In an article written by Prof. Christopher S. Parker, the Stuart A. Scheingold professor of social justice and political science at the University of Washington and Prof. Matt A. Barreto, UCLA, they discuss the idea that a perceived threat could be the key to the black vote in 2018 citing multiple examples of high black voter turnout due to perceived threats. They begin by discussing the low African American voter turnout during the 2016 presidential election stating that the African American turnout had declined relative to 2012. This low voter turnout from black voters may have cost Hillary Clinton. Parker and Barreto’s state that the reasoning may have been that at the time, “that some in the black community failed to see Trump as a credible threat.” For those who did see Trump as a threat the voter turnout was in part very high. This changed dramatically as when Trump was elected and the threat was clear, “to African American interests, e.g., he’s a racist”.

“Now, eleven months after Trump was sworn in as President, black voters are recognizing the threat posed by Trump and his movement. Most recently, this was evidenced in the Republican campaigns of Ed Gillespie in Virginia and Roy Moore in Alabama.” Because of the agendas of Trump, Moore and “his statements calling for an end to amendments to the constitution abolishing slavery and guaranteeing the right to vote, and his comment to an African American voter that America was at its greatest during the era of slavery”, and Gillespie and his statements about pro-slavery civil war monuments, the evidence of the threats they present to the black community is clear. This was especially seen during the 2017 Virginia elections where, “black turnout was higher in 2017 than in 2013 and in coalition with Latino voters provided the margin of victory for Democrat Ralph Northam.” This data was consistent with the data on the African American voter turnout in relation to a perceived threat.

If nothing else, recent history suggests that the black community now recognizes Trump and the GOP as a threat, even if it didn’t do so during the 2016 election cycle. If Democrats make this a theme in 2018, and truly engage the African American community, their prospects today look a bit brighter.