

NATIONAL

Knoxville Address Named Historic Site in Journalism in Celebration of New York Times Founder Adolph Ochs



Ochs took over the Chattanooga Times in 1878.



Chattanooga Blade publisher, Randolph Miller, once operated a press for Ochs.

INDIANAPOLIS — The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) has named 36 Market Square in Knoxville, Tennessee, an Historic Site in Journalism. The address marks the site where Adolph Ochs, founder of The New York Times, started his journalism career.

SPJ's Historic Sites program honors the people and places that have played important roles in American journalistic history.

At age 11, Ochs became a carrier boy for the Knoxville Chronicle. He worked there and then at The Knoxville Tribune for six years, where he rose from office boy to apprentice to journeyman printer. He left for a newspaper job in Chattanooga at the age of 17, taking control of the Chattanooga Times in 1878.

Two decades later, in 1896 at age 38, he acquired The New York Times and in his inaugural edition made the famous pledge to report the news without "fear or favor."

Alex Jones, SPJ Foundation Board member and co-author of the defini-

tive biography of Ochs, said, "While Adolph Ochs's greatest achievement was creating The New York Times, his start was in Knoxville and he never lost his sense of gratitude and kinship with that city. It is fitting that his legendary career should be recognized by SPJ with a National Journalism Historic Marker at the place where it began."

This is Tennessee's second SPJ Historic Site in Journalism Award. The other is in Memphis, recognizing the Christian Index, the second oldest Black religious newspaper in the nation. A bronze plaque will be placed at the Wall Avenue side of 36 Market Square to distinguish it as a National Historic Site in Journalism.

SPJ promotes the free flow of information vital to informing citizens; works to inspire and educate the next generation of journalists; and fights to protect First Amendment guarantees of freedom of speech and press. Support excellent journalism and fight for your right to know. Become a member, give to the Legal Defense Fund or give to the SPJ Foundation.

Civil Rights Leaders Commemorate Anniversary of Voting Rights Act



Martin Luther King, III, left, and Arndrea Waters King

WASHINGTON, DC — Recently, civil rights leaders including Rev. Al Sharpton and Martin Luther King III hosted a call to honor the 56th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, amid news of a new federal voting rights bill potentially being proposed next week.

Rev. Al Sharpton and Martin Luther King III were joined by Arndrea Waters King, Alejandro Chavez, Andi Pringle, and Stasha Rhodes — the organizers hosting the national March On For Voting Rights on August 28th. The leaders answered questions about necessary Congressional action on voting rights, their recent Hill meetings with Texas state Democrats, and the need for federal legislation to restore the Voting Rights Act after key provisions were stripped away in the 2013 Shelby County vs. Holder decision.

Growing calls for Congress to eliminate the filibuster and pass national voting rights protections come as state-level voting attacks spread across the country. That call to secure the sacred right to vote will culminate on Saturday, August 28th, when millions across the country join the March On for Voting Rights in D.C., Phoenix, Houston, Atlanta and Miami to make their voices heard.

Highlights from the conversation: "Achieving change, especially legislative change, is not based on the urgency of the lawmakers — it is based on the urgency of those of us that are going to force the lawmakers. Nobody got up one morning and said 'it's time to give people a right to vote.' It was the women's movement and it was the Civil Rights Movement that made that urgency happen," said Reverend Al Sharpton, Founder and President of National Action Network. "[In 1963] the votes didn't look like they were there. That's why activists have to get acting — if it was already there, we would have never had a movement. [President] Lyndon Johnson didn't lead the Voting Rights Movement, he signed the bill. [President] Joe Biden will sign this bill, and we're going to be the ones that make sure that there's something for him to sign."

"There is something happening in the fabric [of America]. Last year af-

ter the death of George Floyd we saw more civil rights demonstrations by Americans than we've seen in a long time... That same energy is being galvanized around expanding the right to vote," said Martin Luther King III, Chairman of the Drum Major Institute. "My father used to say that a voteless people is a powerless people, and the most powerful step that we can take is that short step to the ballot box. [...] We must demand that America become who it ought to be, and one of the ways it does that is through its most fundamental right: the right to vote. So we will come together on August 28th and [...] fight on this issue."

"For those who wonder whether they would have marched with Dr. King or Cesar Chavez, the answer is in whether you're marching now," said Arndrea Waters King, President of the Drum Major Institute. "As Martin's father said, 'Change has never rolled in on wheels of inevitability. It's always been through the tireless efforts of men and women doing their part in co-creation with God.' If there are elected officials who don't believe that there's still passion around this movement, on August 28th, we the people are going to show our power in numbers, unlike ever before."

"I believe this is our 'I Have a Dream' moment. This is our 'Si Se Puede' moment — to come together and say 'this is it'...it's about equal rights for everyone across the board," said Alejandro Chavez, Grandson of Cesar Chavez and Arizona-based organizer. "For the organizers and everyone around the country that fights for farmworkers' rights, fights for civil rights, fights for ERA rights, fights for every issue — if we do not protect voting rights now, those issues do not matter."

"This is the moment that either we do what is right and honest, and rescue democracy, or we take a huge step towards autocracy. That's what the March On for Voting Rights is all about," said Andi Pringle, Political and Strategic Campaigns Director for March On. "Today, 18 states have signed more than 30 [voter suppression] bills into law. They undo so much of the progress that was made in voting access, not just in the 2020 elec-



President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the 1964 Civil Rights Act in the East Room of the White House. LBJ is flanked by members of Congress and civil rights leaders, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Photo by White House photographer Cecil Stoughton)

tion, but since the 1965 Voting Rights Act was passed. We're standing in the middle of what you might call a perfect storm, but it's really an existential crisis for democracy in America."

Background on Voting Rights Act Anniversary:

Today, we commemorate a historic victory for the civil rights movement — the anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 — that the original 1963 March on Washington helped bring about.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 explicitly prohibited racial discrimination in voting, provided for direct federal intervention to ensure that Black Americans could register and vote, and banned tactics like poll taxes commonly used to prevent voters from participating in democracy. The bill

made good on the promise of the 15th Amendment, which said that no citizen could be denied the right to vote on the basis of the color of their skin.

But in 2013, the Supreme Court in *Shelby County v. Holder* held that preclearance provision of the Voting Rights Act was unconstitutional. The court's decision opened the door for states to enact sweeping and racially discriminatory voter suppression laws, making it harder for people to vote. In 2021 alone, over 400 racially-targeted voter suppression laws have been proposed in states around the country.

To protect our most sacred right to vote, we need Congress to pass the For the People Act, the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, and the Washington, D.C. Admission Act.

COVID, you're about to learn!

don't know what you just started.

But you're about to learn. "

So, COVID, you've snuffed out the lives of over 600 thousand of us. I give you that. But, repeating the words of Mr. Pitts, "You don't know my people. You don't know what we're about. You don't know what you just started.

But you're about to find out!

© Terry Howard is an award-winning writer and storyteller, a contributing writer with the Chattanooga News Chronicle, The Douglas County Sentinel, The American Diversity Report, The BlackMarket.com, co-founder of the "26 Tiny Paint Brushes" writers' guild, and recipient of the Dr. Martin Luther King Leadership Award.



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