who have millions of Black constituents, have no Black senior 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 Democratic meetings and conventions and see this sea of diversity, with Black faces mixed in with faces from all other races 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  
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