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Voter Turnout: Ferguson, MO is a Teachable Moment in History in why Black Votes Matter

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¹Black Votes Matter

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Black Lives, Black Poverty and Black Votes Matter



VOTER TURNOUT: FERGUSON, MO IS A TEACHABLE MOMENT IN HISTORY IN WHY BLACK VOTES MATTER.

Earlier this month I visited Ferguson, Mo. I stood by the signs saying welcome, and population 21,203. What the signs did not say: “here lies the grave of a young Black male named Michael Brown who should not have died”, “here is a city that has a population of nearly 70% Black” and “here is a black population that voted at only 8%”. Yes only 8% voter turnout. Ferguson, Mo black residents contributed to the environment that killed young Brown. Mostly all of the elected officials and all but 3 of the police in Ferguson are white. That is the fault of Blacks who didn’t think their vote matters. Shame, shame.

Let’s discover some of the key elements of voter turnout.

Voter turnout is the number of registered voters who actually voted. Voter turnout is not the number of people compared to the population but compared to the registered voters. To illustrate let’s walk through a scenario. If you had a city of 100 people, only 50% or half would be eligible to vote. (i.e. 18 or older, not in prison etc.), that would leave 50 people. Of those

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remaining eligible voters, generally only half of them will actually register to vote. We are now down to only 25 people who can vote and are registered. Let's say 50% of the 25 actually voted, that would be a 50% turnout or about 12 people. How many voters there would be if only 10% voted? The answer in this simple example is, only 2 or 3 people. Get the point, turnout is critical. In Ferguson the numbers are: of the 21,000 people in Ferguson, about 10,000 were registered and only 800 actually voted (8% turnout). That means in Ferguson 9,200 registered voters stayed home. Shame, Shame.

In North Omaha we have about 32,000 registered voters. In 2014 we had the Minimum wage, the US Senate race, the District 2 Congressional race, the Governor's race and scores of important state and local races on the ballot, yet only about 7,300 of us voted. That's only 23% turnout. Shame, Shame. We need to break this cycle of continued low voter turnout in north Omaha. We need to vote in our own best interest. And we need a strong vote, high turnout, to provide our leaders with the leverage to fight for our point of view. Our **Black Votes Matter**. In my recent book *Economic Cataracts*, I discuss 10 serious reasons why our vote matters. Here are some of the critical reasons why **Black Votes Matter**:

- Jail Time
- Availability of Healthcare
- Federal, State and local financial assistance to the disabled and poor
- Fair running of elections
- Makeup and accountability of our Police force
- The level of our wages (minimum wage)
- Supportive elected officials
- The quality and funding of our children's education
- Supportive Local and State governments
- Honor to our ancestors who fought and died for our right to vote

Add to this list, jobs and economic development and you have a clear view of our own self-interest. If we don't vote, we lose our power to help ourselves: FERGUSON, IS A TEACHABLE MOMENT IN HISTORY IN WHY BLACK VOTES MATTER. We in North Omaha are falling into the same trap.

Targeting is another dynamic of the good, the bad and the ugly of turnout. If you were to develop and color code a map of Douglas county, each color designating various levels of turnout, from high percentages to low percentages, North and south Omaha will stand out with the lowest (by far) turnout percentages. Those of us who attempt to increase awareness and increase the actual turnout, review these types of maps and figures and attempt to devise ways to focus or target our efforts most effectively. We constantly are trying old and new initiatives to get our community's attention on the importance of voting. By targeting we can focus where the help is needed most.

This column is devoted to educating our voters, to defining why our vote is important and to ensuring all voters have information and hurdles removed so to maximize our vote. For example: You need to know that if you vote for too many candidates in the same race, they cancel that part of your vote; that's called an over vote. You need to know that if you skip over all the candidates

in a race when you vote; that's called an under vote. Neither will count. You need to know that if you are refused the right to get a ballot because you are not on the voter list at your polling place, you need to call the election commission and find out why, and as a last resort demand a "provisional" ballot. A "provisional ballot" is a ballot that will be counted only after it is proven that you are a registered voter. That takes weeks, not good but it is better than nothing. As I have mentioned before you need to know your polling place before Election Day or you need to vote early by mail.

Lastly, for the 2016 election the North Omaha Voter Project, which I founded, will be targeting the areas in north Omaha with historic low turnout. One new initiative, will be the placing of 1000 yard signs throughout our community saying "**Black Votes Matter**". Participate, place a free sign in your yard and help the effort to increase our community's voter turnout. The signs will be available in January. For additional info go to Prestonlovejr.com

*To review previous Black Votes Matter column articles visit **Omahastar.com**. or prestonlovejr.com. Column began September 11, 2015*

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