



Dr. Dorian Newton, O&E Committee Chair

July 10, 2026

Welcome to our Outreach & Education Biweekly Series

The Center for African American History, Art, & Culture (CAAHAC), located at 120 York St. NE, Aiken, SC 29801, and housed in the historic Immanuel Institute, preserves and celebrates the creativity, resilience, and significant contributions of Aiken's African American community. Through exhibits, lectures, art shows, concerts, and educational programs, we aim to inspire, celebrate diversity, and highlight African Americans' vital role locally, statewide, and nationally.

This biweekly message continues our Community Outreach & Education series—a chapter-by-chapter exploration of books like Carolyn Click's *The Cost of the Vote: George Elmore and the Battle for the Ballot*. This work connects historical narratives to contemporary civic life, encouraging reflection and engagement across our community.

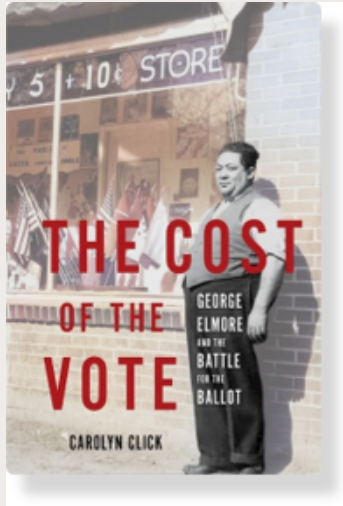


***“Freedom is never given; it is won.”
– A. Philip Randolph***

Spotlight:

The Cost of the Vote by Carolyn Click Chapter 5 – “*Battle Lines at Home and Abroad*”

As we reflect on the ongoing struggle for voting rights chronicled in Carolyn Click’s *The Cost of the Vote*, Chapter 5, “Battle Lines at Home and Abroad,” looks at a critical sequence of local and state decisions in 1942 that shaped the battle for the ballot in South Carolina.



The story begins in early 1942, when Columbia’s Democratic executive committee adopted a new rule on January 22: “Every Negro applying to vote in the city Democratic primary must be known to have voted in the ticket continuously since 1876.” This requirement effectively limited Black suffrage to only those octogenarians who had cast ballots for Confederate General Wade Hampton, excluding nearly all Black citizens from participation.

In the spring of 1942, James Hinton, with the help of Levi Byrd, unified the disparate South Carolina NAACP chapters and became the second statewide president. “Hinton would prove to be the man for the times, enlisting a cadre of volunteers in the battle for the ballot.” This included enlisting the support of NAACP special counsel Thurgood Marshall.

On April 22, 1942, just days before the city primary, a large delegation of Black citizens appeared before the Columbia board of elections. Representing the Negro Citizens Committee of South Carolina, they formally petitioned the board to repeal the exclusionary rule and open the primary to Black voters. Chairman W. M. Perry pointed to the restrictive qualifications adopted in January as satisfaction of their request.

The movement for reform then advanced to the county level. On May 4, 1942, the Richland Democratic Convention convened. At this local convention, a coalition of reformers—including Columbia physician Dr. Heyward Gibbes and attorneys R. Beverly Herbert and D. W. Robinson Jr.—introduced a resolution to repeal the rule prohibiting Black citizens from participating in Democratic primaries. Despite their advocacy, the convention voted 4-1 to reject the resolution, demonstrating the entrenched resistance among white political leaders to expanding the franchise.

Just weeks later, on May 20, 1942, the South Carolina State Democratic Convention met at the State House. The petition from the Negro Citizens Committee was delivered, but the state rules committee, voting 40-1, chose to postpone all “controversial” matters—including the question of Black participation in the primaries—until the 1944 convention. This pattern of delay and resistance at every level underscored the formidable barriers faced by those who sought justice and equality at the ballot box.

These votes did not occur in a vacuum. The decade of the 1940s was a time of profound upheaval in South Carolina, as young men who had never left the borders of their home counties were suddenly sent to fight in distant lands for democracy during World War II. Yet, upon returning home, they and their families continued to face systemic exclusion from the very rights for which they had risked their lives.

By tracing this chronological sequence—from local petitions and city board resistance to county convention rejection, to state-level postponement—we see how local actions and state decisions were deeply intertwined in shaping the long and difficult road toward voting rights and full citizenship for African Americans in South Carolina. These events remind us that the struggle for justice has always required courage, persistence, and a willingness to challenge even the most deeply rooted systems of exclusion.

Reflection Questions

- What impact did the exclusionary rule and the committee's decision to postpone reform have on Black citizens' sense of belonging and civic power?
- How did the courageous actions of the Negro Citizens Committee, Heyward Gibbes, R. Beverly Herbert, D.W. Robinson Jr., and others plant seeds for future change, even in the face of overwhelming resistance?
- How might the experiences of Black soldiers abroad, fighting for democracy, have influenced their determination to challenge injustice at home?

Practical Actions for the Next Two Weeks

- 1 Read or revisit this section of *The Cost of the Vote* and reflect on the courage required to confront institutional injustice. Share one insight at our next book club session.
- 2 Research the history of voting qualifications in South Carolina and discuss with your networks how exclusionary rules have shaped the present.
- 3 Share the story of the Negro Citizens Committee's petition and the efforts of reformers with at least one person outside the committee—helping to keep the legacy of advocacy alive.

Closing Thoughts

The events of 1942 remind us that progress is rarely linear. The defeat of reform efforts at the Columbia and Richland Democratic conventions was a setback, but it also strengthened the resolve of Black citizens and their allies. Their example calls us to continue building bridges, speaking out, and working together for a more inclusive democracy. Let us honor their legacy by remaining steadfast in our pursuit of justice and equal rights for all.

Historical Spotlight

Columbia's Democratic executive committee's rule of January 22, 1942, effectively barred nearly all Black citizens from voting in city primaries. The courageous appearance of a large Black delegation before the board of elections on April 22, 1942, and the delivery of their petition to the state convention, mark important moments in the struggle for voting rights. Though the rules committee postponed reform, the seeds of change were sown by those who refused to accept exclusion.

CAAHAC Bookstore & Gift Shop Update

To support our mission and the local literary community, we encourage you to purchase or borrow *The Cost of the Vote* from independent bookstores such as The Book Tavern in Augusta or All Good Books in Columbia, or to check availability through the Aiken County Public Library system. The CAAHAC gift shop may also have copies available for community members. Every book acquired helps sustain our educational programs, outreach initiatives, and the preservation of these essential stories.

Things to Look Forward To:

- Continuing our summer community programs, including book club discussions and historical education efforts focused on South Carolina's civil rights legacy.
- **July 24, 2026 – Next Biweekly Message** Our next installment will continue exploring *The Cost of the Vote* Chapter 6 "We'll Fight the Negroes at the Polls" and the long road toward voting rights and full citizenship.

Let us carry the spirit of advocacy, persistence, and community from this chapter into every conversation, every classroom, and every gathering as we work together to honor the past and build a stronger, more connected future for all.

Warm Regards,
Dr. Dorian Newton
CAAHAC Outreach & Education Committee