

POLITICAL GRAB BAG

By Steve Bagby, Sr., Political Action Committee Chair

There are several dates during this month of May that are important to our Church and our members. Sunday, May 9th, is Mother's Day and we honor and celebrate our mothers, aunts, nieces, cousins and friends on that very special day as we recognize the true value of our dear, dear mothers and others who raised us, nurtured us and loved us, including all of the wonderful women at Second Baptist Church, past and present, who were and are diligent in their efforts to continue the work of the church and help mold the minds of our children, youth and young adults. A special acknowledgment will take place on May 8th.

On Sunday, May 16th, we celebrate the 136th Anniversary of our Church. Not many congregations can say that they have been in existence for 136 years "with an uninterrupted presence" and we are grateful for and applaud all of the saints who came before us who utilized their leadership capabilities and spiritual dedication to keep the Church moving forward for 136 years. We are blessed to have a dynamic Pastor, Dr. William S. Epps, as our Pastor for many years, as well as other talented and committed clergy, Dr. Venus Butler, Dr. D. Marie Battle, Rev. Barbara Melancon, Dr. Ernest Young and Minister Lois King who have helped us to continue our Christian journey and commitment of service to the citizens of Los Angeles and beyond!

On May 30th, Memorial Sunday, we honor the memory of those members who have made their transition over the past year as we recognize the significance of their lives and the contributions they have made to the ongoing work of the Church. We realize that every life has value and on Memorial Sunday we will acknowledge and remember them. **We take this opportunity in this article to acknowledge the recent passing of our Facilities Manager and Custodian, Mr. Earl Braithwaite, who unselfishly dedicated his time and energy to Second Baptist Church, day-in and day-out, for many years. He was loved and appreciated by many, and will definitely be missed by all as he was indeed a special man! We dedicate this Political Grab Bag article in his memory as he**

often expressed interest in the topics discussed in the monthly articles. He had a natural curiosity about many issues and did not hesitate to share his thoughts. He was truly a joy to be around!

It is within the context of acknowledging the lives of others, that we share in the positive reactions to the conviction of the officer involved in the killing of **George Floyd**. **George Floyd's life had meaning** and his death has propelled this nation and the world to protest and insist that the police brutality, racial injustice and systemic racism associated with the policing system throughout the United States changes, as "Black Lives Matter!!!" In the words of former President Barack Obama after the verdict, while acknowledging that the conviction of former Minnesota police officer Derek Chauvin was "a necessary step on the road to progress," . . . "it was far from a sufficient one." He stated: "True justice requires that we come to terms with the fact that Black Americans are treated differently, every day. It requires us to recognize that millions of our friends, family and fellow citizens live in fear that their next encounter with law enforcement could be their last. And it requires us to do the sometimes thankless, often difficult, but always necessary work of making the America we know more like the America we believe in."

As for making America "more like the America we believe in," as we look at the make-up of the jury who decided the case, it is clear that we all need to respond to those jury summons' we receive so that we can participate in the trial process as I believe that the number of "people of color" on the jury had an impact on the unanimous decision on all three counts, as it only takes one person to disagree with the others for the case to end up with a "hung jury." We also need to be mindful of the need to have persons of color in positions of authority, as the head of the Minnesota Attorney General's Office who prosecuted Derek Chauvin, Keith Ellison, is an African American and one of the attorneys who tried the case, Jerry Blackwell, is an African American. I believe that all of these factors made a difference in the outcome, in addition to the video we all saw and the approach to the case coordinated by the Attorney General's office. The Minnesota Attorney General is a statewide elected office, so as an African American, Keith Ellison was in a unique position to be able to coordinate the prosecution of Derek Chauvin. We need others who are similarly situated to be in positions of authority throughout both the judicial as well as the political landscape so they can help effect or influence change on a local, state or national level. In focusing

our attention on local and state politics, we now reference several elections that are coming up in May and June 2021.

ELECTIONS IN MAY AND JUNE OF 2021 -

Since our members live in various locations throughout Southern California, I am bringing to your attention the following elections that will be held in May and June. Some of the elections taking place in June are being referenced in this month's Political Grab Bag because those particular elections will take place before the next Political Grab Bag will be submitted on June 6th.

On May 11, 2021, the **City Of Hermosa Beach** will conduct a Special Municipal Election for a Member of the City Council to fill an unexpired term ending November 30, 2022. Five candidates are running. The candidates are listed in alphabetical order: Randy Balik, Dean Francois, Raymond A. Jackson, Daniel Rittenhouse and Tara McNamara Stabile.

On May 18, 2021, there will be a Special Primary Election for **California Assembly District 54** to fill an unexpired term ending on December 5, 2022. Five candidates are running for this position, which was vacated by former Assemblymember Sydney Kamlager-Dove, who is now a California Senator, having been elected to fill the position previously held by former California Senator Holly Mitchell, who is now a Los Angeles County Supervisor. The candidates are listed in alphabetical order: Isaac Bryan, Dallas Fowler, Heather Hutt, Samuel Robert Morales and Cheryl C. Turner. Extensive communication has been received regarding Isaac Bryan, including from our own politically savvy member Alex Johnson. Heather Hutt was the former California State Director for former U.S. Senator, now Vice President, Kamala Harris, so this should indeed be an interesting primary.

On June 1, 2021, the **City of Vernon** will have both a Recall Election and a Special Election for a Member of the City Council to succeed Carol Menke if she is recalled, for a term ending in April 2024. The candidate on the ballot for consideration in the event of the recall of Carol Menke is Crystal Larios. On that same date, there will also be another Recall Election and a Special Election for a Member of the City Council to succeed Diana Gonzales if she is recalled, for a term ending in April 2025. The candidate on the ballot for consideration in the event of the recall of Diana Gonzales is Judith Merlo. Per Ballotpedia, the recall organizers allege that Menke and Gonzales violated the public trust by supporting

a solar and wind project led by an allegedly corrupt developer. Gonzales and Menke responded by saying that the real motivation for the recall attempt was their challenge to "an attempt to place Mayor Leticia Lopez's family members in city-owned housing."

On June 1, 2021, the **City of Compton** will have several offices on the ballot in the General Municipal Election, based on the results of the Primary which took place on April 20th:

* Cristian Reynaga and Councilwoman Emma Sharif are in a runoff for Mayor. They are both vying to replace outgoing Mayor Aja Brown, who is not seeking re-election. Per the *Our Weekly* April 21st online article, the incumbent's decision means Compton will have its first change in leadership since 2013, when Aja Brown made history as the youngest Mayor ever elected in Compton.

* Satra Zurita and Brandon Mims will be in a runoff for City Treasurer. The incumbent, Douglas Sanders, did not finish in the top two.

* Challenger Andre Spicer and incumbent Isaac Galvan are in a runoff for the District 2 City Council seat.

* Incumbent Tana McCoy and challenger Jonathan Bowers are in a runoff for the District 3 City Council seat.

GEORGIA'S BILL WHICH RESTRICTS VOTING "RIGHTS"—STACEY ABRAMS

Georgia's 98-page election law was passed by a GOP- controlled legislature and signed by Republican Governor Brian Kemp at the end of March. While Republicans widely supported the bill, it has sparked a debate over voting rights, with Democrats and voting rights groups outraged by voter ID provisions and changes to mail voting . . . with many believing that the provisions will make it more difficult for some minorities and others to cast a ballot.

A video of activist and former Georgia Democratic gubernatorial candidate, **Stacey Abrams**, "is going viral" for her response to a GOP senator who quizzed her on her thoughts about Georgia's recently enacted bill. Ms. Abrams was testifying in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee on April 20, 2021, about voting rights when Senator John Kennedy of Louisiana asked her why she objects to Georgia's controversial voting rights bill.

Per an April 22, 2021, online *CBS News* article reporting on the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, Senator Kennedy asked Ms. Abrams if she found the bill racist. **"I think there are provisions of it that are racist, yes,"** she said. (Note: All quotes regarding this topic are from the *CBS News* article.)

Kennedy then quizzed Ms. Abrams to list all of the provisions she objects to. "It shortens the federal run-off period from nine weeks to four weeks," she said. "It restricts the time a voter can request and return an absentee ballot application." "It requires that a voter has a photo identification or some other form of identification that they are willing to surrender in order to participate in an absentee ballot process," Ms. Abrams continued.

Kennedy then stopped Ms. Abrams to ask a question about the ID provision. "Abrams said Georgia would become the fourth state to require voters to put at risk their identity."

"What else?" Kennedy pressed Abrams. She said, "it eliminates over 300 hours of drop box availability." While she continued to list objectionable provisions, Kennedy continued to ask: "What else?" "Is that everything?" he asked. "No, it is not," Ms. Abrams said. "No, sir."

She continued to share that the bill would shorten voting time windows and allow counties to limit voting hours, "which may have an effect on voters who cannot vote during business hours during early voting." When Ms. Abrams continued to list more provisions, Kennedy interrupted her again. "OK. I get the idea," he said.

A clip of the exchange went viral on Twitter, with many pointing out how Ms. Abrams kept her cool during the questioning. "If you watch even a couple minutes of this testimony you'll see Stacey Abrams do what she does best: Respectfully and seriously make a compelling argument without alienating viewers who don't yet agree with her," tweeted former Missouri Secretary of State Jason Kander, a Democrat and the founder of a voting policy organization. "Her professionalism never comes at the expense of passion."

"Senator John Kennedy thought he was pulling a 'gotcha' question on Stacey Abrams by asking her to list off all the parts of the Georgia Voter Suppression Bill that are racist, SO SHE DID," tweeted Jake Lobin, a Georgia Democratic election volunteer. Per author Jason Overstreet, "I just watched Stacey Abrams go back

and forth with Senator Kennedy of Louisiana regarding the new voting law in Georgia being racist." "What she just articulated, in defending how it is racist in very specific ways, was breathtakingly impressive."

I also listened to and watched the full eight minute video and definitely agree that Stacey Abrams was just **masterful in her responses**. Although not reported in the article referenced above, Ms. Abrams was very careful in her response to a question about her position on ballot harvesting stating that, "I'm both an attorney and a former legislator and it is not simply the words that you're saying . . . as you and I both know, the context, the rules and the structure matters." She further answered regarding a scenario of paying "operatives" to help someone fill out their ballot . . . "it sounds like you are in violation of a number of different rules, not the least of which is buying a vote."

When asked a question about whether it was smart for President Biden to call everybody who supports the Georgia Bill a racist, she responded, **"I think that this bill is grounded in racial animus."** When further asked how she knows that it was based on racism, she explained (as I summarize her words) that **for 15 years Republicans sanctioned and celebrated the vote by mail provisions and early voting hours and it was only after they were defeated by communities of color using the rules they championed for years, that now, all of a sudden, the rules changed!**

She continued to express her viewpoint about the Georgia bill in response to a follow-up question by saying **"my point is that when your motivation is grounded in the race of those who are engaging in behaviors that you disagree with, that is racist, particularly when it is targeted at communities of color by people in power."** The Senator agreed with that definition of racism . . . but wanted to know how did she know that the legislators meant to draft a bill with that intent? She stated, "because we asked them not to do it because we showed them what the effect was and they refused to answer and refused to abide . . ." She went further and said, ". . . **for the purposes of voting rights, when racial animus is your predicate, then yes, you should be held accountable and those bills should be stopped.**"

Stacey Abrams was brilliant in the manner in which she responded to the Louisiana Senator. She **is** a brilliant Yale Law School graduate and definitely a

formidable advocate for fair voting rights. Her command of language and her ability are both so very needed “for such a time as this.” She is continuing the legacy of all of the voting and civil rights advocates of years past and for that we should all be grateful, as well as do whatever we can to assist her in this major fight for our rights as the Republicans continually try to turn back the clock on previous gains so that they can recapture the power that they are in such fear of losing. If you haven’t seen/heard the video, you should definitely watch/listen to it. While there are shortened versions of the video online, the full eight minute version can be found at www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2021/04/22/john-kennedy-stacey-abrams-georgia-voting-law-sot-vpx.cnn

CENSUS RESULTS---CALIFORNIA LOSES ONE SEAT IN CONGRESS -

The Census is the constitutionally designated method to mete out seats in the House of Representatives. Every state is guaranteed at least one representative and the size of each delegation is based on population.

Per an *L. A. Times* online article dated April 26, 2021, population data released by the U.S. Census Bureau on Monday, April 26th, which was delayed due to the pandemic, reveals that California will lose one seat in Congress for the first time in state history, while Texas and Florida are among the states that will see their representation increase. More specifically, in addition to California, “New York, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia each lost a seat, while Texas gained two seats and Colorado, Florida, Montana, North Carolina and Oregon each gained one.” (Note: All quotes regarding this topic are from the *L.A. Times* article.)

“Overall, the Census pegged the nation’s total population at 331,449,281, a 7.4% increase from 2010. The rate of growth was the second-slowest in U.S. history.”

In addition to the initial population data just released, for purposes of redistricting, “[t]he bureau will deliver the census block data — the smallest geographic area detailed by the count, which can vary from the size of a city block to hundreds of square miles in rural areas — by Sept. 30, six months later than originally planned” . . . “resulting in an uncommonly compressed and chaotic redistricting process. For California, that means maps won’t be finalized until February.”

“The delays are injecting a new level of volatility into the 2022 midterms, as Democrats, led by Speaker Nancy Pelosi of San Francisco, try to fend off takeover in the House by GOP leader, Kevin McCarthy of Bakersfield. The unknown contours of the eventual districts are complicating nearly all aspects of congressional campaigns, including candidate recruitment, fundraising and early appeals to voters.”

“The political winners and losers will become clearer after the next round of data is released and the mapping of new district lines begins. Districts must roughly have equal populations, but politicians have divvied them up often to the benefit of their own parties and incumbents, a process known as gerrymandering. The Constitution gives state legislatures the power to draw congressional and legislative districts, although an increasing number of states, including California, rely on independent commissions or other reforms to make the map-drawing less overtly partisan.” Redistricting analysts say that the sluggish population growth which resulted in the loss of a congressional seat could shake up Los Angeles County. “The 25th Congressional District, which includes Simi Valley and Santa Clarita, could be drawn inland, giving the seat a more liberal makeup and imperiling the reelection of GOP Rep. Mike Garcia. But the redrawing of the boundaries could also reverberate in the Central Valley or Orange County, the once solidly GOP region that now is prime swing territory.”

“Apportionment also affects the balance of power in picking presidents, because the number of votes each state gets in the Electoral College is based on its number of senators and representatives. The states that President Biden won in 2020 were worth 306 electoral votes at the time; now those states’ combined total is 303.”

As explained above, there was/is a lot “riding on” the Census and the population figures derived therefrom, and that is why “California leaders . . . [who feared] . . . loss of influence in Congress and [the] diminished federal aid that is determined by population, spent more than \$187 million to encourage residents to participate. Nearly 70% of households in California took part online, by mail or by phone, exceeding the national average and besting the rate in states such as Texas, Florida and Arizona” (although general population shifts out of California helped other states gain seats). Our own Second Baptist Church members participated in this “fill out the Census form” drive!! **We are grateful to Valerie McDonald, Sherryll McDonald, Reverend D. Marie Battle, Amelia Jones, Judith**

Jones, Bernestine Taylor and others, for their considerable efforts in calling, otherwise contacting and encouraging constituents to fill out the Census forms. We applaud them for their diligent efforts during the Census as we see how critical the numbers are to California and the political process in general. Their efforts helped to ensure that California did not lose any more than the one seat it lost! Thank you to all!

ARTICLES SUBMITTED BY VALERIE MCDONALD -

U.S. Supreme Court Rejects Restrictions on Life Without Parole for Juveniles – “Betrayal of Our Children”

“Remembering the Tulsa, Oklahoma Massacre -- 100 Years Later -1921-2021”

Valerie McDonald has written and otherwise submitted two interesting articles/pieces for inclusion in the Political Grab Bag for this month on timely issues to which we should direct our attention. As you know, Valerie comes from a “political” family as the daughter of the late, great Congresswoman, Juanita Millender McDonald. “Our” Valerie is an Usher, Deaconess and President of the Christian Women on the Move, who remains active in the affairs of politics and who previously ran for her Mother’s Congressional seat. As a paralegal in a noted law firm, Valerie keeps her hands, as well as her eyes and ears “on the pulse” of the city and the nation so as to keep her Church members informed on current political affairs and legal issues. We thank Valerie for the constant and insightful information that she shares with us and thank her for the articles included in this Political Grab Bag. Please see below!

THE BETRAYAL OF OUR CHILDREN

Marvin Gaye wrote “Save the Children,” in 1971, in which he laments:

“When I look at the world;
It fills me with sorrow;
Little children today;
Are really going to suffer tomorrow . . .
Let’s save the children.”

One of the most shocking things about the American criminal justice system is what we have done to our children. We have created a narrative about child status that is so corrupted that we now have over 250,000 children serving long prison sentences for crimes they committed under the age of 18. We have over 10,000 children on any given day in an adult jail or prison where they can be sexually abused, or where the suicide rates are much higher than in juvenile facilities. We have 3,000 children that have been condemned to die in prison. I think most people would be shocked to learn that we have 13 states in this country with no minimum age for trying a child as an adult . . . that means 9, 10, 11-year-old kids are being prosecuted as adults resulting in adult prison sentences. ***(Alaska, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia have no minimum age for the adult prosecution of children.)*** I think when you realize what we've done to children and how inconsistent it is with the status that we have in our mind - we don't let kids vote, we don't let them drink, we don't let them smoke, we don't let them do a whole host of things - because we know we have to protect them from the challenges that are created with that. But, yet, in our criminal justice system, we have forfeited that responsibility to protect. And I think it's really shocking when you get close to it. These are the words of Bryan Stevenson, lawyer and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative.

Today, we have more children in the criminal justice system than ever before! And, in a recent decision on April 22, 2021, *Jones v. Mississippi*, the United States Supreme Court rejected restrictions on life without parole for juveniles. There is no redemptive program for children who commit crimes under the age of 18. If a judge deems a crime is heinous enough, a sentence of life in prison is not inconceivable. Theoretically, a 9-year-old could spend the rest of his/her life in jail without the possibility of parole. The 6-3 vote wiped out years of fighting for limiting sentencing years according to the age of the defendant – no more leniency. Justices Kennedy and Ginsberg were among those fighting to secure limits. However, the last three confirmed Justices (Amy Coney Barrett, Brett Kavanaugh and Neil Gorsuch,) joined Chief Justice Roberts, Justice Clarence Thomas and Justice Samuel Alito in rejecting any restrictions.

<https://www.npr.org/2021/04/22/989822872/supreme-court-rejects-restrictions-on-life-without-parole-for-juveniles>

Elections have consequences . . . VOTE! THESE ARE OUR CHILDREN!

(My personal note: We are now more painfully aware of the ability of a President to nominate and the Senate to confirm Supreme Court Justices, Court of Appeal Judges and District Judges who are predominately conservative in nature. We need to elect those who will nominate and those who will confirm Justices and Judges who are **broad** as opposed to **narrow** in their thinking!! Yes, as Valerie stated: "Elections have consequences . . . VOTE!")

REMEMBERING THE TULSA, OKLAHOMA MASSACRE

100 YEARS LATER /1921-2021



May 31-June 1 marks 100 years since the Tulsa community of Greenwood (called Black Wall Street) was burned down and many of its residents killed in what is known as the Tulsa Race Massacre.

Greenwood was a thriving, loving community where African Americans worked, lived and raised their family. They had their own churches, schools, hospitals, markets and theaters. Doctors, accountants, lawyers, teachers and nurses all lived here, as neighbors. During the Memorial weekend of May 31, 1921, 19-year-old Dick Rowland was accused of assaulting 17-year-old Sarah Page, a white female elevator operator. The young man was arrested and taken into custody. Angry white men decided the only justice for Rowland was to lynch him and they descended upon the jail. Hearing about this mob, a group of Black men assembled to protect the young man,

armed themselves and went to the jail. As you can imagine, tempers flared and a shot was fired. According to various accounts, when the dust settled, 12 people were killed: 10 white and 2 Black. When other whites heard of the killings, mob violence exploded. White rioters pillaged the community of Greenwood, killing Black men, women and children, burning and looting their stores and homes . . . their community. By noon on June 1st, the Oklahoma National Guard imposed martial law, essentially ending the massacre. At the end of the day, over 9,000 Black people were left homeless, and property damage was calculated at more than \$1.5 million in real estate and \$750,000 in personal property. The Tulsa massacre is now taught in school, after decades of silence and whitewashing. Facing our history makes us stronger as a people and as a nation. Spend some time learning more about the 1921 Tulsa Massacre.

Below is a planned event to commemorate the centennial of the 1921 Tulsa Massacre, May 26 – May 29.

[John Hope Franklin National Symposium](https://www.jhfnationalsymposium.org): To commemorate the centennial of the 1921 Race Massacre, celebrated authors, activists, educators and journalists will be assembled to discuss the story of the Tulsa Race Massacre and how to work toward the intentional journey of reconciliation. 9 a.m. May 26th to 7 p.m. May 29th. Registration is required. To register, go to
<https://www.jhfnationalsymposium.org>.

Also, take the journey of a mother and her son as they chronicle their education of the Tulsa massacre, which also includes history and events planned . . .
<https://www.metrofamilymagazine.com/remembering-the-tulsa-race-massacre>.

In closing, I want to thank Valerie McDonald for her submissions and encourage others who would like to submit articles for inclusion in or attachment to the Political Grab Bag to please contact me at sjbagbysr@sbcglobal.net. All submissions will be welcomed and appreciated as we all have something to share!

Thank you for reading! (May 2021)