

SPIRALING 'ROUND

THE PROMISE OF

THE RIGHT TO VOTE

*"Democracy is not a state. It is an act."
—John Lewis*

**Dedicated to the long lineage of citizens who
struggle against bigoted violence and
courageously fight for voting rights
as defined by the U.S. Constitution.**

A freedom education project of John Brown Lives!, compiled and designed by Ren Davidson Seward with critical editorial advice from Martha Swan, Anna Forsman, Dr. Alice P. Green, Louis A. DeCaro, Jr., and many other readers, made possible with support and funds from Creatives Rebuild New York; John Brown Lives!; the Statewide Community Re-grants Program, a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature and administered by the Adirondack Lakes Center for the Arts; and New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.



TO ENFRANCHISE

To grant a person citizenship
and the right to vote.

*"A government of the people,
by the people, and for the people."*

TO DISENFRANCHISE

To deprive a person of
equal rights to citizenship
and/or voting in order to benefit
a minority ruling class.

1787

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

HOW TO ESTABLISH A GOVERNMENT

and attain equal voting rights as
endowed by the U.S. Constitution?

**Delegates in the House of Representatives
are split over the issue of representation by
population. There is no property requirement
barrier for Black or White men to vote.
The South bargains to include slaves.**

1787

THE THREE-FIFTHS COMPROMISE

The North capitulates.

Three of every five enslaved people
are counted as citizens to give
a disproportionate representation
to slave states in the
House of Representatives.

1787

THE GREAT COMPROMISE

To leverage the Three-Fifths Compromise and skew political power to White voters in the south, and to limit the popular vote to citizens who own property, a state-by-state method of choosing the president is created and called

THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE.

1787

**STATES DRAFT
STATE CONSTITUTIONS
AT STATE CONVENTIONS**

**New Jersey enfranchises all adults
who own property, including
unmarried and widowed women.**

1790

**654,000 enslaved people are still held in the south,
a third of the population in southern states.**

1792

New Hampshire eliminates the property requirement for White men.

1801

“The will of the people is the only legitimate foundation of any government.”

— Thomas Jefferson

1807

New Jersey bans White women from voting.
Only tax-paying White male citizens can vote.

1818

**Connecticut introduces the first law
in the nation to disenfranchise felons.**

NOVEMBER 10, 1821

**NEW YORK STATE CONSTITUTIONAL
CONVENTION ADJOURNED**

**Legislators eliminate the property
requirement for *all* White men to vote, rich or poor.**

For free Black men, no land, no vote.

JULY 4, 1827

LAST ENSLAVED PERSON IN
NEW YORK STATE IS FREE.

1846

NEW YORK STATE REFERENDUM

New York voters maintain the \$250 property
requirement for Black men to vote.

In response, Gerrit Smith donates 120,000
acres of Adirondack land to distribute to
free Black New Yorkers.

1846–1849

“SCHEME OF JUSTICE AND
BENEVOLENCE”

“Since [New York] State has again determined that although White men may vote, nonetheless Black men, because they are Black, shall be obliged to buy the right to vote—since they must become landowners that they be entitled to vote, they *will* become land owners. Vote they *will*, cost what it *will*.” — Gerrit Smith

Smith relies on leading Black reformers — Rev. J. W. Loguen, Rev. Henry Highland Garnet, and Dr. James McCune Smith — to recruit 3,000 grantees. Ownership of the land entitles grantees to vote.

1849–1859

WHITE ABOLITIONISTS

JOHN & MARY BROWN

Relocate their family to Lake Placid
to befriend and mentor Timbuctoo grantees.

John Brown travels extensively to build
a movement to end slavery.

**Their sons summon their father to Kansas to join
the armed fight that is raging to determine if
the territory will be a free state or a slave state.**

1856

**All states allow all White men to vote.
3.9 million are still enslaved in the U.S.**

MARCH 6, 1857

U.S. SUPREME COURT RULING

DRED SCOTT v. SANFORD (7-2)

**The majority holds that Scott has no right to sue
as an enslaved man. No person with
African blood can be an American citizen.**

**The ruling invalidates the Missouri Compromise of
1820 by permitting slavery in every federal territory.**

OCTOBER 16, 1859

HARPERS FERRY, VIRGINIA

JOHN BROWN'S STAND

AGAINST SLAVERY IN A "SLAVE" STATE

Of 22 Black & White raiders,

10 are killed including 2 of Brown's sons,

5 escape including Owen Brown. 7 are captured.

1859-1861

CHARLESTOWN, VIRGINIA

The 7 captives, including John Brown, are imprisoned,
tried for murder and treason, and hanged.

1860

DECLARATIONS OF SECEDING STATES

**“...The prohibition of slavery in the Territories
is the cardinal principle of this organization....” — GEORGIA**

**“...Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery...
a blow at slavery is a blow at commerce and civilization...
we do not overstate the dangers to our institution....” — MISSISSIPPI**

**“...He [the President] has declared that ‘Government cannot endure
permanently half slave, half free,’...and that the public mind must rest in the
belief that slavery is in the course of ultimate extinction...aided in some of
the States by elevating to citizenship, persons who, by the supreme law of the
land, are incapable of becoming citizens; and their votes have been used to
inaugurate a new policy, hostile to the South, and destructive of its beliefs and
safety...all hope of remedy is rendered vain....” — SOUTH CAROLINA**

Primary Sources, American Battlefield Trust

1860

NEW YORK STATE REFERENDUM

For a second time,
New York voters reject cutting
the \$250 property requirement
to enfranchise Black men.

FEBRUARY 4, 1861

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

"RUMORS OF WAR"

7 STATES SECEDE AND FORM THE
CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA

South Carolina • Mississippi • Florida • Alabama
Georgia • Louisiana • Texas

APRIL 12–14, 1861

After the fall of Fort Sumter, 4 more states secede.

Virginia • Arkansas • North Carolina • Tennessee

1861–1865

THE CIVIL WAR

The federal government,
referred to as the North or the Union,
opposes the expansion of slavery.

To end slavery and unite the 36 states,
186,000 Black soldiers serve in the Union Army.
38,000 die.

All told, 620,000 lives are lost in active duty.

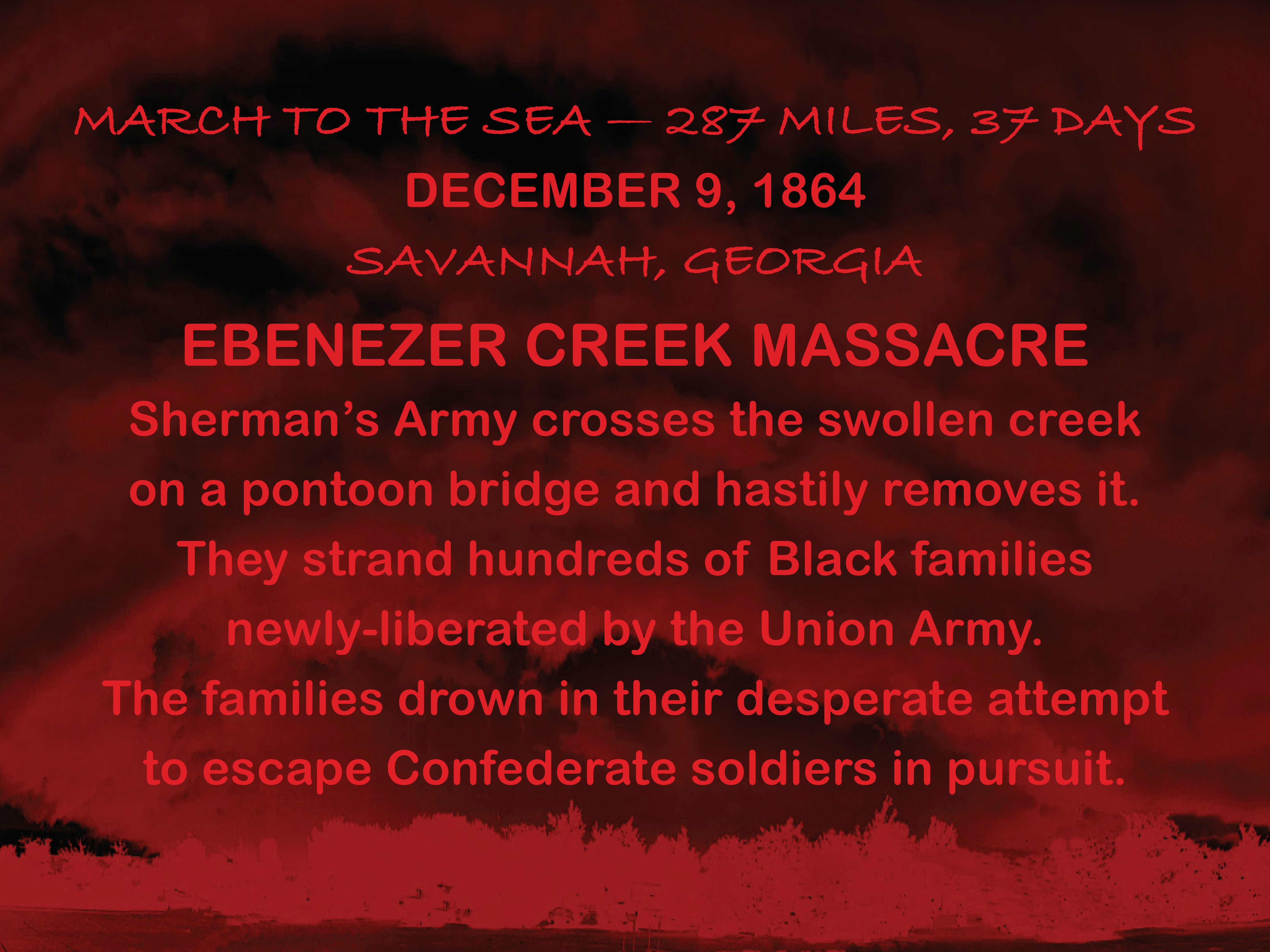
JANUARY 1, 1863

EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

“All persons held as slaves...are, and henceforward shall be FREE.”

— President Abraham Lincoln

The president's declaration is a formality that leaves the legal status of freed Black people unclear.



MARCH TO THE SEA — 287 MILES, 37 DAYS

DECEMBER 9, 1864

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

EBENEZER CREEK MASSACRE

Sherman's Army crosses the swollen creek on a pontoon bridge and hastily removes it.

They strand hundreds of Black families newly-liberated by the Union Army.

The families drown in their desperate attempt to escape Confederate soldiers in pursuit.

JANUARY 12, 1865
DUE TO PUBLIC OUTCRY
ABOUT THE MASSACRE

**Union General William Tecumseh Sherman
and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton
ask prominent Black Southern Ministers:**

Q: *“What do you want for your people?”*

**A: *“Land! Tillable land... and maintain it
ourselves...and live away from prejudice...”***

JANUARY 16, 1865

**GENERAL SHERMAN'S
SPECIAL FIELD ORDER 15**

“40 ACRES AND A MULE...”

400,000 acres of coastal land, originally stolen from Native Americans and then abandoned by Confederate plantation owners during the Civil War, is confiscated by the Federal Government and redistributed to 40,000 Black families who, for generations, worked the same land without pay.

APRIL 9, 1865

APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE, VIRGINIA

BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE WAR

Trapped by Union General Ulysses S. Grant,

Confederate General Robert E. Lee

formally surrenders the Army of Virginia.

For the next 16 months, other commanders

capitulate and negotiate amnesty for

southern combatants.

APRIL 11, 1865

PRESIDENT LINCOLN

“...Very intelligent African American citizens
and veterans deserve the Right to Vote...”

ASSASSINATED 3 DAYS LATER.

Vice President Andrew Johnson,
a former slaveowner, assumes the Presidency
and revokes “*40 acres and a mule.*”

Tens of thousands of Black landowners
are displaced, their property returned to
former Confederate landowners.

JUNE 19, 1865
GALVESTON, TEXAS

“JUNETEENTH”

Two years after the Emancipation Proclamation, Union General Gordon Granger and his troops inform the last enslaved people that they are free.

“...equality of personal rights and rights of property...”

AUGUST 20, 1866
President Johnson proclaims peace.

DECEMBER 6, 1865

1ST ACT OF RECONSTRUCTION

ABOLISH SLAVERY

13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution
ends the Three-Fifths Compromise of 1787
and recognizes millions of ex-slaves
as free human beings.

**Albeit free, Black people have scarce
resources, homes, jobs, or education
in a region desolated by war.**

1866

CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION

WHITE REPUBLICAN ALLIES

WIN THE HOUSE

The Freedmen's Bureau is formed.

Federal troops occupy former Confederate states to grant more rights to Black People.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1866

declares all persons born in the U.S. are citizens and guarantees equal protection under the law.

1866

1ST ACT OF "REDEMPTION"

FORMATION OF THE KU KLUX KLAN

A campaign of terrorism, intimidation, and violence seeks to re-establish social control over 4 million Freedmen. Klan members plot to restore cheap labor by replacing "Slave Codes" with "Black Codes" in state legislatures. One example: if no job, a man can be arrested for vagrancy, fined, or bound to labor for Whites.

JULY 9, 1868

2ND ACT OF RECONSTRUCTION

CITIZENSHIP FOR
AFRICAN AMERICANS

14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution
overrides the *Dred Scott* ruling.

*“No State shall deprive a person of life, liberty,
or property without due process of law.”*

Bitterness festers among White southerners.

SEPTEMBER 28, 1868

OPELOUSAS MASSACRE, LOUISIANA

EMERSON BENTLEY

**Black newspaper editor, teacher and advocate
of voter registration and education for all.**

**Bentley is attacked by 3 White supremacists
resentful of voting rights for freedmen.**

White mobs—violent and armed—are unleashed.

**They kill more than 150 citizens to thwart
a politically powerful Black electorate.**

NOVEMBER 3, 1868

FIRST ELECTION AFTER THE
ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

FIRST TIME FREED BLACK MEN
COULD VOTE.

Union War Hero is elected President.

ULYSSES S. GRANT

protects Reconstruction goals.

MARCH 4, 1869–MARCH 4, 1873

41ST AND 42ND U.S. CONGRESS



Entered according to act of Congress in the year 1872 by Currier & Ives, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

US. Senator H. R. REVELS, of Mississippi BENJ. S. TURNER, M.C. of Alabama JOSIAH T. WALLS, M.C. of Florida JOSEPH H. RAINY, M.C. of S. Carolina R. BROWN ELLIOT, M.C. of S. Carolina

THE FIRST COLORED SENATOR AND REPRESENTATIVES.

In the 41st and 42nd Congress of the United States.

NEW YORK, PUBLISHED BY CURRIER & IVES, 225 NASSAU STREET.

7038CL

FEBRUARY 3, 1870

3RD ACT OF RECONSTRUCTION

ONE MAN, ONE VOTE

15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

“The right of MEN to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the U.S. or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

1871

THE KU KLUX KLAN ACT

Protects Americans from political intimidation.

1874

U.S. SUPREME COURT RULING

SLAUGHTERHOUSE CASES (5-4)

New Orleans butchers contest state-granted meat-packing monopolies. The case is the court's first interpretation of the 14th Amendment and returns citizens' rights to the control of individual states.

1874

VOTER SUPPRESSION CAMPAIGNS
IN SOUTHERN STATES

ELECTION RIOTS

Militias of ex-Confederate War veterans use harassment, intimidation, violence, bombings and assassinations to prevent the Black majority electorate from voting.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1875
bars discrimination in public places.

1876 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN DISPUTE

Electoral commission resolves which votes count in South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana.

MARCH 2, 1877

Rutherford B. Hayes wins the presidency with 20 disputed electoral votes that are used as bargaining chips to restore power to state governments in the south. In exchange, federal troops are removed from the south and a southerner is appointed to Hayes' cabinet.

RECONSTRUCTION IS SABOTAGED.

The Supreme Court overturns the Civil Rights Act of 1875, undermining the 15th Amendment.

1877–1960s

JIM CROW LAWS DOMINATE THE SOUTH

Confederate leaders enact laws and institute policies for a legalized racial caste system in southern and border states. Black political power and civil rights diminish. Economic opportunities are restricted by sharecropping and convict leasing. African Americans are second-class citizens, arrested without cause. Violent anti-Black racism disenfranchises voters.

SEGREGATION OF SOCIETY

1879–1960s

“BLACK CODES”

DOMINATE THE SOUTH

Congressional funding is withheld until the Federal government rolls back Reconstruction-era protections and policies. City and state governments rewrite laws and state constitutions to restrict social contact along racial lines to enforce segregation.

VOTER ROLLS DECREASE DRAMATICALLY.

VOTER SUPPRESSION BASED ON ECONOMIC STATUS

1890

MISSISSIPPI CONSTITUTION

Poll tax instituted as prerequisite to voting.

POPULIST MOVEMENT

BLACKS AND POOR WHITES UNITE

AGAINST DISENFRANCHISEMENT

To quash populism, White supremacists raise monuments. In 1893 in New Orleans, the “White League” victory from 1874, Battle of Liberty Place, is enshrined.

(Monument removed in 2015.)

VOTER SUPPRESSION BASED ON
ABILITY TO READ AND WRITE

1890–1965

LITERACY TESTS FOR BLACK VOTERS

1. Transcribe & interpret sections of state constitution.
2. Write an essay on the responsibilities of citizenship.
3. Answer arbitrary questions:

“How many grains of sand in a seashell?”

“How many bubbles in a bar of soap?”

“How many jelly beans in a jar?”

(Correct answers at election registrar’s discretion.)

VOTER SUPPRESSION BASED ON
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

1896

U.S. SUPREME COURT RULING

PLESSY v. FERGUSON (7-1)

By refusing to leave his train seat, Homer Plessy, 1/8th Black by Louisiana law, triggers a case about the legality of segregation. The ruling, “*Separate but Equal*,” enshrines Jim Crow segregation laws into the U.S. Constitution and separates children in public schools on the basis of race.

“Separate never intended to be equal.”

— Nell Irvin Painter

FEBRUARY 12, 1909

NAACP IS FORMED

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

An integrated advocacy group for civil rights is formed by Ida B. Wells, W.E.B DuBois, Mary White Ovington, Moorfield Storey, Lillian Wald, and Henry Moskowitz.

MARCH 3, 1913

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE PARADE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The largest peaceful protest assemblies on the streets of the U.S. Capitol.

VOTER SUPPRESSION TARGETS

COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

MAY 31–JUNE 1, 1917

TULSA MASSACRE

GREENWOOD, OKLAHOMA

**White violence resorts to lynching
and land theft to disenfranchise voters
in the deadliest domestic terrorist attack
on a thriving, affluent African American
community in our nation's history.**

1917–1930s

To increase literacy, Julius Rosenwald Fund builds
5,000 Black schools in the south.

AUGUST 18, 1920

ONE WOMAN, ONE VOTE

The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution
enfranchises Black and White women.

1923

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)

To end the legal distinctions between men and women.

(Never ratified due to a stalemate over “special protections”
for women—primarily related to the draft and labor laws.)

VOTER SUPPRESSION TARGETS
COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

NOVEMBER 2, 1920

ELECTION DAY MASSACRE

OCCOEE, FLORIDA

FIRE!

**White mob terrorizes
two Black communities
to prevent voting and to “purge”
a local agricultural town of diversity.**

1924

INDIAN CITIZENSHIP ACT

All Native Americans born in the U.S.
are finally granted the full citizen rights
of the 15th Amendment (1870).

(Western states bar their large Native American
populations from voting until 1948 by declaring
the Act makes them wards of the government
due to the fact that they live on reservations
and do not pay state taxes.)

1937

U.S. SUPREME COURT RULING

BREEDLOVE v. SUTTLES (9-0)

Poll tax upheld in Georgia, until 1945.

WORLD WAR II

Black servicemen fight and die to free Europe from Hitler's oppression. Back home, they confront racism.

TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

MONTFORT POINT MARINES

ALL-BLACK 92ND INFANTRY DIVISION

Many emerge as leaders for civil and voting rights.

THE END OF SEGREGATED PRIMARIES
IN THE UNITED STATES

August 14, 1946

Elmore v. Rice

Businessman George Elmore registered to vote in the South Carolina Democratic Party primary, only to be denied the right. He sued the Democratic Party. Federal Justice Julius Waties Waring found in Elmore's favor, allowing black people to vote in South Carolina for the first time since 1880. It took a second lawsuit, *Brown v. Baskin*, in 1948 to outlaw South Carolina's all-White Democratic primary.

1948

TRUJILLO v. GARLEY

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

The county registrar refuses to allow Miguel Trujillo — Tribal citizen, schoolteacher and WWII Marine — to register to vote. Trujillo sues New Mexico for denying him the right. A 3-judge panel rules in his favor: the provisions in the New Mexico Constitution violate both the 14th and 15th Amendments. The case removes legal barriers to voting on Tribal lands in the state.

—Intermountain Histories

MAY 17, 1954

U.S. SUPREME COURT RULING

BROWN v. BOARD OF EDUCATION (9–0)

Separating children in public schools on the basis of race is ruled UNconstitutional, overruling the “separate but equal” doctrine in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) that gave rise to gross inequities in school access and funding.

1954–1968

THE MODERN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

To challenge legalized segregation

and to promote civil rights,

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.,

THE BLACK FAITH COMMUNITY,

BLACK WOMEN ACTIVISTS,

AND BLACK ATTORNEYS

unite against a white-collar backlash

to the *Brown* doctrine by coordinating a unique

nonviolent campaign of civil disobedience.

DECEMBER 5, 1955–DECEMBER 21, 1956

THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

Tired of mistreatment toward Black passengers on city buses, Claudette Colvin, age 15, and local activist, Rosa Parks, refuse to give up their seats to White people.

Their arrests triggers a boycott of city buses.

More than 30,000 African Americans cycle, walk, and carpool for 382 days, financially straining the system. The U.S. Supreme Court upholds a lower court decision ruling it UNconstitutional to discriminate on public transit.

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1957

prohibits voting interference.

FEB 1 – JULY 25, 1960

WOOLWORTH'S

GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

**BLACK STUDENTS TAKE A SEAT AT
SEGREGATED LUNCH COUNTER AND
REFUSE TO LEAVE WHEN DENIED SERVICE.**

The movement spreads to college towns
in 78 cities throughout the south. 50,000 Black
students & White sympathizers take part.

1962

BLACK AMERICANS ATTEMPT TO VOTE

FANNIE LOU HAMER

INDIANOLA, MISSISSIPPI

A 44-year-old sharecropper learns she is allowed to vote. She joins the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and leads 17 volunteers to register voters at the courthouse.

Brutally beaten, Ms. Hamer is fired from her job and evicted from her home for attempting to vote.

1962

24TH AMENDMENT

In Federal Elections, poll taxes are prohibited.

1966

U.S. SUPREME COURT RULING

HARPER v. VIRGINIA STATE

BOARD OF ELECTIONS (6-3)

The 14th Amendment is upheld by prohibiting taxation to obtain access to polls in every state.

JUNE 11, 1963

PRESIDENT KENNEDY

announces tough civil rights bill on National TV.

A few hours later, NAACP's impassioned
visionary veteran activist

MEDGAR EVERS

is in his driveway with a box of t-shirts
in his arms saying, "Jim Crow Must Go."

He is felled by an assassin's bullet.

FOR ATTEMPTING TO REGISTER TO VOTE

APRIL 9, 1963

HARTMAN TURNBOW

Mississippi farmer, orator, and activist defends himself when shot at and his home firebombed. He is framed for arson.

SUMMER 1963

“FREEDOM VOTE” ORGANIZED BY SNCC

MISSISSIPPI

About 80,000 African Americans defy White intimidation and cast UNofficial “freedom ballots” demonstrating that Blacks will vote if afforded the right.

Freedom workers and 1,500 potential voters, face police with dogs and clubs, economic reprisals, and food blockades.

AUGUST 28, 1963

250,000 MARCH ON WASHINGTON

Martin Luther King's "*I Have a Dream...*" speech.

SEPTEMBER 15, 1963

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

16TH ST. BAPTIST CHURCH

White terrorists set a bomb that kills four choir girls.

NOVEMBER 22, 1963

DALLAS, TEXAS

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY

ASSASSINATED.

JUNE 21, 1964

“FREEDOM SUMMER”

Interracial group of northern civil rights workers
travel by bus to register southern voters.

Buses and workers are ambushed. At least 20
southern Black churches are bombed or burned.

PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI

In first interracial lynching, three young men
are brutalized and buried under a dam.

JAMES EARL CHANEY

ANDREW GOODMAN

MICHAEL SCHWERNER

FEBRUARY 18, 1965

MARION, ALABAMA

PEACEFUL VOTING RIGHTS PROTEST

JIMMIE LEE JACKSON unarmed, protecting his mother from Alabama State Troopers, is shot in the stomach.

His death sparks the 50-mile “Walk for Freedom” from Selma to Montgomery.

MARCH 7, 1965

SELMA, ALABAMA

“BLOODY SUNDAY”

Troopers with helmets, gas masks, billy clubs, bullwhips, and tear gas attack 600 peaceful marchers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

MARCH 15, 1965

PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON

INTRODUCES THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT TO CONGRESS

“At times history and fate meet at a single time in a single place to shape a turning point in man’s unending search for freedom....So it was last week in Selma, Alabama. There is no Negro problem. There is no southern problem.

There is no northern problem. There is only an American problem.

Many of the issues of civil rights are very complex and most difficult.

But about this there can and should be no argument. Every American citizen must have the right to vote...The command of the Constitution is plain.

There is no moral issue. It is wrong—deadly wrong—to deny any of your fellow Americans the right to vote in this country. There is no issue of States’ rights or National rights. There is only the struggle for human rights.”

MARCH 21–25, 1965

**Dr. King summons northern clergy for a second
March. 25,000 join the original “foot soldiers.”**

WHITE ON WHITE VIOLENCE

JAMES REEB

**A Unitarian Universalist minister catches
a last-minute flight from Boston.**

He is beaten to death on a Selma Street corner.

VIOLA LIUZZO

Mother of 5 drives from Detroit to Selma.

**She is shot in the head from a passing car
while shuttling marchers.**

AUGUST 6, 1965

VOTING RIGHTS ACT (VRA)

The signing of the VRA reinforces
the 15th Amendment.

Section 5 authorizes federal supervision
to prevent racial discrimination in voting.

Federal registrars oversee dramatic
increase in voter rolls.

“The most important piece of legislation
in the 20th century.”

— Ari Berman

WHITE SEGREGATIONIST INTIMIDATION

JANUARY 10, 1966

HATTIESBURG, MISSISSIPPI

VERNON DAHMER

Successful farmer, businessman, and NAACP leader
registers voters at his store and pays poll tax
for anyone who cannot afford it.

His home is firebombed, he perishes.

Enshrined on his tombstone:

“If you don’t vote, you don’t count.”

*(Ellie, Mr. Dahmer’s wife, survives the incident and becomes
election commissioner in Hattiesburg in 1992.)*

MARCH 7, 1966

U.S. SUPREME COURT RULING

SOUTH CAROLINA v. KATZENBACH (8-1)

A challenge by the state of South Carolina
to the VRA of 1965 is rejected.

“Preclearance” is ruled constitutional.

In order for states to change election law,
federal approval is required.

APRIL 4, 1968

LORRAINE MOTEL, MEMPHIS

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
ASSASSINATED.**

JUNE 5, 1968

AMBASSADOR HOTEL, LOS ANGELES

ROBERT F. KENNEDY

Champion of civil rights causes in tandem with
MLK, Jr., is campaigning in Presidential primary.

ASSASSINATED.

TO PROHIBIT DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RACE

1970

A 7-year extension of the VRA is enacted to address federal preclearance time limits required for discriminatory states to change election law.

Voting age, 21, is lowered to draft age, 18.

(If old enough to fight in Vietnam, old enough to vote.)

1982

A 25-year extension of the VRA goes into effect.

1992

THE VOTING RIGHTS LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE ACT

Expands coverage to voters with limited English.

1993

THE NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT

Congress passes the “Motor Voter” bill which makes voter registration more uniform and accessible by allowing mail-in ballots and registration at DMVs, welfare offices, and unemployment agencies.

1994

VOTING RIGHTS OF FORMER OFFENDERS ACT

The bill secures voting rights for former felons.

1996

SECTION 230 IS PASSED BY CONGRESS.

The law treats social media platforms as neutral middlemen and shields them from liability for illegal or offensive content posted by users.

Unlike traditional media, social media is not required to verify content which enables fake news to become a huge threat to democracy.

2000 ELECTION, “HANGING CHADS”

BUSH v. GORE (5–4)

A contested group of punch-card ballots in Florida set off a weeks-long battle that ends in a controversial Supreme Court ruling that decides the presidency.

OCTOBER 29, 2002

MAJOR FEDERAL ELECTION REFORM LAW

HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT (HAVA)

Sweeping reforms to the nation’s voting process
establish the election assistance commission.

HAVA improves accessibility to polling places and
funds replacement of outdated voting systems.

2008

MASSIVE GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING

15 MILLION NEW VOTERS

ELECT THE FIRST

BLACK PRESIDENT

OF THE UNITED STATES.

2010

U.S. SUPREME COURT RULING
**CITIZENS UNITED v. FEDERAL
ELECTION COMMISSION (5-4)**

The ruling unleashes unlimited spending (dark money) in our elections and allows groups to spend hundreds of millions of dollars without disclosing their sources of funding. This threatens the impartiality of elections. Without transparency, voters don't know who is trying to influence them, sabotaging informed decision-making.

2013

U.S. SUPREME COURT RULING
SHELBY COUNTY v. HOLDER (5-4)

Declares a key part of the VRA

UNconstitutional. States no longer need to seek preclearance for changes to voting laws. Within weeks, 23 states enact discriminatory measures and pass laws that restrict voter registration. By 2018, hundreds of polling places close.

“A dagger to the heart.”—Senator John R. Lewis

NOVEMBER 14, 2014

PRESIDENTIAL MEDALS OF FREEDOM

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

presents the nation's highest civilian honor
posthumously to Freedom Summer co-workers

CHANEY

GOODMAN

SCHWERNER

murdered for their efforts to register
disenfranchised voters in southern states.

**FIFTH TIME IN U.S. HISTORY ELECTORAL
COLLEGE DETERMINES PRESIDENCY**

**John Quincy Adams (1824), Rutherford B. Hayes (1876),
Benjamin Harrison (1888), George W. Bush (2000)**

2016

ELECTORAL COLLEGE VOTES:

Donald J. Trump 304. Hillary Clinton 227.

POPULAR VOTE: Clinton: 65,853,625 (48.0%)

Trump: 62,985,106 (45.9%)

**America's electoral college system turns the election into
fifty state-by-state races, not a single national one, because
the winner in each state takes all the votes.**

2020

COVID-19 ENABLES CENSUS IRREGULARITIES

Redistricting or racial gerrymandering threaten fair representation.

REFUSAL TO ACCEPT DEFEAT IN
A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION LEADS TO
JANUARY 6, 2021

Impending inauguration of a fairly-elected Democrat to the presidency incites hostilities toward the federal government.

IT IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL TO ATTEMPT TO
OVERTURN AN ELECTION BY PREVENTING THE
PEACEFUL TRANSFER OF POWER.

“To advocate for secession is reckless. It legitimizes the false notion that the election of a moderate Democrat to the presidency is such a threat to the nation’s historic values that insurrection is a valid response.”

Rex Smith, “Speculation on Secession is Immoral” Dec. 12, 2020, *Times Union*

PENDING IN THE SENATE
2021

FREEDOM TO VOTE ACT

“The bill would protect our elections from voter suppression, partisan sabotage, gerrymandering, and dark money.”

THE JOHN R. LEWIS VOTING RIGHTS ADVANCEMENT ACT

“This bill would modernize and revitalize the Voting Rights Act of 1965, strengthening legal protections against discriminatory voting.”

Brennan Center for Justice

2022

TO PREVENT A REPEAT OF JANUARY 6, 2021

CONGRESS ENACTS

THE ELECTORAL COUNT REFORM AND PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION IMPROVEMENT ACT (ECRA)

A bipartisan bill that reforms the antiquated Electoral Count Act (ECA) of 1887 as part of the omnibus spending package to fund the federal government.

ECRA removes the ambiguity that lawyers exploited in 2020 to create the fake electors scheme.

2023

U.S. SUPREME COURT RULING

MOORE v. HARPER (6-3)

SCOTUS rules against a debunked interpretation of the Constitution's elections clause known as the Independent State Legislature (ISL) Theory.

ISL aims to nullify hundreds of election rules, challenge key elements of democratic elections, give states the right to overturn the popular vote if they don't like the outcome of an election, eliminate checks and balances against voter suppression, and END DEMOCRACY.

VOTING RIGHTS ELIGIBILITY NARROWS

2024

STATE LAWS

Purge voter rolls. Tighten voter ID & residence requirements.

Criminalize assistance to voters in long lines.

Outlaw assistance to request mail ballots.

Challenge a voter's registration by a single voter.

Hunt for nonexistent voter fraud by “election police,” a pretext to intimidate eligible voters. Close polling places, and institute shorter hours at the polls, disproportionately affecting people of color.

“...We live in a country still staggering imperfectly down the path to full equality...”

— Frank Bruni, New York Times opinion writer, August 1, 2024

CAMPAIGNS TO SUPPRESS VOTES 2024

Replace election officials with partisan actors and impose strict limits on ballot drop boxes.

Disenfranchise anyone with a felony conviction.

Undermine safety and security of election administrators.

**Intimidate and threaten poll workers,
election officials, and voters.**

Legally penalize election workers for mistakes.

Allow “citizen audits” to view every ballot cast.

Allow one voter to sue to remove election officials.

2024

ESTABLISHED RIGHTS UNCONSTITUTIONALLY
ARE REMOVED IN FEDERAL AND STATE
SUPREME COURT RULINGS.

PROJECT 2025

A 922-page policy blueprint under the auspices
of the Heritage Foundation outlines how to reshape our
Constitution, eliminate checks and balances, gut freedom
of education, social security, healthcare, reproductive rights,
and **END DEMOCRACY!**

2024

FIFTH CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS
(Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi)

RNC v. WETZEL, PENDING SCOTUS RULING

Threatens vote counting law.

**Aims to deny the count of mail-in ballots postmarked by
election day for up to 5 days after the election.**

**The routine provision allows for mail-in ballots from
home-bound voters, military personnel, Americans
living abroad, students living out of state, and for
delivery delays due to severe weather.**

2024 ELECTION CYCLE

Meritless election-related lawsuits challenge voters and ballots at a frenetic pace. Some voters are swayed by partisan actors and foreign trolls that create confusion with sophisticated social media disinformation campaigns. They choose Trump even though many back a more inclusive vision of America where traditionally marginalized people have equal opportunity.

On election day, bomb threats received at polling stations where voters trend heavily Democratic, appear to originate from Russian email domains.

2024

With an estimated 99% of votes counted, a few 100,000 votes in key swing states amplify relatively slender victories.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE VOTES: Trump 312. Harris 226.

POPULAR VOTE: 76.9 million or 49.9% vote for MAGA policies.

74.4 million or 48.3% do not.

Tens of millions of registered voters don't vote.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn5w9w160xdo>

“...If you believe the Constitution and the rule of law mean something, mean a better way of life for us and our children... then you can't just give up and walk away.”

—Joyce Vance, Civil Discourse, Nov 26, 2024

SPIRALING ROUND THE PROMISE OF THE RIGHT TO VOTE

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