



# STATE OF BLACK AMERICA<sup>®</sup>

Getting 2 Equal : *United Not Divided*



A NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE PUBLICATION  
[www.stateofblackamerica.org](http://www.stateofblackamerica.org) | #Getting2Equal

**2019**



## ABOUT THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

The National Urban League is a historic civil rights and urban advocacy organization. Driven to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights for our nation's marginalized populations, the National Urban League works towards economic empowerment and the elevation of the standard of living in historically underserved urban communities.

Founded in 1910, and headquartered in New York City, the National Urban League has improved the lives of more than 2 million people annually through direct service programs run by 90 local affiliates in 36 states and the District of Columbia. The National Urban League also conducts public policy research and advocacy work from its Washington, D.C. bureau.

The National Urban League is a BBB-accredited organization and has earned a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, placing it in the top 10 percent of all U.S. charities for adhering to good governance, fiscal responsibility and other best practices.



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## ABOUT THE STATE OF BLACK AMERICA®

*The State of Black America® is the signature annual reporting of the National Urban League.*

Now in its 43rd edition, the *State of Black America* has become one of the most highly-anticipated benchmarks and sources for thought leadership around racial equality in America across economics, employment, education, health, housing, criminal justice and civic participation. Each edition contains thoughtful commentary and insightful analysis from leading figures and thought leaders in politics, the corporate and tech sectors, the nonprofit arena, academia and popular culture.

The 2019 *State of Black America, Getting 2 Equal: United Not Divided*, focuses on the state of the Black vote with an emphasis on its power—and heightened vulnerability to suppression.

Today, there is no denying that American democracy is under serious threat and sustained attack.

Our reporting takes a deeper dive into voter suppression's bold new frontier: social media. Through our partnership with The Alliance for Securing Democracy at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, we expose the massive, state-sponsored Russian operation to interfere in and influence the high stakes 2016 presidential election. Russian internet trolls were on a *seek, destroy and divide* mission, targeting African Americans with surgical precision on social media platforms and chipping away at our nation's exposed racial fault lines. Our research partners, the Brennan Center for Justice, generously provided the National Urban League with maps that lay out in alarming and full display where barriers to the ballot are being

feverishly erected and where civil rights groups, grassroots activists and men and women of good will are tearing down the walls of obstruction brick by brick.

It is impossible to untangle voting rights and the ability (or inability) to exercise political power from the history of race in America: a history that has advantaged some while perpetually disadvantaging others. Our authors explore the potential impact of the For the People Act, a House bill that expands access to the ballot box, reduces the influence of big money in politics and strengthens ethics rules; and the Voting Rights Advancement Act, designed to restore key provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Our nation's pursuit of liberty, justice and economic empowerment *for all* hinges largely on the right to determine who will govern us and how. Because the right to vote is the price of full admission to participate in our democracy, the National Urban League will remain on the frontlines of the battle to protect your fundamental right to vote. From the testimonials of first-time voters to the platforms of presidential candidates, we explore the solemnity and significance of voting and its power to effect change at the local, state and national level.

To access the 2019 *State of Black America* suite of offerings—including author essays, data and expert analysis and a ready-for-download version of this executive summary—head to the *State of Black America* website.

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*Learn more and get more at*

**[www.stateofblackamerica.org](http://www.stateofblackamerica.org)**

### WHERE IS THE 2019 EQUALITY INDEX™?

Given the incremental rate of change to the areas measured by the Equality Index: economics, health, education, social justice and civic engagement, the National Urban League will publish the Equality Index every two years beginning with the 2020 Equality Index. You can find the Equality Index from 2011–2018 on the *State of Black America* website.

# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

BY MARC H. MORIAL

President & CEO, National Urban League

*Our rights are under attack by forces that are clever, sinister, diabolical, and intentional; and their allies run from the Supreme Court of the United States, to state legislatures all across the nation and around the globe, to allies inside the Russian Federation.*

According to some estimates, the Black voting rate matched or exceeded the white rate for the first time in American history in 2008, the first time a major party Black presidential candidate was on the ballot. Not coincidentally, a wave of racially-motivated voter suppression legislation swept the nation the year of the next federal election in 2010.

According to the Brennan Center, our partners in this report, state lawmakers in 2010 began introducing hundreds of voter suppression measures, from strict photo I.D. requirements to slashing early voting and throwing up roadblocks to registration.

The 2013 Supreme Court decision in *Shelby v. Holder* gutted a key provision of the Voting Rights Act which required federal approval for states with a history of discrimination to make any changes to voting laws. Because preclearance had achieved its goal of eliminating racial disparity in voting rates, Chief Justice John Roberts reasoned that it was no longer needed.

"Throwing out preclearance when it has worked and is continuing to work to stop discriminatory changes is like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet," Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote in her dissent.

*Shelby* was just one of several blows against democracy the Supreme Court has struck in recent years. When it struck down campaign finance reform laws in *Citizens United v. FCC* in 2010, it unleashed the power of these super PACs, where wealthy individuals could pour unlimited money into the American political process. And most recently, in *Husted v. A. Philip Randolph Institute*, the Court upheld the right of states to use aggressive purges to remove voters from registration rolls, a process that disproportionately affects communities of color.

Racism also was a powerful tool used by Russian and other hostile foreign hackers and troll farms to manipulate the 2016 presidential and 2018 midterm elections. A Russian-linked social media campaign called "Blacktivist" used Facebook and Twitter in an apparent attempt to amplify racial tensions during the U.S. presidential election. It used the integrity of the Black Lives Matter hashtag (#BlackLivesMatter) to carry out an insidious campaign of voter suppression.

Efforts to suppress the Black vote have coincided with a rapid diversification of the voting public. The projected 2020 electorate is 66.7 percent white...

Read President Morial's entire letter at

[www.stateofblackamerica.org](http://www.stateofblackamerica.org)

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ★ Eliminate strict, discriminatory voter I.D. requirements
- ★ Allow automatic voter registration, online registration and same-day registration
- ★ Restore voting rights to citizens convicted of felonies as soon as their sentences are completed
- ★ Require paper verification of ballots in federal elections to prevent computer tampering
- ★ When necessary, conduct post-election audits to compare paper records to computerized results
- ★ Enact the Voting Rights Advancement Act, which restores the full enforcement protections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965
- ★ Eliminate voter roll purging based on failure to vote or failure to respond to mailed documents
- ★ Prohibit distribution of false information intended to dissuade people from voting
- ★ Grant statehood for the District of Columbia, giving residents in the nation's capital full voting rights
- ★ Create a national commission to identify and eliminate foreign interference in the American democratic process
- ★ Move the U.S. toward the popular election of presidents through states' participation in the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, with the goal of eliminating the Electoral College

The right of  
African Americans  
to vote—our right  
to participate in  
the civic processes  
of this nation—  
quite simply is  
under attack.

—Marc H. Morial  
*President & CEO, National Urban League*



# The History of the Vote

Before the ink could dry on the Declaration of Independence, the right to vote was established as a privilege granted to the few. American history is littered with the stories of men, women and movements that fought to expand the voting franchise to all American citizens.

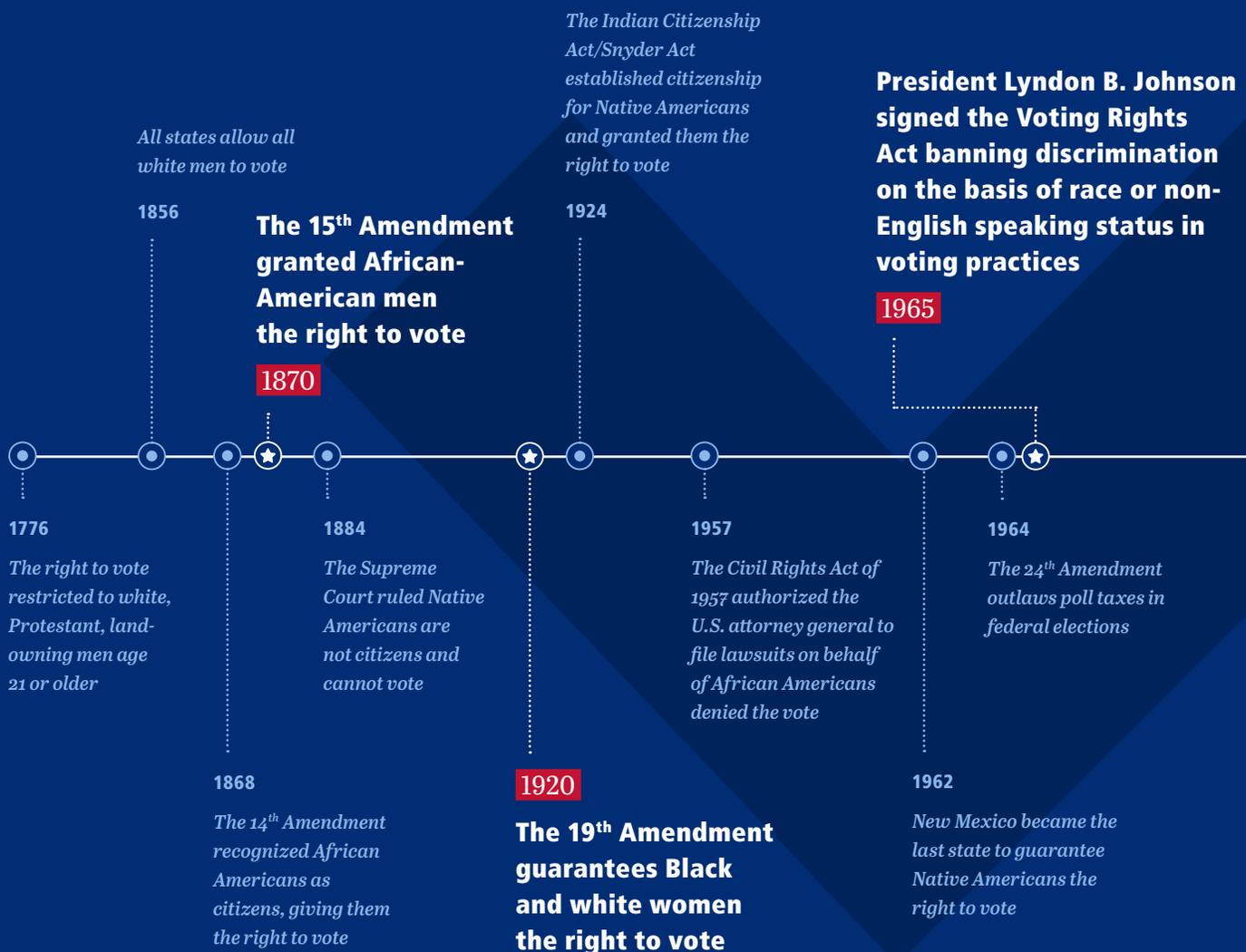




Photo: Marion S. Trikosko, August 1963



## VOTING RESTRICTIONS & EXPANSIONS

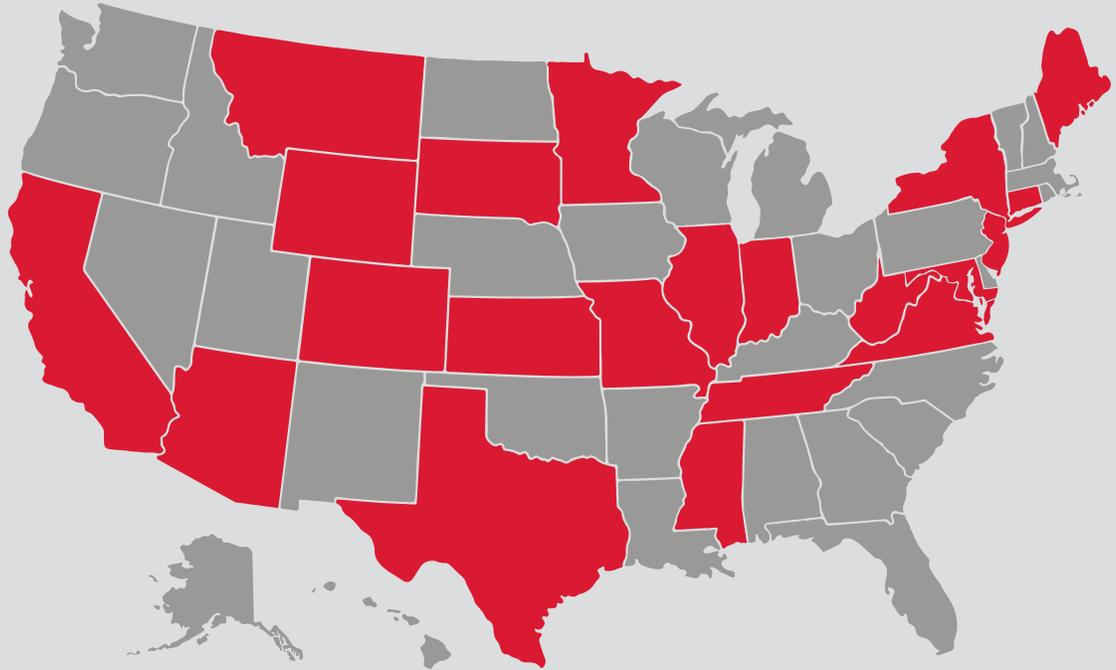
*Voter suppression is destroying American democracy from sea to shining sea.*

The maps—provided by our research partner, the Brennan Center for Justice—display where the vote is in danger and where the civil rights community and people of good will are vigorously pushing back against any and all tactics to block voter access to the ballot.

**BRENNAN  
CENTER**  
FOR JUSTICE

### Restrictive Bills Introduced or Carried Over

(March 12, 2019)



As of March 2019, several states are moving restrictive bills through their legislative process, including in Arizona where its Senate passed bills restricting the use of emergency voting centers (SB 1090) and adding voter ID restrictions for early voting (SB 1072). The legislature has passed both bills and Governor Ducey has signed them into law.



# Foreign Election Interference

**Your timeline is the new battleground for voter suppression. A sweeping Senate investigation found that before, during and after the 2016 presidential election, Russia's St. Petersburg-based troll factory, the [Internet Research Agency \(IRA\)](#), used social media to distract and divide American voters, demobilize the electorate and depress the vote.**

**Russian propagandists specifically targeted African Americans through a wide-reaching influence campaign. Their tactics included posing as legitimate activist groups, eroding trust in democratic institutions and spreading disinformation.**

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ★ The IRA and its employees began operations targeting the United States as early as 2014.<sup>4</sup>
- ★ The IRA started making [YouTube] videos in Sept 2015, producing **1107 VIDEOS ACROSS 17 CHANNELS**. A few channels were active until July 2017.<sup>1</sup>
- ★ By far the most content was related to Black Lives Matter & police brutality: **1063 VIDEOS SPLIT ACROSS 10 DIFFERENT CHANNELS** (59% of the channels, 96% of the content). 571 had title keywords related to the police and focused on abuses.<sup>1</sup>
- ★ The amount of original content produced by the IRA operation jumped to approximately **4,316 POSTS ON ELECTION DAY 2016**.<sup>1</sup>
- ★ **OVER 30 MILLION USERS**, between 2015 and 2017, shared the IRA's Facebook and Instagram posts with their friends and family, liking, reacting to, and commenting on them along the way.<sup>2</sup>
- ★ On February 16, 2018, a federal grand jury in the District of Columbia indicted 13 Russian nationals and three Russian entities, including the IRA, with violating U.S. criminal laws to interfere with U.S. elections and political processes.<sup>4</sup>



There were **109 FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM POSTS** devoted to creating and amplifying fears of voter fraud, all but one of which targeted Right-leaning audiences<sup>1</sup>



More than **11.4 MILLION AMERICAN USERS** were exposed to advertisements purchased on Facebook<sup>3</sup>



**Over 20 m**  
reached by IRA on

**f 470 IRA-created Facebook pages<sup>3</sup>**

**1,000+ videos posted to YouTube across 17 account channels<sup>1</sup>**

On Twitter, of the five most-retweeted IRA accounts, **FOUR FOCUSED ON TARGETING AFRICAN AMERICANS<sup>2</sup>**

**f There were 61,500 UNIQUE FACEBOOK POSTS across 81 PAGES<sup>1</sup>**

**f 126 million people reached by IRA on Facebook (estimated)<sup>1</sup>**

IRA activity increased significantly in the 6 months after the 2016 U.S. election, with **INSTAGRAM POSTS INCREASING BY 238%<sup>2</sup>**

**73 million engagements on original content on Twitter<sup>1</sup>**

There were approximately **109 TWITTER ACCOUNTS** masquerading as news organizations, including U.S. local news organizations<sup>1</sup>

**IRA posted 10.4 million tweets on Twitter across 3,841 Twitter accounts<sup>1</sup>**

**TOP 5 LIKED IRA-MANAGED FACEBOOK PAGES:** Being Patriotic, Stop A.I. (All Immigrants), Heart of Texas, Blacktivist and United Muslims of America<sup>2</sup>

**1 billion users on Instagram<sup>1</sup>**

**IRA posted 116,000 Instagram posts across 133 accounts<sup>1</sup>**

**44 U.S.-RELATED ACCOUNTS** amassed **660,335 FOLLOWERS** between them, with an average of **15,000 FOLLOWERS<sup>1</sup>**

There were **187 MILLION ENGAGEMENTS** on Instagram across an estimated **20 MILLION AFFECTED USERS<sup>1</sup>**

**f There were 76.5 MILLION ENGAGEMENTS on Facebook<sup>1</sup>**

**Sources**

- 1 New Knowledge report
- 2 Oxford/Graphika report
- 3 Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
- 4. Mueller report

# Authors



## GETTING TO EQUAL

By Michael F. Neidorff,  
*Board Chair, National Urban League;  
Chairman & CEO, Centene Corporation*

**“This year’s report highlights the continuing need of American communities and cities to engage in and prioritize bipartisan solutions to persistent and emerging problems, especially in the areas of civil rights, social justice and inclusion. While these remain our country’s shared challenges, they also present our nation with transformative opportunities.”**

## ENGAGEMENT



### MID-STRIDE IN THE MARCH FOR JUSTICE AND EQUITY

By Mandela Barnes, *Lieutenant Governor, Wisconsin*



### ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. WE MUST VOTE!

By Ebony M. Baylor, *Director of Civic Engagement, National Urban League*



### A PUBLIC COMPANY FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

By Anthony Foxx, *Chief Policy Officer and Senior Advisor to the President & CEO, Lyft*



### SETTING THE CAPTIVES FREE: WORKING TO GET TO EQUAL

By Reverend Alvin Herring,  
*Executive Director, Faith in Action*



### NEW VOTERS CLAIM A SEAT AT DEMOCRACY’S TABLE

By Sean Reed, *Civic Engagement Chair, Dallas-Fort Worth Urban League Young Professionals*



### FRANCHISE AND THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF THE ASHLEY STEWART WOMAN

By James Rhee, *Chairman & CEO, Ashley Stewart*



**BLACK JOY, BLACK POWER, BLACK VOTES**

By Rashad Robinson, *President, Color Of Change*



**THE BLACK COUNT MATTERS: WHY WE MUST BE COUNTED IN THE 2020 CENSUS**

By Jeri Green, *2020 Census Senior Advisor, National Urban League*



**THE 2016 BOUNCE BACK: INCREASING LOCAL ELECTION ENGAGEMENT FOR NATIONWIDE CHANGE**

By Christine M. Slaughter, *Civic Engagement and Political Awareness Chair, Los Angeles Urban League Young Professionals*



**COUNTED AS CAST: SECURING AND PROTECTING THE VOTE FOR ALL AMERICANS**

By Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, *Speaker, House of Representatives; California—12th Congressional District*



**CREATING AN EQUITABLE DEMOCRACY THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND SOLIDARITY**

By La June Montgomery Tabron, *President & CEO, W.K. Kellogg Foundation*



**PROTECTING CIVIL RIGHTS ON FACEBOOK DURING ELECTIONS**

By Sheryl Sandberg, *Chief Operating Officer, Facebook*



**WHERE MY VOTERS AT?: MEETING YOUNG VOTERS AT THE INTERSECTION OF ADVERSITY AND ACTION**

By Reverend Lennox Yearwood Jr., *President & CEO, Hip Hop Caucus*



**LOSING THE MILLENNIAL VOTE IN THREE INCONVENIENT TRUTHS**

By Antonesia "Toni" Wiley, *Director of Advocacy, National Urban League*

**SOLUTIONS**



**ELECTION PROTECTION: SAFEGUARDING THE VOTE TO DEFEND ALL RIGHTS**

By Congresswoman Karen Bass, *Chairwoman, Congressional Black Caucus; California—37th Congressional District*



**THE HIGH COST OF NOT VOTING: VOTER SUPPRESSION AND THE RACIAL INCOME GAP**

By Dr. Kristen E. Broady, *Visiting Professor of Economics, Alabama A&M University*



**UNITED NOT DIVIDED: COMBATING ATTEMPTS TO SUPPRESS THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND DISABLED VOTE**

By Michelle Bishop, *MSW, Voting Rights Specialist, National Disability Rights Network*



**A ROADMAP TO THE 2019 RACIAL JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY AGENDA**

By Kristen Clarke, *President & Executive Director, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law*



**HOME IS WHERE THE VOTE IS: PRISON GERRYMANDERING DENIES URBAN COMMUNITIES FAIR REPRESENTATION**

By Congressman Wm. Lacy Clay, *Chairman, House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing, Community Development & Insurance; Missouri—1st Congressional District*



**DISPLACED AND REPLACED: GENTRIFICATION IS THE 21ST CENTURY "NEGRO REMOVAL" PROGRAM**

By Dr. Ron Daniels, *President, Institute of the Black World 21st Century*

**SUPPRESSION**



### COUNTERING AUTHORITARIAN INTERFERENCE IN DEMOCRACIES

By Dr. Silas Lee, *Professor of Sociology, Xavier University of Louisiana; President, Dr. Silas Lee & Associates*



### VOTING RIGHTS AND VOTER SUPPRESSION: THE LATINO EXPERIENCE

By Janet Murguía, *President & CEO, UnidosUS*



### RACE, LIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA: HOW RUSSIA MANIPULATED RACE IN AMERICA AND INTERFERED IN THE 2016 ELECTIONS

By Bret Schafer, *Social Media Analyst & Communications Officer, Alliance for Securing Democracy*

## I VOTED!



### VOTING FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T: A NEW CITIZEN'S FIRST VOTE

By Deisy Cisneros Aranda  
✓ *Painesville, Ohio*



### WIN OR LOSE: THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING FROM A FIRST TIME VOTER

By Nina Michelle Sims  
✓ *Cleveland Heights, Ohio*



### HE VOTADO: THE STORY OF A FIRST-TIME LATINA VOTER

By Monica B. Villa  
✓ *Annville, Pennsylvania*

## VOTE 2020



### INVEST IN OUR STUDENTS AND OUR SCHOOLS: VOTE FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

By Becky Pringle, *Vice President, National Education Association*



### BY THE NUMBERS: BLACK WOMEN BECOME A KEY VOTING BLOC AND A PATH TO VICTORY

By Melanie L. Campbell, *President & CEO, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation; Convener, Black Women's Roundtable*



Holli L. Holliday, *Chief Strategist, Holliday Advisors, LLC; Senior Political & Data Advisor, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation*



### TO BE IN THAT NUMBER: BLACK AMERICA AND THE 2020 CENSUS

By Mayor LaToya Cantrell, *City of New Orleans*



### PROTECTING THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT WE HAVE: THE RIGHT TO VOTE

By Reverend Dr. Al Sharpton, *Founder & President, National Action Network*



### TRANSFORMING AMERICA: A ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE

By U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, *Massachusetts*

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# NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE AFFILIATES

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& Urban League

## **Alexandria, Virginia**

Northern Virginia Urban League

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League

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## **Wilmington, Delaware**

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Urban League

## **Winston-Salem, North Carolina**

Winston-Salem Urban League

**Support the work of the National Urban League as we continue to advance policies and programs to empower African-American and other urban communities.**

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