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How I Became a Super Voter

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How I Became a Super Voter



As we near the Nov. 3 presidential election, [Governors State University](#) is engaging faculty, staff, and students on the importance of voting. We sat down with [Psychology](#) major and a card-carrying “Super Voter” J. Latrice Koger to discuss what the right to vote means to her.

GSU Newsroom: What is a Super Voter (SV)?

Latrice: A Super Voter (SV) is a someone who has voted in every election since they became eligible to vote. We vote in primary and general elections, showing up for presidential elections every four years and the congressional races that come two years later. A SV does not forego state or municipal elections either; we cast our votes for aldermen/women, mayor, governor, the various commissioners, and judges.

GSU Newsroom: What inspired you to be a SV?

Latrice: I was 12 years old in 1983 when Harold Washington ran for mayor of Chicago. I remember my parents, my oldest brother, grandparents, and other family members being so excited to vote. The excitement was contagious; I wanted to go to the polls to

elect the first Black mayor of Chicago, too. That same year, Walter Mondale announced his candidacy for president. I took it upon myself to research both Mondale and the incumbent President Ronald Reagan, and I made a scrapbook of comparisons. I still have it! To gather information, I went door to door and surveyed my neighbors to find out who was registered to vote. I was discouraged to learn that so many eligible voters were either not registered or not interested in voting. Among the reasons cited were they didn't want to miss work to vote, or they didn't feel like their vote mattered. Some had religious conflicts.

GSU Newsroom: Why is voting so important to you?

Latrice: My mom impressed upon me the importance of being involved in the electoral process. My dad reminded me that our ancestors were denied the right to vote for over a century. In 1865, the 13th amendment to the Constitution abolished slavery; however, it did not explicitly guarantee Black people the right to vote. Former slave turned statesman, Frederick Douglass said, "slavery is not abolished until the Black man has the ballot." In 1866 southern states enacted Black Codes, stringent laws that forced Black free men to sign yearly labor contracts. These laws determined where Black people could live and work and they prevented Black people from voting.

The outrage over Black Codes forced Congress to pass the 14th amendment to the Constitution in 1870, which allowed Black men (former slaves) to become U.S. citizens and the 15th amendment, which granted Black men the right to vote. Even with the passage of these three amendments, it was left up to individual states to determine the qualifications for voting. Leaving these decisions to the states led to Jim Crow laws, which was much of the same oppression under a different name.

Blacks were intimidated, terrorized, and even murdered for trying to vote; some suffered humiliation of such acts as having to guess how many marbles were in a jar, or passing an aptitude test to earn the right to cast a ballot. It wasn't until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that Black people were finally able to vote. A century after the Constitution guaranteed all the right to cast a ballot, followed by countless deaths from bombings, lynchings, and the legendary Bloody Sunday march led by the late Congressman John Lewis, black men and women were allowed to vote in peace.

GSU Newsroom: How do you ensure that you always vote and how can others become Super Voters?

Latrice: I joined the military in 1990, and I knew I did not want that to be a reason for me to miss an election. So, I completed a Permanent Absentee Application. If you want to be a Super Voter, you can complete a Permanent Absentee Application too! Your ballot will come to you a month before the election, all you have to do is mail it back. To apply for absentee ballots in Indiana, click [here](#); and for information in Illinois, click [here](#).

GSU Newsroom: Can you leave us with why it's important that students participate in the election process?

Latrice: Do you receive financial aid? Do you or your parents pay taxes or receive childcare initiatives, or unemployment? Do you use TikTok, shop on Amazon, have a

school loan, or use the internet? Do you like breathing clean air or drinking water from your faucet?

Well guess who decides how much your Pell Grant is? Do you know TikTok could be banned? Are you aware who determines net neutrality? YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS! Your president, your congresspersons, your senators, and your governors. Vote! Vote like your life depends on it, because it does.

The General Election is Tuesday, Nov.3