HOW CAN I NOT VOTE?

By Velma Nanka-Bruce

As a child growing up in the 60’s, I was too young to go out and demonstrate on my own. I saw the worry in my parents’ faces when my sister at Fisk University called to let them know she would be participating in a sit-in and might get arrested. I had seen the news reports on television. Law enforcement officers turned fire hoses on arm-linked demonstrators to break up their lines and to discourage any repudiation of the unfairness of Jim Crow laws. Police dogs were unleashed on peaceful, non-violent marchers. Through the television I witnessed beaten and dazed demonstrators who pressed forward with their quest to register black voters, so that we too could exercise the right of any American citizen to participate in elections and their own governance.

Knowing this, HOW CAN I NOT VOTE?!

Voting is a sacred rite, consecrated and canonized by the blood, energy, love, and lives of countless people of various colors. People have died so that all of us can exercise this right of full citizenship. In my mind, it is un-American, and un-African American, not to vote. Not voting renders the sacrifices of our elders meaningless - the jailings, bombings, and beatings.
Did your forebears march, sit-in, get arrested? Were they lynched? Did they do this for nothing?


It was not just about eating at a lunch counter. Some may call it an African American issue. But it is really a human issue. It applies to anyone. It is about our shared future. So, I will ask it another way. How can you not vote? How can you, by example, not teach your children to vote?