



Position Statement on the 2016 Elections:

#justvote

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In his recent report to the 45th International Convention of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, CBTU President Terry Melvin framed the 2016 elections from the perspective of a key group of voters: black union members who will play an important role in mobilizing voters of color in the 2016 elections. CBTU is the nation's largest, independent labor organization representing more than 2 million African American workers in unions.

www.cbtu.org

America's "Black Moment"

I believe America is experiencing a **Black Moment**.

Just consider a few trends:

- The **Black Lives Matter** movement has put criminal justice reform in the national spotlight and on the agenda of most political candidates.
- The **Fight for 15 movement** is led by black and brown people and they have accomplished what was considered impossible a few years ago – a wave of minimum wage victories across the country – from New York to Seattle to California.
- **Black turnout for Hillary Clinton** in the Democratic primaries, especially in the South and Midwest, has propelled her to a commanding lead in votes and pledged delegates to the nominating convention this summer.
- And, of course, **President Obama** is still wielding his executive power to make more than 4 million workers eligible for overtime pay.

We are defining our own version of "American-ness." We are controlling our own narratives – from Shonda Rhimes to Kendrick Lamar to Serena Williams.

We are holding friend and foe accountable – just ask Bernie Sanders or Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump.

Of course, America's unforeseen **Black Moment** has also unleashed another familiar pattern in American life: white rage.

- We experienced its deadly outcome last summer with the massacre of nine Black members of Mother Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston by a young, angry believer in white supremacy.
- It shows up in widespread efforts to suppress our votes.
- And in an obstructionist Congress that will block anything that this Black president proposes to do – from passing a budget to holding hearings for his Supreme Court nominee.

This hate, this instinctive rejection of Black legitimacy – from the White House to our sacred houses of worship – has fueled the rise of Donald J. Trump, the latest Great White Hope, the billionaire bigot who has hijacked the Republican Party's nomination for President.

Trumpism has created an unpredictable political climate that's comic yet toxic; energized but dangerous.

The Devil or Deliverance

I see this election as a choice between the devil and deliverance.

If Trump gets the keys to the White House:

- He'll have his HUGE hand on the nuclear button
- He'll pack the Supreme Court and the rest of the federal court system with judges that will be hostile to voting rights, unions, civil rights, immigrants and women
- He'll put the knife to Obamacare
- He'll turn a blind eye to racism and police brutality
- Safety net programs for the elderly, the poor, and children will be slashed to pay for tax breaks for his wealthy backers

Worst of all, Trump would set a permissive tone for evil.

Haters would know that bigotry is back in business in the White House, and the laws of white supremacy that make being Black and outside of the "comfort zone" of white people "punishable" will be upheld with lethal force if necessary – anytime, anywhere, with anybody.

Deliverance

Now, that's the devil's plan. But CBTU believes that most Americans would rather vote for a candidate who offers a path to deliverance:

- **Deliverance** from hard times and little hope
- **Deliverance** from rents too high and wages too low
- **Deliverance** from dead young black bodies piling up in the streets
- **Deliverance** from shackles of debt
- **Deliverance** from a broken immigration system that punishes foreign workers but not the greedy employers who exploit them
- **Deliverance** from an unjust education system that scapegoats teachers and steers poor students and kids of color into the school-to-prison pipeline

- **Deliverance** from a criminal justice system that houses more people in prisons and jails and detention centers than on college campuses.

We've got to come together to keep America heading toward the light of equality and justice. We cannot backslide into the dark days of Jim Crow, or hooded vigilantes, or church burnings. We must make it absolutely clear that justice is the price that must be paid in 2016 if America is to escape the dark side of democracy.

Don't Buy the Hype

We are told by so-called "political insiders" that Trump's election chances are slim and shady. Don't buy the hype. Stay woke!

- Don't get caught up with fickle daily polls
- Don't base your opinions about a candidate on gossip from Ro-Ro or Mimi or JaQuann or Pookie.
- And please DON'T assume somebody else is going to vote the "right way" for you.
- Don't complain about the outcome if you don't even bother to show up to vote!

Remember, politicians don't always care about people. But they always care about voters.

Bernie and Hillary – Spill No Blood

CBTU has some happy Hillary supporters and we've also got some proud, tenacious Bernie folks.

Let's be clear: We're not going to spill any blood over them. The voters have spoken.

But I do want to make this point clear: Voting is **NOT** only about preferences; it's about **POWER**.

We've got to get our people to understand that this election is not just about Hillary or Bernie or a nasty, egotistical bully: it's about power. Power in the Senate and in statehouses. Power on zoning boards and school boards. Power to run fair elections and to hold police accountable for their use of lethal force in our communities.

Ultimately, it's about the power to save black lives and claim economic and racial justice.

CBTU's position and message is absolutely clear: **JUST VOTE!**

- When the campaigning is over, **JUST VOTE**.
- When early voting starts, **JUST VOTE**.
- When Election Day rolls around, **JUST VOTE**.
- Tell your boys in the barbershop or your girls at the hair salon, **JUST VOTE**.

Spread the message in your union and CBTU chapter.
Put **JUST VOTE** on leaflets, bulletin boards or web sites.
If black lives truly matter, **#JUST VOTE!**

Why GOTV Matters So Much This Year

This will be the first presidential election since 2004 where Barack Obama's name won't be on the ballot. That could impact black turnout dramatically, if we don't double down on our GOTV efforts.

- According to a recent *New York Times* article, if black turnout for Democrats drops back to the pre-Obama level, it could cost Democrats a net loss of 2.8 million votes.

Clearly, that kind of drop-off could put Donald Trump in the White House and other Trump clones in Congress and statehouses across the nation.

Here's the break down on the critical youth vote:

Young voters could swing as many as 80 electoral votes in four key battleground states – Ohio, Pennsylvania, Florida and Virginia.

Four years ago, if Romney had won half of the youth vote, or if millennial voters has just stayed home—then he, not President Obama, would have won the 2012 election.

The news here is that voter apathy is the backdoor to the White House for Donald Trump.

We cannot allow a lack of enthusiasm to distract us from what's at stake or the value of voting.

We have a duty to make good on the sacrifices made by countless men, women and children whose bones were broken but not their will to ensure black folks could exercise their democratic right to vote.

When we sit at home on Election Day, we give away our power. We give away our voice. We co-sign our own oppression with our silence.

That's unacceptable to me and to this organization!

We know there are still too many ridiculous barriers to voting:

- Laws that limit early voting.
- Laws with restrictive photo ID requirements.

- Too few voting machines or locations.
- Excessively waits in long lines.

But we cannot retreat. That's why CBTU has joined with our other civil rights allies to call on Congress to restore the Voting Rights Act. We must immediately ensure every American has equal access to the polls. This is not 1963!

No Crumbs, Please, for GOTV

Make no mistake: the outcome of the 2016 election could well ride on the political muscle of black trade unionists.

- One of every seven union members is African American
- Many CBTU chapters are in key battleground states like Ohio, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Virginia, Missouri and Florida.

This puts us – does it not – in the vanguard of the labor's ground game? So we won't settle for crumbs to get out the maximum votes in our unions and our communities.

To get the massive black turnout that top Democratic leaders and labor leaders say is necessary, we want to be full partners in the strategy-making, the message development, the field operations and staff hiring.

We don't need to be trained to talk to our folks. We don't need a \$50,000 poll to figure out what issues are percolating in our communities – good jobs, reliable childcare, better schools, affordable housing, access to health care, police accountability, fair trade deals to protect American jobs and a Supreme Court that's not hostile to unions or civil rights.

We just need resources, in a timely manner, to do what we do.

Let's get busy!