

The Journey to Voting

A disclaimer: In November 2020, the United States of America will have a Presidential Election in the midst of a world-wide devastating pandemic. I asked myself, why vote? I decided I'd review the past and present in the United States of America and see what the record has to say about Black folks voting in the United States of America. I thought I'd put my data in a table for ease of reading. The data is being shared with others to let them appreciate what I re-discovered on my journey. The opinions expressed in this document, regarding the reasons to vote, are uniquely mine.

The Declaration of Independence was signed July 4, 1776. Thirteen North American British Colonies announced their separation from Great Britain. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
On September 9, 1776, the Continental Congress formally declares the name of the new nation to be the United States of America.
The United States Constitution was ratified June 21, 1788.
Slavery started in America on August 20, 1619 when African slaves landed in Jamestown, Va. The Last slave ship was July 9, 1860, that is 241 years of slavery and 157 years between the start of slavery and the signing of the Declaration of Independence.
There have been 27 amendments to the United States Constitution. The 1 st amendment was adopted December 15, 1791 and the 27 th amendment was ratified May 18, 1992.
Missouri became the 24 th State admitted to the union on August 10, 1821 as a slave state.
Kansas became the 34 th State admitted to the union on January 29, 1861 as a free state (1854 -1861 known as bleeding Kansas).
The American Civil War started April 12, 1861 and ended April 9, 1865. Slavery was a major reason the Civil War was fought.
President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was issued January 1, 1863. The Proclamation freed three million slaves in rebellious states.
President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address dedicated the Soldier's National Cemetery at Gettysburg, PA. on November 19, 1863. Part of the text of his speech, "Four score and seven years ago (1776) our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." 186,000 Black Civil War soldiers fought in the Civil War with 38,000 of them giving their last full measure.
Amendments 13 th , 14 th and 15 th of the United States Constitution were known as the Reconstruction Amendments. These amendments became law following the American Civil War.
13 th Amendment of the United States Constitution was adopted December 6, 1865 and formally abolished slavery.
14 th Amendment of the United States Constitution was adopted July 9, 1868 and granted citizenship and equal civil and legal rights to African Americans and slaves who had been emancipated after the civil war; persons born or naturalized in the United States.
15 th Amendment of the United States Constitution was ratified February 3, 1870 and prohibited the federal government and each state from denying a citizen the right to vote based on that citizen's race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Voting became a constitutional right, for Black men.

From the 1890s to the 1960s, many state governments and local governments in the United States of America administered test to prospective voters to test their literacy in order to vote. Many methods were used to keep people from voting, some methods were violence and intimidation, literacy test, poll tax, residency and property restrictions, grandfather clauses and all white primaries.
19th Amendment of the United States Constitution was ratified August 18, 1920 and prohibits the states and the federal government from denying the right to vote to citizens of the United States based on sex. Voting became a constitutional right, for women.
23rd Amendment of the United States Constitution was ratified March 29, 1961 and extends the right to vote in presidential elections to the citizens residing in the District of Columbia, in addition, it grants the District of Columbia electors in the Electoral College.
24th Amendment of the United States Constitution was ratified January 23, 1964 and prohibits both Congress and the States from conditioning the right to vote in federal elections on payment of a poll tax or other types of tax.
Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted July 2, 1964 and prohibits unequal application of voter registration requirements, and racial segregation in schools, employment and public accommodations.
Voting Rights Act of 1965 was enacted August 6, 1965 prohibits racial discrimination in voting. The Act has been amended at least 5 times to expand its protections. The Act was designed to enforce the voting rights guaranteed by the 14th and 15th amendments to the United States Constitution. The Act prohibits every state and local governments from imposing any voting law that results in discrimination against minorities. It specifically outlawed literacy test and similar devices that were historically used to stop minorities from voting.

Consider: The Outlawed Literacy Test
for the State of Louisiana.

The State of Louisiana

Literacy Test (This test is to be given to anyone who cannot prove a fifth grade education.)

Do what you are told to do in each statement, nothing more, nothing less. Be careful as one wrong answer denotes failure of the test. You have 10 minutes to complete the test.

1. Draw a line around the number or letter of this sentence.
2. Draw a line under the last word in this line.
3. Cross out the longest word in this line.
4. Draw a line around the shortest word in this line.
5. Circle the first, first letter of the alphabet in this line.
6. In the space below draw three circles, one inside (engulfed by) the other.

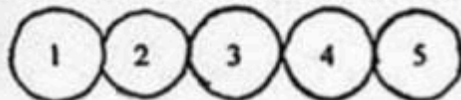
7. Above the letter X make a small cross.
8. Draw a line through the letter below that comes earliest in the alphabet.

Z V S B D M K I T P H C

9. Draw a line through the two letters below that come last in the alphabet.

Z V B D M K T P H S Y C

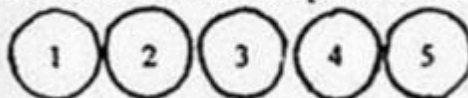
10. In the first circle below write the last letter of the first word beginning with "L".



11. Cross out the number necessary, when making the number below one million.

10000000000

12. Draw a line from circle 2 to circle 5 that will pass below circle 2 and above circle 4.



13. In the line below cross out each number that is more than 20 but less than 30.

31 16 48 29 53 47 22 37 98 26 20 25

Consider: the 2020 Voter Registration Instructions for the State of Kansas

Kansas Voter Registration Instructions

For further information, contact the Office of the Secretary of State,
1-800-262-VOTE (8683) V/TTY. This form is available at www.sos.ks.gov.

You can use this application to:

- register to vote in Kansas
- change your name, address, or affiliation with a political party

To register to vote, you must:

- be a U.S. citizen and a resident of the state of Kansas.
- have reached the age of 18 years before the next election.
- have received final discharge from imprisonment, parole, or conditional release if convicted of a felony.
- have abandoned your former residence and/or name.

How to register to vote:

- Return your completed application to your county. Addresses are on the back of this application. Your county election officer will mail you a notice when your application has been processed.

- Voter registration closes 21 days before any election. In order to be eligible to vote in that election, your application must be postmarked on or before that date.
- If you decline to register to vote, that fact will remain confidential and will be used for voter registration purposes only. If you do register to vote, the office where you apply will be kept confidential and will be used for voter registration purposes only.
- If this form is incomplete, it may be rejected.

Identification number requirements

Enter your current Kansas driver's license number or nondriver's identification card number. If you do not have either one, enter the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you do not have any of these numbers, write "none" in the box. The number will be used for administrative purposes only and will not be disclosed to the public. K.S.A. 25-2309

Rev. 1/15/19 tc

Print in blue or black ink, fold on the center line, seal, and return.

Kansas Voter Registration Application

Warning: If you submit a false voter registration application, you may be convicted and sentenced to up to 17 months in prison.



Qualifications: If you mark "no" in response to either Question 1 or 2, do *not* complete this form.

1. Are you a citizen of the United States of America? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Will you be 18 years of age on or before Election Day? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Last Name (please print)		First Name		Middle	Jr. Sr. II III	☐ Male ☐ Female
Residential Address (include apt. or space number)			City	County	Zip	
Mailing Address (if different than residential address)			City	Zip	Date Residence Established (MM/DD/YY)	
Birth Date (MM/DD/YY)	Daytime Phone Number (if available)	Naturalization Number (if applicable)		Driver's License Number or Last 4 Social Security (see instructions)		
Party Affiliation: Choose one of the following: ☐ Democratic ☐ Republican ☐ Libertarian ☐ Not affiliated with a party						
Complete if previously registered (please print)		Previous Name		Previous Residential Address (Street, City, State, Zip, County)		
Signature: I swear or affirm that I am a citizen of the United States and a Kansas resident, that I will be 18 years old before the next election, that if convicted of a felony, I have had my civil rights restored, that I have abandoned my former residence and/or other name, and that I have told the truth on this application.						
Signature				Date (MM/DD/YY)		

For office use only: Ward _____ Pct. _____ School Dist. _____ Member Dist. _____
Sen. _____ Rep. _____ CoComm _____ Section _____ Township _____ Range _____

26 th Amendment of the United States Constitution was ratified July 1, 1971. Voting became a constitutional right for 18-year-old citizens.
In 1896, the United States Supreme Court ruled in Plessy V. Ferguson that racially segregated public facilities were legal, so long as the facilities for blacks and whites were the same. On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled unanimously (9-0) in Brown V. Board of Education that racial segregation in public schools violated the 14 th amendment to the United States Constitution. The Court ordered states to desegregate “with all deliberate speed.”
Thurgood Marshall quote: “Equal means getting the same thing, at the same time and in the same place.”
Voter Suppression in the state of Kansas, on April 18, 2011, Kansas governor signed the Kansas Secure and Fair Elections Act (SAFE) into law. The Kansas Secretary of State said, “No other state in the union does as much to secure the integrity of the voting process.” The Kansas lawmakers approved one of the strictest voting measures in the country. It passed by a vote of 111-11 in the House of Representatives and 36-3 in the Senate. Democrats and Republicans alike overwhelmingly supported the measures. The law went into effect in 2013, requiring people registering to vote to show a document from an approved list, such as a birth certificate or passport. In 2016, a lawsuit was filed to stop this new law. In June 2018, a federal judge ruled the law violated both the Equal Protection Clause and the National Voter Registration Act. The law disenfranchised approximately 30,000 would be voters. The state of Kansas appealed the ruling to the 10 th Circuit Court of Appeals. On April 29, 2020, the 10 th Circuit Court of Appeals panel ruled that a Kansas law requiring proof of citizenship to register to vote is unconstitutional. Current Governor Laura Kelly (D) said, “Eliminating any barriers to voting is a good thing.” However, it will be up to the current Kansas Secretary of State, Scott Schwab (R) to determine whether to appeal this matter to the U.S. Supreme Court. As legislators at the time of passage of the law in 2011, both Kelly (Senate) and Schwab (House of Representatives) supported the SAFE Act. Kelly now believes the state should not appeal the ruling. Schwab is going to review the matter with the Kansas State Attorney General Derek Schmidt and then decide the state’s next course of action.
Martin Luther King, Jr. quote: “Never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was legal.”
George Santayana quote: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”
Thurgood Marshall quote: “The process of democracy is one of change. Our laws are not frozen into immutable form, they are constantly in the process of revision in response to the needs of a changing society.”
Voter suppression began at the founding of this nation when the right to vote in most states was limited to white male property owners. Non-whites, women, and non-property-owning poor were excluded. After the Civil War, the 15 th Amendment of the Constitution gave voting rights to every man in America, regardless of “race, color, or condition of servitude.” However, from 1890 forward, former Confederate states amended their state constitutions to disenfranchise Black voters.
Voter suppression is a political strategy designed to prevent a group of would-be voters from registering to vote or voting. Voter registration suppression examples: stricter voter ID requirements (accepting only certain kinds of IDs), residency requirements and address requirements, restriction on voter registration drives and elimination of Election Day voter registration. Voting barrier example include closing polling stations, barriers related to disability, disallowing former felons from voting and voter intimidation tactics at the polling places. Partisan gerrymandering has been used.

Rosa Parks quote: “As long as people use tactics to oppress or restrict other people from being free, there is work to be done.”

Slavery was part of the fabric of this land before the Continental Congress named the new nation the United States of America. Slavery existed on this land for about 240 years. At the start of this nation, voting was for white men that own property. It took the United States of America 89 years to abolish slavery. It took the United States of America 94 years to allow Black men to vote. It took the United States of America 144 years to allow women to vote. It took the United States of America 195 years to allow 18-year-old citizens to vote. It took the United States of America 189 years to ratify the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to making it possible for voting by Black citizens. And in Kansas, it has taken 7 years to defeat the SAFE Act and the future of the SAFE Act is still undecided.

The journey from being a slave without any rights in the United States of America to being a citizen with the right to vote in the United States of America has been a hard arduous journey. Getting the right to vote and voting has not been without pain. People were enslaved to tend crops, raise someone else’s children and become the basis for the economic success for a people without the decency to love their neighbors. So many citizens of courage suffered during this journey, People were killed for sport, people were lynched because intimidation was part of control, people were drowned in rivers, houses, churches and businesses were bombed, women were raped, people disfigured, black men were unknowing part of United States of America sponsored medical experiments (Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment [1932 – 1972]), were under-employed, and relegated to being second class citizens. However, because our past family was so strong it gives us the opportunity to declare, Our Time is Now. Our time in this land with all our trials and tribulations have made us stronger and more resilient. Moreover, we are the progeny of Kings and Queens. Hope for a better day is part of our DNA. We are change agents.

Michelle Obama quote: “You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all the world’s problems at once but don’t ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on life on its own.”

Question — What do you do when you know the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments of the United States Constitution and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 expressly guarantees you the right to vote in the United states of America, but United States of America states and local governments don’t want you voting even today? Voter suppression is alive and well. Below are reasons why I believe you must vote and I’m comfortable you can add more reasons to that list.

You **VOTE** for the men and women of courage that sacrificed their lives so we can vote.

You **VOTE** for the prospective voters turned away when they attempted to registered to vote and couldn’t register to vote because they failed some States’ literacy test with unanswerable questions like, how many bubbles in a bar of soap or how many seeds in a watermelon.

You **VOTE** because so many Americans were not able to register to vote because they couldn’t pay the poll tax.

You **VOTE** because your life depends on it.

You **VOTE** because some political party has gerrymandered your community to decrease the impact of the vote in your neighborhood.

You **VOTE** because Black Lives matter.

You **VOTE** because Brown Lives Matter.

You **VOTE** because every life must matter.

You **VOTE** because every vote matters and a single vote not cast can keep our community from moving forward.

You **VOTE** because there are some in the United States of America, the State of Kansas, and possibly your community, that are grateful when you don't vote because they fear the power of your vote.

You **VOTE** to change the American culture of its racist past and present.

You **VOTE** so the police will stop putting a knee on your neck until you die.

You **VOTE** because you are not okay with sanctioned murder in this country by people who supposedly "Protect and Serve" all communities.

You **VOTE** because every human being matters, more specifically, you matter.

You **VOTE** because this country drafted you into the Armed Services and sent you to far-off lands to fight in wars that were the result of failed international policy.

You **VOTE** because your Mom and Dad taught you the value of voting.

You **VOTE** because back in the day, churches had sermons on why you should vote and would lead voter drives.

You **VOTE** because you have a vested interest in the outcome of every election.

You **VOTE** to determine who the leader in the broader community will be.

You **VOTE** to neutralize the hate in our country.

You **VOTE** to make sure the court system is fair to everybody.

You **VOTE** so there will be clean air, a grocery store and drinkable water in your community.

You **VOTE** as if your life is depended upon the outcome of any election, it does.

You **VOTE** because the outcome of every election has consequences.

You **VOTE** because your vote helped elect the 44th President of the United States of America, President Barack H. Obama.

You **VOTE** collectively on every election in your community.

You **VOTE** because our future is decided on our voting today.

You **VOTE** to make life better for everybody.

You **VOTE** because it is the right thing to do.

You **VOTE** to make your community change for good.

You **VOTE** because it's your best day ever.

You **VOTE** for what is in your best interest.

You **VOTE** because you can.

You **VOTE** because you choose to vote, nothing can stop you!

You **VOTE** because it is your responsibility.

You **VOTE** because as the demographics change in the United States of America your voting block becomes the majority.

The future belongs to us. Together, when we **VOTE**, we are walking out of the shadow and into the sunlight of life, **VOTE!**

Barack Obama, 44th U.S. President quote: "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for; we are the change that we seek."