



Speak Out Now

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Stripping Our Right to Vote - an Attack on All of Us!

On April 29, the Supreme Court ransacked the Voting Rights Act, which was won by the Civil Rights Movement decades ago. In a 6-3 ruling, it undermined the section which outlaws voter discrimination on the basis of race.

The ruling by the six conservative judges has made it essentially impossible to prove that electoral maps are racially discriminatory. This ruling is added to a decade of Supreme Court decisions that have chipped away at the Voting Rights Act. In 2013, they ruled that federal oversight into racial discrimination in certain states was no longer necessary. In 2018, and again in 2021, they further weakened the ability to prove that voting districts were drawn on a racial basis. Meanwhile, a 2019 Supreme Court decision to protect partisan gerrymandering—the redrawing of voting districts to benefit a political party—makes it easier to skew districts to “protect the party”.

These decisions reestablish the stripping of voting rights from millions of people. Communities with a concentration of Black people or immigrants will not have a say when it comes to selecting their representatives. Their numbers will be dispersed and overridden by mainly white populations that surround them. This will allow politicians to more openly deepen the racial and ethnic biases used to divide us.

This divide-and-conquer strategy has always existed. But it was weakened through the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. The systematic exclusion of Black people from the political process was no longer possible. The Movement exposed the hypocrisy of a system that claimed to be democratic. The denial of access to basic rights and social services would no longer be tolerated.

A generation of young people, from all sections of the population, was activated by the possibilities opened by these movements in the South. The ruling class was forced to make changes. And their government responded with the Civil Rights Act (1964), followed by the Voting Rights Act (1965), and the Fair Housing Act (1968).

These laws supposedly enforced rights that were guaranteed by the Constitution. The Voting Rights Act prohibits racial discrimination in voting as a way to enforce the right to vote and select representatives. This resulted in the election of an increasingly diverse range of people elected to local and national offices. For the most part, they became absorbed into the political parties that defend the basic interests of the banks and the big corporations, but for

many they represented a hope for change. But over the years, for increasing numbers of people, that change has not been realized.

The failure of this system to focus on the needs of the majority of the population—the working class—didn't begin with the election of Trump. The increasing levels of poverty, the collapse of industrial cities, the increase in incarceration, the dismantling of education and healthcare, and other attacks have been ongoing.

The Trump administration isn't hiding its goal of dividing the population along racial and ethnic lines. It is threatening voting rights by attempting to eliminate mail-in ballots, demanding proof of citizenship at the polls, and threatening to station ICE agents at the polls—obstacles that bring back memories of the segregated South.

We cannot surrender any of our rights. But the rights we have won were not given by this system. The rights we deserve won't be given either.

Their divide-and-conquer attempts can be opposed. They expected people who were not targeted by the terror of ICE to stand back and let these attacks go on. But across the country this was not the case. People in small towns and large cities mobilized to oppose ICE terror and in some places, like Minneapolis, they were forced to withdraw. Still, detention centers continue to be built and innocent people are arrested, beaten, murdered, and sent out of the country.

But the fight continues. Over the past months we have seen hundreds of thousands, and even millions, of people in the streets demanding an end to the attacks on our lives and an end to wars on people around the world. This May Day, millions of people celebrated International Workers' Day in demonstrations across the U.S and around the globe. People are increasingly aware of the need for change.

We can refuse to allow our lives and the lives of future generations to be destroyed. Every attack on our rights tries to push us backwards, but we also can't rely on voting to change our situation fundamentally. The gains of the Civil Rights movement were made by people, like ourselves, refusing to accept the attacks of those in power. It's our time to do the same.

Our power is not through their court system or their elections, it will be on through our own struggles. We don't have to wait on anyone to point the way.

We are the ones we have been waiting for!

Reports From Speak Out Members Around the U.S.

The Triangle, North Carolina:

Our Lives Are Worth More Than Their Data Centers!

The enormous growth of artificial intelligence over recent years has massive consequences, but the tech billionaires tell us that AI is an inherent part of social progress. They say that nothing can be done about peoples' concerns about job loss, environmental damage, energy bill hikes, or anything else. We are told that the rise of AI is inevitable. But nothing is ever inevitable.

City councils throughout North Carolina and the country have become fiery battlegrounds over proposed development of data centers to fuel the growth of AI. NC is already home to several massive data centers, which come at the cost of jacking up utility prices for the people and turning the local environment into a sacrifice zone. This has sparked backlash, with many calling for moratoriums on development of new data centers. In places like Vance County, community members are organizing and speaking out to protect their neighborhoods!

Baltimore, Maryland:

Violent Cops Praised in Official Review

For the last decade, the Baltimore Police Department has been under a consent decree mandating oversight by a federal judge due to its regular violations of people's legal rights. That judge recently lifted several sections of the decree, noting that BPD has reached compliance and is "setting the standard for national police practice."

But cops in Baltimore are still violent, corrupt liars. The prosecutor's office has an official (and ever-growing) list of cops that are not to be trusted in court. Four other BPD officers have been suspended for more than six months after allegedly raping a woman in San Francisco. And the police continue to murder Black Baltimoreans, including the recent incident when they shot Dwight Hawkins 17 times and cheered in celebration.

Imagine if the rest of us committed these heinous acts—would we get that sort of praise on our performance review?

We live in the wealthiest country in the world, and it is our labor that has created all of this wealth. We aren't the ones who benefit from this. The super rich — the bosses of the big corporations and banks — keep the wealth and make all the decisions. Working people do the work that makes society run, and we can organize to unite our forces. When we do, we have enormous power to change things and make a better world.

Newark, New Jersey:

World Cup Changes Screw Jerseyans

In Jersey this summer, fans and everyone else will get screwed by the presence of World Cup games at MetLife Stadium. Tickets start in the hundreds and go well into the thousands. Attendees will be forced to take NJ Transit trains to the arena, but instead of the usual \$12.90 fare, the trip will cost \$150! And for four hours before and after each match, trains on those lines will only take people to games, with no other commuters allowed! This affects hundreds of thousands who just need to get to work!

Millions love and enjoy sports for fitness, fun, and to watch the best teams and athletes in the world. But as so often happens, the drive for profit hurts non-participants, makes it hard for working people to participate, and sucks the joy out of the event.

Bay Area, California:

Oil Execs Sneak Price Hikes During Wartime Gas Crisis

Gas prices nationally are up over \$1 per gallon from this time last year, reaching an absurd \$4.30 on average as a result of Trump's war of aggression on Iran. With California's added environmental regulations and taxes, our gas already comes at a premium, but since the war began, it's crossed \$6 per gallon! Taxes and regulations are not the whole story here. Between January and April, oil refiners' gross margins went from \$0.51 to \$1.50 per gallon according to Consumer Watchdog. That extra money is coming out of our pockets and going straight to the oil executives controlling the market in California. This is blatant price gouging and war profiteering! Corporations will take any excuse, including a horrific war causing the deaths of thousands and a global energy crisis, to extort every penny they can out of us.

