



**National
Urban League**

To Be Equal #35

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National Urban League and Civil Rights Coalition Announce 21st Century Agenda for Jobs and Freedom during March on Washington

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"Almost 50 years ago, I gave a little blood on that bridge in Selma, Alabama for the right to vote. I am not going to stand by and let the Supreme Court take the right to vote away from us." Representative John Lewis at the 50th anniversary March on Washington

Last weekend tens of thousands of citizens from around the country converged at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington and to dedicate themselves to a continuation of the fight for jobs, voting rights and a host of other challenges that are having a disproportionate impact on African Americans and other communities of color.

Just as 50 years ago, the National Urban League was on the front lines of last week's march activities. I had the honor of addressing the multitude from the same location that Dr. King and Whitney Young did during the 1963 March. Approximately 5000 Urban Leaguers and friends marched with us to the Lincoln Memorial in a pre-march rally. We came in full force.

Our participation was shaped by our determination that the 50-year anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, as well as of Dr. King's historic "I Have a Dream" speech, would be both a commemoration and a continuation of the unfinished work of building our more perfect union. To that end, we convened a Redeem the Dream summit on Friday, bringing together civil rights legends and new generation leaders for spirited discussions of the work that lies ahead as we confront both the progression and regression of equal opportunity in 21st century America. We, along with a coalition of civil rights, social justice, business and community leaders - the African American Leaders Convening (AALC), also introduced our 21st Century Agenda for Jobs and Freedom joined.

While the agenda was developed during meetings in Washington in December 2012 and January 2013 with the help of the dozens of leaders that compose the AALC, the effort was led by the presidents of the National Urban League, the National Action Network, NAACP and

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the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation. This growing coalition has produced a domestic policy agenda that lays out five urgent domestic goals for the nation:

- Achieve Economic Parity for African Americans
- Promote Equity in Educational Opportunity
- Protect and Defend Voting Rights
- Promote a Healthier Nation by Eliminating Healthcare Disparities
- Achieve Comprehensive Criminal Justice System Reform

The civil rights and legislative successes that followed the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom laid the foundation for the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and decades of progress. But, recently we have witnessed concerted efforts aimed at turning back the hands of progress in numerous areas from voting and civil rights to workers rights and criminal justice. In addition, high unemployment and other economic, social and legal disparities that continue to plague African Americans and low income and working class Americans underscore the urgency of our demand.

We cannot wave the flag of victory when so much work remains to be done. These injustices have, in fact, sparked the flame of a revitalized 21st Century Civil Rights Movement. The AALC will hold future meetings to discuss strategies and tactics in support of the agenda. We will also be calling on elected officials and candidates to commit their support for the agenda and to work for its implementation. Until we meaningfully confront these challenges, we jeopardize our ability and potential as a nation to fully live up to our ideals of liberty and justice for all.

To read the full text of our 21st Century Agenda for Jobs and Freedom visit:
<http://iamempowered.com/21st-century-agenda-for-jobs-and-freedom>.

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