

ALL SKINFOLK AIN'T KINFOLK

A FILM BY ANGELA TUCKER

# *Black Women's*

**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

*"I don't believe in hope. I believe in action... to a large degree, everything is in your hands."*

*- Kerry James Marshall*

# LETTER FROM THE FILMMAKER



This movie started as a walk between two friends.

My friend Ameca and I often take walks in City Park in New Orleans. We talk about all kinds of things on these walks: love, health, education. You name it.

This particular time, I wanted her opinion about the upcoming mayoral election. There was going to be a runoff and it was between two Black women. As a Black woman who lives in New Orleans (but was born and raised in New York City), I found it incredible to participate in an election like this. It was something I hadn't imagined in my lifetime: two Black women running for mayor of one of the most influential cities in the United States. Because New Orleans' mayor is almost always a Democrat, I was in new territory.

No longer could I rule out the conservative candidate and just vote for whoever was a Democrat. I was in the unique and exciting position of having two candidates who were moderate enough that I seemingly aligned with both of them, so real research on their platforms had to take place. In trying to better understand who to vote for, I became interested in the dialogue around these candidates, which seemed to be focused on everything but their platforms.

My conversation with Ameca was initially about the election itself, but it eventually led to a deeper discussion about the expectations that Black women have of Black politicians. This sparked my interest in talking to other Black women and I decided to record those conversations. Those walks and talks revealed such nuanced and compelling perspectives on the role of Black women in politics, the future of New Orleans and the history of our right to vote that I began to feel that the personal decision I faced resonated far beyond this local race, that it set the stage for how a new wave of candidates might run, campaign and lead. This race also foregrounded how the media would grapple (rather clumsily) with political contests that have virtually no playbook. This race had to be documented and *All Skinfolk Ain't Kinfolk* was born.

We created this guide as a tool for Black women to have conversations like the ones featured in the film. We hope that you agree, disagree and do it all with love. I truly believe that Black women's power to change the world lies in their ability to be heard.

## Angela Tucker

Director, *All Skinfolk Ain't Kinfolk*



**Director Angela Tucker**

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### GUIDE CREDITS

Written by Nyasha Laing and Alice Quinlan

Reviewed by Nia Weeks and Ameca Reali

Designed by Jheanelle Ferguson

Impact Producer: Krystal Tingle

# ABOUT THE FILM



After a contentious race, the 2017 runoff for mayor of New Orleans came down to two candidates: Desirée Charbonnet and LaToya Cantrell, two very different Black women. The winner of this election would take office as the first female mayor of New Orleans and the city's fourth Black mayor. Through news footage, campaign advertisements and archival audio and video, All Skinfolk Ain't Kinfolk tells the unprecedented story of this mayoral runoff through the eyes of Black women living in this city.



Join the conversation on social media!

#worldchannel #whatdefinesyou

@tuckergurlinc @worldchannel



# DISCUSSION PROMPTS



In recent years, Black women have been recognized as a formidable force in both local and national politics. They have built their electoral base and begun to convert their success into political power, securing several seats in the U.S. Senate and Congress in the 2018 election. In New Orleans, the historic race featured in the film galvanized activist voters who used the opportunity to move conversations beyond politics as usual. What's next for Black women in politics? What do the victories mean to you and how do you see the challenges ahead?

Now that you've seen the film, here are some discussion prompts to help you consider and think through during this election season what this film meant to you, your personal relationship to local and national politics and the issues that you hold close.

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**"I thought having two black female candidates would be this sort of transformative moment where I felt that I was seen in a way that I hadn't been, but somehow it didn't really feel that way."**

Do you feel that representation is an essential step to advancing the political concerns of Black women?

Do you have thoughts about what that representation should look like?

Has having Black women in office at the local and national levels (and in the White House) made it any easier for you to advance your concerns? Has it made a difference in the material conditions of your life? How?

**There are things that suggest that once a person who's formerly oppressed obtains some sort of power, they then adopt the tools of the white power structure and use them against people they used to be like.**

The title of the film is a reference to an old saying popularized by Zora Neale Hurston, "All my kinfolk ain't skinfolk." It reflects the wisdom of Black elders, who meant that even a person with Black skin is capable of betraying you or working against your interests.

What does this title evoke?

How do you decide who you should trust to represent your interests? How much of a factor is race for you?

Do you feel that Black and Brown folks in positions of power can resist using tools of White supremacy once they are inside that system of power? What can we do to hold them accountable?

Do you feel that Black women leaders have the potential to resist succumbing to the pressures of politics? Why or why not?

# DISCUSSION PROMPTS CONT'D



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**The leanings of our local media publications deeply, deeply shape our discourse about these candidates in ways that haven't been as obvious with other races. We have two Black candidates; we have two Black female candidates. The vote for them is not split along racial and economic lines in ways that we can recognize. So what do we do? None of our stories hold up. This is a whole new genre.**

How often do you feel like the media is reporting on candidates in a way that is helpful to you as a voter? Do you feel that the media interacts with candidates differently based on race, gender or both?

How much does social media influence how you view a candidate?

How much does social media influence how your peer group views a candidate?

If you could place yourself in the role of reporter on a campaign, what would you make sure to ask every candidate?

Do you feel that women candidates, and specifically Black women candidates, are judged by a different set of criteria than their male counterparts?

Do you believe that more is required of Black women in politics? What choices do they have to make in order to appeal to voters, appease their base or successfully navigate race and gender lines? Check out this [New York Times article](#) reflecting on this topic.

**Black women are tried and true as we've always been, particularly with our loyalty to Democrats showing up at the booth. It is a tradition I think we have that is important and I feel as if as a black person I have a debt that I owe to my ancestors.**

How do you approach deciding whom to support in an election? Where do you get your information?

How much do you trust the idea of having a Black woman in executive office? Do you trust Black women's leadership over that of any other group?

Why do you think people, especially Black people, are resistant to the idea of a Black woman in executive office?

Are there certain experiences or issues stances that you look for in a candidate? What is more important to you as a constituent, process or product (i.e., what someone achieved versus how they achieved it)?

Do you feel tied to family or community allegiances in your voting choices?

Do you feel that race or gender or a combination of the two has the ability to influence how you vote?

Have you ever made a choice to support a candidate that surprised your friends, family or broader community? What about your choice surprised them? Why do you think they assumed you might vote differently?

# WAYS TO TAKE ACTION



Take action to amplify the issues facing black women during the 2020 election season, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Convene conversations with your friends and family to reflect on the film and talk about issues important to Black women. Host a virtual party: Ask everyone to watch the film before the party, and then have a discussion about the electoral issues that are important to you in local, state and federal elections this year, what kind of election reporting you'd like to see and how you make decisions about your vote. Share your perspective using the hashtag #whatdefinesyou and connect with the resources below to learn more about candidate issue profiles and connect your community with information.
- Learn more about laws that may have an effect on voter turnout in your area through the partners listed in the Resources section below.

# LEARN MORE



Black Women's Roundtable with Roland Martin. [https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=612942689425962&ref=watch\\_permalink](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=612942689425962&ref=watch_permalink)

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For more information about the film and filmmakers, visit the *All Skinfolk Ain't Kinfolk* site: <https://www.asakfilm.com/> and be sure to follow @TuckerGurl on social media to receive the latest updates from the film.

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*Black Women's*

ELECTION GUIDE

A FILM BY ANGELA TUCKER

# A HISTORIC ELECTION SEASON



Black women have long been the unsung heroes of our democratic system. From early abolitionists and suffragists like Sojourner Truth and Charlotte Forten to Fannie Lou Hamer in the Jim Crow South, Black women have fought to protect the right to vote for all throughout this country's history. Today, women of color are shaping the composition of the female electorate and influencing the priorities of presidential candidates. In this election cycle, over 15 million Black women who are eligible to vote will have the power to influence the priorities of the electorate by participating in primaries, local forums and national elections in the tradition of Black women serving as catalysts in movements for progressive change.

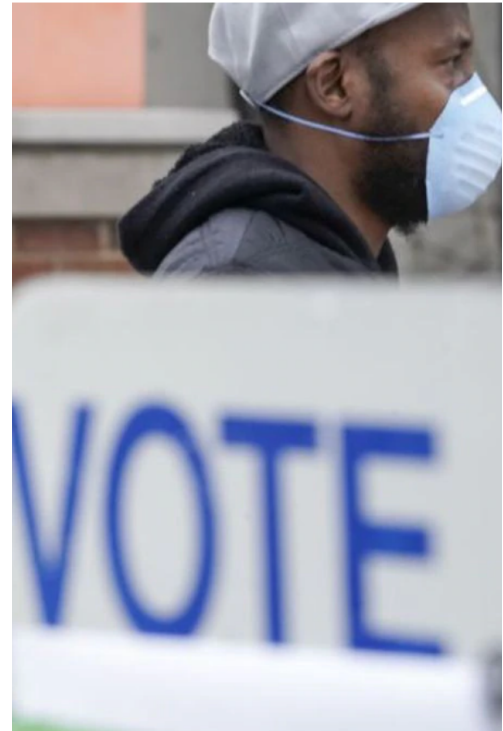


This election season is a critical litmus test of Black women's power, given the ongoing threats to democracy, including growing limitations by states and municipalities on electoral access and voting power for voters historically protected under the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The restrictions on equal protection across the country have suppressed universal access to the ballot box through measures like strict voter ID laws, shorter voting times, restricted registration and purging of voter rolls. The Supreme Court ruling in *Shelby County v. Holder* in 2013 provided fuel for many of these efforts by weakening the legislative framework. Since then, the barriers faced by eligible voters—including Black and Brown, young and older voters—have increased in states such as Alabama, Texas, Florida and Georgia. Between 2013 and 2018, 24 states introduced or carried over at least 70 bills restricting voting access.



## Voting After COVID-19

COVID-19 presents special challenges for voting. In some cases, it may require a special effort to vote. For example, in Louisiana, voters currently must provide an “excuse” to be eligible to vote by absentee ballot. Officials there have proposed a plan for the upcoming primary and municipal elections that would allow voters with specific underlying medical conditions or who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 to request absentee ballots. But this does not allow all voters who may be vulnerable to COVID-19 to receive absentee ballots. Louisiana also requires that each absentee ballot be signed by a witness to confirm that the identity of the voter matches the ballot. These requirements could put a significant number of Louisiana voters at risk by forcing them to leave their homes or invite others into their homes. We each hold power in our vote. Let’s work to ensure that Black women voters can cast their ballots this year.



## Tips To Protect Your Vote:

- Make sure to register to vote.
- If early voting is available in your state, take advantage of it.
- If you need an absentee ballot, make sure to obtain a ballot by the deadline in your state.
- If you are voting in person and do not know where to go to vote, call your local election office or an elected official or visit their website in advance.
- Plan ahead: check your schedule, request time off and arrange transportation to make sure you have enough time for the long lines.
- You may need your photo ID, water and a face mask.
- If you have a problem with a voting machine, seek help and report it through your local election office.
- If you are denied the right to vote, ask to vote via a provisional ballot.
- If you are concerned about your eligibility to vote, contact a local or national voter protection organization. The list below includes resources to help you spot any voter fraud schemes in your area.
- Report election disinformation.



*"If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free."  
- Combahee River Collective*

# KEY CAMPAIGN ISSUES



## Criminal Justice

Key issues emerging in the 2020 election cycle include police accountability for shootings of unarmed victims, marijuana decriminalization, bail reform, reentry and the release of vulnerable inmates. While politicians have achieved bipartisan consensus on a narrow criminal justice reform agenda, the views of Republican and Democratic candidates still diverge on a range of policies, including sentencing and the rehabilitation of incarcerated persons. Other issues, such as the privatization of prisons, are ripe for debate. Finally, how funding is prioritized and allocated to meet law enforcement and security aims—as well as rehabilitation and restorative justice goals—has become an increasingly urgent issue for local constituents as well as national policymakers.

## Environmental Justice and Climate Change

The Trump administration has rolled back many of the federal air and water protections and other environmental regulations that impact the health and wellbeing of communities of color throughout the country. And infrastructure agendas have failed to address holistically climate resilience planning and the special risks of natural disasters in coastal areas. The prospect of expanding solar energy and green technologies also raises equity and climate justice concerns that will make this election a defining one.

## Racial and Gender Equality

From Charleston to Atlanta, acts of racial terror have shaken communities and taken lives too often for any candidate to ignore. Hate speech against persons of color also threatens peace in our communities, schools and homes. The current moment demands smart and inclusive agendas to tackle hate crimes, White supremacist speech, xenophobia and issues of reparation, justice and systemic racism. More than this, Black women still face vast inequities, with studies showing that close to half have experienced gender discrimination when applying for jobs or seeking promotions or equal pay.

## Health Care and COVID-19

Long before the arrival of the novel coronavirus in U.S. states, Black women supported quality, affordable health care for all. More broadly, the experiences of Black women reveal harmful intersections of health and racial equity that have led to vast disparities, including the high infant mortality rates and lack of access to reproductive rights and care that prevail among Black women. In 2020, voters will also be looking to leaders to address vulnerabilities in employment, health care, housing and transportation that COVID-19 has heightened.

## Economic Empowerment

We know that the economy is not working for everyone. In particular, Black women without college degrees and those with annual household incomes of less than \$50,000 struggle to support themselves and their families. Cuts to big corporations and the wealthy, investment in entrepreneurship and innovation and access to capital in communities where small businesses can offer needed growth will also be key issues in this election cycle.

## Our Democracy

In recent years, our democracy has faced seismic shifts and novel challenges. The presence of money in government, state governance, foreign influence, new voter suppression tactics and the electoral college have raised stakes and unprecedented questions of fair and equal representation. This will arguably be one of the most historic elections in our history, with the potential to shape questions fundamental to the future of our constitutional democracy.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR VOTERS



## **BLACK VOTES MATTER**

Dedicated to increasing power in Black communities through voter registration, policy advocacy, organizational training/development, and election activities.

## **ROCK THE VOTE**

Helps build young people's political power and increase their participation in our democracy. Voter registration by state is available on the organization's website.

## **BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE**

An independent, nonpartisan law and policy organization that works to reform, revitalize, and when necessary, defend our country's systems of democracy and justice.

## **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**

Working to empower voters and defend democracy through information, voter registration, advocacy participation & inclusion. Also pledges to challenge all efforts and tactics that threaten our democracy and limit the ability of voters to exercise their right to vote.

## **ELECTION PROTECTION**

Works year-round to ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to vote and have that vote count. Made up of more than 100 local, state and national partners, Election Protection uses a wide range of tools and activities to protect, advance and defend the right to vote.

## **YOUR LOCAL ACLU AFFILIATE**

The ACLU protects your freedom through a nationwide network of staffed offices in every state, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. To request legal assistance or get involved, find your local ACLU affiliate on the website.

## **BLACK FUTURES LAB**

Works with Black people to transform our communities, building Black political power and changing the way that power operates—locally, statewide, and nationally.

## **THE SUPERMAJORITY**

A membership-based home for women's activism that affirms and builds women's power, training and mobilizing a community of all ages, races, and backgrounds to become effective advocates and build a more equitable future for all women.

## **WOMENX**

Focused on creating intentional meeting spaces for Black Trans Women, Cis women and gender-nonconforming community leaders and activists to talk with each other about the Democratic primary and our impact on 2020 elections.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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The Skinfolk Engagement Campaign's Impact Producer is Krystal Tingle.

Our Impact Coordinator is Jheanelle Ferguson.



## ABOUT WORLD CHANNEL

The WORLD Channel mission is to inform and inspire with real stories from around the world.

## ABOUT THE TUCKERGURL INC

Founded in 2006 by Angela Tucker and Iyesatu Chari, TuckerGurl LLC is a production company for feature length films, television and web series, advocacy videos and theatrical productions. We are passionate about telling compelling and irreverent stories about underrepresented communities.

## ABOUT RED OWL

Founded by veteran impact strategists Eliza Licht and Alice Quinlan in collaboration with Nyasha Laing, and Jessie Rovera Debruin, Red Owl seeks to bolster community through the power of art. With a collaborative and responsive approach, we work with filmmakers and changemakers to leverage the power of strategy, storytelling and partnership to create meaningful change on the local and national level. From development to distribution, we work with filmmakers at all stages of their film's journey to define impact strategy and implement campaigns that engage deeply with nuanced issues. Using a boutique model, Red Owl draws on 25+ years of experience in the impact and engagement field to support films with vision and perspective.