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The Resurrection of Jim Crow and the Birth of a Non-Voting Black Community

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¹Black Votes Matter

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Black Lives, Black Poverty and Black Votes Matter.

THE RESURRECTION OF JIM CROW AND THE BIRTH OF A NON VOTING BLACK COMMUNITY. BOTH NEED A QUICK BURIAL.

After the passage of the 15th amendment to the US constitution in 1870, Black folk were given the right to participate as citizens and given the right to vote. Males to be exact. Black females were not given the right to vote until 1920 when all women were given suffrage. Immediately blacks registered and voted like crazy. They elected blacks at every level including US House and the US Senate. Go to your history and you will find black elected officials in most every office. Most were from the southern states, where we had the numbers. All were republicans. This period in our history is affectionally called “Reconstruction”. Estimates are that there were over 1500 Black elected officials during “Reconstruction”. It didn’t take long before the enemy had enough of the black votes mattering in their towns and states and in the US congress.

What emerged was “Jim Crow”. Jim Crow laws were state and local laws enforcing racial segregation in the Southern United States. Enacted as a result of the Reconstruction period, these laws continued in force until 1965. They mandated de jure racial segregation in all public facilities in states of the former Confederate States of America, starting in 1890’s with a "separate but equal" status for African Americans.

Jim Crow introduced impediments to the blacks attempting to register, run for office, and vote. Some examples:

- Grandfather Clauses. If your grandfather did not vote, sorry your grandfather voting is a requirement.
- Literacy Test. Unreasonable literacy requirement to be able to register/vote. Recite by memory the Bill of Rights, sorry no mistakes.
- Poll tax. Southern poor blacks were required to pay to register/vote. Only required by blacks and way out of the financial means of the potential black voter.
- Property requirement. You can only register/vote if you own property. A rare occurrence in the poor black southern states.
- Gerrymandering. The drawing of voting lines to minimize the impact of black voting blocs, and or guaranteeing white or party victories.
- Intimidation: Threatening and executing the loss of jobs, white favor or direct injury if you dare to register/vote
- Violence and death were rampant for blacks, no exceptions in their attempts to vote.

¹ BVM.4

The effect of Jim Crow was dramatic and reduced the voting of blacks and the election of blacks significantly. Jim Crow became the target of the civil rights movement. The historic drama of the civil right fight culminated with the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights.

Those bedrock pieces of legislations along with civil rights challenges and changes in black consciousness began the second wave of great black registering /votes. The number of Black Elected Officials skyrocketed from approx. 500 in 1966, to over 9,000 in 2000. This rise was punctured by the 1984 candidacy for President by Rev, Jesse Jackson, victories in many major cities of Blacks for Mayor and of course 2008 election of Barack Obama.

The election of Obama, breathed life into Jim Crow and Jim Crow has been resurrected. The impediments are in different forms, couched in false premises and intents, disguised in non-racial trappings, but racist they are and directed to again retard the black vote. A few example:

- Voter ID laws. Requiring voters to purchase state issued ID and be required to present the ID before voting. Sound simple enough? The reality is many cannot afford the expense and many cannot physically get to and from ID sites. Truth is, this measure is directed to reduce minority voters.
- Gerrymandering. The drawing of voting lines to minimize the impact of black voting blocs, and or guaranteeing white or party victories. The practice continues.
- Purging. Removing targeted voters from the voter “rolls” using questionable methods and logic.
- Reducing conveniences. In 2008 in Ohio blacks used early voting and weekend availability for early voting to vote heavy for Obama. In 2012 Ohio closed many early voting sites and shut down week end access.
- Targeted polling place confusion. Closing and moving polling places so as to reduce access, cause confusion and reduce voter confidence in the voting processes. Douglas County played this card in the 2012 primary.
- Minimal voter information. Minimal use of mail, newspaper and community measures to inform voter of where and how to vote.

So what has been our community’s response to this resurrection?

Has it been renewed registration and voting?

Has it been to go activate new voting initiatives and for voter participation?

Has it been to stand up and fight the new Jim Crow?

NO, NO, NO. We have slowly birthed a community of non-voters.

I have written in the Omaha Star and even a book called *Economic Cataracts* dealing with the root causes of this new non-voters in our poverty stricken urban communities, including North Omaha. The bottom line is that we need to quickly bury Jim Crow and realize that our

community needs the power of our vote to be heard in order to take our destiny in our own hands. **Black Votes Matter**. Next column we will discuss the cause and effect our vote.

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