

Protecting The Voting Rights And Civil Rights Of African-Americans

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Introduction

In US history, the struggle for voting rights for the African American community is part of a century-old effort to ensure that under the US Constitution, all citizens receive equal rights to vote. It took years of campaigning, struggle and activism, where many stakeholders were involved who joined the voice of the advocates that led the cause and countered the criticism and reluctance of a few stakeholders who wished to preserve the status quo. It undoubtedly left a great impact on American society and the world. The paper will study the movement from the historical context and track the movement's performance as it moved towards success, as well as the opposition or support it received from different stakeholders. Strategies to ensure that voting rights and civil rights of African-Americans, as well as other communities, remain protected are also discussed and evaluated. Contemporary issues in voting rights are investigated along with recommendations that would ensure civil and voting rights protections are provided.

Annotative Bibliography

Overton, S. (2013). Voting Rights Disclosure. *Harvard Law Review Forum*, 127(19), 19-31. Retrieved from <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2365620>

In a research paper entitled Voting Disclosure by Spencer Overton, the US Supreme Court's verdict in the landmark *Shelby County v. Holder* case is discussed, and that impacted voter equality legislation. Overton argues that we should not be forced to select between the Elections Clause and the Fifteenth Amendment because they can both act at the same time to avert racial discrimination in polling and to advance access to the charter for all Americans.

Johnson, P. C. (2015). Voting Rights And Civil Rights Era Cold Cases: Section Five And The Five Cities Project'. *Touro Law Journal Of Race, Gender, & Ethnicity & Berkeley Journal Of African-American Law &*

Policy, 16(2), 377-390.

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In an article entitled, 'Voting Rights And Civil Rights Era Cold Cases: Section Five And The Five Cities Project', the author discusses enfranchisement, exclusion, and denial of electoral participation in historical and contemporary times. Deprivation of the right to vote by ethnicity and race in America and the overlapping forces of disenfranchisement and inequality have been discussed in several case studies.

Woodson, A. N. (2015). "There Ain't No White People Here": Master Narratives of the Civil Rights Movement in the Stories of Urban Youth. *Urban Education*, 1-28. doi:10.1177/0042085915602543

The article "There Ain't No White People Here": Master Narratives of the Civil Rights Movement in the Stories of Urban Youth uses the hypothetical concept of master narrative to investigate ideological and historical assumptions regarding the Civil Rights Movement according to the interviewed youth in the urban community, the researcher presents four themes existing in the movement's master narrative to demonstrate how ideologies of white supremacy are reinforced through these functions.

Sturm, C. (2014). Race, Sovereignty, and Civil Rights: Understanding the Cherokee Freedmen Controversy. *Cultural Anthropology*, 29(3), 575-598.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.14506/ca29.3.07>

The article 'Race, Sovereignty, and Civil Rights: Understanding the Cherokee Freedmen Controversy' uses the 'Cherokee Freedmen' debate to study how discourse diminishes or empowers tribal authority and observes the response of people in settler-colonial context when the application of civil rights comes into confrontation with tribal rights, and an analysis of how settler colonialism can obscure racial power dynamics to weaken native tribal nationality and identity.

Joni Hersch, J. B. (2015). Fifty Years Later: The Legacy Of The Civil Rights Act Of 1964. (K. A. Couch, Ed.) *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 34(2), 424-456. Retrieved from https://law.vanderbilt.edu/phd/faculty/joni-hersch/2015_Hersch_and_Shinall_Legacy_of_Civil_Rights_Act_Journal_of_Policy_Analysis_and_

Management.pdf

In the article entitled 'Fifty Years Later: The Legacy Of The Civil Rights Act Of 1964', Joni Hersch (2015) evaluates the legacy of 'the Civil Rights Act' over 50 years, studying its scope, history, impact on employment, wages and social exclusion as a result of the Act's five protection, and presented evidence that the 'Civil Rights Act of 1964' helped improved employment and wage results for women and Black Americans in the market

Harris, F. C. (2015). The Next Civil Rights Movement? *Dissent*, 34-39. Retrieved from <https://franklinhslibrary.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/101640115/Black%20Lives%20Matter.pdf>

In a case study entitled, 'The Next Civil Rights Movement? The author discusses the merits of the 1960s movement that related to the political and civil rights that black people were previously deprived of but also pointed towards the racialized degradation black people continued to withstand at the hands of the police in the context of the Black Lives Matter demonstrations, to discuss police reform policy in the civil rights framework.

Policy Formation

Introduction

As the reconstruction era concluded in 1877, states in the south of the American republic introduced new laws restricting African American voting rights. After the Civil War, African Americans were granted citizenship through a series of legal achievements, including the Fifteenth Amendment of 1870, which allowed African Americans the right to vote and ended racial discrimination in the vote. Despite these protections, many southern states opposed racial equality and circumvented the law by mandating tests to prevent African Americans from registering, to prevent them from partaking in the election process. Due to this a policy reformation was needed. The election law was subsequently modified and re-established to ensure that anyone could vote, with which, finally, African Americans obtained the right to vote. One of the primary goals for the stakeholders of the civil rights movement was to register Southern voters for African- Americans to gain political power there.

Democratic Processes

The Fifteenth Amendment was ratified in 1870 after the Civil War and prohibited denying citizens the right to vote on the basis of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. However many states and

localities circumvented the law to prevent them by introducing difficult tests for African Americans to pass, to be able to register their votes. Rules such as civic tests, taxes, and the grandfather clause continued to create obstacles for black people to vote. In 1964, the 'Civil Rights Act' was approved, stating that everyone would have equal civil rights. President John F. Kennedy proposed comprehensive civil-rights legislation in 1963, and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the 'Civil Rights Act' into law on July 2, 1964. In 1965, Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil-rights leaders advocated for stronger voting protections, while President Johnson signed the 'Voting Rights Act' into law on August 6, 1965. Therefore, the election law was modified and re-established to ensure that anyone could vote, with which, finally, African Americans obtained the right to vote.

Stakeholders

The prime stakeholders in the process were African Americans. Their long struggle for the right to vote for African Americans was part of a century-old effort to make sure that all citizens received equal rights under the Constitution of the United States, not just white landowners. In 1861, the general public living in the North used to be opposed to slave ownership, but those who dwelled in the South sought to uphold the status quo. Then began the Civil War period between the South and the North. As years passed, however, many arose to change their minds about Black citizens after the Harlem Renaissance, which is where people shared the African-American experience for the first time. Systemic racial discrimination, however, continued until the mid-20th century, such as in 1951, when there was a boycott of the buses. 40Forty thousand blacks joined a bus boycott movement and largely agreed to not use the bus until they changed the racial profiling systems in the busses until finally it was abolished. In 1964, the 'Civil Rights Act' was approved, stating that everyone would have equal civil rights, and as a result of their mobilization, a year later, the 1965 Voting Rights Act was passed.

Final Thoughts

The right to vote was a big step not only for the civil rights movement but also for democracy. It can be said without hesitation that the civil rights movement was a great success and produced a substantial change in society's values. Today, it is difficult to envision different sections for different persons and races on the bus or the metro. However, there are still many issues related to racial tolerance that continue to haunt the people. The activist movements for the freedom and participation of black people in American society saw a rise in demands for civil liberties that intertwined with voting rights.

Program Factors and Program Accountability

There were a number of factors that worked together to make the civil rights and voting rights movement a success. Some of the factors in the historical context are discussed to understand how

the movement thrived during the 1960-1970 period, carried to success by its stakeholders, and the effectiveness of the funding and strategies that were used and the impact of those strategies that helped the movement gain traction despite opposition from critics. Furthermore, issues surrounding voting rights in the cotemporary context are also monitored, highlighting some current issues to evaluate how they are holding up today and how it is relevant in the stakeholders' lives up to this day.

Stakeholders

The main stakeholders of the civil rights movement and, in particular, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were the African American communities, who were facing racial discrimination as well as systemic discrimination even after the Fifth Amendment. Despite protections offered by the Fifteenth Amendment, racial equality was still opposed by many southern states that circumvented the law by introducing different tests that served as a barrier to prevent Black citizens from registering and taking part in the election process. One of the primary goals of the civil rights movement was to register Southern voters for African- Americans to gain political power there. Systemic racial discrimination, however, continued until the mid-20th century, such as in 1951, when there was a boycott of the buses.

There was a separation between white passengers who sat in the front seats of the bus and the black passengers who were made to sit in the back seats; front seats were kept segregated for the White Americans. Forty thousand blacks joined a bus boycott movement and largely agreed not to use the bus until they changed the racial profiling systems in the buses until finally it was abolished. The 1964 Civil Rights Act had provisions that barred segregation and discrimination in jobs, education, public facilities, and housing. An 'Equal Employment Opportunity Commission' was formed to ensure that hiring practices remained fair, and a 'Federal Community Relations Service' was established to aid local communities regarding issues related to civil rights. The 'US Office of Education' was authorized to deliver financial aid to public schools in communities that were still struggling with segregation. There was a coalition of labor unions, religious groups, and civil rights organizations that exerted pressure from the grassroots level to lobby support for the bills. It was finally passed on 11th June 1964 in Congress with votes of 73 against 27.

Advocates

The 1964 'Civil Rights Act' was approved after years of activist lobbying that sought a comprehensive civil rights legislation where everyone will be guaranteed with equal civil rights. President Lyndon B. Johnson, after the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963, gave top priority to the bill's passage and signed the Civil Rights Act into law on July 2, 1964. Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil-rights leaders later advocated for the Voting Rights Act, which President Johnson signed into law on August 6, 1965. Civil rights workers underwent vicious murders and beatings for the passage of the 'Civil Rights Act,' which led to some black activists becoming radicalized, who became doubtful of the

integrationist, nonviolent tactics and instead sought a more radical approach. Six hundred activists set out on a march on March 7, 1965, from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, in an event that came to be known as “Bloody Sunday”.

The activists organized a peaceful protest due to continued violations of African American civil rights, but state enforcers descended upon them in an unprovoked attack, leading to the outbreak of violence and many deaths. This convinced President Johnson at the time that additional civil rights legislation was required to address the situation (Berman, 2015). Malcolm X’s activism also left a lasting effect on the civil rights movement. His ideas had an influence in shaping and reinforcing the South’s tradition of self-reliance, which demonstrated itself in the movement.

Critics

The movement had its share of resistance. Despite the fact that President Kennedy had sent the bill to Congress in 1963 before the March, the Judiciary Committee had blocked the passage due to delay tactics used by some Southerner senators who held segregationist views, such as James Eastland, who was a Democrat from Mississippi. Due to these measures, there was still resistance even following the Bill’s enactment. Another segregationist was George Wallace, a governor of Alabama, who was also a vocal critic of the movement, and his campaigns involved heavy anti-integration rhetoric that related the movement to the loss of traditional American values. This rhetoric later led to the rise of social conservatism in many parts of the US (Carter, 2000). Following the legislation, some venues that were public tried to convert themselves into private clubs rather than implement the new desegregation rules and let African Americans become members. This was subsequently declared illegal by the Supreme Court (John Hope Franklin, 2011).

Impact

The impact left by the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was one that still greatly affects society today, despite recent controversies. The bill had made literacy tests, poll taxes and other practices to be illegal, some methods used to prevent southern black Americans from casting their votes. The US attorney general was authorized to ensure compliance by local registrars by dispatching federal officials in case there were problems and to conduct supervision in districts where disfranchised African Americans had been more prominent. In the South, the patterns of political power were transformed by the Voting Rights Act (Risen, 2014). The results led to half a million African Americans registering themselves to vote by 1966, and four hundred Blacks had been elected to office by 1968. Many Southern Democrats began to leave the party as African Americans joined the Democrats. Some congressmen began to leave their old rhetoric behind and started campaigns to appeal to the black community for votes, for example, George Wallace (May 2014). The Act not only expanded the scope of the federal civil rights laws of the time but completely transformed voter dynamics in local and state governments. The results and

impact are indisputable and led to far less discrimination today in voting than what used to be 60 years ago. Racial degradation, however, did not end completely in society, as even today, black people continue to be victims of racist behavior and bias. The Black Lives Matter demonstrations led to widespread criticism of police action, and reform policies within the civil rights framework were discussed as a result (Harris, 2015).

Monitoring

The Act has become a part of America's national lore. It provided meaningful legal remedies to minority citizens. The two Acts continued to play a part in many social justice movements that ensued in later years. There have been many studies evaluating the social dynamics of racism today in order to monitor the performance and effect of the legislation and the movement today. One of the studies conducted in this regard used the hypothetical concept of master narrative to investigate ideological and historical assumptions regarding the Civil Rights Movement. According to the interviewed youth in the urban community, the researcher presents four themes existing in the movement's master narrative to demonstrate how ideologies of white supremacy are reinforced through these functions (Woodson, 2015).

The research provides insights into how Master Narratives of the Civil Rights and Voter Rights movement shape perceptions of average black youth and shed light on racial dynamics still present in society despite the success of the voter rights and civil rights movement in 1964-1965. Similar studies are useful for monitoring the results and implications of the movement and how they are still relevant today.

Another important issue was the US Supreme Court's verdict in the landmark *Shelby County v. Holder* case regarding two provisions of the Voting Rights Act. The provisions had to do with local governments and certain states obtaining a preclearance from the center if they were required to make any changes to the voting practice or laws that were to be determined by their histories of discrimination in voting. The Court decided that the coverage formula in section 4b was unconstitutional because it left a burden on constitutional principles and equal sovereignty of the states and was no longer responsive to current needs. As a result of the decision, some states implemented voter identification laws and became stricter in expunging voters who were not eligible the vote according to the new conditions (Overton, 2013). The two studies point toward how the Voter's Rights Act has performed throughout the years and the contemporary challenges the legislation faces. Prevailing social attitudes are also monitored and compared to the time when the act was passed.

Funding

The movements that led to the enactment of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act received funding from different quarters, state and non-state, at the time. In 1957, the 'Southern Christian

Leadership Conference' was formed in an alliance of Church leaders that offered leadership assistance and training to complement local efforts in fighting segregation. They raised funds from Northern sources mostly, to support campaigns in the south. They adopted violence as its primary method and central tenet in challenging racism. In 1962, the SNCC used funds from the 'Voter Education Project' to organize voter registration in the Mississippi Delta. A fierce opposition met their efforts. However, it showed that organizations and alliances that had believed in racial equality and civil rights began to organize themselves and fund different campaigns that helped strengthen the movement at the grassroots levels, although the funding efforts could hardly be termed sufficient.

From the opposing side, some state-funded organizations attempted to counter the civil rights movement by utilizing state funds to portray segregationist policies in a positive light. They used their own resources to collect information about activists and legally harassed them, threatening their jobs or using other economic boycotts against them to suppress the movement.

Strategies

The core strategies used in the movement centered around the theme of nonviolence. Leaders of the Civil Rights movement, such as Rev. Martin Luther King, endorsed this method in favor of an armed guerilla uprising. The movement was inspired by the nonviolent teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, the popular Indian leader. Millions of African Americans went out in the streets led by Martin Luther King to participate in peaceful protests, as well as economic boycotts and acts of civil disobedience, with such spirit that man began to term it as America's second civil war. They also boycotted the buses where segregation was taking place. Students did not leave lunch stores until they were served. The 1963 March towards Washington had hundreds of thousands of demonstrators who demanded equal access to quality education, public facilities, decent housing and adequate employment for African Americans and was a major success. This is when Dr. Martin Luther King delivered his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech. They not only led protests but challenged segregation by pursuing legislative reforms through courts, all of which contributed to the movement. The struggle for equal rights still continues to this day and demands accountability for racially motivated murders that occurred during the Civil Rights Era. Institutions and individuals are still to be held accountable for any racially motivated deaths of victims who were struggling to obtain the right to vote (Johnson, 2015).

Final Thoughts

The right to vote was a big step not only for the civil rights movement but also for democracy. It can be said without hesitation that the civil rights movement was a great success and produced a substantial change in society's values. Today, it is difficult to envision different sections for different persons and races on the bus or the metro. However, there are still many issues related to racial tolerance that continue to haunt the people. The activist movements for the freedom and participation of black people in American society saw a rise in demands for civil liberties that

intertwined with voting rights.

Program Outcomes and Recommendations

The Voting Right Act, which was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, brought a lot of changes in the American political area. The intended outcome of the program was to remove or overcome the barriers that existed at the State and local level that prevented the black community from practicing their rights to vote and be voted as well. As a result, the black community started to have representatives from both state and local assembly and even the Congress, they started to get employment, and the income of black neighborhood increased as several new opportunities started to become available. Though racial discrimination started to fade, it still affected attitudes that would not die down with the passing of a bill alone.

Intended Outcome(s)

The Voting Right Act, which was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, brought a lot of changes in the American political area. The first aim of the program was to remove or overcome the barriers that existed at the State and local level that prevented the black community from practicing their rights to vote and be voted as well. According to Beyerlein (2016), before the signing of the act, African Americans were not permitted to vote, and the Voting Right altered the political scenes since African Americans started to be considered and involved in political rallies and events. In states like Mississippi, the number of black voters doubled and over 72 blacks were elected to various political seats. In the 1980s, the job opportunities opened for many blacks and therefore, several African Americans were elected and appointed in public offices across the northern states and other forty states in the United States. It is, therefore, evident that the Voting Rights Act put an end to economic inequality and created employment opportunities for many blacks across the nation. African Americans registered to vote, and several of them were elected to various political positions as well.

Actual Outcome(s)

The actual outcomes of the Voting Rights Act were that several African Americans were elected to public office, and therefore, the black community started to have representatives from both state and local assemblies and even Congress. This improved the bargaining power of the African Americans, and hence employment opportunities and even the funds to low-income earners and other poor black communities started to receive fund payment transfers to support their lives. As stated by an economist, Gavin Wright, the immediate outcome of the Voting Right Act, was the change of activities towards the black community. Even though African Americans started to win various public offices, the great achievement was white politicians started wooing influential members of the black community (Lopez, 2015).

The presence of African Americans started to be felt in a courthouse in statehouses where lobbying for political support was being done. The African Americans started to get employment, the income of black neighborhoods increased, and several opportunities started to be available. According to Lopez (2015), even the remote areas of Florida and other states where black communities live are receiving state payment transfers to support various families. It is, therefore, evident that the Voting Rights Act program changed the political landscape in America and brought a lot of economic and social gains to the public. Therefore, the Voting Rights Act is viewed by a majority of Americans as one of the most far-reaching sections of civil legislation in United States history.

Match

It is evident that the intended and actual outcome of the Voting Rights Acts was to benefit the African American in society. As stated by Barrett (2013), the benefit of the Voting Right Act was the permission of the black community to register as voters, vote and be elected to public office. This, therefore, increased the number of African Americans participating in political as well as public participation, which are beneficial to the black community. However, the unintended consequences of the Voting Rights Act are that the Act enfranchised millions of African Americans in society. It also opened an opportunity for African American power brokers to collaborate with conservatives to draw the political map where districts for African Americans and whites were drawn, and this started to divide Americans further along the race (Barrett, 2013).

Despite the achievement of the right to vote, racial discrimination against the black community continued to frustrate the achievement. As stated by Barrett (2013), blacks were riding on the back of the bus and eating at only black restaurants, and therefore, the programs made several African Americans suffer. According to the US Commission for Civil Rights, the enactment of the Voting Rights Acts made it difficult for African Americans to vote as well since the state government introduced taxes and literacy tests before an individual was allowed to vote. It made it difficult for black voters to vote since a majority of black voters could not pass the literacy test.

Recommendations

African Americans that were registered as voters suddenly increased from 7% in 1964 to 67% just five years after the Voting Rights Act was signed, despite the fact that implementation, even after signing the act, was weak. A huge voter turnout in the first elections after the act was witnessed even in the South. Despite its success, today, there is still a need to recommend policy reforms that ensure that voting rights remain protected and discrepancies are removed. Multi-faceted process improvements are needed, from education to policy reform to introducing new measures with appropriate funding strategies devised to channel funds into the program to lead it toward success. A performance measurement and monitoring program to evaluate the efficacy of policy reforms will go along with it to provide further recommendations to improve the process.

Evaluation

Research has established that the Voting Right Act brought several changes to the American political scene. The number of African Americans registered as voters increased, and several African Americans were elected to power immediately after the enactment of the law. It is, therefore, evident that the Voting Rights Act's objective of getting power was achieved. Several studies have also indicated that the enactment of the Voting Rights Act ends the economic inequality against African Americans. It is also established that the number of African Americans registered as voters suddenly increased from 7% in 1964 to 67% just five years after the Voting Rights Act was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson (Barrett, 2013)

It shows a significant shift in American politics, and therefore, it brought political players together regardless of race or ethnicity because the number became essential in the political competition that African Americans possess. Even though the implementation of the Voting Right Acts by the state and the federal government was weak, the voter turnout across the Southern States was high, which threatened the status quo in several states.

Process Improvements

It is recommended to make voting mandatory across the United States to make sure that every eligible voter is registered and participates in the election process as well. This will make sure that all African Americans and other Americans participate in the election process. It is also recommended to build the capacity of young African Americans through training and workshops so that they can be active and involved in the various political platforms. The voting should also be streamlined, and bottlenecks that hinder the process of voting, such as literacy tests, should be removed to make sure that every citizen participates in the voting process. However, it is also necessary to enact a bill that can make sure that constant workshops and training fully support the Voting Rights Act. Educational training and other activities that can provide improvement should be done continuously to allow the people to be familiar with the process, not only during electioneering.

Funding Strategies

The Voting Rights Acts can be funded using various strategies such as political parties funding and state and federal government funding of various activities that can promote the Voting Rights Act. The funding strategies recommended for this program so successful and also improve its effectiveness are through non-actors, parties, civic organizations, and the federal government as well. Civil organizations and other non-actors can directly fund activities that empower the populations on the right to vote and also mobilize the black community to participate in the voting process. The funds can be obtained through a partnership with donors and corporations willing to work together to empower the populace on matters of voting. It is also recommended for the federal government to

fund various political activities that can increase the voter turnout and registration of voters. The federal government should fund education training seminars and other workshops with the objective of empowering the public. This will improve the effectiveness of the program and therefore, it shall benefit the general public through increased public participation.

It is also recommended to seek funding from the state government to help in addressing issues that can make the program effective. Within the State budget, the assembly should have a separate budget or funds for voting, education, and mobilization (M. Holzer, 2016). This can be achieved by mobilizing the assembly and Congress to have a special fund towards the Voting Rights Act to facilitate activities that can ensure that the black community turns up in large numbers to participate in the political process of the country.

The political parties, Democrat and Republic, should also fund various activities that can ensure that the Voting Rights Act is properly implemented and effective. This is because the political parties are critical stakeholders in the program, and its improvement benefits the politics; therefore, it should fund education programs and mobilization towards voter registration and voting.

Measurement

The effectiveness of the recommendations made shall be measured based on many factors, such as the number of African Americans registered to vote, the total vote turnout from districts classified as African American bases or districts, and the number of African Americans running and getting elected to public offices. The number of the black community joining various political debates and voting in the election automatically translates that the recommendations are working and, therefore, should be continued. It is also appropriate to conduct studies and surveys to analyze the understanding of society on issues related to voting or registration as a voter so that it can establish whether there is an impact of finances being channeled towards Voting Right Acts to make sure that people are properly educated and participate in the political arena.

Conclusion

The outcome of the Voting Rights Acts changed the political landscape and brought many political players that changed the American political fields to date. It is evident that millions of African Americans have registered as voters, millions are turning up to vote, and there are several who have been elected to various public offices across the country. The right to vote was a big step not only for the civil rights movement but also for democracy. It can be said without hesitation that the civil rights movement was a great success and produced a substantial change in society's values. Today, it is difficult to envision different sections for different persons and races on the bus or the metro. However, there are still many issues related to racial tolerance that continue to haunt the people. The activist movements for the freedom and participation of black people in American society saw a rise in demands for civil liberties that intertwined with voting rights.

It is also appropriate to conclude that the Voting Rights Act created employment opportunities for African Americans, and most importantly, several white politicians started to work closely with African American political players in various political content. It is, therefore, recommended to mobilize and receive funds from the state and federal government, the political parties and non-actors to fund various activities which can improve participation of the black community in politics through voting and registration to vote as well so that the effectiveness of the program can be noticed and achieved as well.

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