

## Get Out the Vote Messages from Alpha Kappa Alpha Forum

The Kappa Tau Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. held their March 25 candidate forum at the Crestmont Boys and Girls Club to reach out to that neighborhood. The event began with three strong messages on the importance of voting.

- Jeanetta Nelms, former director of the Indiana University 21st Century Scholars Program:  
These are some of the questions I want you to pose to yourself as we approach this election season.  
Number One: Why do I vote? Or why do I not vote?  
Number Two: How familiar am I with the criteria for voting in this upcoming primary election?  
Number Three: How well do I know each candidate and their platform?  
Number Four: Will I hold candidates responsible for their campaign promises?  
Number Five: What steps will I take to assist and make sure that others vote?

I hope you can provide answers to all five of these questions before the primary election. Now, here are some of the reasons I vote. It took many years of marching, protesting, fighting for all of us to have the right to vote. Therefore, we dare not not vote.

I vote for the next generation. Decisions made today impact children, grandchildren, and all generations that follow. Our voice is your voice. And not voting is giving someone else your voice. Voting is a chance to stand up for all of the issues that you care about.

Vote, or lose your right to complain about the world's circumstances. If you don't vote, other people get to choose who represents you.

As I remember, Congressman John Lewis, always saying: The vote is the most powerful, nonviolent tool we have in a democratic society. So let's all vote.

- Charlie Nelms, professor emeritus of higher education administration at IU, served as vice president for institutional development and student affairs:  
I just want to add a couple of things. Number one—so Jeanette and I are both from the Arkansas Delta. So we grew up in an era when our parents could not vote—well, they had to pay a poll tax. And I know you don't live with it now. But when you go home, Google "poll tax" ... [You had] threats against you for even casting a vote, even signing up to vote, registering to vote.

It was a dangerous kind of business. So we cannot afford now, to sort of get there and say: Well, we're not going to vote.

I want to ask you a question: If voting wasn't important, why are state legislators all over the country passing legislation, saying making it more difficult for you to vote? Why do candidates spend so much money trying to convince you to vote for them, if voting wasn't important?

Someone once said: If you're not at the table you're on the menu. So the idea is to be at the table, so you can express your own point of view and not having to worry about anyone else.

I just want to thank all of the Divine Nine sororities and fraternities for all that you do everyday, not just in this election season, to make our community a better place, I want to say thanks to all the people who chose to run for election. And it's not a small thing.

And I know we get all excited about Mr. Trump and all of these other people, the most important election, y'all, is the local election: Who gets elected to city council, the county council, the mayoral position, and the state legislature. That's where the action is. And if we pass up the opportunity to exercise our right to vote, we give up our right to vote. End of conversation.

Thank you. Go vote!

- Camille Scales, a sophomore studying law and public policy at IU, representing the Pre-Law Division of the Black Law Students Association:

I'm sure that many can attest to the statement that adulting...is expensive. There are a plethora of factors that play into our daily lives where sacrifices have to be made, and prices have to be paid. Yet I want to note that the freedom for us to vote too was costly. Obtaining an education came with a cost, a great one at that. Generations of Black Americans were dehumanized, ridiculed, and punished for even attempting to pick up a book. And it's because of those before us that we have the freedom to pick up a ballot. Educating oneself comes with a cost, and I encourage you all to believe you are worth it. Your dreams, hopes and aspirations matter. There is great importance in advocating for oneself and for what causes you believe in. For generations, individuals before us have fought for us to have the opportunities we have. Many individuals in this room have contributed to the liberation of Black minds on and off campus. We must continue to educate ourselves on legislation that impacts our communities and our youth. In this day and age, we have the chance to write our own stories. Make our own history. We mustn't take for granted that our voice matters...that our vote matters.