

June 1, 2023



## **Testimony at the Second Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent**

Madam Chair, Moderator, Dignitaries, and Comrades in Civil Society,

I am Kayla Griffin, Ohio State Director at All Voting is Local and I bring special greetings from the Cleveland Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to which I serve as President.

I wish to uplift the work of advocates on the local level throughout the United States by means of the democratic electoral process. Domestic and foreign policy are codified and implemented by elected officials, and all elections start at the local level.

I like to think of this process as a three legged stool:

1. The U.N. bodies makes recommendations,
2. The civil society mobilize to demand accountability and action from our governmental systems, and
3. Change agents within our nation states act on the will of the people, be they elected or appointed.

The absence of any of these approaches leads to a stagnation or even regression of great proportions.

When we depart, civil society will carry this message to our members and community. We will mobilize our constituents to pressure our lawmakers into acting on our behalf and — depending on who represents us — we may be ignored. This is because states within the U.S. are moving dangerously close to authoritarian powers.

We have watched corrupt politicians prioritize special interest dollars over the people and gerrymander their way into veto-proof supermajorities. Now, in my state of Ohio, our General Assembly is trying to remove the constitutional privilege of “One person One Vote” by changing the constitution to make citizen-led initiatives nearly impossible. Last year, they changed the State constitution to reflect xenophobic ideals around people who have been nationalized and have the right to vote in our state.

These attacks are undemocratic and unfair, so we fight to protect our freedom to determine our future in the states. And while this democratic experiment of representative democracy through elections is far from perfect, it is a tool by which we express our voice until we see the full liberation for people of African descent.

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People**

12200 Fairhill Rd., Suite 401 • Cleveland, OH 44120 • 216.231.6260 • [clevelandnaacp.org](http://clevelandnaacp.org) • [contact@clevelandnaacp.org](mailto:contact@clevelandnaacp.org)

If states within the U.S. continue to infringe on our right to vote, this body will have no one to appeal to in our halls of Congress because corrupt politicians will continue to be paid off by special interests who would rather see people of African descent expelled from the country or back in chains rather than fully-liberated, self governing people.

Self-determination is central to the promotion of justice, and voting in lawmakers who are anti-racist is a tool in winning at justice.

U.S. public policy is developed and implemented by people who are elected. We must start calling out individuals within administrations who are in the way of progress. The UN committees should identify— by name — blockers of official PFPAD within Congress so that civil society can mobilize on the local levels and vote them out!

Thank you

- # # # -

Chartered in Cleveland in 1912, the Cleveland Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), is a branch of the National Association. Founded in 1909, the NAACP is a membership based civil rights organization. The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination. Learn more at [clevelandnaacp.org](http://clevelandnaacp.org)