

## NAACP STAND FOR FREEDOM CAMPAIGN

# STAND FOR FREEDOM

*McKinney executed a robust media outreach campaign for the NAACP that reached an audience of more than 250,000,000.*

**Client:** Founded in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. The NAACP is dedicated to ensuring the political, educational, social, and economic equality of all citizens.

**Challenge:** The right to vote is fundamental to our democracy and has been central to the work

and mission of the NAACP for more than 100 years. However, the current political and economic landscape presents some unique challenges to voting rights advocates. In 14 states, dozens of restrictive measures, including the elimination of same-day voting and strict voter ID laws, erected barriers to African-American and Latino voters, mostly in states where voter participation had skyrocketed among those groups. In light of these challenges, the NAACP approached McKinney & Associates in 2011 to help launch the *Stand for Freedom* campaign. The centerpiece for the launch was a rally at the United Nations on December 10, marking International Human Rights Day, and the release of a report documenting the vote blocking tactics of opponents.

**Solution:** Working in close collaboration with NAACP senior leadership and communications staff, McKinney employed a multi-tiered strategy to support NAACP's goal to mobilize one million new voters. The campaign launch was an ambitious six-week sprint that involved envisioning a communications strategy, devising a multi-faceted message platform, generating media attention, producing communication collateral, and crafting a final report with qualitative and quantitative assessments on project outcomes.

The voter ID battle was the toughest fight to wage. Voting rights opponents had cast their restrictive measures as an election integrity issue and developed a narrative that tied voting to commercial enterprises like cashing a check, driving a car and other activities that typically require photo identification.

McKinney crafted collateral that called attention to the language of opponents. Words that spoke to a narrow and closed system—restrictive, limit, tough and harsh—conveyed the underlying goals of voter ID measures.

The firm also consistently yoked the obstacles together. While polling data strongly suggest general acceptance of voter ID measures, there is very little support for limiting or eliminating Sunday voting or barring non-partisan civic groups from conducting voter registration drives.

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The firm produced factsheets focusing on the role of the billionaire Koch brothers, who provided much of the financing for the voting restriction campaigns; exposing their opposition to other civil rights measures and the family's connection to the racist John Birch Society.

Key salient points from McKinney's message platform included:

- Voting Rights = Human Rights
- Voting is a right—*not* a privilege.
- Stemming the Tide of Democracy: Turning Back History
- We are Fighting Back: We can Protect and Exercise our Right to Vote

Despite the short gestation period, McKinney effectively positioned the NAACP as an avid defender of democracy and voting rights.

The firm executed a robust media outreach campaign that garnered prominent and favorable coverage in print, online and broadcast outlets—including, *Associated Press, The New York Times, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, Huffington Post, Politico, CNN, MSNBC, ABC, and BET*. Outreach efforts were supplemented by a well-attended media briefing to rollout a NAACP/NAACP LDF report, *Defending Democracy*, that resulted in placements spanning over a six-day news cycle. Prominent media attention was further spiked by McKinney-shepherded op-eds by NAACP President and CEO Benjamin Jealous placed in the *Houston Chronicle* and *Miami Herald*. Most importantly, *Defending Democracy* offers a blueprint for educating, empowering and mobilizing voters in 2012 and beyond.