



I grew up in the inner city of Cleveland, where my family was often the only Caucasian family in the neighborhood. People of color have been my friends and allies my entire life. My own views reflect my concern with racial justice. In summary, I support:

- A study of the best means by which to make reparations for slavery
- Immediate statehood for the District of Columbia
- Abolition of the racist death penalty
- An end to the racist "War on Drugs"
- Tougher gun control laws
- Creation of affordable housing and a crackdown on predatory lending
- Protection of workers' rights
- Universal health coverage
- Investment in education

Crime

Our nation's police should be fully capable of protecting neighborhoods from crime and drugs while respecting the rights of residents and communities. I support strengthening civilian review boards, greater community policing, and an end to the drug war that has poisoned relations between cops and neighborhoods in too many cities. I also support legislation introduced by my colleague Rep. John Conyers to deny federal funds to police departments that continue to practice racial profiling.

Affirmative Action

Affirmative action is right, it is necessary, and it must be preserved. I supported the Supreme Court's decision allowing colleges and universities to use race and ethnicity as an admission factor. In Congress, I joined with 110 representatives to file a friend of the court brief in defense of the University of Michigan's affirmative action policies. And I continue the fight for diversity and civil rights.

Drug War

A safe, free, and just America is undermined, not bolstered, by the costly and ineffective War on Drugs. This misguided policy -- which emphasizes criminalization over treatment -- has led to increased violent crime, misdirected resources of law enforcement and restricted Constitutional liberties.

Racial bias in the enforcement of drug laws is pervasive. According to a Human Rights Watch report based on FBI statistics, blacks were arrested on drug charges at nearly five times the rate of whites. Drug use is consistent across racial and socioeconomic lines -- yet in the state of New York, for example, 94% of incarcerated drug offenders are Latino or African-American, mostly from poor communities.

Death Penalty

The evidence shows that the imposition of the death penalty is both racially and economically biased. African American defendants, for example, are far more likely to receive death sentences than others who committed similar crimes. To put that into perspective, 42 percent of inmates on death row today are African American, even though they comprise only 13 percent of the U.S. population; 180 African Americans have been executed in cases involving white victims, while 12 whites have been executed in cases with black victims. Of all the people on death row today, 75 percent of them are non-white. Moreover, a full 98 percent of all defendants sentenced to death have been people who could not afford their own attorneys. I simply cannot support a policy that is so unfairly and unevenly applied.

Voting Rights

Our election system is in need of serious reform. Too many Americans, especially African-Americans, have been intimidated, excluded, and shut out from our democracy. I support measures such as Election Day as a holiday; election-day voter registration; enhanced voting rights enforcement; an end to the racially-biased disenfranchisement of felons who have served their time; and full Congressional representation for residents of the District of Columbia. We need comprehensive campaign finance reform and Clean Money public financing of the public's elections, ample free television time for candidates, and the break-up of the media monopolies that restrict political debate.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis J. Kucinich".