

9-9-2016

Presidential Politics and the Black Vote, Part 1 of 3

Preston Love Jr.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/blackstudfacpub>

 Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#)

Black Votes Matter
UNO Adjunct Professor, Preston Love Jr.
Prestonlovejr.com

Black Lives, Black Poverty and Black Votes Matter

Presidential Politics and the Black Vote

Part 1 of 3

With the advent of the 2016 Presidential contest, I reflect on the impact and importance of the black Vote during presidential elections. There have been significant events that must be acknowledged prior to any discussion of the presidential black vote. We must establish the importance of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. We must be reminded of the importance of the civil rights struggle and movement culminating in the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the events of Selma. These historic events laid the ground work for the explosion of black registration and voting.

That explosion created an environment of a great increase in Black Elected Officials and historic victories by blacks to high profile first. First black Mayors, first black elected officials at the local, state and federal level, the congressional Black caucus and the symbolic campaign of Black congresswoman Shirley Chisholm of New York in 1972.

It is my contention that these occurrences slowly built a confidence and resolve in the black voter psychic. Repeated great milestones, first Black Mayors of Atlanta (1973), Birmingham (1979) Los Angeles (1973) and a growing list of black congressmen and women. By 1983 the black vote was strong and was constantly proving that black votes mattered throughout this country.

The race that changed things was held in 1983 when black congressman Harold Washington ran and won the race and became the first black Mayor of American's third largest city, Chicago. Personally, after serving as a campaign advisor to Ambassador Andrew Young in his run to be Mayor of Atlanta and his appointment of me as his Commissioner of Planning for the city of Atlanta. As such I became included in the civil rights circles in the Atlanta scene. I was sent to Chicago by Andrew Young to advise and assist the Harold Washington in his run to become Mayor of Chicago. I spent over a month in Chicago computerizing and developing a field operation with the Washington campaign. Along the way I began to develop a relationship with Rev. Jesse Jackson. Rev. Jackson was close to Andrew Young and lived in Chicago.

Immediately following Harold Washington's win, the buzz among the national black leadership, which included Rev. Jackson was, "if we (black community) can win Chicago we can win the Presidency, the time has come". In other words the Black vote had arrived, matured and black

voters began to realize that black votes mattered. (Please note, this was 1983 and in my humble opinion this was the beginning of the 2008 candidacy of Barack Obama) There were meetings, phone calls, letters among the leadership about the idea of running a black for a serious run for the democratic nomination and on for the Presidency. Many prominent names were kicked around, former Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson, newly elected Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young, Harold Washington. DC Mayor Marion Barry, Richard Hatcher, Jesse Jackson and others. The feeling was that the black vote had proven itself, all over the country, the black turnout in Chicago was an amazing, over 90% for Harold Washington. Talk of who would run the campaign was discussed. Ivanhoe Donaldson (Barry's guy), Stoney Cook (Young's guy), Preston Love (Young's new talent), and a few others. There was a *Time* magazine (1983) article written along the way (by Tom White) which discussed myself and the others as the small few national Black campaign resources available at that time for such an effort.

No consensus decision was ever formally made but Rev Jackson decided to test the waters and received the blessing of most of the leaders. Rev Jackson launched a southern voter registration tour, hired me as his only staff (I took a leave of absence from the City of Atlanta). Read part 2 and follow what evolved; a hint, RUN, JESSE RUN!

*To review previous Black Votes Matter column articles visit **Omahastar.com**. Or **prestonlovejr.com**. Preston love can be reached at prestonlovejr@gmail.com*

BVM.25