

FORUM

We applaud Court decision in overturning N.C.'s biased redistricting plans

Bob Hall
Guest
Columnist

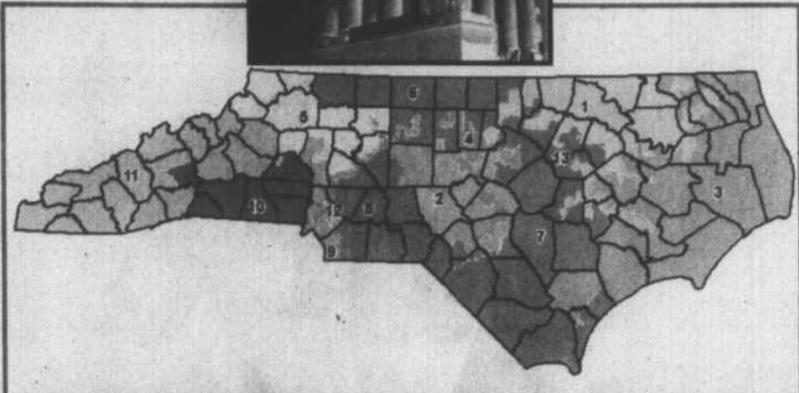
In March, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that maps drawn by Alabama lawmakers distorted the requirements of the Voting Rights Act by packing African-Americans into a small number of districts.

*Overall, 563 of the state's 2,692 precincts were divided into more than 1,400 sections by the new plans. More than one fourth (27.2 percent) of North Carolina's voting-age population live



the Voting Rights Act's requirement that African-American voters have a fair chance to elect representatives of their choice. But 15 of the 25 African-American legislators in the 2010

goal in splitting many precincts and drawing weirdly shaped districts was to increase the chances that their party's representatives would win elections, and they adamantly deny that race was a deciding factor in how the splits were made. However, it turns out that the GOP mapmakers only had the racial identity of voters below the precinct level, not the party affiliation. They could not zigzag a line through a precinct based on where voters from one party or another lived; instead, they were using race as a surrogate for who was likely a Democrat or a Republican.



in these split precincts, where neighbors will get different ballots and have less ability to work together for common political ends. Importantly, black voters are twice as likely as whites to live in one of these split precincts.

General Assembly were elected in districts where black voters were a minority. They were elected by a "fusion coalition" of people of color and white voters. The U.S. Supreme Court is right: Packing blacks into arbitrarily fixed super-majority districts is no longer required for them to elect candidates of their choice.

*Republican mapmakers said they had to segregate voters in this manner to create majority-black districts that would satisfy

*Republican mapmakers admit their

The divisive strategy used in drawing these maps undermines the development of multiracial fusion coalitions in North Carolina. White Democrats used similar strategies 120 years ago to fight a fusion coalition of black Lincoln Republicans and white Populists — and now white Republicans are doing the same thing.

Democracy North Carolina recognizes that some partisan advantage and precinct splitting is inevitable in how new maps are drawn.

But the plans developed in 2011 divided far more precincts than ever before and went well beyond the limits of acceptable political greed. North Carolina can and must do better.

Bob Hall is the Executive Director of Democracy North Carolina.

5 One view of succeeding while black: ways to avoid altercations with the police

Matthew Drayton
Guest
Columnist

During the past few months, there have been numerous incidents — some tragic — where police officers were accused of brutality and abuse of power against African-Americans, including Ferguson, Missouri; North Charleston, South Carolina; and New York

to work through whatever issues those police officers had with me. I did not respond to their behavior toward me, and worked more closely with the officers who reached out to me than the ones who didn't. In the end, we successfully finished our work in both cities, and I made some new friends in law enforcement.

My experiences with the police were not all bad; in fact there were more positive experiences with them than negative ones. I realize some of my circumstances and encounters with the police were of a different nature than being pulled over for a routine traffic stop, but the two situations I mentioned above were intense and could have easily become confrontational.

I have been stopped and pulled over by the police numerous times over the years, and I can honestly say, I have never been mistreated by a police officer. The following tips have worked for me when I have had encounters with police officers in the past. Hopefully they can help you too.

***Obey the law:** If you are breaking the law in any way; it's only a matter of time before you have to deal with the police. Turn on your flashers, drive slowly and pull over to a well-lit busy area if you are pulled over. Cooperate if you are being questioned or arrested to avoid any physical confrontation.

***Be polite and show respect:** Greeting and treating a police officer with respect immediately de-escalates the situation. Regardless of how you feel about being pulled over or questioned, the police are authorized to do so. Muzzling off and becoming aggressive toward the police will make the situation worse.

***Obey police officer orders:** When a policeman asks you to do something reasonable, do it. Remember, these men and women are trying to do a job, and sometimes need to gather facts to do their job. Disobeying the police officer's orders will again only make the situation worse.

***Make lifestyle changes:** Most of the things that happen to us are a result of our decisions. Alcohol, outdated

license plates, and erratic driving are a few contributors to police stops. If you are hanging out late at night with known offenders, or in places where there is a high probability of a crime, there will likely be a heavy police presence there.

***Educate your children:** Teach your children at an early age about police brutality, and to be respectful when dealing with the police, and all adults for that matter. Explain current events to them in an unbiased way, and make them aware of the dangers they face if they break the law, and what can happen to them at the hands of some police officers.

It is not my intent to downplay police brutality incidents or to be insensitive to anyone who has suffered or died at the hands of the police. My purpose is to help African-Americans understand that engaging an officer properly can de-escalate the situation, and possibly avoid a deadly altercation.

I am a middle-aged, African-American male who regrettably has had too many encounters with the police during my lifetime. I have never been arrested or beaten by a police officer, nor have I ever been disrespectful or mouthed off to one.

I do realize that if a police officer wants to use violence against you, he is going to do it, but I truly believe it's harder to beat up a person who is polite and compliant.

Try these tips the next time you have an encounter with the police. It cannot hurt and it may just save you. Remember, we cannot control a police officer's behavior, but we can control our own.

Retired Army Sergeant Major Matthew R. Drayton is a corporate speaker, life coach, consultant, leadership expert and author of "Succeeding While Black." He has also been mentoring youth for over a decade and is currently the Executive Director of Great Oak Youth Development Center, a NC-based non-profit organization that mentors at risk youth. For more information, visit www.MattDrayton.com.

being the most well-known.

Some of the incidents were caught on video. There are nearly 780,000 sworn officers in the United States protecting and serving 319 million Americans. Police officers have a very difficult and stressful job, but that is no excuse to use excessive force. However, we must take into account what these officers go through and understand that all police officers aren't bad.

I have been in situations where I could have easily gotten into confrontations with police officers. Years ago, I regularly worked with local and state police officers in major cities throughout the U.S. I can tell you firsthand that there are some police officers that are prejudiced or egotistical, and some that have their own agendas.

I remember arriving in Texas to meet and work with local police there. When I reached out to shake one of the officer's hands, he refused! Later during that same trip, I was almost arrested because the same police officer who wouldn't shake my hand failed to tell a group of his fellow officers who I was as I approached them.

On another trip to California, a police officer stood 2 feet in front of me and stared me down while I waited to meet with the deputy police chief. I had never met this officer before, nor did I do anything to him to warrant the stare he was giving me.

In both Texas and California, I was the only African-American in the group; my co-workers were not subjected to the same treatment. In both cases, I had no choice but

State of Black America: The big eruption

Bill Turner
Guest
Columnist

I just finished my read of the "State of Black America - 2015" report, released recently by

An explosion in the neighborhood of the Old Faithful Geyser today would eject 1,000 times as much material into the atmosphere as the 1980 Mount St. Helens eruption, "a disaster that would be felt on a global scale."

Were the riots of Detroit in 1967 or was it the eruption of blacks' hot anger in Los Angeles in April of 1992 when a jury acquitted LAPD officers of beating Rodney G. King, or was the wrath

exhibited in Ferguson, Missouri last fall — or is it the seething discord following the death of Freddie Grey in Baltimore this month — that should inform us of the deeper chamber of hot, molten despair that is deep within America's social mantle?

Just as geoscientists have developed, literally, a complete diagram of the plumbing system of the world's largest volcano, one that is capable of erupting with catastrophic

violence on a scale never before witnessed, we also have complete pictures and evidence of the crisis in Black America — in America, period — that has the potential to go "Bang!" This month, under the title "1.5 million black men missing," the New York Times reported that "in New York, almost 120,000 black men between the ages of 25 and 54 are missing from everyday life. In Chicago, 45,000 are, and more than 30,000 are missing in Philadelphia. Across the South — from North Charleston, S.C., through Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi and up into Ferguson, Mo. — hundreds of thousands more are missing. They are missing, largely because of early deaths or because they are behind bars."

If indeed the tectonic plate below Yellowstone Park is creeping at the rate of roughly an inch a year, the status of far too many Black Americas is deteriorating into a bottomless abyss, a hell on earth. One doesn't have to be scientist to see what is happening and what is likely to happen.

To view the New York Times story about the missing black men, go to http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/04/20/upshot/missing-black-men.html?_r=0&abt=0002&abg=1.

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the National Urban League. I read it alongside an article in Science magazine by two geoscientists at the University of Utah who have now completely imaged the plumbing system beneath the bubbling geysers and hot springs of Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming.

The Urban League described — to nobody's surprise — "that black Americans fares worse than their white peers across a variety of indicators, including economics, social justice and overall equality." For nearly 40 years now, the League's report gives a high resolution picture of the modest gains blacks have made in some areas as well as a very detailed image of the speed things are moving, how far we yet have to go.

Side-by-side, the Urban League Report and the study by the U.S. Geological Survey of Yellowstone's volcanic activity make for a great allegory. It was 640,000 years ago when Yellowstone erupted the last time. The scientists noted that there is now enough built-up magma in a new reservoir that they discovered to fill the Grand Canyon if it were to burst forth today.