

## Black Voters Would not be Denied

Written by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.  
Tuesday, 13 November 2012 14:10

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Most of the misinformed pundits who were unaware of the readiness and enthusiasm of millions of Black Americans to go to the voting polls on November 6, are not acting as if they are shocked by another record voter turnout of the Black American community. We are not surprised at all by the historic contributions of Black American voters to help determine the victory for the re-election of President Barack Obama.

Many of them spent the weeks leading up to the election lamenting and criticizing the suppressed economic state and high unemployment rate for African Americans. Yes, it is true that poverty, unemployment, housing foreclosures, youth violence, and exceedingly high rates of incarceration are all serious problems that must be addressed resolutely, especially by Black America. But what happened on Election Day should not be undervalued or understated.

In the face of unprecedented systematic attempts to suppress and to prevent a large voter turnout in our communities, Black Americans and millions of others stood up, face down, and moved “forward” to vote in high numbers in long lines for many hours. Some people in Florida and Ohio had to stand in line for more than eight hours to enjoy their right to vote. In fact, as I stood in line in Fort Lauderdale, Florida as an early voter, I witnessed firsthand the sheer determination of thousands to stay in the long lines for hours without ever thinking about getting out of the line or leaving without voting.

The Republican-led efforts to suppress the vote backfired and made millions of Black Americans and other voters more determined than ever before to cast their votes in this most important election. The enthusiasm in the Black community was very high and the resilience of people at numerous voting precincts was irrepressible. The old repressive and divisive tricks of the past did not work this time. We were conscious, aware and ready for the struggle at every

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voting booth. This was also the case in Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan, and in California. Even after the devastation of Hurricane Sandy, African Americans turnout in massive crowds at voting places in New York, Connecticut and in New Jersey.

The fact that it took four additional days before all the votes could be counted in Florida's Dade County was actually a significant testimony to the successful turnout of both Black American and Latino American voters across the county. On election night, some voters in Dade County stood in line for 10 hours until early on the morning of Wednesday. But all of this displays once again that the forces of repression, segregation, injustice and racial oppression cannot and will not ultimately prevail against the moral, spiritual and political determination of those who struggle, participate in social action and cry out for freedom, justice and equality.

In fact the success of Black America's voting strength in 2012 and beyond will put our communities in a much stronger political position not just to demand economic justice and empowerment, but force American democracy to become more inclusive. It will enhance Black America's opportunities to push further to eradicate poverty in real time and to advance the development interests of our communities toward greater sustainability and future progress for all.

We, therefore, have so much to be grateful for and to move "forward," away from the pits of cynicism and hopelessness. I was so proud to see so many young brothers and sisters in the long lines voting for the first time. Our young people need more encouragement and support. And when our youth and young adults do something right, we should take the time to acknowledge their renewed and revitalized activism.

Black American youth are not lost and they are not alienated from their civic responsibilities. Thank God for the hip-hop generation and for stepping up to the plate to help make the victory won on Nov. 6 a victory that was felt across America and throughout the world. Now let's work together to transform our communities and families for a better quality of life for all.

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