

GERRYMANDERING DEPRIVES ALL VOTERS OF THEIR RIGHTS

by Dr. Horace Huntley

The ultimate insult to the democratic process is disfranchisement. For many generations, black people, poor whites, women and others were deprived of the right to vote. The 13th, 14th, 15th, and 19th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution were designed to remedy such political inequities. However, there has always been white male backlash to the creation of an equitable and just society. After the 19th century amendments went into effect, unprecedented violent activities emerged with the development of such organizations as the KKK, and the Knights of the White. The delegates to the 1901 Alabama Constitutional Convention made it crystal clear, that since violence could no longer be used to intimidate voters, they would use the law to insure that "white supremacy" would be the guidepost for 20th century Alabama development.

Now, fast-forward to the 21st century. Today, many white males in the Alabama State Legislature do not wear robes but they also make laws that disfranchises in the same manner as the white supremacist of by-gone days. The Jefferson County Legislative delegation is controlled by Republicans who gerrymandered districts so that they would retain white supremacy. The district lines for Jefferson County and the rest of the state were redrawn to include persons in the delegation who do not live in Jefferson County, as well as others who live in Jefferson County, but also represent many residents who live in other counties. For example, Arnold Mooney is a member of the Jefferson County delegation, represents 224 residents of Jefferson and 44,885 in Shelby, where he resides. Tim Wadsworth represents 5338 in Jefferson County and 39,735 in Walker and Winston Counties, and lives in Winston County. Kyle South represent 12, 563 in Jefferson County and 33,517 in Lamar, Fayette and Tuscaloosa Counties, while living in Fayette County. Representatives Allen Farley, Richard Drake and Jim Carns have sizable numbers of residents in Shelby County. The six legislators referenced above are all members of the Jefferson County Legislative delegation. In addition they are members of one or more of the following delegations: Shelby, Lamar, Fayette, Tuscaloosa, Walker and Winston Counties. Notice that all of these individuals are white Republicans. It is also the case that not a single black legislator represents residents other than in Jefferson County.

Every person who resides in Jefferson County should be outraged, because it is clear that their interests are secondary to those represented by the aforementioned legislators. Historically, five of them, or their predecessors, have consistently voted against any economic growth for Jefferson County.