Our Vote, Our Voice, Our Power

There is no doubt that 2020 has been a turbulent year filled with challenges and uncertainty. I did not predict on March 13th, when I packed up my office, that six months later I would still be working remotely in the midst of a pandemic - a crisis that has taken the lives of over 200,000 people in the United States. During this Covid-19 crisis, we witnessed the murder of George Floyd and the inadequate action bringing Breonna Taylor's murderers to justice. Now we have lost one of the most ardent supporters of democracy in US history, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Every day it seems there is another challenge thrown our way, knocking us off our feet. No wonder we feel powerless, anxious, and uncertain. So many American voices go unheard. How do we unite to bring about change and lead the way out of this crisis? We can and must vote! Voting is exercising our power to preserve our democracy and make our voices heard.

Throughout American history, diverse voices have rarely been considered. The 15th Amendment, passed by Congress in 1870, granted voting rights to all American men regardless of race or color. Yet it was met by countless discriminatory hurdles erected by states to render voting impossibly difficult for people of color. Women's suffrage has recently celebrated its 100-year anniversary, a hard fight for women's voting rights. The Voting Right Act of 1965 prohibited racial discrimination, yet voter suppression continues to this day as does the oppression of BIPOC. What can we do? All of us must commit to call out and fight voter suppression. We have an obligation to support all voters and be followers in Justice Ginsburg's footsteps and be warriors for justice.

There is no denying the importance of this election. Health Outreach Partners is participating in voter registration drives and campaigns through social media. We are getting the word out, especially encouraging young adults and new voters to register and participate in this crucial election. We have also given our team election day off from work to volunteer in polling places and to serve as poll workers or monitors. On election day, we are committed to assisting our underserved communities with whatever means are necessary to get to the polls.

The 2020 election is just over a month away. The last day to register varies by state and is quickly approaching. We must encourage our friends and families to register as soon as possible. Make it fun! Host a gathering over Zoom to register and celebrate our voice and our power. Create a voting plan, as we know we are more likely to succeed when a plan is in place. Many states are allowing early in-person voting this election cycle and many more are mailing ballots in advance to all registered voters. Vote early and keep the conversation going - this election is too important! We must exercise our power and vote on November 3rd!

The challenges and the division in our county are overwhelming. The solutions often feel out of reach. However, the critical change needed to unite us is well within our reach. Now, more than ever, we must call on our inner strength and inspire those around us to use our single most important power, our voice, our vote! In the words of President Barack Obama, ?There is no such thing as a vote that doesn't matter.?

? Cindy