

Natalie Jowett:

Hello everyone. Welcome, welcome. Thank you for being here with us. Can you hear me fine?

Speaker 1:

Yes.

Natalie Jowett:

My name's Natalie Jowett. I'm serve on the board of Justice Aid. Thank you for coming to our educational forum and call to action called Boots to the Ballot Box. Capitalism doesn't make it easy for people to get away in the middle of the day, so thank you for this act of rebellion.

So we're gathered here in DC, the capital of a nation that's writhing under the polarity and the pull between forces working to undermine our democracy and those working to unleash the promise of its highest ideals, and those ideals are worth fighting for. Successful movements require great leaders and history will erect monuments to these when justice wins. This panel is expert in making good trouble, and they're here to teach us why and how to be in this fight. Justice Aid is thrilled to be partnering with Black Voters Matter this year, and we welcome its co-founders here today.

Latosha Brown, born in Selma, Alabama, gifted with the voice of an angel, has devoted her life to organizing in communities, strategizing and building coalitions to unleash the power of women and girls and people of color globally. Her message of love as a force for righteous action is the spiritual glue of this juggernaut. Her partner in work, Cliff Albright, co-founder and executive director of Black Voters Matter combines what I consider multiple forms of genius, part Bronx, part Ivy League, part Selma, part Atlanta. Cliff has co-created an organization that has magnetized disparate groups in cities and towns across America into a coalition that wields an enormous amount of political and economic power, something to really be reckoned with in this fight for justice for every American.

Damon Hewitt, president and executive director for the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Damon has devoted his legal career to raising a voice for many who struggle to access justice in our legal system. The fight for voting rights requires action and lots of legal challenges and long-haul lawsuits. We're so grateful to have Damon here to remind us of the power of that work and teach us how to support it.

Our host today is already famous for her role as a journalist who speaks truth to power every day. Joy Reid is also an author, a filmmaker, and in possession of one of the most brilliant and nuanced minds it has ever been my honor to engage with. Everyone on this stage works at a very high level, and Joy is singularly qualified to lead such a discussion. Once the discussion winds down, we will have some time for questions from the audience. And so Joy, over to you.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Thank you, Natalie. Thank you very much. Natalie and I just keep running into each other. This is our plan. We just sort of find different places to arrange here. So thank you for the kind introduction, and thank you to this incredible panel. I would just say I love everyone on this panel, but I'm here because of this sister right here. She made me a southern black girl. She invited me to Southern Black Girls and

made me one of them, and I was like, I had to let her know I'm really from Brooklyn, but I'm going to go ahead and be a Southern Black Girl. I'm going to go ahead and be... Denver's close enough. I grew up in Denver. It's south-ish, southern-ish.

So let's talk about this because we are in, I feel like we are in such a perilous time for everything. I don't know if y'all saw that movie, Everything Everywhere, All at Once. That's this time. Whatever can go wrong is going wrong everywhere, all at once. But we want to zero in on one of the solutions, the potential solutions to our challenges that we can't always get access to, and that is the ballot. The ballot, what did King used to say? I can't necessarily make a racist sheriff not hate me, but I can vote out a racist sheriff, and that will solve my problem, whether or not that sheriff ever changes his heart.

And we know that democracy works because we just saw, I'll give you some news of the day, in Poland, which had a far right wing autocratic Trump-like government, they just threw them out after eight years. So the people of Poland will now have an opportunity to have a centrist, productive government that will allow them to have more freedom. So we know that the ballot works. It may take time, but it works.

So I do want to go right down the middle here because your state, your home state, the State of Alabama, whether it's Shelby versus Holder or the Milligan case, it feels like it has become kind of the center of the battle for the ballot. Where do you believe that our fight to access the ballot stands?

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's such a wonderful question. Well, the first thing I did right was the day I started to fight, keep your eyes on the prize and hold on, hold on, hold on, hold on. Keep your eyes on the prize and hold on, hold on. Even in singing that song, I'm actually really connecting to the spirit of the movement of even why we're here. Part of what we're experiencing, even what we're seeing in Alabama, it's there's unfinished business. The bottom line is what we're seeing happen across the country, we saw it in a microcosm in Alabama, and it never fully got resolved.

Even with the creation of the Voting Rights Act. The Voting Rights Act, in many ways, was a compromise. It never was the fullness of protecting or making a permanence around black people's right to vote in this country. And so I say that because the more things change, the more things stay the same if you're not shifting the structure of it. And part of what is the problem is when we're talking about voting rights and we're talking about voting in this country, we're really not talking about the structural barriers. We're not really talking about how racism has been a vehicle, has been a determining factor on the shaping of who even has access to the ballot. And so what's currently happening in Alabama, as most of you all know, it's really interesting. It's like this perfect storm because on one hand what you're looking at is you're looking at a community that literally led the voting rights movement, that it was the birthplace of the voting rights movement.

It is also the place where the Voting Rights Act was gutted. Shelby versus Holder actually took place in Shelby County in the same area. Now even this whole question around gerrymandering, even though there be other cases, but it has a significance. You have a state that is so egregious around providing access to just black folks having representation that even when a right wing, conservative Supreme Court... Now when the Supreme Court, the current Supreme Court says, y'all just a little too racist. Come

on now. You got to be pretty bad, when you got this Supreme Court saying you got to do that again. Come on now. And so even with the Supreme Court, they refuse on two tries to actually, well, it wasn't a real try, where they had to actually appoint a special master to go in and draw. I think there's a number of things that I'll just kind of raise around that. And I think in terms of where we got to go forward.

One, I think what we have to really recognize is that even voter suppression, and I always talk about it's always come in three, and I think I see it as like a three-legged stool. There's always been this legal barrier that's created. It's almost like in America, let's remember slavery was legal. Didn't make it right, but there's kind of this framework of using the legal structure itself to become a barrier for communities of color. And we're seeing more of that happen all across the country. I think the second piece is really using fear as a tactic to actually create this space of fear, of making people, even making people fight for just basics, some basic access to it. And then I think the third piece has always been around weaponizing administrative process, like making these administrative processes so cumbersome that by the time you really are not getting a real remedy out of it.

And so I think what is happening in Alabama should be indicative of what's really is a microcosm of what is happening in this nation right now, that we are seeing that racism is decided, that the root of racism in the State of Alabama is saying regardless of what the laws say, even the highest court in the land, we're going to do everything we can to suppress a quarter of the population in this state. That's significant. In addition to that, this is a state that you would think by now that would think about kind of development. Who wants to go to a state that just economically, this is also a state right now, which people may not know, is building the most expensive prison in the nation ever. That right now there's a prison to be, they do need a new prison, but there's a prison to be built in Alabama that they're charging \$270,000 per bid. You heard me correctly, imagine \$270,000 because it's a money game. It's the exploitation of communities and people of color.

So I think when we are looking at, we know the problem around kind of the racism, the structural racism, those who are in power, who are actually using those processes. I think that that comes to the question for us and why we are doing the work we're doing that the only way that things change is that people are literally, you have to have folks who are actually operating in their democratic agency to say that's not acceptable and to reject that and to move those people out of office. But that's not even enough. If we know that a barrier is structural barriers, what does that mean? That means we're going to have to replace, change, reform, eliminate some of the structures that are also been standing in the space as barriers.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

This is like when you go to a dinner, and it's too much food on the table. I was just in Jamaica and now, I don't usually do a buffet because I'm snooty like that. I'm like, I don't know, everybody been looking at this food too much. They've been looking too close. But when I tell you they had a buffet, they had so much food on it and I was so greedy, I ended up with all this food on my plate and I don't even know where to start. You done put so much food on my plate, I don't even know where to go. I'm like, let me figure out where I go with all this food on the table.

But let me go to, oh, where do I start? Where do I go? Where do I go? Well, okay, let's start with the prison piece. Let's start with that because if you think about where the mega, mega big prisons are,

Angola, I think that's in Louisiana, Parchman, Mississippi, where they're building the big super training, monster training facility, Georgia. It's in the states where pre the 13th Amendment, slavery was legal. And where because of the 13th Amendment loophole, the enslavement of prisoners is legal. And the use of slave labor in this country isn't under discussed... I mean, even in California, they're using prison labor to fight fires. It's not like they want to be firemen, but they are firemen taking all the risks for \$1.80 An hour.

And so that is the thing that the United States capitalism, Natalie brought up capitalism, the most pristine capitalism we ever had was slavery, the lowest possible cost of labor, highest possible profit. So you do have an incentive to create more harm. But where is the counter incentive? Because you are on the ground. You all are fighting on the ground to get people to see that there's a way around that.

When people look at that kind of a system where there's that much despair, we just saw in Louisiana, people barely vote. Louisiana is one of the lowest voter turnouts, that's self suppression. People are just have given up. People in Alabama are still fighting it out, not necessarily across these states where black folks have numbers. 27% of the Alabama population is black, 33% of the Mississippi population is black, 12% of the Michigan population is black, but they're able to elect democratic leaders with a fraction of the numbers that they have in the south. Florida high levels of blacks, very low turnout. So how do you get past the despair when they see that the business is the prisons and that they can't get justice? How do you actually get people to come out and actually even try to vote?

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter :

So much on the table there.

Joy Reid, MSNBC :

I'm telling you though, it's a lot. You greedy. You start trying to eat it up.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

First, let me say, I have to say this, as a native New Yorker, I won't hold it against you for being from Brooklyn.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Amen.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Because I'm from the Bronx.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Oh, come on now. You got to move over there. Can we switch seats? Hip hop was born in the Bronx.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter :

That's right. Thank you. Thank you, 50th anniversary. So much there.

And I want to come back to the Louisiana piece and the self suppression piece and the black voter turnout because there's a lot going around this week around the black turnout, or lack of, in Louisiana. So I definitely want to come back to that, but I want to touch on the early part of your question, which is about the economic connections because not only is there that overall connection between those prisons and the prison industrial complex and slavery, many of those prisons were in fact, slave plantations.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Hey were.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Right? Angola's called the farm because it was a farm plantation.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Parchman, too.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Parchman, too. Not only that, but even the plants, I don't know if this is true, I've heard this a long time ago, but I'm inclined to believe it's true, that many of those plants... Our organization just did a environmental justice bus tour, Blackest Bus in America of Cancer Alley in Louisiana, and many of those plants were also plantations. The story that even the word plant come from the shortening of plantation. And so this evil alliance, right, this connection between voting rights, economic suppression, felony disenfranchisement, all these things have been woven together. And in fact, I mean we talk about the original sin. The country at a very early point had a decision to make about whether to elevate human rights or property rights, and the country chose property rights. And we've been living in the legacy of that ever since.

So when we look at the voter suppression, when we look at what happens in places like Louisiana, yes, part of it is, to Latosha's point, you've got all these objectives of the suppression and part of the objectives is the fear, part of it is the use of the administrative process, but part of it is to send a message that you don't matter.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

That's right.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Even if you're not fearful because of the suppression, what comes across clearly is you don't matter. We don't want you to vote. So I would argue that there's a lot of reasons why turnout was so low in Louisiana. Some of it is financial, and we'll get to that in a second. But part of it is because just like we're talking about the Alabama case and the Milligan case, one of these gerrymandering cases is in Louisiana.

So black folks in Louisiana has systematically been told, you don't count. You don't deserve an extra congressional seat. And I don't care who you are, what population you are, when you have that in your face day after day, constantly, some part of you, just out of pure self-defense, just out of pure mental

health, some part of you is going to say, you know what? I don't want to mess with this. I'm not going to be involved in this.

Now, that's not the only reason that we wind up having to see low turnout. There's also the financial issue. I read an article today that in this, and I don't know if y'all know about the Louisiana election that took place over the weekend, a very racist Republican candidate who has a history of anti-blackness. He won in a jungle primary where there was like six or seven different candidates, and there was one Democrat running who really got no support, not from the party, not from progressive funding. And the stat that I saw was that in September alone, Republicans put \$1.2 million into that governance race. And if I asked you, how much do you think Democrats put into that race, what would you say?

Joy Reid, MSNBC :

Very little.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Very little. \$28,000. \$28,000 against \$1.2 million. But then you want to wake up the next day and be like, where were the black folks? Why the black folks didn't come out? And so what we have repeatedly seen is you can't continue to expect us to be out here in these streets mobilizing folks, sending text messages, knocking on doors, doing billboards with no resources. And you can't expect black folks to come out when you refuse to put...

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We've got this crazy notion. Our organization is built on a couple of very basic beliefs, and one of the beliefs is this. We believe folks come out when you talk to them. That seems crazy, right? We believe that folks will come out if you actually have a conversation with them, if you knock on the door, if you send a text message, if you have an event in their community. But if you don't do any of that, don't expect us to come out. Not only is it foolish for you to think that that would happen, it's insulting. We just going to show up in spite of the fact that we in an abusive relationship where you don't want to spend money on some flowers or some dinner or whatever, but you want me to keep showing up. So it would be foolish of us to not respond just out of our own, again, our own self-preservation, our own mental health. And so there's a lot of reasons why this work that we do is so difficult. The voter suppression is one piece of it. The lack of investment is one piece of it. The mental messages that we don't matter, that's why we came up with the name Black Voters Matter because there's a lot of, as we always say, there's a lot of folks that care about black votes that don't give a darn about black voters. And our work is to demonstrate through love, centering love, black joy and culture, that our communities matter, that our issues matter, that our health matters, that our housing matters, that criminal justice and our safety matters. And we believe that if we have those conversations all throughout the year and build those relationships, that's how people come out.

That's what we've done in Georgia. And that's how the things like what people look at as a Georgia miracle, ain't no miracle about it. They ain't realize that's work. That's work. That's consistent work. And so we believe that that can happen in all these states, including Louisiana, including Mississippi, which also has a gubernatorial election in just a couple of weeks, including Kentucky, which also has a gubernatorial election in just a couple of weeks where there's another candidate who was the same DA that refused to press charges against those that killed Breonna Taylor, and now he wants to be governor of Kentucky.

So all these elections, and not to mention the local elections that we engage in and support all throughout the year, this is how you demonstrate that black voters matter. This is how you get turnout. This is how you help to overcome some of the voter suppression. But at the end of the day, we've got to have the legal frameworks that help us to overcome the voter suppression. And that's why we got friends like Damon.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

That was like a alley-oop right to him. So let's talk about that. That's a great point. And I love that you said this because percentage wise, there are more black people in Louisiana than New York where we're from. Percentage wise, there are more black people in Florida than Michigan. Percentage wise, blacks are only 9% of the vote in California. California elect Democrats like water. The place where there's actually the most opportunity in the entire United States to elect black people and the first state to elect black people state why was Mississippi. Actually, the best opportunities are in the South. But you know what Democrats spend in the south? Nothing.

A pop quiz. What year do y'all think the Republicans took over the south politically? What year does anybody want to guess? Tell me a guess. Say it loud. What year? No, the year the Republicans took over. What year Republicans took over. What'd you say? '65? 2014. Prior to 2014, the majority of black Democrats served in majority state houses and state senates, and there were multiple United States senators and governors in the south: North Carolina, Arkansas, Alabama. Trust me when I tell you it was 2014. Why did they do it?

2010, the Armageddon election, which was a combination of an election and a census, Armageddon. And 2014 lack of voter participation. We gave up the south. Democrats, black folks let the south go, and black people have been paying the price ever since.

Let's go to the legal piece. We pray over Brother Clarence. We pray over him, but we don't really have to pray for him, because he got rich friends to take him on vacation. So he don't need our prayers. He has rich friends. But we have a Supreme Court right now, which shocked us, honestly. We were kind of surprised, but that might've been a bit of embarrassment, because John Roberts has been against the voting rights since he was a young lawyer in the Reagan administration. So this is a hostile Supreme Court. But we are now seeing a confluence of cases that could overturn the Voting Rights Act, which I think a lot of us anticipate probably will. Where do we stand on a legal basis in terms of the right to vote?

Damon Hewitt:

Sure. First, thank you Joy, and thank you Brother Cliff and Sister Latosha. I can't tell you how much, as a civil rights lawyer, it matters to have a black voters matter fund. I can't tell you how much it matters because the work that we do in the courts and behind the scenes, lawyers don't want to lead movements, for the most part now. We want movement to call lawyers, but that energy, that moral clarity you bring to the table cannot be replaced. One other word about Louisiana, my home state.

Damon Hewitt:

... cannot be replaced. One other word about Louisiana, my home state, and my mom and I... I grew up in New Orleans. My mother now lives in Cancer Alley, so thank you for the bus tour in Cancer Alley. You know that the new governor elected is the biggest enemy of environmental justice, of voting rights and civil rights that you will find anywhere in the Deep South. But I'll say one other thing about Louisiana. Between 1965 and 2010, after every [inaudible] every reduce in compliance for the State House of Representatives was rejected by the Department of Justice or federal court because they were retro-aggressive plans, they hurt the standing of Black voters, every single time, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010.

You know how that chain got broken? Because of Shelby County v. Holder. Let me say it more broadly. The last Black person to be elected statewide in Louisiana was P.B.S. Pinchback who was the Black Governor during Reconstruction. Let me say it even more broadly. Ever since we've had elections in this country, we have had racial discrimination in voting, from the beginning of the country. So I hear that folks give up on us, and maybe folks give up on ourselves, but the context-

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter :
That's right.

Damon Hewitt: ... of
systemic oppression-

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:
Structural, yes.

Damon Hewitt:
... structural oppression, the context of psychological oppression, the context of, "You don't matter,"-

Audience:
Come on.

Damon Hewitt:
... is serious and it is real, even in a state where you have a stronghold of Black political power in New Orleans, even in a state like that. So the psychological dimensions, the political electoral dimensions are deep. Joy, to your question, where are we? We're in a really tough spot. They're coming for the big rights and they're coming for the crops. They gutted Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act in preclearance, and on Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, they try every way to diminish it. 2021, a case decided by a justice... well, written by a justice of legal majority opinion, *Bernie v. DNC*, a case that never should have happened.

Audience:
Come on.

Damon Hewitt :

Right? We told the people, "This never should have happened." The court essentially determined that, "Well, there's only a little bit of discrimination. In fact, it's all a little bit of disadvantage, so maybe it's not really discrimination at all, at all." It's like an acceptable amount of rat hairs in food. "It's just a little bit, it's okay." But you flip to the Affirmative Action context and the court says, "Well, if you consider race at all, it's discrimination."

Audience:

Right.

Damon Hewitt :

It is internally inconsistent, and it's intellectually dishonest. There's another case out of Arkansas coming up, one this week for the Eighth for the Court of Appeals. It'll probably get to the U.S. Supreme Court, which says, an attack saying Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, " You may not have a private right of act," meaning maybe private people and civil rights lawyers don't have a right to sue at all. Now, that's important because of this. When the court gutted the preclearance provision, Section 5 would be already and Shelby County v. Holder, the majority said, "Oh, well you still have Section 2. You can still file cases like that." Now, we always knew Section 2 in the Voting Rights Act is a poor substitute for Section 5. See, Section 2 is where you can address things after the fact, after the fact, when the damage is done; time-consuming, years-long cases.

Section 5 was your prophylactic to stop the bad things before they went into effect. It's important because Section 2 litigation, lawsuits generally take a long time. So I'm up here on this panel, but I know that my work is to reconcile. The Lawyers' Committee, we have to reconcile. The community has a pulse, ba-boom, ba-boom, ba-boom, ba-boom. Community going to keep going no matter what happens; racism, oppression, death, disaster. But litigation has a different kind of pulse. It's, "Let's plan. Let's plan," "Oh, hurry up and file the case," and then lose the motion. Then nothing happens for a long time, and then boom, boom, boom, boom. If you mix those two EKGs, end up with a heart attack.

So litigation cannot drive community, community support and muscle and not part of some political orientation and drive, and not just support, but drive litigation. So we have to get the two to work hand-in-hand. I think that's who we're seeing. Even though things are not looking at favorable in the courts, and we know why the federal courts, because it's folks that said lifetime tenure, and we know who appointed the majority of these federal judges. Even notwithstanding the great progress, President Biden has appointed more Black women in the court of appeal than every other president combined, some of them are my friends, but I think it's an indictment that how is it that I know, I'm a young man, I'm only 50, how is it that I'm friends with the first Black woman on the Eleventh Circuit, the first Black woman on the Fifth Circuit?

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Damon Hewitt:

It's not because I know everybody.

Audience:

Right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Damon Hewitt:

I know a few people, not everybody, it's because there's still Black women first in this day and age. So the courts are not generally our friends, so we have to fight. Our duty is to fight on multiple fronts. We fight in federal courts, we fight in state courts. One of the cases that I think that the lawyer's community filed that holds the most promise in recent years is not necessarily the case that challenging voter suppression and federal court where we always felt like we get a fair chance until these courts got taken over, it's actually a case we filed in state court in Texas.

Some people thought we were crazy for doing it, but our theory of the case is this: Texas is at war with its own people, just like the other states are, other Southern states. But Texas is also violating its own rules, not just federal. That's important because of this. When we push for Voting Rights Act preauthorization, and we'll talk about the civil disobedience, I think hopefully in a bit, when we pushed for preauthorization, we tried to work with Joe Manchin. We said, "Joe, come on, man. Come on, man. We just need your vote, and the other one's vote, look the other way.

Audience:

Yeah.

Damon Hewitt:

He said, "Well, the Republicans, you got to reach out to them and say, 'Look, we'll do bipartisan outreach because civil rights is not a partisan issue.'" He brought to us 13 Republican Senators, and you know what they all said? They said two things. Number one, "No Democrat bill is going to make its way and win in the Senate. It's got to be bipartisan." Well, that's why we're here."

Audience:

Right.

Damon Hewitt:

Then the second thing they said was, "Well, don't call my state racist." They view voting rights legislation, especially something about preclearance, especially something that says that things that happen in their view in the normal courts that is discriminatory, that is racist, they think is calling them racist as individuals. That's calling people who look like them racist, people who vote like them racist. So this is really what's happening with the law and with the politics is a power play, but it's also a play to reshape narratives as if the Civil War never happened-

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Damon Hewitt:

... as if slavery never happened, as if the Civil Rights Movement never happened. They are trying to rewrite narratives and really the narratives is what holds to that. So anything that can replace their narratives, dismantling of voter right statutes, blocking access to courts, primaries where Black folks don't stand a chance, this all is consistent with their narratives. So I do believe in this country we got more, we have more actually Black people, I mean people of conscience because we're clear at the Lawyers' Committee we are a Black-centered, Black-focused organization, but we're building a multiracial democracy-

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Damon Hewitt:

... because Black folks in California can't take everything over as you said. Even though we have large percentages, large numbers of Black folks in Southern states, we are not the numerical majority.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Damon Hewitt:

So we're going to build a multiracial democracy-

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Damon Hewitt:

... through the lens of our experience, through The lens of our struggle and through the lens of our successes, our relative failures. So as Black America goes to the south, as these folks know, the rest of the democracy goes as well.

Audience:

That's right. Amen.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's it.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

What was the guy, I think he just passed away, I think? Was his name Steven Phillips? He was a right wing thinker back in the day who said that the way that Republicans will take over so the Democratic Party will become a mass of Black folk, liberal Scandinavians and Jewish voters. They said the Jews, liberal Scandinavians and Black folks will all combine, and then that's how we defeat them. That's literally what this theory was, and look at the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party is liberal and moderate white folks, Black people, Asian Americans, Latinos. It is a multiracial party, which makes it harder to navigate.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's it.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Whereas, the Republican Party is still 90% white, and so it's easier to navigate a ship that is monolithic. They don't have as much of diversity that they have to contend with. Democrats have a really hard job of keeping all these coalitions happy.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

You talked a little bit about the fear factor. Let's talk about that just for a second. We saw in Florida, the governor there, Ron DeSantis, well, okay, let me not make any further comment.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Your friend.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Your friend.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

My friend, Ron DeSantis, good old Ron DeSantis. I lived in Florida for 14 years, so I get to talk about it. It's like you can talk about your own family, so I can talk bad about Florida.

Damon Hewitt:

You are a citizen of the world. You are [inaudible 00:35:34]

Joy Reid, MSNBC :

I lived in all swing states. I'm like, I lived in Colorado except for New York. I'm a swing state, I live in swing states, but Florida's not a swing state anymore. It's a red state. But anyway, if you think about the ways in which power happens, Shelby v. Holder, the Holder in that is Eric Holder, who by the way, doesn't like it being called Shelby Holder.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

He doesn't.

Joy Reid, MSNBC: He's like,

"Just call it Shelby."

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter: That's

right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

He doesn't want his name on it. Why is Eric Holder on that? 'Cause he was the attorney general.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Attorney general.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Why was he the attorney general? Because Barack Obama was the president.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Again, the South didn't turn over until Barack Obama was the president, and the backlash against Barack Obama produces the 2010 election and the 2014 election, which Republicans take over the South, take back over the South, take over Congress.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

It all happens because of this one guy getting elected. So there is a sense on the other side of what their power is and how to get it and how to keep it.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Right. Right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Right? On the other side, it's a lot more scattered 'cause again, it's a more diverse coalition. One of the reasons that we currently have a Republican House, because Joe Biden, say what you want about Joe Biden, he defied history. He actually had a fantastic midterm. Democrats did not lose the United States Senate. Georgia elected, not one, but two Democrats, one Jewish Democrat, one Black Democrat. They completely defied history. They are now the new Virginia. Democrats would've kept the House but for Ron DeSantis. Ron DeSantis produced an illegal gerrymandered map, which the United States Supreme Court, including our friend, Clarence, allowed to stand, which is still in litigation. I think LDF is suing them.

Damon Hewitt:

Yes.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

It's a literally illegal map that puts an additional set of Republicans in. Alabama's illegal map, that map is also illegal. There should be two Democratic senators.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter :

Right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

They have one Democrat.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

All these Southern states have like 30% Black population, one congressman for the Democrats. They get the rest 'cause of gerrymandering. Of course, a stupidly gerrymandered map in New York, which Democrats dropped the ball on that. But for the illegal map in Florida and the stupid map in New York, there wouldn't be... there would've never been a Kevin McCarthy as speaker. It wouldn't have happened.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

But one of the things that DeSantis did is he arrested a bunch of people for voting, and these are people who, there was an amendment that was passed by the voters of Florida by 65% that said, "Restore former felons' voting rights." The DeSantis Administration said, "Yeah, but you got to pay a really big fine to get your..." It's basically a poll tax. That's also in litigation.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

But he still used that illegal poll tax-

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

... to arrest about 20 Black people. I think one white woman and the rest were all Black, and they did it on camera-

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

... publicized it, humiliated them and terrified them. A lot of them were elderly.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

I have a friend at work that does, not at your level, but she does what you do in Florida and said that Black folks who didn't even have a criminal record were afraid to vote. So there is a fear factor, and I know you all deal with it when you're-

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC :

How much of that is active in the minds of folks that you guys are talking to?

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

There's a couple of things, when you were talking, I don't know why this image came to me, but some of y'all may have seen this image of where they were doing this experiment on frogs where they were slowly heating the water up and that in the space of, and the frog would actually sit there and boil because as it would get higher, at some point, the frogs started thinking that something's wrong, but by that time, it was too late. I'm saying that because even in the circumstance, I feel like that's what's happening in America. We're literally looking at the water. We're looking at frogs, like the water being heated for literally voters to actually boil to death. I know that's an image, but we've actually normalized it, right? Many of us who've been doing voting rights forever, voting rights work, I think about my sister and colleague April Albright around the voter ID. I got so tired and frustrated with arguing with other Democrats about how the voter ID wasn't no problem. What's wrong with a voter ID?

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Right? What we are not seeing is we're not seeing this little attrition. It's slowly, it's slowly, and then all of a sudden, there's this narrative that something is wrong and we've got to fix it.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Right? In that it's this way, it opens this way to be able to shift things so that people don't respond in that same way. It's the same thing around, I think it was very strategic around when he arrested the people in Florida, he arrested folks who were formerly incarcerated folks, who are former felons. We've actually developed, in this nation, we've developed this idea that there's something wrong with those people, that they are less than.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Because we've allowed them to be dehumanized, when that happens to them, we see that as, " Oh, maybe they shouldn't have done it, but it doesn't really impact us in that way." Then it gets greater and greater and greater. I say that because part of the way that fear takes place, there's a spectrum of how fear takes place. There's the fear that's in your face that's the monster, and there's the fear that some... I think about my grandbaby, you turn the light off, it ain't a monster in there, but the fact that it's in darkness and it's the unknown creates fear. So all of those tactics are used in such a way that the narrative itself says, because this is what Black people know, right? Black folks know that we start, and even in this context of this legal context in America, you're innocent until proven guilty, that's flipped for us. We are guilty until proven innocent. We know that. It doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter where you are, we know that automatically we going jail unless somebody save us. It doesn't even matter whether you're innocent or not. We've seen the Scottsboro Boys, we know people, and we know stories of folks who have gotten killed, their innocence, that when you Black and innocent, that is not enough for your defense, not in this nation.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Right? Unfortunately, I think white America has a different kind of belief system in this legal system to believe on some level, and even for them, that doesn't hold true really necessarily, particularly if you don't have access to resources, that there's some parity, that there's some space of fairness. That has never been our reality.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Right.

Damon Hewitt:

Right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

So I'm raising that because I think we are really underestimating this space of fear. Part of what I think has been Trump's biggest weapon, we're talking about DeSantis, but Trump's biggest weapon has been around fear, right? It's like it was not by accident, even though he focused on the Muslim communities, and that was to send a message that if you were anything other than a white man with means, we coming for you, and we're going to respond in kind. So there's these layers of spaces of fear that when you're hearing the, "Do you have a voter ID?" When you're hearing the message, we've seen this even with the work that we're doing in Black Voters Matter, where people literally put out flyers, right? Flyers saying that you're going to get arrested, or-

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Oh, the billboards that they've done-

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matte:

Oh, they get billboards.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

... where they say if you haven't paid your child support-

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

... you will be arrested at the polls.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter :

You'll be arrested at the polls, right? I remember there was a billboard, I don't know, Cliff, if you remember, there was a billboard in Selma that actually had a Confederate... do you remember?

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

[inaudible]

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Who was it? It was Nathan B. Forrest, one of the founders of the Ku Klux Klan. This was in 2000?

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Yeah.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

This is in 2000, in Selma there's a big billboard with Nathan B Forrest, the Ku Klux Klan, one of the founders of the Ku Klux Klan on a horse, when you come in. This was around election, they put it up. At the bottom it said, "Keep the scare on them." Right? So this is in 2000, we're not talking about 1960, and there's subtle ways that there's these messages connected to fear that we actually see all across the nation. Think about it, going into a dark room by yourself is really scary, but if you got to go in a dark room and you got four other people, you get a little more courage, don't you?

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Right. Right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matte:

You're like, "Come on, go in this room with me." Right?

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Mm-hmm.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

There is something about collective power, and so part of the way that we even combat fear is that literally engaging people to see themselves as a collective block.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's why it's important that when we're talking about mobilizing and messaging to really constituency groups that it actually helps with some of the fear. We have actually used music. We've literally had been at polling sites in Atlanta where they would not allow people to vote and crowds actually... we actually made sure that somebody voted 'cause we were doing electric slide. I swear this is a true story. Literally, we blocked the doors with the electric slide and dared them to cross us, and we're like, "Go in there and vote." We sent people in there to vote with them, and there was something about that sense of collective power and work and joy, and we were like, "No, no, no." We're not even going to get mad. It could have been an ugly fight. Instead, we was like, "No, we're not going to fight, but we're going to dance our way to vote."

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

We going to slide."

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

"We going to slide," right? "Guess what? We ain't going nowhere, so all of us don't come in there and slide."

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

"So pick your choice." My point is, though, creative ways to do it, part of it is sometimes you have to diffuse the fear. I think a couple of ways. One, it's through information to let people know that they are not alone, that's why our work is so important. It's like if you are in the military, you're in the Army, and you are actually sent over somewhere and you drop. When you find out the Special Ops are coming, you're like, "Okay, okay. The Navy SEAL is coming to get me." There's a certain kind of feel. That's how we see ourselves. We see the soldiers on the ground, we just the Special Ops.

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We just might pop on in, and help them reinforce who's already there. So I think part of it is three simple ways, I think, and thoughts to me around how we combat fear. One, there has to be information. The challenge with that is that our counterparts are flooding our communities with bad information, misinformation that is laced with fear, misinformation and confusion. It's very expensive. What we also know is that politically, that there's an enormous amount of money that is being placed in terms of advertisements, and it ain't cheap, y'all, right? It's not cheap. What we also know, those of us that do this work, the hardest space to raise money for is literally around marketing and information-

Damon Hewitt:

Yeah.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Yes.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

... that oftentimes, we don't have the resources to be able to actually put the kind of money to combat some of the issues, and so that requires us... So one is information. What we've been able to tap into is trusted messengers on the ground, so people that are trusted messengers, but you all know how marketing work, it's actually a layered approach. For people to believe something, they need to hear it repeatedly, and so they need to hear it on the radio. They need to see it on TV. They need to see it in flyers. They need to hear people doing that. That requires money and resources. So the progressives have not done a really good job, in my opinion. Part of even what we've seen, and I think we're in D.C., so we can talk about the political consulting class. The political consulting class has been directing political resources to television.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Young people are not even watching network TV, y'all. They're watching Netflix and TikTok and all those other places, and so part of it... but they also get there's a financial benefit-

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

... and kickback for them on that, right?

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

So there are resources that are really needed to actually be able to combat the misinformation and the shaping of information. The second thing I think around fear, which is what I just raised earlier, is that there is something about collective power. There's something about the human spirit that when we are together, we feel a little bit stronger. That's why team works.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Yes.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter :

Right? We like teams. We like being on teams. There's some reason that when your teammate is showing out, you show out too.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

You shoot better.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

[inaudible]

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter :

That's why we got those shirts. It's true. People want a sense of belonging, people need a sense of, "I am something greater." When you look at the message of Black Voters Matter, you will never see our bus, we're very inclusive in our language. We don't say like we're individual, we're separated from the community. Our language is very inclusive. It's always "We," it's, "Us. Let's do this, y'all," so that people actually feel a sense of belonging, because that in itself has a tremendous amount of power to actually go through fear. The third and a final thing that I'll raise, which is what I do all the time, is music, that one of the things that we were talking, I remember one of my mentors was a lieutenant, our mentor was a lieutenant of Dr. King, Reverend Orange, Reverend James Orange-

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matte:

Leader.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

... and leader. Part of what he would say, and others would say that the singing, that part of the whole strategy around singing as they were getting arrested was that it was part of the process to calm their fears, for them to feel a part of each other. It was literally a tactic. So part of the reason why we use music and that we're doing the electric slide at the polling sites, and while we're coming and we are doing James Brown, some of it's to change the atmosphere, to literally shift the atmosphere, to say that we're not going to operate in fear. We're going to challenge this power, but we're going to bring our Black joy in this process and hope, and some of y'all will be transformed in the process. So that's another piece, I think, we have to fight, but I think we also have to recognize that we're all humans. So in some ways, because we've so allowed Black folks to be dehumanized in this nation, that we forget that we're not just a number.

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These are human beings that every single day, which one of us, every single day, that just doing something that's simple, well, you already know that you don't have the same justice as somebody else, that you already know that you're living in a culture that people would literally put you out. In my own family, literally when they registered to vote, they had to get out of the land that they were on, that there have been serious repercussions for Black folk in the South for something as simple as voting. Do you think that our collective memory, that we don't have some memory of that? I remember we went to, and out of this story, in 2000, I think, '16, '17, '18, one of those years, was it '18?

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter

I don't know-

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matte :

With the bus?

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

It's all one year now.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

I don't know what story it is.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matte):

Cliff was like, "I don't know what the story it is."

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

I think it was '18 when we were in Jefferson County, we were in a bus of seniors. This is a longer story. I won't get into all of it, but we had a bus of seniors that the local county administrators said we could not take them to vote. They were Black seniors that could not vote. In that process, there was a 90-year... people were afraid. We had media. We could not get any of the members to talk to the media. They were afraid. One woman was so triggered, I think she was 80 something years old, I can't remember. She was so triggered you all, she got sick.

She actually was literally in the bed and could not move because she remembered what had happened to her in the '60s. It was a traumatic experience. I'm saying that because it is real. For some folks, it's something as simple as, "Okay, yeah, we're just voting," right? We have to fight just to vote. In Georgia, we stood in line with people til 12:37 AM on Wednesday, that we literally have been in spaces where folks have... It's taken me, his son, four hours to vote. Where you go on the white side of town, and it's 10 minutes.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Right.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

It's in and out. That is strategic, and that is also a space that sends a message, not only you don't care, but it also creates this culture of fear. So part of our work, part of what we talk about, the joy and why we are so excited about JusticeAid tonight and the music-

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Don't remind me that I can't go.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

I know. I know. Don't underestimate how that music, that joy, that sense of belonging, that culture is also an opening to literally help people feel a part of something greater and bigger than themselves, and also remind us of our own humanity.

Audience:

Amen.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

When you think about it, how did you learn your ABCs?

That's right.

Audience:

A, B, C-

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

How did you learn your ABCs?

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter :

That's right.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

(singing)

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

I still remember them that way.

Joy Reid, MSNB:

No, but now Patti LaBelle done switched it. Okay. Have y'all seen the Patti LaBelle one? Babe, it'll change your life?

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matte:

It'll change your life.

Joy Reid, MSNBC):

Life changing.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

It'll change your life.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

And I like that you talked about that because there are people who have, there's a song in South Africa, because they obviously have the same history as ours, where they say the higher you build your barriers, the taller I become, the further you take my rights away, the faster I will run. But the problem is when you get taller and run faster, people say, "See, there's no voter suppression."

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

"You voted."

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Yes.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

And so in Georgia, when they say, "You have to stand in a seven-hour line, but you can't have any water."

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Then they say, "That's not voter suppression. You voted."

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Right.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Even though I voted and it took me two minutes and it took you four hours, you voted. And so the fact that you clear the bar, it's like the curse of competency. If you're at your job and you're really good at your job, what do you get?

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

More work.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

More work. If you're crappy at your job, they don't give you nothing. So the people who are bad at their job don't do anything. And the people who are good at their job do everybody's work. So it's a competency. So you all actually don't benefit from succeeding. You get demerits for succeeding. You don't benefit for winning the lawsuits. They just go higher. But you talked about something, Cliff, that I want to come back to. Because there's the fear piece, but you also talked about the information piece and you talked about it in context, but I want to have you zero in on that, because the other thing is the civics piece of getting to understand why you should bother, why you should overcome the fear.

How are we doing at getting people to make a connection between not just the one guy, the president, the quarterback, but voting all the way down the team, down to the school board? Because where republicans are being very successful, and I won't just say to be partisan about it, but conservatives, because it used to be the Democrats were the conservatives, let's not forget Democrats history. was on that side. That's right. So it's been both parties, it's just they just want power, whatever they call themselves. But they've been very successful at starting at the school board level and working their way all the way up. And so they now control state senate, state houses, school boards. So that's where the actual real, where your life is impacted. How do you make the connection, especially with young voters who are completely frustrated with politics in general with the way that they see politics? They see it as a gerontocracy that doesn't help them at all. They can't get their student loans forgiven. They feel like this isn't worth it. How do you make the connection civically to why you should vote and why you should bother?

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter

No, that's great because that's a big part of the work that we do, right? People know us because of these big elections, presidential and these senate races, but a lot of the work that we do is really at that local level and connecting those issues. Before I talk about that though, I just wanted to piggyback on what you had said about how we become victims of our own success. I mean, even we were talking about Shelby, I won't say Shelby versus the H word, but when we talk about Shelby, part of what was embedded in Shelby was, "Hey, y'all don't really need this anymore. After all, you got a Black president."

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Racism is over. Look at that Black guy. He was president.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Who's old enough to remember post-racial America? Anybody?

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

[inaudible]

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Right. Right. And we're experiencing this right now because of the Georgia elections where people said, we just talked about this at our event yesterday. They're saying, "Oh, y'all made a big deal about that SB202, that Georgia voter suppression bill."

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

That vote was fine. You voted.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

"You voted. Warnock won. There was big turnout. Wasn't there big turnout?" And so yeah, there wasn't no voter suppression in spite of the fact that we know that there was voter suppression and it was harder for Black voters to vote, that no other races, no other statewide races were won by Black voters and Democrats. So we're still dealing with that in very real ways that becoming a victim of your own success. But in terms of the local work that we do, that's a big part of, I mean, that's really what we do

all throughout the year. And to be clear, we support local organizations. Some people know us because of the Blackest Bus in America, because of the singing and dancing at various events. We support local grassroots organizations.

Over the past five years, we've put in \$33 billion into the hands of local groups. That's church groups, that's neighborhood associations, that's NAACP chapters, that's folks like our friend here, Andrea, from Center for Common Ground. It's organizations that do this work 365 days out of the year on a wide range of issues. And sometimes those issues are housing issues. Sometimes it is, if we're talking to young folks, they may not be as excited about Medicaid expansion, although they may because they may be taking care of an elderly person in the household. But what's more likely to get them interested is what? Gun violence, police violence, marijuana legalization, climate change. Even for Black young folks, yes, climate change, because we tend to feel it in our communities in terms of what? Deadly floods, electric bills and utility bills are out of control. So yes, young Black voters care about climate change as well.

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But we do this work in local communities by centering those issues and then centering those local races that are often the very first points of contact. A lot of times we do it through ballot initiatives. Because sometimes you take Atlanta right now, I don't know if y'all are familiar, Joy mentioned it earlier, Cop City, the big police training facility that's being proposed, \$90 million in Atlanta, that petition to stop Cop City got 115,000 signatures on it. That is not only more than who voted for the mayor, Mayor Dickens in Atlanta. It's not only twice as many as what he got. That is more than the total number of votes in the most recent Atlanta Mayor's election. More registered Black voters, many of them young, signed that petition than voted in the entire city election.

And so what we know is that by engaging in these local issues, by engaging in ballot initiatives, sometimes it takes one issue, one very specific issue to be the on-ramp for our folks to get involved. First time voters, young voters, maybe even older voters that just weren't believing in the system. But sometimes it takes one issue to be that on-ramp because what we know is that when our folks engage on that first issue, it becomes contagious. It becomes a pattern. But you've got to engage. You've got to have that on-ramp. And to do that, you got to be willing to talk about something, some issue, some local level election that maybe other folk aren't talking about, but that's what they want to talk.

We can't just go talking about what we want to talk about, right? We got to talk about what it is. That's part of the reason why we created a reparations fund to support local reparations efforts in several cities around the country because again, we care about the issue in and of itself. But we also know is that for some people, they're going to engage in that issue and by engaging in that issue, and it might be the only issue they care about, but by engaging in that issue, then you turn around. Now they're engaged in housing, they're engaged in climate, they're engaged in Medicaid expansion, but reparations might be the on-ramp. But if we don't ever demonstrate we hear you, we feel you, and we're going to invest in you on that issue, then there is no on-ramp. That's how we get involved in the local elections and that's how you get people involved up ...

People think, again, we've got these crazy notions, y'all. People think that the top of the ticket drives the issue because more people care about the top of the ticket. That's not the case. That's the lie. The truth is people turn out more in the top of the ticket because at the top of the ticket, presidential, senate,

governor, you get what? You get more money, which means you got more outreach, which means more people know about. Remember our crazy notion? When you talk to people or remind them about elections, they're more likely to come out. The difference between local elections isn't that less people care about it. In fact, we've got data that shows that there are people that will come out ...

In fact, 2018, I'm going to just share this. In 2018, at the same time that Stacey Abrams was running the first time for governor, there were some counties, Richmond County, which is where Augusta is, that had under votes on the governor's race. The item that got the most votes in that county in that election was not the governor's race. It was a ballot issue, a local ballot issue about using the local stadium that they were trying to figure out what it was going to be used for. More people voted on that issue than voting in the governor's election.

This is what we believe, that just as much as that the top of the ticket can drive turnout going down, that the bottom of the ticket can actually actually drive turnout going up. If we invest in it, if we talk to people enough about it, if we do as many door knocks and remind people that those are the issues that more people are likely to care about, the ones that make the difference on the margins, the ones that people talk about converting voters from red to blue, from this to that, we believe the most important conversion there is, is converting a non-voter to a:

That's right.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's the conversion that we focus on.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's right.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

And the way you do that is by focusing on the issues that our communities care about. And a lot of times that's a local issue and a very specific issue.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Well, and I can tell you that the right is so far ahead of the left in so many ways on this. Why do you think that trans panic is a thing? Literally two years ago, they didn't care about drag shows. They didn't care about LGBTQ books. This is not an issue that came up at all. They were talking about inflation. And then all of a sudden it's just trans panic 24/7. Why? Because it's an issue that you can pull people who would normally vote one way to vote another way. Because they're like, "You know what? I'm a little panicked about that, even though I've never actually met a trans person, but I'm panicking." And why? I mean, the whole book banning thing. Glenn Youngkin wrote that into the governor's mansion, scaring people about classic award-winning novels and saying these classic award-winning novels, I mean novels about the ... What do you call it? A graphic novel about the Holocaust is suddenly a threat to children's futures. That has to go. Books by Black folk have to go, right?

They're doing that because they think that suburban women will vote on that issue. And they figure while you're here, you might as well also vote for Glenn Youngkin. And it does work. And so I think that it's important that you say that, that people need to think. If you put marijuana legalization, it always passes. If you put, by the way, one of the most successful ballot issues in the history of voting, and it never almost fails, is raising the minimum wage. And again, just remember every right-wing issue is generally about money. It's generally about not wanting to pay taxes and have regulation. And so it's like the idea that you don't want to raise the minimum wage is an economic issue. It's not because you don't like people. It's that you like them, you just want them to work for you for free.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Can I just say on the medical marijuana, a lot of people don't know this. Medical marijuana passed a couple of years ago in Mississippi.

Joy Reid, MSNBC :

Oh, it will. 100%.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter;

It passed in Mississippi. So when we say that these issues can sometimes be the thing that engage not only Black voters, but even those white voters that are often convinced in the south, that somebody else is the reason that they're poor, right?

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Yes.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

But sometimes it's an issue like medical marijuana, Medicaid expansion.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

And watch for abortion.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matte:

Exactly.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Because the reason you're having voter suppression in Ohio right now is because Republicans are panicking. I used to say back in the mid 2000s, Republicans never wanted Roe V. Wade overturned. They wanted the issue of Roe V. Wade on the ballot because it motivated right-wing Christian voters. But once it actually happened and they caught the car, they're panicking. Because when you put that on a ballot in Kansas, even the conservative white women go, "Hell no. No." And you put it on the ballot anywhere white voters go, "Nope." And so they're terrified of it. And in Ohio they're like, "Oh, we have to have a special August out of time election to try to stop them from putting that on the ballot." It's going to be on a ballot. And they know that while you're here, you want to vote for Chad Brown? They understand that those candidates will jump on it.

So my final question will be to you, before we're going to do a very brief Q&A. I like to say on the readout, our subtitle is scaring is caring. We scare because we care. We give the bad news because we want help. If you don't know there's nothing in the dark room, you go in the dark room. And nobody tells you the boogeyman is in the room. They didn't help you. They didn't scare you, but they clearly didn't care. Because they let you go in there and the boogeyman was in there. I want to know when the boogieman is in there, so we can go in together, do a slide, slide on out.

Okay. Let me give you the last word on this. There are a few cases that I have my eye on, but I want to know what case you have your eye on. There is a gerrymandering case for Nancy Mace's district in South Carolina. Sorry, I put her in the wrong Carolina, of whether that district was drawn for political reasons or racial reasons, which is a huge deal because if they decide political is okay, you can gerrymander, so there's that case. Are there any other cases that you think we should be paying attention to coming forward through the courts?

Damon Hewitt:

Well, the case that was argued last week, the South Carolina [inaudible 01:05:30] case. The Supreme Court several years ago decided a case called Common Cause V. Rucho, or Rucho V. Common Cause. I forget which is which, when it went up, decided that partisan gerrymandering is what the Supreme Court calls a non-justiciable issue. That's fancy talk to say it's out of reach of the court. It's a political question. So what that means is when partisan folks want to get advantage, they can trample on Black people's backs and put on a mask and say, "Hey, it wasn't racist. It's just partisan." And so ironically, so look, I believe that partisan gerrymandering's cousin is racist gerrymandering. They may even be conjoined twins. But ironically, part of the rhetoric from the bench, when our sister [inaudible 01:06:18] argued that case was, "Well, maybe the burden should be on the plaintiffs to demonstrate how you can disentangle racial partisanship." When in fact you cannot disentangle them at all. And it just shows how effective our system is. That case is huge.

Now, on the bright side, I would say that there are laws in some states, and we need more of these that ban partisan gerrymandering. That is frankly the hope because the federal courts and the federal system has completely advocated all responsibility. The other case is one I alluded into earlier, the case in the eighth circuit. I forget the name of the case at this point, but it's a case about whether we can sue under section two of the Voting Rights Act, or only the federal government can sue. Now, the federal government my sister friend Kristen Clarke, who's a Civil Rights, she's my predecessor at the Lawyers Committee, my friend for 25 years. Because of what she did, because of what Barbara Arnwine did before her on the Lawyers Committee, because what we do now, we filed for cases at the Lawyers Committee.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

That's a problem, Mayor Garland.

Damon Hewitt:

That's a problem. So we can't do the loan, but if we are blocked, if the Lawyers Committee, if the LDF, , if we are blocked from filing lawsuits, win, lose or draw, then we're going to be forced to do some other means. So what I worry about is not whether we lawyers can do it, but whether our community has access to the courts. It's one thing to say that the judges are biased, the system is

rigged, but we don't even have access to the courts that vindicate rights, then what are we doing? It's not a system at all.

The last thing I would say is the way these voter suppression cases get resolved, the federal cases in Texas, Georgia, Florida, the state court case that we filed in Texas, it's a slow grind. We filed these cases two years ago. And so we see these elections still happening under the worst terms possible. In those same states, you also have redistricting litigations. So what I worry about is this crucible of oppression where we get bad rulings in the voter suppression cases where they say, " That's just politics as usual. It's not discrimination." Where we get bad rulings in the redistrict cases, whether it's a gerrymandering claim or not. And we get stuck for the decade, the next two decades, the next three decades, what's essentially bad law.

And so the answer to that is going to be twofold. One is going to be our friends at Black Voters Matter, and also it's going to be us working with them. So at the Lawyers Committee, we are the conveners of the Election Protection Coalition in which there's hundreds of organizations around the country involved. The hotline number is 866-OUR-VOTE. And it's not just Black people's votes only, it's Black centered, for terms of the work that we do, we want everyone to see themselves in there. The answer isn't us. We don't do GOTB, but we do GOTM. We get out the message, the message about what the promise is, what the possibility is, and what the peril is as well in terms of this care factor.

And so we can't do that alone as lawyers. Most of the people [inaudible 01:09:29] are not lawyers at all, all over the country. We actually have to get back to basics. And some people call it education or reeducation, let's call it re-information or redoubling our efforts to understand who we are, what's at stake and what the possibilities are and what happens if we do nothing.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Yeah. And just very quickly, we're going to go to a very brief question and answer here, but just on the point that Damon was making, the reason that you can't substitute partisan for race is that in southern states, 90% of white voters are Republicans and 90% of Black voters are Democrats. You have racially polarized voting, much more polarized than in non Southern states. So in southern states, you can do a partisan gerrymander because you can count on the fact that if you throw a rock and you hit a white voter, they are a Republican. If you throw a rock and you hit a Black voter, they are a Democrat. It's so polarized that you can actually partisan gerrymander and racially gerrymander at the same time.

And the last thing I'll say on standing, we are in a world where the Supreme Court has said that some random right-wing doctors who feel that in the future they may see a case of somebody with Mifepristone giving them a complication for an abortion. They have standing when they've never met anyone who's had that problem. And their thing has been legal for 20 years. So they're trying to get rid of the abortion drug based on standing that shouldn't exist. And where a person who said in the future, she may create a website where she does weddings, she may have to create a website for a gay couple, but she's never done it. And she doesn't have a business that does weddings right now, but she may in the future do it. And she has standing.

Damon Hewitt:

Sorry to interrupt you, so sorry. And if you could add in the affirmative action context context, you may apply to participate in the minority contract program that is not exclusive to people of certain races, but it recognizes people who have been disadvantaged. Even if you don't apply, you still have standing. It's mythical standing

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

It's mythical standing. And by the way, in the affirmative action case, you know how many Asian American stud:

Zero.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

The students for fairness or whatever, has no students. And all the Asian Americans who testified, testified in favor of affirmative action. I'll say one more thing about, I'm an alumnus of Harvard University, I'm not a big booster of the school. It's whatever. The current class at Harvard University is 24%, I believe it's either 24% or 27% Asian American under affirmative action. So what are you arguing about now that it's discriminated against Asian Americans? They are, right now there are 5% of the population and 24% to 27% of the current class, the current class is 14% Black, which is about on population. His problem is not that he caress about Asian Americans, it's that he's mad at Black people for having affirmative action. And he pretended he's there for Asian Americans and not a one testified for him. And no one was a student and all the Asian Americans were for affirmative action. Let's go to questions. Here's a question right here.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

Hi. Latosha, I want to say to you that I saw a documentary on Dorothy Cotton and she always opened with a song. She had a bus where she went to voter registration and stuff. So when I saw that documentary, I want you to know I thought of you. So, that's a compliment.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Yes.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

One other thing about kids about, I'm a former labor leader and a retired labor leader.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

She's being real modest, y'all. This is Pat Ford. She was the highest ranking Black woman in labor.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Tell us your name.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter

My name is Pat Ford. I was the first African-American, the second woman to hold office at the Service Employees International Union. And I was responsible for politics, legislation, policy, international affairs. And naturally because I was Black, they gave me the Civil Rights Department.

Joy Reid, MSNBC :

Of course. And we're glad they did. What's your question?

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

My question is that I actually want to go to Mr. Hewitt. I'm worried about the raising the issue of trying to keep Donald, that man, from office by going to the 14th Amendment. It scares me in this climate that they're drawing attention to the 14th Amendment. Will Smith produced an excellent documentary on the 14th Amendment. Everybody went to that amendment. And I'm scared if we open that door in this climate that given who the Supreme Court is, it troubles me to death because that's the only thing I see that we have right now. And I wanted to know if you felt that way, because that's my fear.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

That's a great question.

Damon Hewitt:

It is a great question. So look, I would say that that's not actually what we're part of the Lawyers Committee and frankly, civil rights organizations with whom we're allied are not using that avenue either. I don't know that litigation under that provision is going to fully open up the 14th Amendment, but I know what will be the constitutional convention, which essentially because I have friends on the Black progressive left and friends on the white progressive left who are both saying we're getting a constitutional convention. But you know who else is saying that? [inaudible conservatives out there. So something that leads to that, that would worry me in part because even despite all the great work, we're not ready for that yet. We're not ready for that. But I don't know if those lawsuits alone, I don't think they're going to be a fruitful avenue, but they don't worry me quite as much.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

And by the way, just for those who do not know what she's talking about, California has now threatened to file a lawsuit saying that Donald Trump is ineligible to be on the ballot in California because he committed insurrection. And under the 14th Amendment, anyone who committed insurrection is ineligible to hold office because of the Civil War. That's what that was put in. Okay. We have a question back there and then we'll come to you. So here in the back and then here.

Speaker 2:

Yes, thank you panelists for your ... Wow, Covered a lot of ground there. First I'd like to know, is this an organization y'all to collectively

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

We have determined ourselves to be an organization and at this moment, yes, we are.

Speaker 2 :

Okay. Understand Black stuff matters, voters matter.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:
Black Voters Matter.

Speaker 2:

Yeah. But my question was, is there a website or somewhere where, let's say for instance, Black Voters Matter can give further information and connection to other organizations here in the United States? Because I was reminded while everybody was talking back in the day, you had the Black Panthers, you had the NAACP, and they were kind of working on the same platform, if you will, where it seems like now we got a lot of individual things going on. So are folks behind the scenes collectively doing things that can unite everybody statewide? Because the problems may not be rooted the same, but they're of the same tree.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Yeah. And I will say that they didn't all work together seamlessly in the past either. And this is the actual anniversary of the Black Panthers founding today. So please give your websites.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

So Black Voters Matter Fund, Black Voters Matter Fund, with a D at the end, .org. You can also, if you pull out your phone, you could text us. I think it's working. If you text, "We matter" to 25225, 25225, "We matter." And that'll get you connected to us. But just to answer your question, we're in partnership. A big part of what we do is about partnership, coalition connectivity. We connect with local organizations in all the states where we do our work, we connect with national organizations that are all working on a lot of these same issues. In fact, on that topic, let me just say this very briefly. I got to give a shout-out to Damon. We were talking about the voting rights battle. We did a lot to get federal legislation, fell a little bit short because of But throughout that battle we did a lot of things. We did a national bus tour called The Freedom Ride. We also did a whole series along with our friends, somebody's here from League Women's Voters.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

We also did a whole series along with our friends, somebody's here from Legal Women's Voters along with our friends from LWV, partnership People for the American Way. Did a bunch of protests including civil disobedience in DC. Latosha was one of the first ones led by our dear friend, Melanie Campbell. But at several of those we got arrested. I got arrested five times throughout 2021, including one that ended in an overnight stay in a DC jail.

But at all five of those protests and even some others, Damon and the organization, the Lawyers' Committee was there. Sometimes Damon there personally was there to have our back. So they do a lot of work. Y'all give it up for Lawyers' Committee.

And last thing on that note, he mentioned the 866R vote. I heard today from Steve that our friends at Justice Aid, and please give it up for Justice Aid, that they were one of the supporters of Lawyers' Committee, I think even around the time, and helped get that 866R vote number set up. And so we believe that we are all in this together. We believe, as Dr. King said, that we are all mutually connected, tied together in a single garment of destiny. We believe that and we work on that every day in the work that we do.

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS

Joy Reid, MSNBC

Damon, give your website.

Damon Hewitt:

866ourvote.org for election protection, lawyerscommittee.org for the organization.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

And we love us some legal women voters, by the way. I love it. I love them like I love librarians. I love librarians. Right? I love librarians. Librarians are the best. Go ahead.

Pat Tyson :

Good afternoon.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

This'll be the final question, unfortunately. I'm sorry.

Pat Tyson:

My name is Pat Tyson. I'm on the advisory committee for the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund, which is a part... And the Pain Center for Social Justice. They just put out a Black Thriving document. I would encourage everybody to get a copy of it and read it. One of the things that I found interesting about it was that when Barack Obama was elected, individuals, black folks, felt that they were thriving above 55%. When Trump was elected, it went down to about 45%. It has been easing up to 52% underneath Biden. Now, clearly it is the local issues that make a difference. But what this document kind of says, in my opinion, not Gallup's opinion, but in my opinion, is that when we see hope, when we see opportunity, we participate in the political system. And I encourage everyone, again, to read this and look at it.

Latosha, also, I was one of the founders of the Alabama Women's Campaign Fund. That was a group of black women, white women, rich, poor, everywhere, but some kind of a way it fell down. Alabama is one of the few states that consistently votes against its own interests. My question to you outside of this, too, is whether or not we are using healthcare as an issue in organizing in southern states. Because what we are seeing is because of the policies of those southern states, people are dying at a younger age, whether they be black, white, purple or green. They are dying at a younger age. So that's what I'd like to know.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

So I'll just say quickly. One, we do have a campaign, we have a Medicaid expansion campaign-

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matte:

Sick and Tired.

Latosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter:

That's called Sick and Tired. Fannie Lou Hamer would say, "I'm so sick and tired of being sick and tired." And many of those states, particularly our southern states, as you all know, they have not expanded Medicaid expansion. And so you have dire, not just for even the health outcome. It's really interesting. That's why we really got to deal with this racialized politics, because the white poor folk in those states are not doing good at all. It is not just black folks. They have significant white population. You have more white houseless children in Alabama than any other state, y'all. So you have poor white folks, but what has happened, they've racialized the politics, and so their youth, literally white people are voting against their own best interests to protect landowners. It's the same model from slavery. Most of the folks who died in the Civil War couldn't even afford a slave, but they had bought into this institution of white dominance that even they worked against their own interests and were even willing to give up their own lives even though they didn't even have public education.

But the bottom line is, I do think there are three quick points around that. One, we are using healthcare expansion, Medicaid expansion, and healthcare as an issue to organize. I think there's more that we need to do around that. Secondly, I think part of that is because of the climate in this nation. There's a larger conversation around healthcare. We've accepted healthcare as a privilege instead of... There are people who are actually excited that they have better healthcare than other folks, that they use that as in some ways to weaponize like, "Oh, I have good insurance." That in some way that it feeds this idea that I'm better than you. And so we have not literally settled this question even in this nation that healthcare actually should be a right. We see it as a privilege and something that only a few should have.

Then on top of that, you layer that with a pharmaceutical company that's just running rampant, that literally is becoming extraordinarily wealthy off the exploitation of sickness of people. In addition to that, we have a current climate, when we're talking about policy, there's a larger question around, and I do think that that's why we raised this whole piece around...

One of my critiques, I'll just say this real quickly, we will not fix this issue by issue, issue by issue. That's why I keep raising the structural pieces and the value proposition. I always say there's these four things that I think will shift this nation. This is my V strategy. One, I think it's a vision that I often tell, we have to have a radical re-imagination of every single system in this country. So we need a vision, a collective vision. What's the north star where we're going to?

Secondly, it's really going to take voice, which is what I see in terms of voting around our collective engagement in this process. Third, it's going to take around a value system. We are brag on being the wealthiest in the world, why aren't we the healthiest in the world? The kind of resource... At worst case scenario, you say, "Well, they're lazy." At worst case scenario, sick people get well. I mean, what's so bad about that? I don't understand.

And then I think there's another, the fourth V, is really a shift in the paradigm of how we see victory. We have created a political reality that it's like a football game. You're either on the red team or the blue team. You either win or you lose that in order for me to win, you have to lose instead of recognizing that we're in this beautiful, amazing space, that we should be creative enough that we can actually... I don't expect everybody to have to be my same politics. I don't have my own same politics in the same week, right? I would shift up and be like, no, I don't really believe this Tuesday.

But my point is, we have not literally, I don't think America's problem is we don't know how to get along. We don't know how to fight. That the way that we fight, we fight in a way that says that in order for me to win, I have to destroy your humanity and someone else has to lose. And so I think the fourth V is really shifting the paradigm of how we see what a victory is. That there's enough resources, there's enough creativity, there's enough life, there's enough love that we can create space and grace for each other to be different, to have political differences without trying to destroy each other. We have to be creative to believe that.

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

Amen. Amen. Amen. I want to thank this incredible panel, Damon, Latosha and Cliff. Y'all are amazing and it's just a privilege to sit here on this panel with you all. And I would just close by saying, the reason I'm obsessed with history is as my friend, Rachel Maddow, says, "History is here to help." History is here to help. After the Civil War, we had 12 years of multiracial democracy in the south, because three states had majority black populations, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. What did they do? They elected statewide, whether it was governors, lieutenant governors or United States senators, it was a black and tan coalition of white unionists and black folks.

What did they create? Public schools. That started in South Carolina under reconstruction, under a multiracial democracy. What else did they say that they needed? Housing. That people who were formerly enslaved had nowhere to live. They also needed to have workers' rights. But why were those communities burned to the ground? Because in Arkansas, they were trying to unionize. That's why those black folk got burned down. Whenever people tried to create progress, what white landowners understood was that when black people could vote, they voted for very progressive policy. What does progressive policy produce? It produces taxation on the super rich.

Why keep white and black people fighting? Because then they won't get together and fight for progressive policy. When black people are allowed to vote, they tend to vote for things that help poor white folks too. And so that coalition is dangerous. Why was Fred Hampton killed? Because what was he saying? He said, "Black, Chicano, and white folks need to work together." He went to racist white people and said, "What are you getting out of this?" And they went, "You know what? Nothing. Let's work together." Dead.

The reality is that the United States, the biggest fear that we've ever had in this country has been that white and black and brown and Asian American people would get together and realize the enemy wasn't each other, it's the planter class. The planter class still exists, and they still don't want to be taxed, and they still don't want to be regulated. And as long as they keep us fighting to stop people from getting healthcare, why did we have Obamacare? A hundred years Democrats tried to get universal healthcare. FDR couldn't get it because the doctors committee stood up and said, "We not going to give away healthcare. Hell no." And they fought that for a hundred years.

And then it took getting the black guy elected. He comes in, they get 60 votes in the Senate, and as soon as Al Franken gets clear, Obamacare. None of the south would do it. Texas didn't do it and Florida. Two biggest uninsured states in the country. Kentucky has the most powerful Republican in the country,

Mitch McConnell, assuming he's still alive, which is not clear. And they are the poorest, other than West Virginia, in the country. You're the most powerful human in the United States Senate, and your state is poor. Your state is 7% black. It ain't blacks. White people in Kentucky are dirt poor. They finally get Obamacare.

I'm going to tell this real quick. But the governor there, who is this current governor's dad, Governor Beshear, white Democrat, a rarity in the south. He says, "That ain't Obamacare. That's called Connect." The guy running against him for reelection says, "I will vow to end Obamacare." All the white Republicans go, hell yeah, let us vote him in. He comes in and tries to get rid of Connect. Now, white folks looked around and they said, you're trying to get rid of my healthcare? I got to doctor and a dentist for the first time in my life. You can't take my Connect. Voted him out. Why? He was smart enough to rebrand Obamacare as Connect.

I worked at the Grio during this time, during Governor Beshear, the free previous Beshear. We sent a reporter down there, Perry Bacon Jr. We call him PBJ. We sent him down. He's from Kentucky. He interviewed people, and he said what do you think about Obamacare? Hate it. What do you think about Obama hate him. What do you think about Connect? Love it. And then he said, "You do realize that Connect is Obamacare, right?" No, it ain't. And he said, "Yeah, it is," and they said, well, I still hate Obama. They like Connect.

Everybody wants healthcare. Everybody wants to live right now. There is a study that came out that I sent to my team last week that shows that your lifespan is seven to eight years lower if you live in a red state in America. We are a country that has two lifespans. Your lifespan in Vermont and your lifespan in Alabama, your lifespan in Massachusetts, and your lifespan in Kentucky, your lifespan in New York and your lifespan in Mississippi, it is completely different. We are two Americas, and it is not just black people who are dying young.

The Washington Post did a front page piece on this. White southerners are dying in their 30s and 40s and 50s because of policies their governments are putting in place, which in their mind are just to hurt blacks but are killing them. And so we literally have white Americans who are willing to die to hurt black people. That's crazy. But they're doing it, and they're not doing it on their own. The propaganda from the very rich in this country is very clear. Keep them all fighting. Give us our money. We don't want to be taxed, and we don't want to be regulated. And to all of even our supporters, eff him. If you think Trump cares about them poor people that vote for him, you don't understand Donald Trump. We're from New York. Trust me, he don't care about those people. He wouldn't wipe his behind with those people, but they keep him in power. He doesn't give a shit about them. Sorry to curse, sorry, saints.

But the reality is, if we can solve that and survive what Fred Hampton couldn't, we will be the country that was promised in them documents. And I want to thank y'all.

Cliff Aldridge, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter: Somebody pass the hat. Somebody pass the hat. Joy Reid!

Joy Reid, MSNBC:

collection right now. No, we're not. It's free.

Oh, we're going to do a slide. Slide to the left.

Natalie Jowett:

The magnificence in this room leaves me speechless. Thank you so much to our panel. Anyone who wants to find out more, please go to justiceaid.org.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:42:39]