

7-1-2021

Book Review - Voter Suppression in U.S. Elections

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Recommended Citation

Rogers, E. (2021). Book Review - Voter Suppression in U.S. Elections. *Georgia Library Quarterly*, 58(3). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol58/iss3/14>

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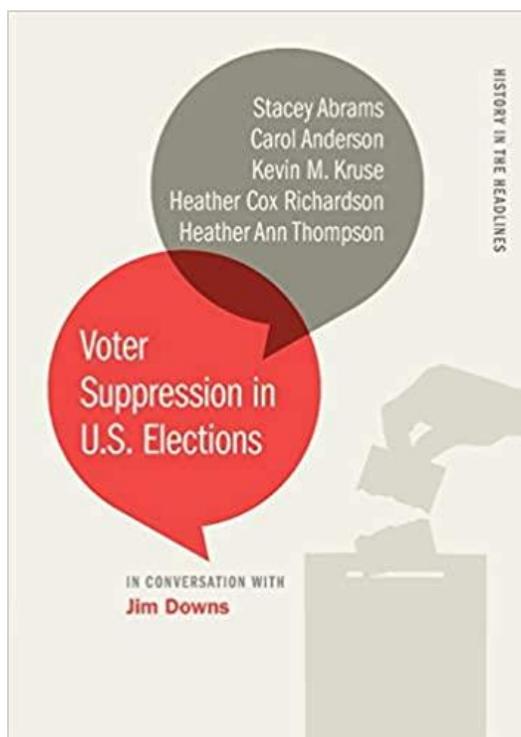
Voter Suppression in U.S. Elections edited by Jim Downs (University of Georgia Press, 2020: ISBN 978082035774, \$19.95)

The timely *Voter Suppression in U.S. Elections* presents a roundtable discussion by Stacey Abrams and historians Carol Anderson, Kevin M. Kruse, Heather Cox Richardson, and Heather Ann Thompson, a panel organized by historian and editor Jim Downs at the Library Company of Philadelphia on April 15, 2019. The transcript appears here, along with newspaper columns and documents on voter suppression by these and other authors, including Congressman John Lewis, Pulitzer Prize-winning author David W. Blight, and journalist Ari Berman. Part of the History in the Headlines series from the University of Georgia Press, this small volume is the ideal length and price for political and regional nonfiction audiences and course adoptions.

In light of Georgia's SB 202 and other states' efforts to whittle voting access, and with the future of the Voting Rights Bill in question, *Voter Suppression in U.S. Elections* is valuable reading. The introduction succinctly reviews the Reconstruction and 20th century history of federal protections of Black voting rights in the United States, leading to the 2013 Supreme Court case *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*, which eliminated such protections. Efforts such as requiring driver's license and election roll

name matches, closing numerous poll centers, and limiting early voting days and hours have further restricted voter access to the polls.

This volume brings together a number of anti-voter suppression voices while providing historical context. In addition to the panel transcript, the selection includes newspaper editorials as well as Abrams's 2019 testimony before the US House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties. The panel discussion centers upon historical and contemporary challenges to elections and distinguishes voter apathy from the low voter turnout caused by voting restrictions. The authors make the case that disenfranchisement differs from lack of political engagement and is, indeed, a result of systemic barriers to voting, not isolated incidents.



Of particular interest to residents of Georgia and the South is Abrams's review of the 2018 Georgia gubernatorial election in the transcript and her House testimony that resulted in her creation of the Fair Fight Action PAC. Abrams's efforts to increase voter registration and participation played a substantial role in the 2020 federal elections for president and senators in Georgia. Accordingly, classroom teachers might choose to balance this volume's selections with readings from legislation and

editorial positions of more conservative voices to avoid accusations of partisanship.

At the same time, the lesson of this volume is that in the absence of federal voting protections, race- and class-based limits on voter enfranchisement do and will continue to occur at the state level. As Abrams said, “we tell

the same myths over and over again until they sound like truth.” This book is an attempt to change that narrative.

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