

Duane Merrells walks with an upside down flag during a protest about Michael Brown, who was killed in 2014 by police in Ferguson, Mo.



## Time to Go Green

**Rosa Clemente** says Black voters must break up with the two-party system

"**THE GREEN PARTY** is no longer the alternative; the Green Party is the imperative." In 2008, I ended a speech with those words after accepting the party's nomination as their vice-presidential candidate. Cynthia McKinney and I would be the first presidential ticket featuring two women of color in American history. Some may have thought my statement was needlessly hyperbolic, but I think I was simply ahead of my time.

In the eight years since that proclamation, the Green Party has worked to prove that we represent a vitally necessary new direction for American politics, and I am confident that it is more necessary than ever to break the two-part corporate duopoly that exists in this country. Voting has become a political project of the elite and while some Black and Latino people are able to benefit from this, the reality is that the majority of poor people and people of color in this country do not vote. Why should they when their choices are a Democratic candidate who

infamously referred to certain Black children as "super predators" in 1996 and has argued that children fleeing violence in Central America should be detained and deported, or a Republican reality star who spouts fascist rhetoric about Muslims and Mexican immigrants?

The Green Party has four main pillars: ecological wisdom, social justice, grassroots democracy and nonviolence. In terms of education, we wish to eliminate the system of crushing student debt and provide tuition-free, high-quality public education from preschool through college while also putting an end to high-stakes testing and the privatization of public schools. The Democrats and the Republicans certainly have failed to take such a clear stance about improving the lives of Black people and acknowledging the challenges that complicate them in the first place.

Though "Obamacare" would become the signature piece of legislation from our current Democratic president, the Green Party, back in 1988, was the first party to call for universal health care for every single American. Like the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, we also support the immediate release of all political prisoners in the United States and a complete end to the building of detention centers and prisons.

As I have traveled all over the country the past two years, talking to young people in the 'hoods, the barrios and at border crossings as well as at high schools, colleges and universities, I find that most don't know much about the Green Party because mainstream media refuses substantial coverage to any party outside the two dominate ones. In this election cycle, the media has focused so much coverage on the sensationalism of Donald Trump rather than the issues third option voters have this year.

This year, the Green Party will be on many state ballots. We have raised the money and done this without one super PAC or any corporate money. Black voters, you have another option. You can lead an actual political revolution, powered by the people, but that means thinking outside of the two boxes.

Rosa Clemente is an activist and scholar. Follow her on Twitter: @RosaClemente.