

Statewide 1000 Churches, Temples and Mosques - 100% Voter Registration Campaign

Written by Rev. Dr. William J. Barber | NAACP North Carolina
Tuesday, 03 April 2012 14:24



We stand here today on the eve of the 44th anniversary of the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I'm pleased to be joined by the Chair of the North Carolina NAACP Religious Affairs Committee, Rev. Dr. Cardes H. Brown, Jr., Co-Chair Pastor James Woodson, Rev. Curtis Gatewood, our HKonJ Coalition Administrative Coordinator and other faith leaders to announce the statewide **1000 Churches, Temples and Mosques - 100% Voter Registration Campaign**

From the anniversary of the assassination of Dr. King, through August 28, the 49th anniversary of the March on Washington, the North Carolina NAACP and its religious constituents will call upon one thousand churches, temples and mosques to register 100% of their parishioners to vote. Dr. King, as a social gospel evangelical, reminded us that concern for policies that impact racial disparities, the poor, the marginalized, the vulnerable children and workers are all matters of faith. Whether we look at Isaiah 10, Isaiah 58 or Luke 4, people of faith are called to be concerned about the implications and impact of public policy. After examining data and public policy, the NC NAACP renders the opinion that North Carolina is in a State of Emergency when it comes to public education funding, poverty and jobs, equal protection under the law, injustices in the criminal justice system, access to healthcare, the protection of civil and constitutional rights, environmental protection and immigrant rights for many North Carolinians. Civic engagement is of paramount importance and the NAACP believes that expanding participation in our democracy is critical for this state to choose a better way.

The continuing brokenness, race/class disparities and injustices within our state and society require a cross-examination by the NAACP and the religious community. When you have groups like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) spoon-feeding State Legislatures with regressive and copy-cat legislation, which is at the center of a national campaign to suppress our voting power, that will have a devastating impact on public policy, the civil rights and progressive community must march, meet, raise our voices and maximize the full strength of the Black, Brown and Progressive Vote. The 1000 Churches, Temples and Mosques - 100% Voter Registration Campaign is an aggressive endeavor, attached to other efforts by the NC NAACP, to match the extreme right's attack on the rights of African-Americans, the elderly, the poor, women and other minorities.

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Not only is ALEC orchestrating regressive voter suppression laws, but they are also promoting Stand Your Ground laws, which give cover to acts of racial profiling with deadly consequences as we have seen in the Trayvon Martin case.

During this electoral season, the North Carolina NAACP and many of the partners in the Historic Thousands on Jones Street (HKonJ) People's Assembly Coalition, will engage in statewide efforts of 1) mass non-partisan organizing to protect our vote, 2) mass non-partisan voter education on the issues, 3) and mass non-partisan expansion, mobilization and participation in the voting process. We know and we believe that our democracy works better when the electorate is deepened and broadened rather than narrowed and suppressed.

Today we are launching the One Thousand Campaign because North Carolina is in a State of Emergency:

Representation of Minorities is in a State of Emergency when our General Assembly uses high-paid, out-of-state consultants to create redistricting maps that pick apart black communities block-by-block, person-by-person to ensure their political prosperity at the expense of the power of the African American vote. It is a State of Emergency when the North Carolina NAACP and others are in court challenging these maps that have stacked, packed and isolated black voters more than any others have since the 1890s in another attempt to undermine Black, Brown and Progressive coalition building.

Voting Rights are in a State of Emergency when a state wants fewer people to vote. A photo ID requirement would disenfranchise more than a half million registered voters in North Carolina, mostly those who have long been the victims of voter suppression tactics before. African-Americans are nearly twice as likely as whites not to have a government photo ID. More than 150,000 of our elderly voters, to whom we owe so much, would be denied the ballot. Many of them can remember a time when people died so that African Americans and other minorities could vote. The leadership in the General Assembly is also holding back millions of dollars in federal Help America Vote Act funds that would help local boards of election expand access to the ballot in 2012. They want to repeal same-day voter registration and shorten the early voting period, and ban early voting on Sundays. Public Education in North Carolina is in a State of Emergency when \$2 billion is being cut from education over the next two years - over \$800 million from K-12, \$250 million from Community Colleges, and \$700 million from universities. When these cuts were made, it caused North Carolina to drop to 49th in the Nation in per-pupil spending on public education, forced tuition hikes that will undermine

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access to higher education for poor and minority students and passed legislation that will lead to resegregation of public schools. Healthcare Justice is in a State of Emergency when funding for Medicaid will be cut by nearly \$2 billion over the next two years in NC - almost \$700 million in state funding and \$1.3 billion in lost in federal matching dollars. We have a State of Emergency when there is a chorus to stop healthcare reform when 25% of African-Americans in NC currently have no health insurance. The Criminal Justice System is in a State Of Emergency when a Southern Legislature chooses to fight against the Racial Justice Act, which only gives the courts a tool to ensure race is not a factor in anyone's death sentence. They also slashed funding for Indigent Services and public defenders, who are often the only hope for young black men and women to escape an unequal and unfair criminal justice system. We are in a State of Emergency when the State Bureau of Investigation Crime Labs are found to be intentionally perjuring evidence for trials, while at the same time seven men have been exonerated from death row, who would have been wrongfully killed by the State if the system only worked faster.

Economic Justice is in a State of Emergency when we have 1.6 million people living in poverty in NC, over 600,000 of which are children. We have double-digit unemployment amongst African-Americans and Latinos, over 40% of African-American and Latino children living in poverty and one out of every four African-Americans. We have a State of Emergency when, amidst their campaign to take us backwards, so much current of the leadership in the General Assembly is ignoring the plight of the poor and refusing to focus on job creation.

Pre-K Education is in a State of Emergency when the Legislature passes a budget that is found by a Republican Judge to violate the constitutional rights of poor and minority four-year-old children by cutting funds for early childhood education.

Equal Protection Under the Law and the NC Constitution are in a State of Emergency when there is a synthesis of plan and purpose by regressive forces to roll back voting rights, educational rights, civil rights and constitutional rights in a strategy to undermine the fundamental role of government to operate for the good of the whole, provide equal protection under the law and ensure liberty and justice for all. It is especially concerning in a Southern State for powers to set a precedent whereby a majority votes on the rights of a minority in an attempt to move toward a limited states rights agenda as a way of undermining the broad protections of our Constitution.

We understand that national Movements must start at the state and local level, and most often from the South. We are continuing to build a Movement in North Carolina on the shoulders of the countless freedom fighters that come before us. The 1000 Churches, Temples and

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Mosques - 100% Voter Registration Campaign is the most recent endeavor to keep building the aggressive and progressive Movement to push North Carolina to choose a better way. ###