

PostEverything • Perspective

Black women saved the Democrats. Don't make us do it again.

We turn out reliably every election. But you can't just vote white supremacy away.



A "Black Lives Matter" sign hangs next to a campaign sign in support of Joe Biden outside a home in Philadelphia on Tuesday. Black voters there and in other swing states helped Biden beat President Trump. (Hannah Yoon/Bloomberg)



By **Taylor Crumpton**

Taylor Crumpton is a music, pop culture and politics writer transplanted in Oakland, originally from Dallas.

November 7, 2020 at 4:45 p.m. UTC

Black women saved Joe Biden.

Without our support, the president-elect would be preparing a powerful speech about how despite his defeat, the nation needs to stand together as a united people to blunt the effects of President Trump's white supremacist reign. Instead, thanks to wins powered largely by the turnout in places like Detroit, Atlanta, Milwaukee and Philadelphia, Biden and the first Black woman to serve as vice president, Kamala D. Harris, are preparing to take office.

[Follow the latest on Election 2020 >](#)

Support journalism you can trust when it matters most.

Get one year for \$29



AD

It's the lifeblood of our nation's political institutions. It's the insidious undercurrent that absolves the new president-elect of his 1994 crime bill, a historic piece of federal legislation that increased funding to law enforcement agencies throughout the country. During this campaign, Biden has apologized for his previous actions, contextualized the social conditions of the early 1990s and pledged for forgiveness from Black Americans, specifically Black women.

Which he had to do if he wanted to win: As the Democratic Party's most loyal and dependable voting bloc, Black women were essential. From the [2016 presidential election](#) to the [Senate special election in Alabama in 2017](#) and the [2018 midterm elections](#), more than 90 percent of Black women voted for the Democratic candidate, and that's not even to mention all the work they did for voter registration and turnout. Black women are the country's most powerful political force. In times of political chaos and civic unrest, we need to remember the words of our foremothers, not turn to the nation's political parties.

Forty-three years ago, the [Combahee River Collective](#) — a Black lesbian feminist organization, composed of members from the nation's various social movements of the time (women's rights, civil rights, the Black Panthers) — released their belief statement. "Our politics initially sprang from the shared belief that Black women are inherently valuable," it read. "That our liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else's may because of our need as human persons for autonomy. ... We realize that the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation are us. Our politics evolve from a healthy love for ourselves, our sisters and our community which allows us to continue our struggle and work." Just 12 years after the passage of Voting Rights Act, this collective of Black women understood the necessity of unifying through a shared anti-racist and anti-sexist framework.

AD

As their descendants, it's our responsibility to embrace and share the teachings of our foremothers to improve the social conditions in our communities. This year, I've witnessed the collective power of Black women who took it upon themselves to uplift their communities, outside of political institutions, from [a group of single mothers in Oakland](#) who ushered in a new chapter of a historical movement for housing rights to the various Black women who are fighting against [cash bail](#) and the countless known and unknown Black women [who held healing spaces](#) for us to mourn the loss of Breonna Taylor and Oluwatoyin "Toyin" Salau. While the world transformed their deaths into memes and trending topics on social media to garner attention, Black women did the vital work to sustain and nurture our communities.

We marched. We organized. We mobilized. We cried. We screamed. We wrote anti-racism book lists (that [none of y'all read](#)). We went above and beyond, and what did we get in return? [Numerous reminders](#) that 94 percent of Black women voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016, and that we'd better replicate our previous voting behaviors if we wanted to head off another disaster.

[Tuesday proved that racial groups don't vote as a bloc — with one exception]

Even now that the nation has elected a woman as its first Black vice president, Black women still have to swallow some tough choices. Harris is a longtime admirer of the late representative Shirley Chisholm (D-N.Y.), the first Black woman elected to Congress and the first to run for a major political party's nomination for the presidency, and she's invoked the political foremothers to inspire Black women to turn out in record numbers. Alpha Kappa Alpha, the sorority she joined at Howard University, launched voter registration efforts, and the various Black Greek letter organizations have followed suit to make history. But before Harris got to the Senate, she was also "California's top cop," who [prosecuted and incarcerated Black people](#). Do we ignore that now just because she is a Black woman?

AD

[Patrisse Cullors and Alicia Garza](#), the co-founders of #BlackLivesMatter (along with Opal Tometi), pledged to vote for Harris, but they also promised to hold her accountable for her "tough on crime" history in California. [Charlene Carruthers](#), the founding national director of BYP100 (the Black Youth Project 100), voted for Biden — and promised to organize around actions to [abolish the Supreme Court](#). Angela Davis, a world-renowned activist, scholar, academic and prison abolitionist, emphasized the need to vote Trump out, but she still expressed some disinterest in the Biden-Harris ticket, which contradicted her abolitionist political beliefs. "If we want to continue this work, we certainly need a person in office who will be more amenable to our mass pressure," she said. "And to me, that is the only thing that someone like a Joe Biden represents. But we have to persuade people to go out and vote to guarantee that the current occupant of the White House is forever ousted."

* * *

Because of those women and others like them, all through the summer and fall leading up to the election, I had faith. It's an ancestral faith that exists within my bones; a faith not centered around political institutions, but in the collective faith of Black women who fight our liberation and freedom. Black women's civic and political engagement extends beyond the polls — we're organizing for a future where Black women don't have to vote for the "lesser of two evils," but none at all.

[African Americans who sat out 2016 explain why they're voting this year]

Four years ago, I voted for Hillary Clinton. I didn't want to — I knew her political career had been detrimental to [my community](#), but I felt like voting for her was my only option. This year, I had the same eerie feeling as I filled my mail-in ballot out for Biden. By the time I voted, yes, he had apologized for the 1994 crime bill, but he'd also written a scathing statement condemning the actions of protesters in Philadelphia after [the death of Walter Wallace Jr.](#) at the hands of police.

I've had enough, and my life has only just begun. Every four years, the Democratic Party looks to me and countless Black women to save it. Our White women counterparts aren't held to the same standard, especially not the 53 percent of them who voted for Trump in 2016. White women are granted forgiveness for their "infidelity," and wooed all over again each election, while Black women are expected to remain loyal and faithful.

It's not a burden I want to bear. My ancestors did not bear me into the world so I can put a White man into a position of power over a system that will inevitably harm me and my loved ones. The Black women who give me strength are not the ones in the halls of Congress, or even the one preparing to move into the vice-presidential mansion, but the ones in the streets.

The Black women's movement has never centered exclusively on the ballot box in our journey toward liberation and freedom. We're not your political mules. We're not your monolith — so especially now, after we turned out all over the country to sweep Trump from office, Democrats had better support and listen to Black women even in odd-numbered years. We're not here to save the world. We're just here to protect ourselves.

Updated November 7, 2020

Election 2020: What to know

Joe Biden has been declared the winner.

Live updates: [The latest developments.](#)

Takeaways: [Winners and losers from the 2020 election](#)

Election results: [Presidential race](#) | [Senate races](#) | [House races](#)

How the world is reacting: [The latest developments.](#)

Are you surprised by the election so far? [Tell The Post.](#)

 338 Comments