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Stroke of a Pen



Written by kimar cain
Illustrated by Keisha Okafor

About the Southern Poverty Law Center

The SPLC is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements and advance the human rights of all people.

For media inquiries, please contact our press team at press@splcenter.org

For more information, visit splcenter.org

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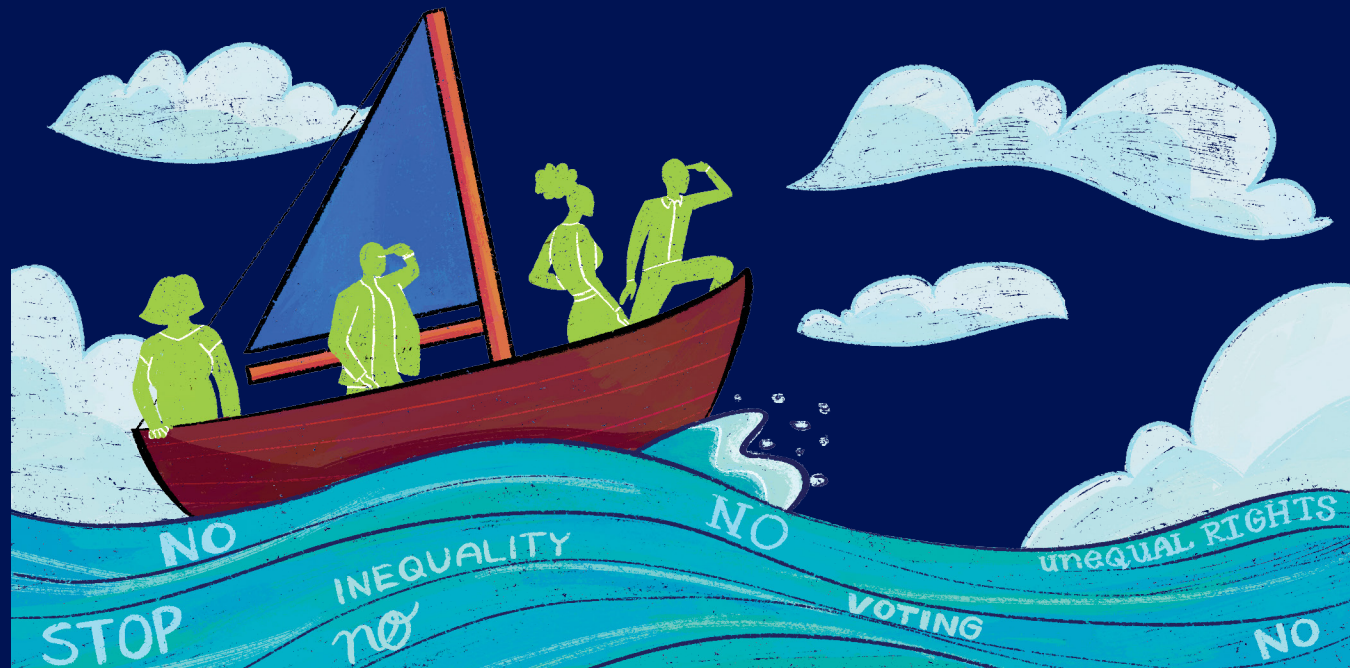
Stroke of a Pen

Back in the day, during a time not so old,

Black folk were told “No!” when trying to be bold.

They wanted to have their own say, they wanted to vote.

But in the sea of unequal rights, it was hard to stay afloat.



Stroke of a Pen

They were strong,
they were smart,
they worked
hard every day.

But something
as simple as skin
color had them
turned away.

Guessing games
and literacy tests
determined if
voting could be.

“No vote for you!”
said the people in
charge, and it didn’t
come without a fee.



Stroke of a Pen

Feeling defeated but not enough to quit.

They fought and fought to make their voices and votes fit.

The people stood tall and wouldn't back down.

They marched through the streets of Selma town.



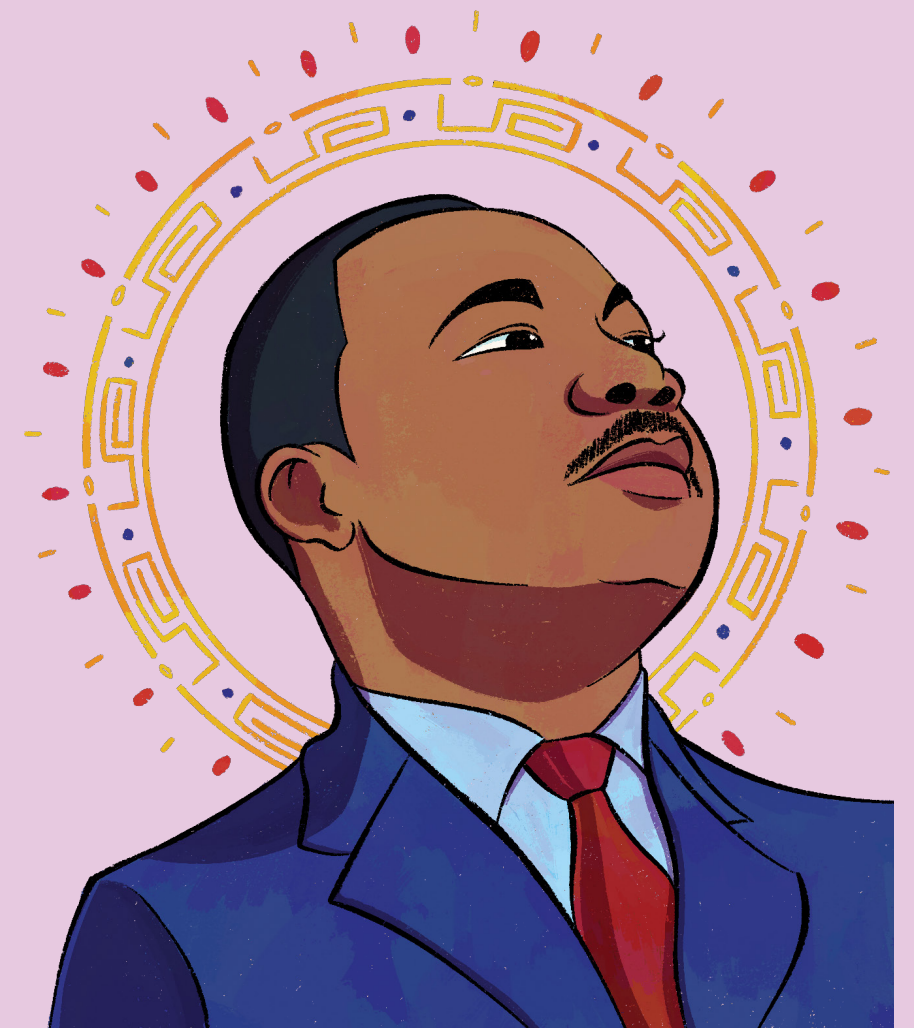
Stroke of a Pen

Dr. King led the way with courage so bright.

He's known for saying you can't fight darkness with darkness, only with light.

Marching for freedom, for justice, for voice.

They crossed a big bridge with the hope of making a choice.



Stroke of a Pen

Met with anger,
force and threats.

On the world stage,
many watched while
trying to catch
a breath.

But people kept
marching, with
signs held high.

They prayed, they
spoke, they reached
for the sky.



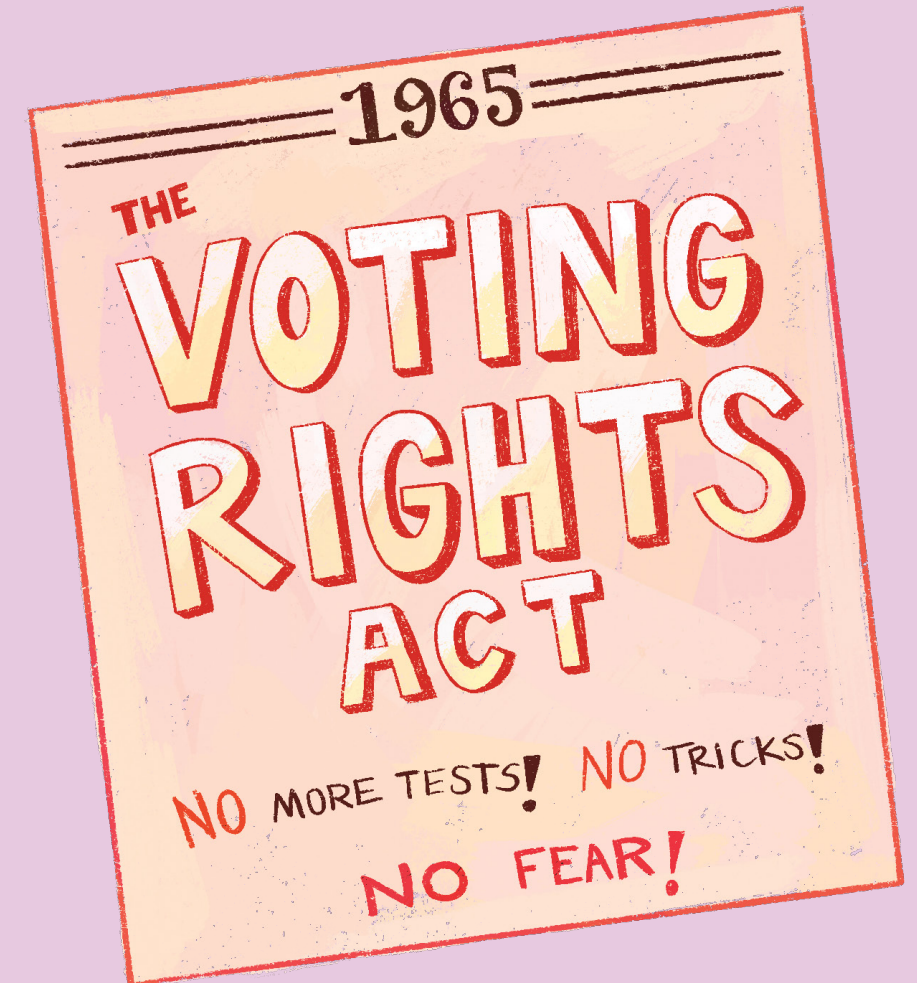
Stroke of a Pen

It was the year
1965, and a new law
was in town.

The Voting Rights
Act is how it all
went down.

It said, “No more
tests! No tricks!
No fear!”

“Every vote must
count, no matter the
color, far and near!”



Stroke of a Pen

With the stroke of a pen President Johnson signed this act,

So that unfair rules would cease,
and Blacks could have their voices back.

Many didn't like it, but that's OK.

A win is a win, and we live to vote another day.



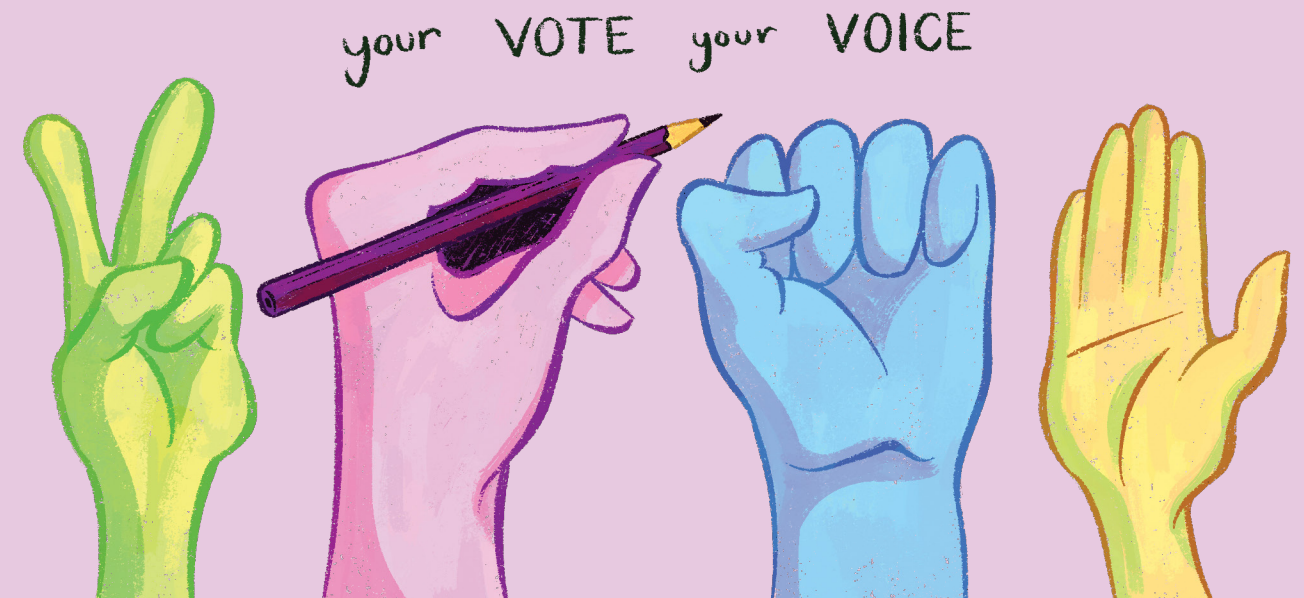
Stroke of a Pen

There were no more worries about voter registration.

Whether Black, Brown, or white, rich or poor,
from states across the nation.

Your vote is your voice,

And whether you vote or not is your choice.



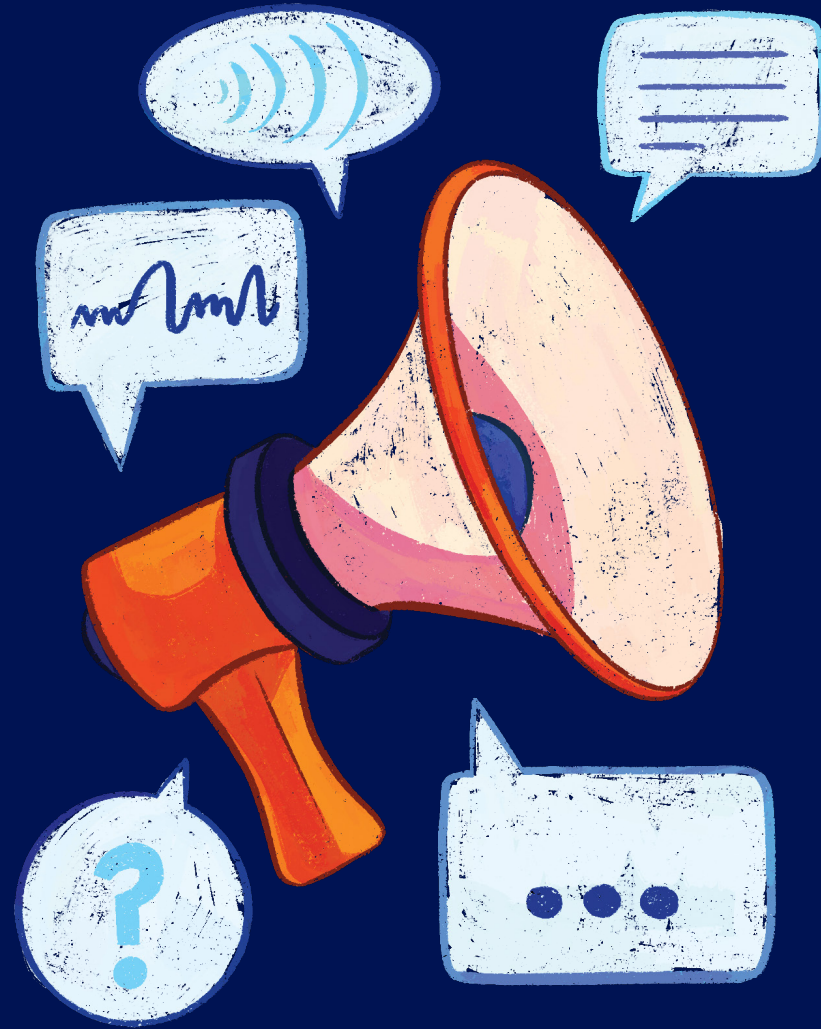
Stroke of a Pen

So what does
this mean for
someone like you?

One day you'll
vote and make
choices too.

But even now, your
voice is strong.

You can learn, speak
out, and stand up
to what is wrong.



Stroke of a Pen

Tell the story, share the facts.

And spread the word of the Voting Rights Act.

From Selma's bridge to schools and communities worldwide,

Remember that real change starts from the inside.



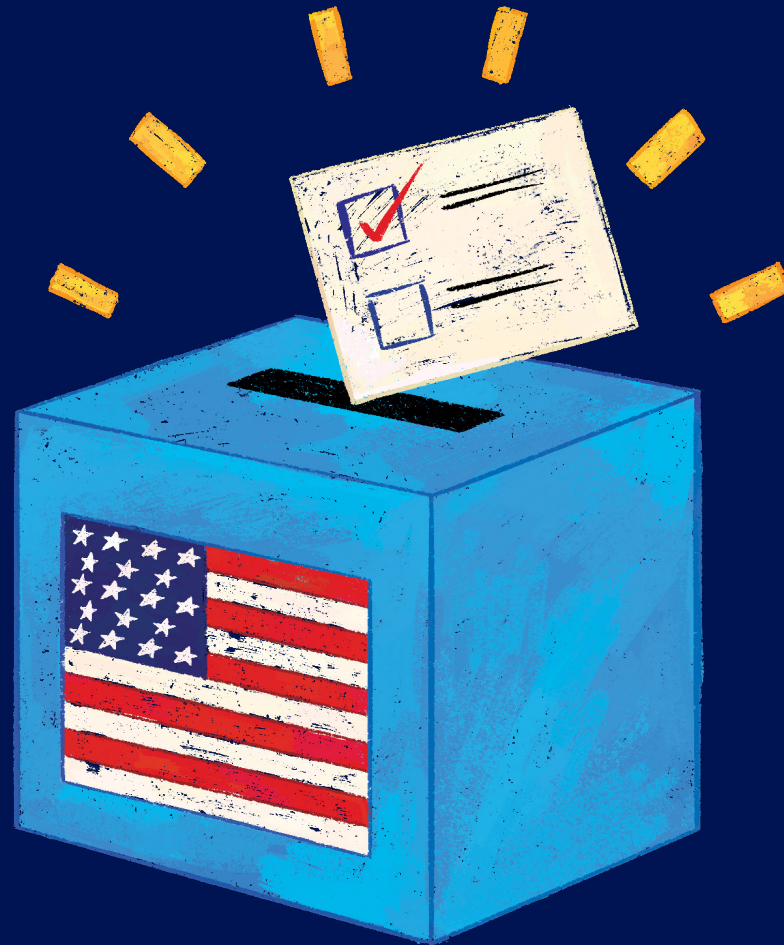
Stroke of a Pen

The ballot box
awaits, it's your
future to steer.

With courage,
hope, and with
voices so clear.

We can do now, what
we couldn't do then.

Make choices and
use our voices, with
the stroke of a pen.



kimar cain

kimar cain is a native of Natchez, MS. Introduced to community organizing in 2009, he's enjoyed building community in various ways over the years and organizes still, til this day. A State Community Organizer with Southern Poverty Law Center and former educator, kimar understands the importance of real-life experiences being taught in classrooms. With experience in elementary and high school, it is with great hope that this piece of literature can help shape and mold the next generation. kimar resides in Central, MS.

Keisha Okafor

Keisha Okafor is a Nigerian-American artist and designer dedicated to spreading joy through her vibrant creations. Inspired by her rich cultural background, the nostalgia of the 90s, music, and fashion, Keisha's work radiates with energy and celebration. With collaborations with renowned companies such as Spotify, Target, and YouTube, her artistry has garnered widespread recognition.

Outside of her professional endeavors, Keisha is an avid collector of dolls and a devoted fan of the Spice Girls. As a graduate of North Carolina State University, she infuses her bold, texture-rich designs with the vibrancy of everyday moments, paying homage to her heritage and community.

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