
Foreword

The National Programs and Special Projects Committees of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. are pleased to distribute the first edition of the *A Voteless People Is A Hopeless People Implementation Guide*. Since its inception, tens of thousands of Americans have been registered to vote and have been educated on the importance of voting and about how their vote can make a tremendous difference. During the 1930s, our Fraternity was very instrumental in abolishing the national poll tax that served as a constraint for poor and non-white voters.

Our voter registration drives have been very successful in the past. However, because of the current attacks on affirmative action and federal programs for poor children and the elderly, it is even more critical to build voting networks in our communities.

We would like to thank all of the Brothers who contributed their ideas to this leadership guide. Special thanks to Brother Zollie Stevenson, Jr., Director of National Programs (Corporate Headquarters) and Brother John L. Colbert, Project Alpha Chairman for their invaluable contributions to this guide.

Questions or comments regarding this Implementation Guide should be sent to: Director of National Programs, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., 2313 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, MD, 21218-5234.

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Problem

Although the overall voter participation in the country dropped dramatically in the 1996 election, voter participation among African-Americans increased. According to the National Coalition on Black Voter Participation, 10 million African-Americans went to the polls in 1996 compared to 8.2 million in 1992. This increase may in part be due to a movement within the "Million Man March" that encouraged participants to register to vote during the ceremonies, and thus the vote of African-American males became a force in the 1996 election.

Despite these recent increases in voter participation, voter turnout is still lower among African-Americans. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in the 1992 Presidential election, 54 percent of registered African-Americans cast ballots, compared to 64 percent of White-American voters. Additionally, the turnout for African-Americans in the 1994-midterm elections was 37 percent for African-Americans compared to 47 percent for White Americans.