

Fisk University and Brennan Center Launch New Initiative on Democracy and Justice in the South

The Partnership for Southern Impact will work with communities and organizations across the South to build more representative and responsive state and local governments. Fisk and the Brennan Center will develop nonpartisan solutions to problems like voter suppression, partisan redistricting, and excessively punitive criminal justice.

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The Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law and Fisk University's John Lewis Center for Social Justice have launched a joint initiative, the Partnership for Southern Impact. With Fisk's Nashville campus as its base, the two institutions will establish a hub for communities and civic groups across the South seeking to make their local and state governments more

representative. The Partnership will highlight and foster nonpartisan solutions to problems like voter suppression, partisan redistricting, and excessively punitive criminal justice.

"We are delighted to forge a partnership with the Brennan Center, a likeminded nonpartisan organization devoted to defending

democracy and justice,” said [Dr. Agenia W. Clark](#) [\[link-1\]](#), president of Fisk University. “Through research advancement, community engagement, and policy advocacy, we seek to build upon Fisk’s historical commitment to justice while creating a more innovative and supportive environment for policy reform in the South as our culture rapidly evolves.”

Fisk University is a historically Black college that was established in 1866 to serve people recently freed from enslavement after the Civil War. In the 1960s, its students’ nonviolent protests helped make Nashville the first desegregated city in the South. Fisk’s alumni include such leaders as W.E.B. Du Bois and Representative John Lewis. The Brennan Center is a nonpartisan law and policy institute dedicated to strengthening democracy and advancing justice.

“Fisk University, its faculty, and its graduates have already done so much for American democracy,” said [Michael Waldman](#) [\[link-2\]](#), president and CEO of the Brennan Center. “It is an honor to work with them at a moment of great challenge for our country.”

The Partnership for Southern Impact will draw on Fisk and the Brennan Center’s experience and expertise in research, advocacy, and communications. Fisk has longstanding relationships with the elected officials, community leaders, policy advocates, and others in the South who are working to make local and state governments more responsive and effective for all. The Partnership will bring these leaders together to collaborate on nonpartisan ways to improve democracy in the South.

“Fisk University is proud to partner with The Brennan Center for Justice to advance policy research in the

American South. During this time when our society is rapidly shifting, there is deep alignment between the Brennan Center's experience to upholding justice and Fisk's organized approach to elevating ideals that move our country forward and bring people together," said [Dr. Sekou Franklin](#) [\[link-3\]](#), executive director of Fisk's John Lewis Center. "We look forward to building upon Fisk's deep legacy of social justice advocacy to create a better, more just future for all."

Dr. Clark, Dr. Franklin, Waldman, and [Kareem Crayton](#) [\[link-4\]](#), vice president of the Brennan Center's Washington, D.C., office, appeared on the Brennan Center's podcast [The Briefing](#) [\[link-5\]](#) to talk about what's ahead for the Partnership and how it will make a difference for the South.

"The Partnership's mission addresses a pressing need I have seen my entire life as a native

southerner. Public institutions of the South, from legislatures to administrative agencies, still have doors of opportunity that are closed to many of the communities who call the region home," said Crayton. "I'm excited to work with Fisk and help communities open those doors."

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About the John Lewis Center for Social Justice at Fisk University

The John Lewis Center for Social Justice at Fisk University aims to foster and advance a social justice agenda into every sphere of contemporary society. We do so through rigorous research, applied scholarship, artistic and cultural production, and community engagement at a local and global level. As the intellectual hub on campus, the center is committed to putting interdisciplinary ideas and theories into direct action on the

ground. For more information, visit Fisk.edu.

About the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law

The Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law is an independent,

nonpartisan law and policy organization that works to reform, revitalize, and defend our country's systems of democracy and justice.

For more information, visit

BrennanCenter.org **[link-6]**.

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Links

link-1: Dr. Agenia W. Clark <https://www.fisk.edu/university-news-and-publications/fisk-university-names-nashvillian-dr-agenia-walker-clark-as-next-president/>

link-2: Michael Waldman <https://www.brennancenter.org/about/leadership/michael-waldman>

link-3: Dr. Sekou Franklin https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.fisk.edu/university-news-and-publications/distinguished-educator-and-author-joins-fisk-university-as-executive-director-of-john-lewis-center-for-social-justice/_;!!DICMXiNAtWOclwyFrPWLdnjDGyqZbudAnQnH5C3s9APUT1QhyAEarbuzz_i_ZssHUdpcedR5p6BQViVmnZCeryHDE6-_F6pt95Q5RpAJgY%24

link-4: Kareem Crayton <https://www.brennancenter.org/about/leadership/kareem-crayton>

link-5: The Briefing https://youtu.be/BhN7sB_5PKM?si=HaCjsV--jSx3k7iK

link-6: BrennanCenter.org <http://www.brennancenter.org>