



## Democracy Spring Met with Media Silence

**May 11, 2016** - The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People joined more than 100 organizations in a massive protest in Washington, DC last month. The expansive sit-in culminated in noise, marches, shouting, and arrests - and you probably never heard about it.

The NAACP joined hands with hundreds of followers and members of sister organizations protesting the corrupting power of money in politics. Public Citizen, People for the American Way, AAUW, American Postal Workers Union, Common Cause, Greenpeace, Communications Workers of America, Democracy Initiative, and countless other pro-democracy organizations participated in the three-day event that began with a 140-mile walk from the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia to the U.S. Capitol.

“Every American deserves an equal voice in government. That is our birthright of freedom, won through generations of struggle, but today our democracy is in crisis,” according to Democracy Now’s website. “American elections are dominated by billionaires and big money interests who can spend unlimited sums of money on political campaigns to protect their special interests at the general expense. Meanwhile, as the super-rich dominate the ‘money primary’ that decides who can run for office, almost half of the states in the union have passed new laws that disenfranchise everyday voters, especially people of color and the poor.”

The coalition and the NAACP point to anti-democratic efforts to stifle votes in states by enacting new disfranchising laws, including new voter registration deadlines and [restrictive identification](#) requirements. The U.S. Supreme Court aided the effort to lock out voters by nullifying the section of the Voting Rights Act requiring federal permission before states could do anything that might tamper with voting. Within weeks of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, North Carolina and Mississippi began passing new laws imposing voting restrictions.

Protestors criticized the emerging American oligarchy, wherein the rich and powerful have more say in politics than the voters. Examples, according to protesters, include the Supreme Court’s ruling in the *Citizens United v. FEC* case, which opened the floodgates to new money in politics by enabling new political action committees (Super PACS) that can raise limitless amounts of cash from any source and buy influence with elected politicians. One of the more obvious examples of influence-peddling includes House Democrats’ attempts to [jettison](#) an Obama administration plan to reduce drug prices for regular Americans, spurred by wealthy doctors and the pharmaceutical industry who donate heavily to their campaigns.

Participants in the protest included NAACP President and CEO [Cornell Brooks](#), as well as actress [Rosario Dawson](#) and Harvard law professor Lawrence Lessig, among others. The event was a

protest, in every sense of the word, meaning many participants participated in what amounted to civil disobedience and were consequently rounded up and charged with "crowding, obstructing, or incommoding," [according](#) to DC police.

Despite the arrest of nearly [1,400 individuals](#), however, the media largely ignored the event. Rebecca Lenn, outreach director for media watchdog group Media Matters for America, told the Mississippi NAACP that the national press never gave the event coverage because wealthy media owners don't want money out of politics. The media is, they claim, part of the establishment that wants moneyed interests to retain political power.

"Thousands gathered in Washington last week to protest the outsized influence of money in politics and unprecedented restrictions on voting rights, yet most broadcast evening programs and the top five Sunday shows failed to take notice. This election cycle, too many network hosts and pundits have prioritized horse race campaign coverage over the substance of issues that matter most to their viewers," Lenn stated.

She went on to explain that [a huge majority of Americans](#) believe that money matters more than voters in shaping U.S. policy and that money's corrupting influence [ranks as a top concern](#).

The Democracy Spring and Democracy Awakening demonstrations weren't the only ball that large media dropped, however. Lenn explained that her organization's "[last analysis](#) revealed that six years after the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*, the same networks have largely neglected to cover the need for campaign finance reform," with publicly owned PBS being [the lone exception](#).

"This lack of coverage often presents the problem as intractable and the new status quo and disregards the growing movement of Americans working to implement solutions that can reverse it - a movement reflected in both Democracy Spring and Democracy Awakening," Lenn said.

The coalition remains stalwart in its demand for Congress and the President to pass laws such as the Voting Rights Advancement Act, which restores the protections against voting discrimination that were struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in its *Shelby County v. Holder* decision, as well as the Voter Empowerment Act, which will modernize voter registration and stop "deceptive practices" that turn voters away from polls.

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Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors. For more information about the Mississippi NAACP or news stories, call 601-353-8452 or log on to [www.naacpms.org](http://www.naacpms.org). Like us on Facebook by searching Mississippi NAACP and follow us on Twitter @MSNAACP.