

Voter Suppression and Disenfranchisement: The Unseemly Corruption of the Hallmark of our Democracy

Goal for Class

The goal of this class is to more thoroughly understand the long history of voter suppression and disenfranchisement, starting with the Constitution and now including subverting the U.S. Postal Service and a President who actively promotes other actions to reduce the vote.

Resources for Class Preparation

- “Block the Vote: Voter Suppression in 2020” (ACLU article), <https://www.aclu.org/news/civil-liberties/block-the-vote-voter-suppression-in-2020/>
- “Trump’s Attack on the Postal Service is now a national emergency,” Paul Waldman, *The Washington Post*, 8/13/20, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/08/13/trumps-attack-postal-service-is-now-national-emergency/>
- “Suppressing the Vote/Disenfranchisement,” part of “Knowing Better Series,” YouTube, 11/4/18, 15 minutes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jl25YYZURGk>
- “Impact of Voter Suppression,” Carol Anderson, op-ed TV, YouTube, 10/9/18, 26 minutes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpKgpFpUoem>

Questions for Discussion

- Using generalities, during our lifetime voter suppression and disenfranchisement have included the following: poll taxes and literacy tests (outlawed), partisan gerrymandering, voter ID laws, purging the rolls, closing down registration and voting sites, reducing times at registration and voting polls, intimidation, and now weaponizing the Postal Service, and the President openly opposing a fair and free vote. Flesh these out in more detailed efforts to reduce the vote.
- What do you see as the worst of these anti-democratic measures and why?
- Share what you’ve learned or have already known about efforts by individual states to negatively affect voting.
- What are steps we can take as a Church to fight for fair and free elections?

Additional Resources

Articles

- “Voter Suppression is Still One of the Greatest Obstacles to a More Just America,” Rev. Jesse Jackson and David Daley, Time, 6/12/20 <https://time.com/5852837/voter-suppression-obstacles-just-america/>
- “Five Ways Trump and GOP Officials Are Undermining the Election Process,” Perry Bacon, Jr. Five Thirty Eight, 8/11/20 <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/five-ways-trump-and-gop-officials-are-undermining-the-election-process/>
- “The Plot Against America’s...” Andy Kroll, Rolling Stone, 7/16/20 <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/trump-campaign-2020-voter-suppression-consent-decree-1028988/>
- “How the Native American Vote Continues to be Suppressed,” Patty Ferguson- Bohnee, American Bar Association, 2/9/20 https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/voting-rights/how-the-native-american-vote-continues-to-be-suppressed/
- “Debunking the Voter Myth,” Brennan Center for Justice <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/debunking-voter-fraud-myth>
- Letter from Senator Heinrich, “Voter Rights,” 8/14/20 (attached)

Videos

- “Suppressed: The Fight to Vote,” Stacey Abrams, etc., YouTube, 9/25/19, 37 minutes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03DGjnIkTdl>
- “War on Voting,” Thom Hartmann, YouTube, 2/5/20, 31 minutes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BecQUuD-A1o>
- “President Obama Delivers Passionate Eulogy for John Lewis,” YouTube, 7/30/20, 40 minutes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPeqVow2hKQ>

Books

For a deeper dive into Voter Suppression/Disenfranchisement and Debunking Voter Fraud below are 7 books for your reading pleasure—not really pleasure but edification.

- *One Person, No Vote*, Carol Anderson, 2019
- *Uncounted: The Crisis of Voter Suppression in America*, Gilda Daniels, 2020
- *The War on Voting*, latest in the series *The Hidden History*, Thom Hartmann, 2020
- *Give Us the Ballot*, Ari Berman, 2016
- *The Myth of Voter Fraud*, Lorraine Minnite, 2010
- *Voter Suppression in U.S. Elections*, edited by John Downs, 2020
- *Voter Suppression: Blocking the Ballot Box*, NY Times Co., 2020

The final two are large compilations, thus, there are longer and more expensive.

Action Items

- Review 100 days till ElectionDay-100 ways to take action and do as many of the actions as you can. https://www.lwv.org/blog/100-days-and-100-ways-get-ready-election-day?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=072620
- Write “please vote” letters to otherwise unlikely voters for the upcoming November election. Vote Forward is running a campaign called The Big Send. Our mission is to send 10 million of these letters to voters in key states in October. Handwritten letters to voters have significantly increased voter turnout in multiple experiments. Vote Forward makes it very easy to get started and make an impact! Please sign up to write letters at <https://votefwd.org/bigsend>.
- Contact Congress about the the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. Use this easy AAUW link to let your senators and representatives know how you stand on this issue. <https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/voting-rights/?emci=97d0d67e-b3d1-ea11-9b05-00155d03bda0&emdi=41967f86-6dd2-ea11-9b05-00155d03bda0&ceid=946290>
- Because of the important elections on the horizon, today's action item suggests you take a look at the following organizations that include the goal of making sure everyone who is eligible in this country can vote. Maybe you can volunteer (from home) or maybe you can support one of these groups with a donation.
 - Let America Vote letamericavote.org/
 - Common Cause <https://www.commoncause.org/new-mexico/> (includes election protection volunteers)
 - League of Women Voters <https://www.lwvnm.org/>
 - ACLU <https://www.aclu.org/affiliate/new-mexico>
 - Spread the Vote <https://www.spreadthevote.org/>
 - Election Protection <https://866ourvote.org/state-information/new-mexico/> (including information regarding registration and voting deadlines)
 - Asian Americans Advancing Justice/Asian Law Caucus <https://www.advancingjustice-aajc.org/>
 - Brennan Center for Justice <https://www.brennancenter.org/>
- Plan your vote. Review the NBC News information and share it with others. <https://www.nbcnews.com/specials/plan-your-vote-state-by-state-guide-voting-by-mail-early-in-person-voting-election/>