

NATIONAL NEWS

Acting On Adverse Redistricting: ‘One Thing Leads To Another’



By B. Robinson

The Washington Post (TWP) reported last month that (paraphrasing) “Black voters are being shortchanged through redistricting.” As you know, “redistricting” is a process that permits states to reconstruct congressional districts to account for increases or decreases in their populations as determined by the most recent US Census (in this case the 2020 Census). In addition, states often use “redistricting” opportunities to redraw congressional district lines to accommodate political interests. Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 includes protective provisions related to redistricting exercises; i.e., redistricting should extend to so-called minority populations an equal opportunity to elect representatives of their choice. TWP article confirms that certain southern states—in particular, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Louisiana—have made, or are making, overt efforts to reduce or limit the number of Black politicians who have an opportunity to be elected and serve in the US House of Representatives.

The evidence is that white Republicans in these states are the main actors in adverse redistricting efforts. What can Black Americans do to halt these efforts? We recognize that redistricting efforts are nearing their conclusion in many states. Therefore, given a recent US Supreme Court action, it appears that Black Americans must take matters into our own hands quickly to preserve rights codified in Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. Inter alia, there are at least two actions that Black Americans can take to prevent being shortchanged by redistricting now and in the future:

1. We should organize and prepare to address issues that arise from current and future adverse redistricting exercises.
2. We should commit to “Doing the Arizona” and to advertising our intentions concerning current and future adverse redistricting actions.

You ask: What is “Doing the Arizona?” Recall that, in the early 1990s

‘Gerrymandered Maps Are About Maintaining Power’

ATLANTA, GA — On the heels of 39 states adopting new legislative maps and with redistricting in process in states such as Florida and Louisiana, a collection of Black women executive directors in the South outlined the conundrum facing voters. The Black Southern Women’s Collaborative (BSWC) noted that despite population growth, unfair redistricting processes will make it harder for voters of color to elect candidates of their choice. The group issued the following statement:

“There are currently 5 million unheard voices in Florida,” said Rev. Rhonda Thomas, executive director of Faith in Florida and a BSWC member. “I am determined to make those voices heard. To do so, we need an equitable and fair redistricting process and the elimination of restrictive voting laws.”

Redistricting is still underway in Florida, where the governor took the rare step of drawing his own legislative maps versus allowing the state legislature, which typically draws maps, to do so. Florida also has a controversial proposal that would harshly penalize groups for errors on voter registration forms. Advocates such as Thomas contend that such penalties would depress voter registration, thereby limiting the number of people who participate in the process.

“In addition to drawing unfair maps, far too many conservative legislators are taking draconian efforts that will limit who can vote. Efforts to restrict the franchise are not about election integrity, as many conservatives are quick to claim, but rather about making it harder for communities of color and persons living in poverty to vote and have their votes counted,” said Ashley K. Shelton, executive director of the Power Coalition for Equity & Justice and a BSWC member.

when the State of Arizona failed to adopt MLK Day as an official holiday, Black Americans all over the nation convinced people across the nation and certain important businesses to boycott the state. The economic pain that the State of Arizona experienced and anticipated from the boycott was sufficient to convince the state to change its mind about MLK Day. Similarly, for states that attempt to reduce or limit Black representation at the national level through redistricting, Black Americans should commit to imposing an economic boycott and to motivating businesses to boycott also.

For example:

- Black athletes could forego accepting scholarships from universities in adverse redistricting.
- Black families and college students could cancel their Spring Breaks to Florida.
- Black college basketball players could decide to not participate at March Madness venues that are in adverse redistricting states.
- Fans could decide to not travel to support their teams when they compete in states that practice adverse redistricting.
- Black Americans could convince businesses to redirect activity away from adverse redistricting states.

If Black Americans begin to adopt these actions immediately, commit to continuing them until states reconsider their adverse redistricting plans, and if we advertise our intentions vigorously, then this economic pressure can motivate a change in plans.

When Black Americans observe that we can stifle or reverse adverse redistricting efforts, then we will know that our economic power translates into real political power. In combination, the economic and political power can be leveraged to generate favorable outcomes for Black Americans all around.

As our ancestors used to say: “One thing leads to another.” What a good thing that would be.



Tamika Greer

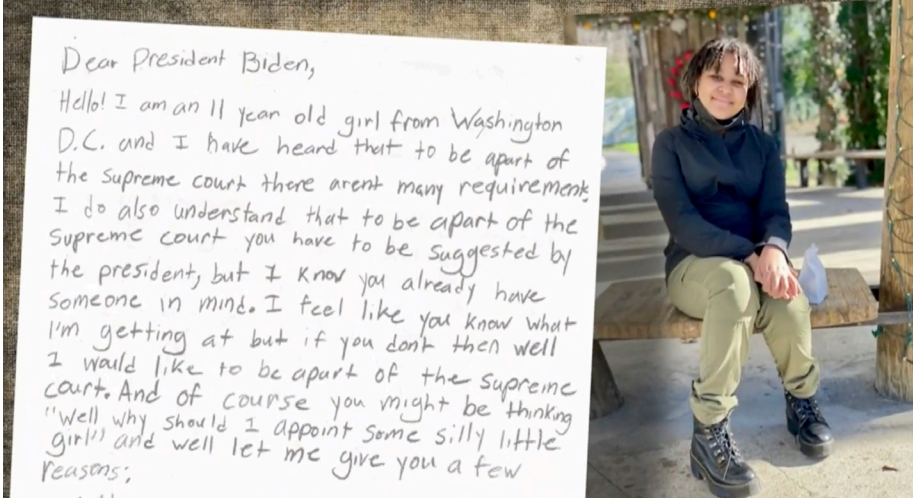
In Louisiana, the Senate ignored advocates’ pleas to create a new majority Black district to reflect Black population growth. Advocates, who held a statewide roadshow connecting voters and legislators, are hoping Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards vetoes unfair maps, especially since Black voters helped him get into office.

“In today’s environment, too many thought leaders are making conversations about voting rights academic, but the motivation for restricting voting is simply about power,” said Nse Ufot, executive director of the New Georgia Project and a BSWC member. “Republicans wants to hold onto power. They want control at every level of government, from school boards to prosecutor and district attorney races to state legislatures to statewide offices to Congress and the White House. That creates conflict, because in the marketplace of ideas, fewer and fewer Americans are subscribing to the GOP vision for the nation.”

One of the tools at advocates’ disposal is litigation. In states such as

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Meet the 11-Year Old Girl Who Asked President Biden for a Position on the Supreme Court



Maddi Morgan alongside the letter she wrote to President Biden.

NATIONWIDE — Maddi Morgan, an 11-year old girl from Washington, DC, says she wants to be the next Supreme Court Justice and she even wrote a letter to the White House asking President Biden to choose her for the role.

With Justice Stephen Breyer’s retirement, Biden is reportedly looking to fill the vacant seat with a Black female, which would be the first-ever in the US. Maddi, a small girl with big dreams, is hoping that she will be considered.

“There aren’t really many requirements to be a part of the Supreme Court. You just have to be appointed by the president. So, I thought, why not? And I just shot my shot,” Maddi told CBS News.

Maddi said she started aspiring to be a part of the American government when she learned about the topic in fourth grade. And since then, she believes she could handle the tough job.

“Children don’t have a voice in this country,” she confidently said. “Give them a small one.”

Maddi’s parents said they are proud of their daughter’s passion

and confidence. Her father Tony said, “We were just amazed and delighted by her insight into what this country needs. The insight we need. Many voices to represent us. We’re just very proud and delighted by her wanting to do this.”

The White House confirmed it has received the letter. White House spokesman Andrew Bates said, “While it’s clear that Maddi is very bright, gifted at making a case, and will go on to do great things, I cannot comment on the Supreme Court vetting process.”

Maddi said if she gets the role, it would be easy for her to commute since she lives a few blocks away from the Supreme Court. If she doesn’t get the role, Maddi said she still has other big dreams to help the country.

“I would definitely understand that President Biden does not want a child on the Supreme Court,” she said. “But I have always wanted to be an astrophysicist. I’ve always been quite interested in space and stuff.”

Ketanji Brown Jackson is the Supreme Court Justice We Need Now

By Ben Jealous

It is with profound joy that I write these words today: Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson has been nominated to become our nation’s first Black woman Supreme Court Justice. From a pool of outstanding Black women attorneys, jurists and legal scholars, President Biden has chosen Judge Jackson for her stellar credentials and brilliant legal mind. We are overjoyed by this nomination; now the Senate needs to move quickly to confirm her. In the coming weeks we will all get the opportunity to learn more about Judge Jackson’s story and her record.

Her legal credentials are outstanding: a double-Harvard alumna, earning both her undergraduate and law degrees with honors; a clerk for three federal judges – including the one she will succeed, Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer, who called her “great” and “brilliant”; a star in private practice and as a public defender in Washington, D.C. The country will also come to know that Judge Jackson wrote nearly 600 opinions in her time as a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, before she was elevated to the Circuit Court – and that she was reversed fewer than twelve times. But what is just as important as Judge Jackson’s resume is her character, and her deep personal commitment to civil rights.

Ketanji Brown Jackson could easily have chosen a lucrative career in private practice, advancing the interests of the wealthy and powerful. Instead, she chose public service. And that speaks volumes. As a public defender, Judge Jackson represented people who could not afford to hire a lawyer. She chose to stand beside these people in their hour of need, and she has seen the justice system through the eyes of the vulnerable. It’s hard to overstate the importance of that insight in the context of the Supreme Court.

As Vice Chair and Commissioner on the U.S. Sentencing Commission, she worked to end the huge discrepancy between sentences for crack cocaine and powder cocaine, a discrepancy that had a devastating impact on Black communities. And on the bench, her opinions have shown her dedication to upholding legal protections for people with disabilities, workers, immigrants, freedom of speech, and the environment.

Also evident is her commitment to see the humanity of all people who appear in her courtroom. In one notable instance, Judge Jackson heard the case of a deaf man who was incarcerated



Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson speaks at the White House in Washington, DC on Feb. 25, 2022 after President Joe Biden delivered remarks on his nomination of her to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

ated and denied even basic accommodations for his disability. Without an ASL interpreter, he could not understand directions. Another prisoner attacked him and he was put in “protective custody” that turned out to be solitary confinement — a decision he was unable to understand.

Judge Jackson ruled that the correctional facility had broken the law. Not only that, she wrote pointedly and movingly about the significance of laws that protect the rights of people with disabilities. As she put it, “an entity that provides services to the public cannot stand idly by while people with disabilities attempt to utilize programs and services designed for the able-bodied.” That is a moral truth.

And of course, Judge Jackson’s own lived experience as a Black woman enriches her perspective about so many aspects of day-to-day life in the United States. This is a perspective that has never, ever existed on the Court, in all its 233 years.

This perspective is urgently needed now for many reasons, not least of which is because we have reached a point in our history when racial equity and civil rights are facing more attacks than they have in decades. Just as Justice Thurgood Marshall was a justice for his time, joining the Supreme Court at the height of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, Judge Jackson is needed now. There could be no better time for the voice of a brilliant and insightful Black woman on the Court, holding the line for truth and accountability.

That woman is future Supreme Court Justice, Ketanji Brown Jackson. It’s time.