

# Transforming Our Political System by Transforming Our Democracy

For too long, our democracy has been based on exclusion. In order to build anew with policies that support the common good, we must rid our democracy of systemic racism and exclusion and create a true democracy that honors both the dignity of each individual and the value of community. It is time to strengthen and protect our democracy, ensuring it is just, inclusive, and representative.

Voting rights in the United States are under assault at the state and federal level and it is critical that we build a new democracy together. Today, election policies continue to disenfranchise voters of color and deliberately undermine Black voter participation. Policymakers must ensure that every voter can cast their ballot freely and fairly, and is able to organize and exert political power.



*NETWORK joins partners at a Faithful Democracy Vigil in January 2020.*

Big money in politics, gerrymandering, varied methods of voter suppression, felon disenfranchisement, and other anti-democratic tactics limit the impact of individuals' participation in shaping our policies. But when everybody in the United States is represented fairly, our policies will prioritize the common good, not the special interests of one party, racial group, or income level. By protecting our democracy we begin to transform our nation's politics, making it more fair, transparent, and accountable and honoring the human dignity of every person.

## Why our Nation Needs to Build a New Democracy and Dismantle White Supremacy

The old framers of our Constitution understood that this new America was not a "perfect union." But their hypocrisy in forging the Constitution and the Republic on the institution of slavery would be a sin so grave that it would delay this country 400 years from achieving its true greatness.

The foundation of white supremacy set forth by the framers has led to every attempt in this nation's history to rectify the issue of race and exclusion of Black and Indigenous people of color being met with white violence.

Despite the odds, the majority of BIPOC communities continued to believe in this nation's promise, and in 2008, with the election of Barack Obama as President many Americans thought at long last, we have become a post-racial nation.

What we saw was a renewed wave of violence that led to Colin Kaepernick kneeling protest to the white violence during National Football League games. Kaepernick's kneeling and Black people's rebellions in the streets were too much for many whites and made Donald Trump's promise to "Make America Great Again" too appealing.

Trump's rise along with recent events such as the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, COVID-19, children being locked in cages, a racist insurrection at the Capitol to overthrow an election, and now the growing racist attacks on Asian Americans ripped away the façade that we live under a rule of law and revealed the glaring disparities of our society. These disparities caused by the legacy of white supremacy signaled the need to build a new Democracy and dismantle systemic racism to transform our politics.

This new Democracy is being led by marginalized communities that aim to explicitly challenge, rather than reproduce, structural inequalities. It has arisen from a growing community of leaders of all backgrounds who have been affected by discriminatory policies.

We have witnessed allies marching and kneeling with BIPOC communities who now comprehend that all rights *"intersect at the ballot box"* and Dr. King's prescient words still ring true: "In a real sense all life is inter-related. All men (people) are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be...This is the inter-relatedness of reality."

These **NEW FRAMERS** awakened by the inhumane policies and practices that white supremacists long sought to use to keep us divided now recognize if change is to happen representation must be derive from all aspects of society to bring about a new democracy.

*Written by Reuben D. Eckels. Reuben Eckels is the Policy Advocate for U.S. Hunger, Poverty, and Racial Justice at Church World Service's Office for Public Policy and Advocacy in Washington D.C.*

## We Pray

Almighty Creator and Redeemer of all things, we come to you with humble yet hopeful hearts asking that you hear our cries for justice.

Strengthen our spirits like you strengthened the spirits of our ancestors, who paved the way for us as we continue to fight against the oppression within our democracy.

Guide us as we work to dismantle the stronghold of systemic racism and inequality deeply ingrained within our society.

Protect us from the evil that wants to keep the system as it currently is and therefore seeks to silence or even harm us to prevent progression.

Remind us that oppression is sin; corruption is sin; racism is sin! Therefore, "our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil"! (Ephesians 6:12)

Forgive us when we fail to act justly towards our neighbor.

Teach us to acknowledge our wrongs, turn from unjust ways and walk humbly in your way of hope and liberation.

Help us to forgive one another and hold each other accountable in love and truth.

Lord, in your love and mercy hear our prayers. Amen.

*Written by Christian Brooks. Christian is the Representative for Domestic Issues for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Office of Public Witness.*

## Take Action

Take action to strengthen our democracy. The For the People Act (H.R.1/S.1) is comprehensive legislation that will make sweeping reforms to restore and protect our democracy. This bill is essential to move towards our ultimate goal of protecting the sacred act of voting and ensuring that every eligible voter is able to exercise this right. Help us begin to build a new democracy by calling your Senators.

*When you call, here's what you might say:*

"Hi, my name is [NAME] and I am a constituent from [TOWN]. I am calling to encourage the Senator to support the For the People Act. Too many people are disenfranchised based on their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, or class. My faith teaches that we have a responsibility to participate in our civic society, and this civic duty begins with voting. Among other critical democracy reforms the For the People Act (S.1) would ensure that elections are free, fair, and accessible in every state. Please vote in support of protecting and strengthening our democracy. Thank you."

## Reflect

- What are the short-term and long-term effects of excluding certain populations from the voting process?
- Do you live in a gerrymandered district? Find out [here](#) and determine how it affects your local, state, and federal politics.