

# SUPPRESSED

## THE FIGHT TO VOTE

# DISCUSSION & ACTION GUIDE



**BRAVE NEW FILMS**



# About the Film

## FILM SYNOPSIS

*Suppressed: The Fight to Vote*, the new documentary by Robert Greenwald (director of *Outfoxed*, *Walmart: The High Cost of Low Price*, and *Making A Killing: Guns, Greed, & the NRA*), weaves together personal stories from voters across the state of Georgia to paint an undeniable picture of voter suppression in the 2018 midterm election where Stacey Abrams fought to become the first Black female governor in the U.S. The issues Georgians faced included polling place closures, voter purges, missing absentee ballots, extreme wait times and a host of voter ID issues – all of which disproportionately prevented many students and people of color from casting their ballots. *Suppressed: The Fight to Vote* features experts, poll watchers and everyday Georgians speaking to the reality of voter suppression and the threat it poses in 2020. In a race that was ultimately decided by 54,723 votes, the film exposes how the basic constitutional right to vote continues to be under siege in America. **#FightToVote**

[FightToVote.org](https://fighttovote.org)



## HISTORY OF VOTER SUPPRESSION

Following the Civil War, the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution established: “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Although the Fifteenth Amendment was adopted in 1870, it would be almost one hundred years before Black Americans’ right to vote would move from being written in law to protected in fact.

Even as the right to vote was still being debated, opponents across the U.S. South were devising ways to block the vote of the newly freed Black population. What followed was a gamut of state restrictions meant to keep Black Americans away from the polls. These included discriminatory

literacy tests, poll taxes, and disenfranchisement for crimes that were rarely prosecuted if the accused was white. Such restrictions also targeted Native Americans once they received citizenship in 1924. These laws had their intended effect of keeping Black and Native voting rates minuscule for decades.

Thanks to the sustained and committed efforts of the Civil Rights Movement—enduring constant police and vigilante violence as it pressured the federal government for change – the Voting Rights Act (VRA) was signed into law in 1965.

The VRA sought to put an end to racial discrimination in voting. It did so, among other things, by providing for federal oversight of voting and registration practices in jurisdictions with histories of voting discrimination against Black, Native, and immigrant-origin communities.

# About Voter Suppression

The impact of the VRA was almost immediate, and many experts have called it one of the most effective pieces of legislation in the history of the United States. Effective, that is, until a U.S. Supreme Court decision rendered the federal oversight provision unenforceable in 2013.

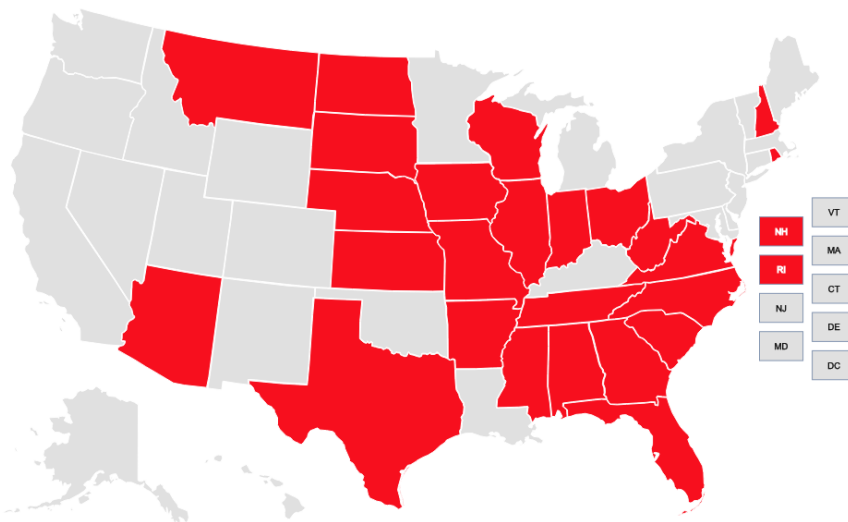


## VOTER SUPPRESSION TODAY

In its 2013 *Shelby Co. v. Holder* decision, a 5-4 majority of the Roberts Court essentially held that the VRA's oversight provision was antiquated—that the mechanism for preventing racial discrimination in voting did not fit “current conditions.” Four dissenting justices argued that the decision to throw out the provision was “like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet”—but to no avail.

That rainstorm quickly became a tsunami—new voter suppression laws proliferated across the South and other jurisdictions that were until recently subject to federal anti-discrimination oversight. Thus, the *Shelby* decision was the clear catalyst that ushered in the new era of voter suppression laws we see today.

Visit [bravenewfilms.org/suppressed\\_tactics](http://bravenewfilms.org/suppressed_tactics) to read about the tactics outlined in this film and others happening elsewhere.



**25 states have placed some sort of restriction on voting in the past nine years.**

*This Brennan Center for Justice map shows significant voting restrictions in America since the 2010 election. Overall 25 states have placed some sort of restriction on voting in the past nine years.*

**LEARN MORE ▶▶▶**

**BRENNAN  
CENTER  
FOR JUSTICE**

The Brennan Center is at the center of the fight to preserve, protect, and expand the right to vote for every eligible citizen. Through practical policy proposals, litigation, advocacy, and communications, the Brennan Center works to ensure that voting is free, fair, and accessible for all Americans. The Center's signature proposal, automatic voter registration, would save money, make our voter rolls more accurate, increase participation, and could add an additional 50 million voters to the rolls permanently.

For reports, state data and more maps like the one above, visit The Brennan Center online:

[brennancenter.org](http://brennancenter.org)

## HAVE A CONVERSATION

1. How do the experiences in the film compare to experiences you've had when voting?
2. Has anyone in the room ever experienced any of the kinds of problems we saw in the film when trying to vote?
3. Based on the film, who would you say was told that they belong and who was told that they did not belong in the 2018 election in Georgia?
4. Was there anything in the film that surprised or moved you? If so, how was it new to you?
5. Often voters like Jocelyn in the film experience these types of incidents as isolated or as mishaps. Was there anything in the film that would make you interpret your experiences differently?
6. What do you think the film reveals about claims of election fraud and voter suppression?
7. What do you think communities can do to prevent what happened in 2018 from happening in future elections?
8. Name some things you can do – whether in your community or across the country – to help expand the “we” in “we the people”? *Can't think of anything? Check out our menu of actions on the following pages.*

# Discussion Questions



**'Suppressed' reminds us that we can fight together to achieve a future where all Americans can freely exercise their fundamental right to vote.**

**–Stacey Abrams**



# Take Action

There are a number of things you can do – big and small – to join the fight to vote between now and the election. Check out our action partners on the next page.

## BEFORE ELECTION DAY

### YOU DO YOU!

1. Make sure you are registered to vote.
2. Know your state's voter ID laws.
3. Confirm your polling place.
4. Vote early or by mail if you are able so you can help out some way on election day.

### JOIN THE FIGHT TO VOTE!

1. Host a registration drive.
2. Volunteer in at-risk states to help registration efforts.
3. Get involved with one of our Action Partners on the following pages.

## ON ELECTION DAY

### YOU DO YOU!

1. VOTE!

### JOIN THE FIGHT TO VOTE!

1. Sign up to be a poll worker.
2. Volunteer to be an election observer.
3. Help with Get out the Vote (GOTV) efforts with a local group.
4. Volunteer to drive people to the polls.
5. Report incidents of voting irregularities on election day.



## SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER

### NATIONALLY

Contact your members of Congress and ask them to support The Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2019 (HR4) and the For the People Act (HR1) which expands voting rights and access across the country.

**TAKE ACTION:** Find your Congressperson and Senator by visiting: [democracy.io](https://democracy.io)

## NATIONAL ACTION PARTNERS

For more information about Action Partners in specific states, visit the *Suppressed* action page: [bravenewfilms.org/suppressed\\_act](http://bravenewfilms.org/suppressed_act)

### ALL VOTING IS LOCAL

The All Voting is Local campaign fights to protect and expand the right to vote for every American. **TAKE ACTION: Sign up to be a poll worker.**

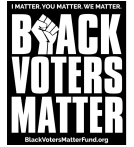
[allvotingislocal.org](http://allvotingislocal.org)



### BLACK VOTERS MATTER FUND

Black Voters Matter Fund works to increase political power in Black communities. **TAKE ACTION: Sign up to volunteer with nonpartisan voter mobilization efforts.**

[blackvotersmatterfund.org](http://blackvotersmatterfund.org)



### CARPOOL VOTE

Carpool Vote is a platform that introduces volunteer drivers to people who need a ride, to vote or get registered. **TAKE ACTION: Volunteer to drive voters to the polls.**

[carpoolvote.com](http://carpoolvote.com)



### ELECTION PROTECTION

The national, nonpartisan Election Protection coalition works year-round to ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to vote and have that vote count. Election Protection uses a wide range of tools and activities to protect, advance and defend the right to vote. **TAKE ACTION: Report incidents of voting irregularities to the hotline.**

[866ourvote.org](http://866ourvote.org)



### FAIR FIGHT

Fair Fight is building voter protection teams in 20 key states across the country to protect the right to vote. **TAKE ACTION: Visit Fair Fight online to get involved or make a donation.**

[fairfightaction.com](http://fairfightaction.com)



### RECLAIM OUR VOTE

Reclaim Our Vote, a nonpartisan phone bank, post carding and textbanking campaign created by the Center For Common Ground, focuses on contacting voters of color in voter-suppression states to help them register and vote. **TAKE ACTION: Volunteer to make calls to voters in at-risk for suppression states.**

[actionnetwork.org/forms/reclaim-our-vote-signup](http://actionnetwork.org/forms/reclaim-our-vote-signup)



### ROCK THE VOTE

Rock the Vote is a nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to building the political power of young people through pop culture, music, art, and technology.

**TAKE ACTION: Host a registration drive, find your local voting information, and more.**

[rockthevote.org](http://rockthevote.org)



### VOTERIDERS

VoteRiders is a national nonpartisan, nonprofit organization providing free information and help to voters to make sure they have the right kind of ID to vote in their state. **TAKE ACTION: Confirm you have the right kind of ID to vote in your state.**

[voteriders.org](http://voteriders.org)





We hope this Discussion and Action guide will help to make your screening a success. For additional materials specific to faith communities or educators, or to sign up to host a free screening visit [FightToVote.org](https://fighttovote.org).

## ABOUT THE HAAS INSTITUTE FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

The Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at UC Berkeley brings together researchers, organizers, stakeholders, communicators, and policymakers to identify and eliminate the barriers to an inclusive, just, and sustainable society in order to create transformative change. The Institute's Civic Engagement Narrative Change project works in partnership with leading equity and racial- and economic-justice organizations to address the most pressing obstacles to inclusive democratic participation.

[haasinstitute.berkeley.edu/ce](https://haasinstitute.berkeley.edu/ce)

## ABOUT BRAVE NEW FILMS

Brave New Films champions social justice issues by using a model of media, education, and grassroots volunteer involvement that inspires, empowers, motivates and teaches civic participation and makes a difference. All of our films are **free** to screen with civic groups, faith communities, and in classrooms.

[bravenewfilms.org](https://bravenewfilms.org)

