

## **Clarence Henderson's**

### **Statement for Congressional Hearing 02/04/22**

#### **Examining the History and Importance of "Lift Every Voice and Sing"**

Good morning,

"Lift Every Voice and Sing" will forever have a powerful place in American history and will be a continual reminder that equality and justice must be defended.

It was written in the time of Jim Crow which was a dark time in our history of which I lived in and had the opportunity to put Jim Crow on trial when I participated in the 1960 Woolworth Sit-in in Greensboro NC.

The song was first performed in public to celebrate the birthday of President Abraham Lincoln which reminds me of the resiliency that we exhibited when we came up out of slavery and continued until we eventually broke the back of Jim Crow.

One of my concerns is that this great inspirational song not be used out of context as a racial divide to take us back to times that were and no longer are. That those who may vote against this measure are not viewed as racist for having a difference of opinion.

History shows us the unifying progress that America has made since then. One example of the progress are the elections of Black Americans in some of the highest political positions in the

land such as Electing President Obama as the first black President, Appointing Justice Thomas to the Supreme Court, the election of NC's first black Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson and Virginia's first black female Lt. Gov. Winsome Sears, just to name a few. This did not happen within a vacuum with just the black vote. The voting in of these officials is an example of forming a more perfect union.

As a matter of fact, The Preamble of the Constitution is an introduction to the reason for forming a new nation and it begins with [We the People](#). ... Before that we had the Declaration of Independence in which the second sentence shows what American exceptionalism looks like - [We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness](#) - and it ends with the reason for forming our government, - [That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed](#).

For those of you have been elected, let us lean toward practical and essential approaches for addressing issues that are facing the country as a whole.

According to Pew Research Center April 15 2021, Americas' top ten views facing the nation indicated as a very big problem are:

1. The affordability of health care. 56%
2. The federal budget deficit. 49%
3. Violent crime. 48%
4. Illegal immigration. 48%
5. Gun violence. 48%
6. The corona virus outbreak. 47%
7. Racism. 45%
8. Economic inequality 43/%
9. Unemployment 41%
10. Climate change 39%

As we see 45% of Americans' view Racism as the very important issue that needs to be addressed.

However, as stated earlier, my concern is that we do not use "Lift Every Voice and Sing" as a symbolic gesture to further divide.

It is my hope that we understand the progress of the American experience is never complete but continues to grow with concentrated efforts to become a unified country.

Thank you