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Georgia Election Proves the Point

The shadow of the January 6 insurrection in Washington is dark and will be long, but we ought not let it obscure the rays of light that also burst forth that day, cutting through the dissipating miasma of 2020 like a beacon through fog. I'm referring, of course, to Georgia.

As the last vote counts from the previous day's runoff elections trickled in, it became clear that Georgia voters had shifted the balance of power in the United States Senate. That's a big deal, obviously, and many people (including me) will be focused on the opportunity it creates to undo some of the colossal damage done during the past four years to the health, wellbeing, and future prospects of millions of people, and to the democratic institutions on which we all depend.

More important in my mind, though, is how it came about. A **brilliant Black strategist** organized and motivated long-disenfranchised Black communities in a former Confederate state, and as a result, control of the United States Senate shifted through the election of the **first Black Senator** to enter the Senate by election from any Confederate state since Reconstruction. (Republican Sen. Tim Scott (South Carolina) was elected in 2014 (special election to complete term) and 2016 (full term), after having been initially appointed in 2013 to fill a vacancy left by the resignation of Jim DeMint.)

This is just another instance of the oft-proven notion that all Americans owe any pride we have in the American idea to the ceaseless efforts of Black people to remind us, cajole us, and, where necessary, force us to live up to the ideals that define us as a nation. This has been true since Black people, enslaved and free, signed up to fight and die for those ideals in the Revolution and the Civil War, and it has held up through every moment of external conflict or internal civil strife this country has weathered.

Closer to home for us, nonprofit organizations draw on this legacy to vigorously defend and aggressively advance the democratic values and institutions that form the bedrock of the American idea. Nonprofits, including many of our clients, work tirelessly to (in no particular order) preserve independent, objective journalism in an era of interest-driven infotainment; address the rampant abuse of social media to disseminate false and hateful disinformation; strengthen voting systems and elections; give voice to the disenfranchised; and peacefully oppose violent extremism wherever it appears.

In all of these areas and countless others, Black Americans continue to hold all of us, as they always have, to the standards we profess to embrace, even when met with reactions that make their case for them. (We are appalled by the racism evident in how differently security agencies in Washington **prepared for and responded to** last summer's peaceful,

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largely-Black BLM protest, on one hand, and to January 6th's violent, mostly-White insurrectionist mob, on the other.)

As we recover from a devastating year followed by one of our worst civic moments, our nation has just honored the legacy of Dr. King, who embodied the indomitable devotion of Black Americans to a persistent, principled, and peaceful demand that all of us live to our highest ideals. Moving forward, we should never forget that Black lives matter not only in their own right, but also because without the integrity and power of enfranchised Black Americans, there will be no American idea to defend.