

Cynthia McKinney Speaks at Voting Rights Act Rally

Written by Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney ID1765
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Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney spoke at the Voting Rights Act Rally August 6th, along with other icons of the civil rights movement Saturday morning in the streets of Atlanta to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act and to build support for extending the law's protections.

"We are here to celebrate one of the most important pieces of fruit shaken down from America's tree of opportunity.

But what do you do when you have no more tree shakers and all your fruit is gone?

If we are to avoid the strange fruit of powerlessness, we have to pass the torch of leadership to a new generation of strong, uncompromising tree shakers.

We can no longer be satisfied with leaders, hand-picked for us, and not by us. Because it's that strange fruit that wrecks our dreams and kills our community.

The strange fruit that occurs when other people assume our powerlessness and we act accordingly.

The strange fruit of Bakke, Croson, Adarand, Shaw v. Reno, Johnson v. Miller. And Gratz. Each iteration more contorted and perverted than the version before it.

Strange fruit like Kenneth Walker, dead at the hands of the Columbus, Georgia police. Strange fruit like Frederick Williams, tasered to death by the Gwinnett County police. Strange fruit like Bernard Burden, found hanging from a tree in Coweta County.

America's tree of opportunity is becoming twisted and dead because America is becoming devoid of tree shakers: people unafraid of taking a stand, voicing dissent; throwing their bodies

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against the levers and the gears of the machine in order to make a difference.

Dr. King's bounced check still bounces back every day marked insufficient funds because we allow America not to pay.

Halliburton gets paid. Billions and billions and billions of dollars. But our black farmers have yet to be paid--despite winning in America's courts of law.

That's a lesson for us. In how twisted the tree of opportunity becomes when we fail to follow through with vigorous agitation and tree shaking, sowing the seeds of justice for the next generation.

But today we are here to demand our due.

Life, liberty, and the right to vote. On machines that we know will accurately count our vote.

And on this we will not be hoodwinked, snookered, bought out, or bushwhacked.

Up you mighty race, you can accomplish what you will. No more strange fruit."

Thank you.

Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney