The Center for Racial Equity and Justice
Repent – Reform – Refocus

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"No African Americans take to the streets in protest to demand Whites to love us more. We demand a behavior change!" Rev. George C. Gilbert, Jr.

July 2026 Newsletter

WHY BLACK COMMUNITIES CAN'T LOSE THEIR VOICE

A Faith Leader Briefing and Call to Action

Why The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) Louisiana v. Callais Ruling Matters to the Black Church, the Voting Rights Act, and the Fight for Justice?

For more than four centuries, African Americans have fought not simply for the right to vote, but for the right to be heard. The Black Church has stood at the center of that struggle. From slavery to segregation, from Selma to today, pastors and congregations have helped defend the promise that every voice matters. Now, the Black Church is once again called to defend the principle that every community deserves a meaningful voice. The time for observation has passed. The time for action has come. The question before us is not whether this moment matters. The question is whether the Church will meet the moment.

Here's A Basic Understanding of the Louisiana V. Callais Ruling:

The U.S. Supreme Court struck down Louisiana's congressional map, ruling that the state could not maintain a congressional map containing two districts in which Black voters have a meaningful opportunity to elect candidates of their choice. It said, even if the results of the redrawn maps harmed Black people, without proof of a racially discriminatory intent, the court would consider the map legal political

gerrymandering, not illegal racial gerrymandering. This 6-3 decision effectively rewrites the rules for how states can draw political maps, posing significant impacts for voting rights nationwide.

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

- Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Just the Facts - Louisiana v. Callais Has Weakened Protections for African American Voters:

The needed protections secured through generations of sacrifice have now been weakened. Our communities have less ability to elect representatives of our choice.

Our communities are losing influence over decisions affecting health care, education, housing, economic opportunity, environmental justice, and criminal justice. The voices of our communities become easier to ignore when decisions are made in state capitols, Congress, and the courts. When representation declines, influence declines. And when influence declines, communities suffer.

Why Every Black Church Should Care About SCOTUS' Louisiana v. Callais Ruling:

The stakes extend beyond Louisiana because justice has never respected state lines. If protections designed to ensure fair representation are weakened today, the consequences will not stop at Louisiana's borders. History teaches us that what begins in one state often shapes the future of the entire nation. When voting rights were denied in Selma, Alabama, in the 1960s, the consequences were felt throughout America. That is why this moment demands our attention. Not because it is happening in Louisiana…But because it could expand to other states.

"The vote is precious. It is almost sacred. It is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have in a democratic society." - U.S. Representative John Lewis

Our Ancestors Paid Too High A Price for Us To Remain Silent:

The freedoms we enjoy today were not handed down by courts or politicians alone. They were secured by ordinary people of extraordinary faith. If our ancestors could sacrifice, we can speak. If our ancestors could risk everything to be

heard, we can ensure their voices—and ours—are never silenced. If our ancestors could march, we can organize.

What Does the Bible Teach Us?

"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." — Matthew 25:40

"Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." — James 2:17

"Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed." — Isaiah 1:17

"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will." - Frederick Douglass

The Lesson of Esther:

Even when facing overwhelming danger or injustice, you may be uniquely positioned to make a difference. “And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” — Esther 4:14

How Faith Leaders Can Answer the Call - NOW:

PREACH – Connect faith, justice, and civic responsibility from the pulpit. Micah 6:8, Psalm 140:12; Matthew 23:23; Matthew 12:18

EDUCATE – Help your congregation understand what is at stake and why voting matters.

MOBILIZE – Organize robust, church-based voter registration and turnout action plans.

SPEAK – Use your voice to ensure communities are not ignored or silenced.

PRAY – Pray for wisdom, courage, justice, and faithful action.

In Service and Solidarity,

Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner

President, Skinner Leadership Institute

Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network (NAACN)

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NOTHING IS TOO SMALL!!!

Congressional Black Caucus Amplifies Call for Independent Investigation into Death of Nolan Xavier Wells

WASHINGTON, D.C. *– Today, Congressional Black Caucus Chair* ***Yvette D. Clarke (NY-09)*** *and members of the* ***Congressional Black Caucus*** *issued the following statement:*

"The Congressional Black Caucus sends our deepest condolences to the family and loved ones of Nolan Xavier Wells, who are suffering an unimaginable loss. We are praying for their continued strength and resolve during this incredibly difficult time as they seek answers. We hope the outpouring of concern and support from people across the country in recent days brings them some comfort in the days ahead.

“At this time, too many questions remain unanswered, and the Wells family, concerned members of the Mississippi community, and our nation deserve nothing short of a full, transparent, independent, and timely investigation into the circumstances that led to Mr. Wells’ disappearance and untimely death.

“We commend Attorney Ben Crump, Rev. Al Sharpton, and the National Action Network for their leadership and swift efforts to push for transparency on behalf of the Wells family, and we amplify their call for an independent investigation into this matter.”

National Baptists launch Social Justice Center on US Capitol Hill

By Rev. George C. Gilbert, Jr.

History is often measured not only by elections won or laws passed, but by who is present in the rooms where decisions are made.

For generations, African Americans have faithfully prayed for America, preached to America, fought for America, and built America—often while being excluded from many of the institutions that shaped public policy and national life. The Black Church has stood as the conscience of the nation, leading movements for abolition, civil rights, voting rights, economic justice, and human dignity. Yet despite this profound influence, Black denominations have often exercised their prophetic witness from outside the halls of power rather than from within them.

That reality is changing.

The establishment of office space for the National Baptist community within the historic United Methodist Building on Capitol Hill marks a watershed moment in American religious and racial history. For the first time, a historically Black

denomination has secured a formal presence in one of the nation's most influential faith and policy corridors, just steps away from the United States Capitol. This is more than an address change; it is a declaration that the voices, experiences, and moral concerns of Black faith communities belong at the center of national conversations. The Methodist Building itself was originally constructed to ensure a Protestant witness near the seat of government and has long served as a place where faith and public policy intersect.

The National Baptist tradition carries a rich legacy of spiritual leadership and social engagement. Since its founding in the nineteenth century, National Baptists have educated children, planted churches, supported missions, defended civil rights, and nurtured generations of leaders who transformed communities across America. The denomination emerged from the determination of formerly enslaved and newly freed African Americans to build institutions that reflected their dignity, theology, and aspirations.

The symbolism of this Capitol Hill presence cannot be overstated.

It represents:

- **Recognition** that Black faith voices are indispensable to conversations surrounding justice, healthcare, housing, education, voting rights, environmental stewardship, and economic opportunity.
- **Representation** for millions of African American Christians whose experiences and concerns have too often been marginalized in policy debates.
- **Relationship-building** between faith leaders, elected officials, advocacy organizations, and community stakeholders seeking solutions to America's most pressing challenges.
- **Responsibility** for Black faith leaders to continue the prophetic tradition of speaking truth to power while offering hope to communities that have too often been overlooked.

For African Americans, physical presence has always carried symbolic power. During segregation, where one sat determined who mattered. Access to lunch counters, schools, voting booths, and neighborhoods became battlegrounds because location represented belonging.

To have a Black denomination on Capitol Hill sends a clear message: **we belong here too.**

This moment echoes the long journey of African Americans from the margins to the center of civic life. From enslaved believers worshipping in brush arbors, to storefront churches during the Great Migration, to sanctuaries that served as headquarters during the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Church has continually moved closer to the places where history is being made—not for prestige, but for purpose.

The question before us is not simply what this office means today, but what it makes possible tomorrow.

Will it become a place where faith leaders advocate for affordable housing and healthcare?

Will it serve as a gathering point for conversations about criminal justice reform and educational equity?

Will it amplify the voices of communities too often ignored by policymakers?

The Center for Racial Equity and Justice believes the answer must be yes.

The presence of National Baptists on Capitol Hill should inspire renewed commitment to civic engagement, public theology, and advocacy rooted in faith and justice. The Black Church has never been called merely to survive history; it has been called to shape it.

The prophet Isaiah declared, "You shall be called repairers of the breach, restorers of streets to dwell in" (Isaiah 58:12).

Perhaps this new chapter represents exactly that—a bridge between the sanctuary and the legislature, between prayer and policy, between faith and public witness.

For generations, Black Christians marched to Capitol Hill seeking justice.

Today, history records that they now have a seat there.

And with that seat comes an opportunity—and an obligation—to continue the sacred work of bending the moral arc of the universe toward justice.

The Center for Racial Equity and Justice Leads Opposition to Proposed Washington, DC Bottle Tax

WASHINGTON, DC — The Center for Racial Equity and Justice (CREJ), under the leadership of Executive Director **Rev. George C. Gilbert, Jr.**, recently held a press conference opposing proposed legislation that would place an additional bottle tax on residents of the District of Columbia.

Standing alongside faith leaders, community advocates, and concerned residents, Rev. Gilbert argued that while environmental stewardship is important, public policy must also account for the economic realities facing working families, seniors on fixed incomes, and low-income residents already struggling with the rising cost of living.

"Washington residents are already paying more for housing, groceries, transportation, healthcare, and utilities," Rev. Gilbert said during the event. "At some point we must ask ourselves: how many additional costs can families absorb before affordability becomes a crisis?"

The proposed bottle bill would add a deposit fee to beverage containers sold in the District, with consumers receiving refunds upon returning eligible

containers for recycling. Supporters argue the measure would reduce litter and increase recycling rates. However, CREJ expressed concern that the policy could disproportionately impact vulnerable populations who may not have easy access to redemption centers or transportation to reclaim their deposits.

The Center emphasized that communities east of the Anacostia River and many seniors and residents with disabilities could face additional burdens under the proposal.

"Public policy should not force residents to choose between convenience and affordability," Rev. Gilbert stated. "Environmental justice and economic justice must work together, not against one another."

CREJ leaders also raised questions regarding the infrastructure required to successfully implement the program, including the location and accessibility of redemption sites, the administrative costs of the system, and the impact on neighborhood businesses.

The Center called on District leaders to explore alternative strategies for improving recycling rates and reducing litter without placing additional financial pressure on residents already facing economic challenges.

During the press conference, Rev. Gilbert noted that communities of color have historically borne the weight of policies that, while well-intentioned, produce unintended economic consequences.

"Racial equity requires us to examine not only who benefits from public policy, but who bears the burden," he said. "The families who are living paycheck to paycheck deserve to have their voices heard in this conversation."

The Center for Racial Equity and Justice reaffirmed its commitment to advocating for policies that advance both environmental responsibility and economic fairness. CREJ pledged to continue engaging residents, elected officials, faith communities, and business leaders to ensure that any solution adopted by the District reflects the needs of all Washingtonians.

As the debate continues, the Center maintains that affordability, accessibility, and equity must remain central to the conversation.

The mission of the Center for Racial Equity and Justice is to advance policies and partnerships that promote fairness, opportunity, and dignity for the least, the lost, and the left out in communities throughout the District of Columbia and beyond.

The Center for Racial Equity and Justice Calls for Caution on Autonomous Vehicles

Technology must serve humanity—not replace it.

The Center for Racial Equity & Justice is deeply concerned about the ongoing humanitarian and economic crisis affecting the people of Cuba.

As an organization committed to human dignity, racial equity, social justice, and the protection of vulnerable communities, we recognize that the greatest burden of political and economic conflict is often borne by ordinary citizens—families, children, older adults, workers, and those already living on the margins.

The current crisis, marked by widespread power outages, shortages of food and medicine, disruptions in healthcare services, fuel scarcity, and increasing economic instability, has created significant hardship for millions of Cuban people. Access to basic necessities should not become a casualty of political disputes or geopolitical tensions.

We acknowledge the legitimate concerns surrounding human rights, democratic participation, and governmental accountability. At the same time, we believe that policies and actions taken by any nation should be evaluated by their impact on human lives. Measures that unintentionally deepen suffering among civilian populations raise serious humanitarian concerns and deserve thoughtful review.

As advocates for justice and equity, we affirm that all people—regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity, or political system—deserve access to food, healthcare, medicine, electricity, education, and economic opportunity. Human dignity must remain at the center of all policy decisions and international engagement.

We call upon leaders in both the United States and Cuba, as well as members of the international community, to pursue peaceful dialogue, humanitarian cooperation, and solutions that reduce suffering while promoting human rights, accountability, and stability. We encourage efforts that expand access to humanitarian aid, support vulnerable populations, and create pathways toward long-term economic and social well-being.

The Center for Racial Equity & Justice stands in solidarity with the Cuban people during this challenging time. We reject the notion that civilians should bear the weight of political conflict, and we reaffirm our commitment to justice, compassion, human rights, and the inherent worth of every person.

In moments of crisis, our shared humanity must be greater than our political differences. The pursuit of justice requires not only accountability but also mercy, compassion, and a steadfast commitment to protecting human life.

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