



# #BlackWomenVote

## Our Voice, Votes and Leadership Matter

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### Meet #BlackWomenVote

#BlackWomenVote is a nonpartisan voter-activism campaign designed and supported by Higher Heights that aims to ensure issues affecting Black women are integral to the national political debate and Black women are engaged leading up to and beyond the 2016 election.

#BlackWomenVote seeks to be the leading, independent and trusted voice for Black women. Through its innovative and creative digital campaign, #BlackWomenVote will provide the latest election news, commentary and tools for Black women to prepare to vote and get out the vote within their social networks.

In an effort to elevate understanding of Black women's demographic breadth and give voice and analysis to their concerns during and beyond the 2016 election, the campaign has developed The Faces and Voices of #BlackWomenVote. This expanding list of Black women influencers, who range from thought leaders and issue experts to every-day women leading in their communities, will serve as a resource for journalists, bookers and producers seeking Black women to appear on and be quoted in digital and print media coverage.

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### Why #BlackWomenVote

Black women not only voted at a higher rate than any other group during 2008 and 2012, they also engaged in historic levels of voter recruitment, campaign donation and fundraising during these periods. Their activism demonstrated that robust involvement of Black women

voters is essential to any winning coalition.

This engagement can be attributed greatly to the Obama for America strategy, which provided meaningful tools of engagement—from hosting house parties to organizing virtual phone banks and door-knocking opportunities—that facilitated activism among women who had never before voted and those who were long-time voters but rarely, if ever, offered tangible opportunities to get involved beyond the voting booth.

The 2016 election presents a movement-building opportunity to create a sustained voter-engagement effort designed for and by Black women, independent of any particular candidate or political party. Higher Heights—a nonprofit organization dedicated to harnessing, organizing and mobilizing Black women's political power—believes this critical voting bloc can be engaged during forthcoming elections at the same historic levels that characterized the 2008 and 2012 elections. We are answering this call through the launch of the #BlackWomenVote campaign.

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### About Higher Heights

Higher Heights is the only national organization exclusively dedicated to harnessing, organizing and mobilizing Black women's political power by making sure they have the tools to effectively engage, advocate and lead. Higher Heights for America, a national 501(c)(4) organization, and its sister organization Higher Heights Leadership Fund, a 501(c)(3), is building the political power and leadership of Black women from the voting booth to elected office.





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## By the Numbers Factsheet

The following data offers a snapshot of Black women's electoral power and potential impact in 2016.

### Black Women Are A Voting Powerhouse

- 70% of eligible Black women cast ballots in 2008 and 2012, accounting for the highest voter turnout of any racial or gender group.
- Black women make up 6.3% of the total U.S. voting age population, but represented 9% of the 2012 and 2014 electorate due to their high voter turnout.
- More than 15 million Black women were eligible to vote in 2014—up 3% since 2012.
- Black women have been among the three most active voting groups in the US since 1984.
- Black women have registered and voted at a higher rate than Black men since 1998.
- 76% of eligible Black women voters were registered in 2012.
- Black women are committed voters even though they are more likely than any other group of women to experience problems registering (6%) or difficulty getting to the polls (8%)

### Black Women's Votes Decide Elections

- Black women have the proven power to determine national elections. In 2012 Barack Obama won re-election by 4.9 million votes. Black women cast a total of 11.4 million ballots, providing the margin he needed to win.
- 94% of Black women voters in Pennsylvania and Virginia—key purple states—cast ballots for the Democratic U.S. Senate candidates in 2012, helping to deliver victories to Bob Casey (D-PA) and Tim Kaine (D-VA).
- In 2015, Black women voters helped to elect black women to the Mississippi, New Jersey and Virginia legislatures—the only states where elections took place.

### Black Women and the 2016 Primaries

- Black women were integral to Hillary Clinton's victory as the presumptive Democratic Party nominee. During the 2016 primaries, 85% or more of Black women voters in Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia cast their ballots for Clinton.
- Hillary Clinton won a larger percentage of Black women voters in the 2016 South Carolina Primary than did Barack Obama in 2008, suggesting that the intersection of race and gender may play a more nuanced, complex role in Black women's support of political candidates than traditionally assumed by political analysts and portrayed by media.

### Issues to Watch Among Black Women Voters

- **Intersectionality:** During the primaries, media focused on the electorate riff between younger White women and Baby Boomer feminists. Little attention has been given, however, to how the intersection of age, feminism and race will influence the voting decisions of Black women. If Black female Millennials have a substantive split from recent voting trends, Black women may have an unanticipated impact on general election outcomes.
- **Political Engagement:** Black women's model for political engagement is significantly different than the traditional measures of political donations and campaign volunteerism. These factors suggest that politicians who want the support of Black women need to become savvier in their outreach, understanding and engagement of Black women voters.
- **The Post Obama Era:** While Black women have traditionally been a highly engaged and committed voting group, their distinction as the most active voters coincided with President Obama's two candidacies. Will they continue to maintain their voter engagement in 2016 and will they grow their support of candidates down ballot?

Sources: *Black Women's Roundtable*, *Black Women in the United States 2012: Power of the Sister Vote*; Center for American Women and Politics, *Black Women Voters: By the Numbers*; Higher Heights for America, *By the Numbers*; Higher Heights Leadership Fund, *Votes, Leadership: The Status of Black Women in American Politics*; Center for American Progress, *Women of Color: A Growing Force in the American Electorate*; Pew Research Center; *The Demographics of Social Media Users*; American Women, *The Impact of African-American Women on the Vote*.



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## The Black Woman Electorate

Ten facts about Black women voters:

1. Black women voters are most likely to live in the South (55%), followed by the Midwest (18%), North-east (17%) and West (10%).
2. They attend college at about the same rate as all other women (57%), but are not as likely to attain a four-year degree (22% compared to 30%).
3. Black women have a median income of \$33,780 compared to \$38,097 for all other women.
4. White-collar jobs are held by 64% of Black women. The other 36% works in blue-collar jobs or the service industry.
5. In 2014, 13.5% of Black women were union members, making them second only to Black men (15.8%) in rates of union participation.
6. 71% of Black women are currently single (55% either are or have been married and 45% have never married).
7. 63% of Black women between the ages of 15 and 50 have at least 1 child.
8. Black women are more likely to politically engage around specific causes (e.g., ending police brutality) that affect their families and communities and donate to institutions (e.g., church, sororities or civil rights groups) that address these issues instead of giving to politicians.
9. The number of Black women online has surged 30% in three years, with 60% now using the Internet.
10. Black women are among the most engaged users of social media platforms and are 2-times more likely than the general market to spending more than 3 hours on these sites in an average day. They are particularly active on Twitter, where regular conversations around political issues take place, and Instagram, which is often used to document trending community and social issues.

## Meet Black Women Voters

The following voter narratives were created to provide a sense of the women behind the numbers.

### Althea



Althea, 68, is a retired schoolteacher who lives in Jackson, Mississippi, where she is a lifetime member of the local NAACP chapter and a regular churchgoer. She has three kids and several grandchildren who are scattered across the country. Althea's husband, Douglas, worked for the post office.

He died two years ago, and she still lives in the house they bought together. The home is completely paid off, but the couple lost quite a bit of their retirement savings in the 2007 stock market crash. Althea is concerned that, even with her husband's pension, her savings are going to run out sooner than she'd originally anticipated. That worry is compounded by the fact that the city wants to cut some of the health benefits it covers for retirees. Althea, who votes in every election—even the local ones—wants to make sure her elected officials will honor the promises made to union retirees, and she wants to ensure the unions will be around to help current and future workers.

### Kenya



Recently divorced, Kenya, 44, is raising her 8-year-old son in New York City. Davon, her former husband, provides child support and has their son half the time, but money is tighter than ever now that there are two households to support. Recently, Kenya's landlord began doing things like turning off the hot water

and delaying repairs in an effort to force Kenya and other long-time residents out of the apartments so that he can command higher rents from newer tenants. Kenya—who always votes during presidential election years, but sporadically other times—looked around her swiftly gentrifying neighborhood and realized she and her son can't afford to move anywhere else nearby. She doesn't want to take him away from his school and friends. Kendra sees news stories every day about how developers are getting big tax breaks to build affordable housing, but she's yet to find any she can afford. Kenya wants to know what her elected officials can do to help families like hers.

### Zoe



Zoe lives in Detroit, and for the past year the 23-year-old has been working at a clothing retail chain and braiding hair on the side hoping to save up enough money to go back to school. Zoe finished her associate's degree two years ago, and she really wants a career handling social media communica-

tions for a company, but no one will hire her without her bachelor's. Zoe has been accepted into a four-year college, but right now she can't afford to pay the tuition. Even with student loans the money won't quite cover all her tuition and living costs. Plus, she's afraid of racking up debt and not being able to pay it back. Zoe hadn't previously voted, but this year she was really inspired by what one of the presidential candidates had to say about creating programs to relieve student debt and make college more affordable. Unfortunately, her candidate didn't win the party nomination, so now she's not certain she'll vote come November.



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## On the Issues

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### What Black Women Want

A recent poll from the Center for American Progress asked Black women voters to share what issues they believe are most important for politicians to address. The poll found that the economy and jobs rate highest among Black women, followed by affordable healthcare, education and women's rights. Black women voters also overwhelmingly said that the economic wellbeing of families is an important priority for the next president to address. Here's a snapshot of their concerns.

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### Jobs

42% of Black women said they're worried that they or someone in their household might lose their job.

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### Better Pay

Low wages are currently a challenge for 63% of Black women, and more than 80% said they would personally be helped if elected officials strengthen laws to ensure that women are paid the same as men and minorities are paid the same as other workers for doing the same jobs.

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### Sick Pay and Family Leave

43% of Black women said they aren't able to take off when they or a family member is sick, and roughly the same amount said paid maternity leave is unavailable if they need it.

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### Childcare

Affordable childcare is out of reach for 65% of Black women, and about three-fourths of them said they would be helped by programs that reduce the cost of childcare for low- and middle-income families and create universal public preschool for 3 and 4 year olds.

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### Racism and Discrimination

36% of Black women said they've been treated unfairly in the workplace because of race, and both Black women and Latinas said Black women experience the greatest amount of discrimination.

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### Improved Wellbeing

Nearly 80% of Black women said they would be more willing to vote for or donate to candidates who support policies and laws that facilitate equal pay, paid sick days, family and medical leave, and affordable childcare.