

**The Civil Rights Movement in the late 1950s and 1960s won the historic fight against legal segregation in the Southern United States. People marched, registered voters, braved violence and lost their lives in the struggle for equality for African-Americans.**

Nonetheless racismis present in the United States today and affects large numbers of people of color today. Americans ofcolor are disproportionately poor and lack the political power that donations to campaigns give to wealthy contributors. Voter suppression denies many the right to vote – especially in Southern states.

“We’re not seeing ourselves represented in legislatures. So a political career isn’t seen as a viable option,” said Sayu Bhojwani, of The New American Leaders project. “And if we’re not at the table, our interests aren’t going to get entertained.”

\*\* People of color make up 31% of the population, but only 14% of Congress.

\*\* 11% of elected members of state legislatures are people of color. African Americans are 13% of the population; 9% of state legislatures; Latinos are 17% of the population, 5% of legislatures; Asian-Americans are 5% of the population, 1% of legislatures.

\*\* Candidates of color have a more difficult time raising money and therefore are typically underfunded.

\*\* Civil rights enforcement has lagged. In a 5-4 vote five years ago, the Supreme Court struck down the “heart” of the Civil Rights Act of 1965, freeing nine states, mostly in the South, to change their election laws without advance federal approval.

\*\* Many states have since have passed voter suppression laws aimed at restricting access to the vote by poor people, especially people of color. These include requiring special identification, reducing the opportunity of early voting, and the gerrymandering of election districts.

\*\* Money and wealth in the United States is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small group of primarily white males. Less than 1% of the American people donate the majority of the money going to campaigns. The greatest amounts of campaign cash come from neighborhoods where wealthy white populations dominate.

\*\* Mass incarceration affects primarily people of color. Private prisons earn billions in profits each year. The US has a higher percentage of its people in prison than any other country. 38% of prison inmates are African-American (13% of total US population); 33% are Latino (17% of total US population); 58% are white (63% of total US population).