

"There's Blood on That Ballot": Our Heritage and Responsibility,"

by Dr. Chris Jones

On a recent Saturday in Arkansas, acclaimed actor and activist Wendell Pierce delivered a powerful message: He urged Black men to exercise their right to vote.

Wendell Pierce, known for his roles in iconic productions such as *The Wire* and *Suits*, is much more than an accomplished actor. Born and raised in New Orleans, Pierce has been a vocal advocate for social justice, using his platform to speak on issues like racial inequality, civil rights, and voter suppression. Beyond his acting career, he has become a significant public figure in the fight for equity and civic engagement. His connection to New Orleans has inspired his work in post-Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts, where he played a key role in rebuilding communities in his hometown. He has done so by utilizing Community Development legislation passed by President Bill Clinton. Pierce's passion for activism reflects his deep belief in the power of community, the importance of education, and, most notably, the impact of political participation.

Pierce hammered home the historical weight and sacrifices associated with this act. His words, "There's blood on that ballot," imprint a stark reminder of the struggles and losses endured by those who fought for every citizen's right to vote. Pierce's poignant message resonates deeply, not just with the Black community but with ALL voters. His words highlight the gravity of every election and the responsibility it carries.

Wendell Pierce's statement evokes images of the Civil Rights Movement, a time when many sacrificed their lives for the right to vote. It is a direct reference to those who were beaten, harassed, and even killed in the fight for voting rights in America. The rivers of Alabama and Mississippi, as Pierce mentioned, were once stained with the blood of brave men and women who dared to demand equality. Voting was not always a given; it was earned through struggle, and Pierce's words serve as a crucial reminder of this history.

Honest Words for Our Time

Pierce's statement comes at a time when voter suppression and apathy are critical issues. Many people, particularly in minority communities, feel disillusioned with the political process. However, his message, delivered with urgency in Arkansas, calls for reflection on the blood, sweat, and tears that paved the way for today's voters. To disregard the right to vote is to dishonor the sacrifices made by previous generations. And whether you vote or not, and how you vote, will truly affect your and future generations.

Pierce's visit to Arkansas was more than just a call to action; it was a plea for unity and awareness. During his speech, he not only addressed voter participation but also tackled issues concerning the representation of Black men in political discourse.

His speech is part of a broader effort to energize the African American voter base, particularly Black men, who have been targeted by various political parties in recent elections. As Black men have increasingly become a key demographic in tight races, Pierce's rallying cry is vital. He challenges Black men to recognize the power of their vote and their role in shaping the future.

During his recent time in Arkansas, Pierce highlighted the need for voters to remember their roots and honor the legacy of those who struggled and won before them. The historical context of his statement draws a line from past to present, urging the audience not to take the hard-earned right to vote for granted. By doing so, Pierce emphasizes the moral duty of all citizens to participate in the democratic process, particularly in times of social and political division like today.

In a political climate marked by concentrated efforts to suppress voting access, Pierce's message in Arkansas stands as a reminder of the importance of voter registration and turnout. His call to action is clear: the power of the ballot cannot be overstated, and it is essential to honor those who made it possible, and to honor ourselves and our freedoms.

As the 2024 elections draw near, let us not forget Wendell Pierce's words, "There's blood on that ballot." It's a powerful reminder of the past and a call to action for today

and for the future. VOTE! Make your voice heard—not just for yourself, but for those who sacrificed to give you that right.

Call to Action

Your vote matters. It's not just a right; it's a responsibility. Make a plan to vote. Honor the past, shape the future, and ensure that your voice is heard in the upcoming elections.

Share your thoughts and comments at chrisjoneslistens@gmail.com.