

# Count and Be Counted:

Why our communities must be counted in the 2010 Census

In the last few weeks, you have probably found a bag reading "United States Census 2010" hanging from your door knob. Or maybe your Census form has already come in the mail. The US Census is a count of all the people in the United States. It's used to distribute government money to communities for schools, hospitals, and programs like job training. It's also used by businesses to determine where to open new shops, grocery stores, and restaurants. Because the census is used for such important purposes, it is vital to make sure our communities are counted in the process.

Historically, low-income communities of color and neighborhood with high rates of incarceration and formerly-incarcerated persons have been severely undercounted. For this reason, V.O.T.E. is partnering with local and national organizations who are leading the effort to ensure that black communities and neighborhoods with high incarceration rates understand what is at stake in the 2010 Census, and make sure they are not undercounted.

It is especially important for residents of New Orleans to fill the census since so many people are still displaced four years after Hurricane Katrina. Making sure everyone is counted will help New Orleans neighborhoods receive all the funding and resources they deserve to rebuild and develop. Filling out the Census form helps organizations like V.O.T.E. that advocate for our families and community fight for our fair share of government money. It only takes about 10 minutes to fill out and send back. If you don't send it back, it is likely that a Census worker will come to your door to help you complete the Census. Let's make sure we count ourselves. It is a free and easy way to fight for the resources and respect our community deserves.

**It's up to each of us to make sure our community counts.  
Be smart. Be counted.**

## V.O.T.E.'S MISSION:

VOICE OF THE EX-OFFENDER (V.O.T.E.) is an organization dedicated to building the political power of people most impacted by the criminal justice system, especially formerly incarcerated persons (FIPs,) their families and loved ones. Through leadership development, community education and voter mobilization, V.O.T.E. will ensure that our constituents are at the center of transforming the criminal justice system.

## Contact V.O.T.E.:

(888) 552-VOTE  
Or  
(504)943-1901

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[www.vote-nola.org](http://www.vote-nola.org)

V.O.T.E. OFFICE

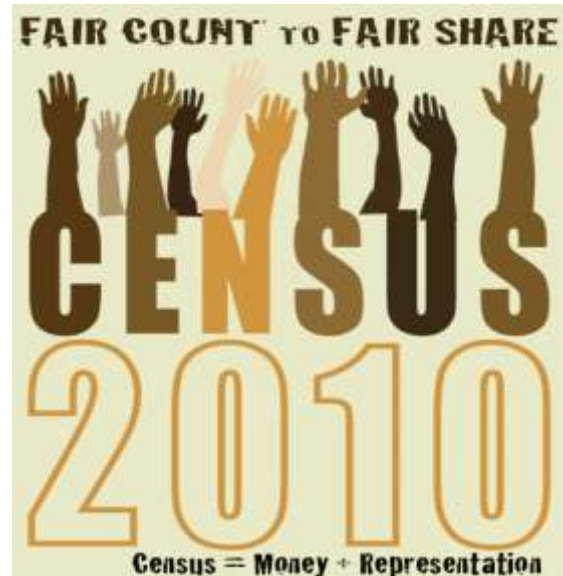
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# V.O.T.E. REPRESENT!

## V.O.T.E. CHALLENGES DISCRIMINATORY PROPOSED CITY ORDINANCE... AND WINS!

On Thursday March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009 V.O.T.E.'s founder and Executive Director Norris Henderson spoke in opposition to a city ordinance that would have prohibited the City from contracting with anyone convicted of certain felonies in the last five years. The Ordinance, according to its author and sponsor Councilmember Stacy Head, was intended to prevent those guilty of public corruption from accessing City dollars. Mr. Henderson spoke at length about the detrimental impact that this ordinance would have on many Formerly Incarcerated Persons who had never been guilty of any type of public corruption. He also addressed the barriers that the ordinance would create for organizations that had recently released individuals on their boards or as their principals. The broad language in the ordinance included individuals convicted of charges as wide ranging as theft and possession of stolen goods as well as embezzlement and fraud.

After Mr. Henderson's appeal, the Council amended the Ordinance to more specifically address the issue of public corruption and ensure that individuals not involved in public corruption would still have access to City contracts. Ordinance Calendar No. 27,892 establishes that it is unlawful for the City to execute a contract or cooperative endeavor agreement with or award a grant to any person, corporation or entity whose principal(s), member(s), and/or officer(s) have within the preceding five years been convicted of, or pled guilty to, a felony under state or federal statutes for embezzlement, theft of **public funds**, bribery, and/or falsification or destruction of **public records**.

## NORRIS HENDERSON APPOINTED TO TASK FORCE BY MAYOR ELECT LANDRIEU

Mayor elect Mitch Landrieu has hit the ground running, convening numerous task forces and committees to provide guidance on several community issues like housing, education and criminal justice. V.O.T.E.'s own Norris Henderson was among a small group of criminal justice reformers and social justice advocates selected to serve on a Task Force to lead the search for the new NOPD Chief. This group will advise the Mayor and the International Chiefs of Police Association, the organization that is contracted to conduct the search for the new Superintendent.

The Task Force has been compiling community input and discussing the best practices in hiring for this position. After 3 weeks of work, the Task Force has already compiled hundreds of surveys from throughout New Orleans which show a nearly unanimous desire in the city for a Chief who will root out corruption & abuse of power in the New Orleans Police Department.

### **(ORDINANCE cont.)**

It was a significant change for many of our members, especially those who are in the process of starting their own businesses. "We dodged a bullet with this change," said John Thompson, director of Resurrection After Exoneration (RAE.) RAE and V.O.T.E. are exploring the possibility of starting a silk screen shop run by Formerly Incarcerated Persons.

The video of the City Council meeting, including Mr. Henderson addressing the Council, can be found online at the City Council's website or on the V.O.T.E. website. The discussion of this specific Ordinance begins at time marker 5:34.

# Masquerade

PARTY & FUNDRAISER



Save the date! On April, 10, The Greater New Orleans Organizers' Roundtable will be hosting a Masquerade Party & Fundraiser to benefit local and regional residents' participation in the 2010 US Social Forum, which will take place in Detroit, Michigan, from June 22 to 26, 2010.

The Masquerade, which is co-hosted by V.O.T.E. and other members of the Roundtable, will be held **Saturday, April 10, 2010 from 7pm to 11pm at the New Orleans African American Museum, 1418 Governor Nicholls Street.** The event will feature live entertainment and a raffle. Raffle prizes include an iPod and a flat-screen television. 100% of the admission and raffle ticket sales will be used to pay for participants' travel, lodging, and registration fees for the 2010 US Social Forum.

The Greater New Orleans Organizers' Roundtable is a local and regional group of organizers which has been working together for nearly 3 years. It is dedicated to strengthening relationships, analyzing systems, and building grassroots membership and power through anti-racist organizing. The Organizers' Roundtable owes its beginning to the 2007 US Social Forum in Atlanta, GA, where over 15,000 people traveled from New Orleans, the Gulf Region, and other parts of the US and the world to learn, share, and experience social movement building. The Masquerade Party & Fundraiser will help members of V.O.T.E. and other organizations share this rich experience next June in Detroit.

## **Join us for a great cause and a GREAT party!**

Tickets are now available at a cost of \$25 each. You can purchase them from V.O.T.E. at our office or our next membership meeting or at the following two locations:

### **People's Institute for Survival & Beyond**

601 N. Carrollton Ave

(504) 301-9292

Wednesday, March 17<sup>th</sup> – 11 am - 5 pm

Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup> – 11 am - 2 pm

Friday, March 19<sup>th</sup> – 11 am - 2pm

### **Community Books Center**

2523 Bayou Road

(504) 948-7323

Monday to Saturday – 10am - 7pm

### **For more information**

Monique Harden, AEHR – 504.799.3064 | Kimberley Richards, PISAB – 504.722.3213

To learn more about the US Social Forum, visit <http://www.ussocialforum.org/>

# V.O.T.E.'s STREET LAW

**Attend our  
Know Your Rights workshop  
And learn about what to do:**

- **when you encounter police,**
- **if you or a loved one is arrested,**
- **when you have to go to court**

***Learn to be SAFE and SMART  
on the STREET!***

**WEDNESDAY  
MARCH 31, 2010 5:30pm  
2601 Tulane Ave, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**



V.O.T.E. Issue 06 March 2010

**V.O.T.E.**

PO Box 13622  
New Orleans, LA  
70185

**MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS ARE THE FIRST THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH  
APRIL 1<sup>st</sup>\*\*\*\*\*MAY 6<sup>th</sup>\*\*\*\*\*JUNE 3<sup>rd</sup>\*\*\*\*\*  
AT 6PM AT THE RAE HOUSE, 1212 ST. BERNARD.**