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Needed an Investment in our Youth: Civic Education

Preston Love Jr.

University of Nebraska at Omaha, prestonlovejr@gmail.com

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Black Votes Matter

UNO Adjunct Professor, Preston Love Jr.

Prestonlovejr.com

Black Lives, Black Poverty and Black Votes Matter

Needed an Investment in our Youth: Civic Education

I have longed thought that slowly but surely the educational curriculum for our youth has gravitated away from, physical exercise, technical skills training and the subject of this article Civic education. After years of direct working with our community's voters and non-voters at all ages I have learned how little we know about civics, the voting processes, governmental structures (at all levels), when to vote and how to vote. The problem is very serious with our youth, very serious. Elementary, secondary school children have little civic education and knowledge. There are exceptions, when there are sensitive teachers, but systematically we have a problem. There needs to be a heightened dialogue within and outside our community. There is a need for a heavy investment in our youth as it relates to civic education.

There can be no doubt that this lack of overall civic knowledge is one of the key factors that affects our community's voter turnout. In my book *Economic Cataracts* (Love, 2015) I discuss the many factors that negatively affect turnout in north Omaha. Page 44, "There is a need for proactive initiatives directed to this issue" (civic education for our youth).

Let me summarize some of the efforts I have led and collaborated.

- This column while directed to adult readers is and my attempt to provide serious education related to all of the civic education issues. That is why the column is titled *Black Votes Matter*. With the support and encouragement of the Omaha Star we have been writing civic education articles since September of 2015.
- My book, referenced above, is directed to be both educational and a challenge to my community as it relates to community engagement.
- Along with IMA, the League of Women Voters (LWV) we funded and provided opportunity for 700 of our youth to see the movie *SELMA* and provided civic education afterwards.
- Numerous presentations to youth groups; Hope Center events, 100 Black Men, Step-up participants, Youth Summit Programs, Summer Work's programs, Nathan Hale and Benson classes and assemblies.
- As an Adjunct Professor for Black Studies at UNO I created a three session "service learning project" bringing Benson students to UNO for tours, exposure to scholarship opportunities and civic lessons from my "Black Politics" Class students and myself. The students learned about voter registration and turnout. One of the activities

- involved voter registration and they along with authorized registrars, registered over 25 UNO students in an hour.
- Most recently after some visionary work by LVW and myself and some hard developmental work by the LWV, civic lesson modules have been developed and are being presented to classes at many of our High Schools including Benson, Central, Burke and North. Recently at Benson we taught the youth about civics and later registered over 30 excited teenagers.



Parents and youth leadership, we need an investment. We need our leadership to expand on going civic education efforts. We need a new generation of well-informed voters. We need our community and our youth to realize that Black Votes Matter and vote.

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