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Voting: What Do Our Kids Say?

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Black Votes Matter
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Black Lives, Black Poverty and Black Votes Matter

Voting: What Do Our Kids Say?

This fall Black Votes Matter, my UNO “Black Politics” class and a Benson High School class of 25 embarked on a civic education project, which revealed something wonderful. Those reading this column and have read my book *Economic Cataracts* (Love, 2015) are aware that one of my major concerns is that our youth are not receiving an adequate amount of civic education. As such I have led efforts to improve the situation. We led in 2015 the effort for 700 of our youth to see the movie SELMA. We are partnering with the League of votes to insert civic lessons into 4 of our high schools, we have created civic lessons into the program for the annual youth programs, Step Up and Summer Works, and I give civic talks to numerous youth programs such as the Hope Center, Boys and Girls Club, Sudanese youth and many more. We are advocates for civil education.

So annually as part of my UNO class curriculum, which teaches the African American political experience to upper class UNO students, we organize and reach out to Benson High for an intense civic education experience. With the help of the Service Learning arm at UNO we conduct a three session module:

- We bring the students to UNO, expose them to the campus and scholarship opportunities, as well University contacts that can assist them in getting into college.
- We provide teachable civic lessons not only from the Professor but also the UNO students, teach from some of their learning experiences in the “Black Politics” class.
- We expose the UNO students and staff, to the people and culture of our kids and their voices.
- We conduct a civic learning project with them. In 2015 it was voter Registration, this year it was a door to door canvass of north Omaha voters.

This year we all learned a lot from our project. The students (UNO and Benson) were divided into teams, accompanied by one or two adults. The teams then were assigned an area in and around 45th & Bedford to knock on residents doors. The process of the canvass was to ask for answers to a series of questions regarding voting. The purpose was to determine whether the resident is a voter and the reasons why or why not. There were some surprises. I will share two. All but one participant believed that Black Votes Mattered. The one that did not believed that elections were “rigged” and predetermined. In spite of the fact that all but one believed that Black Voters Mattered many of those same people were not voters, I found that strange. Along the way, the previously somewhat jaded High School students became excited and concerned about their community voting, they were enlighten by the process and a seed was planted for them to become future voters and advocates of voting,

After the civic lessons and the canvass experience the voice coming from those high school “kids” was clear“, our community needs to vote”. That’s what our kids say. What do you say?

North Omaha, Get Out To Vote.

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

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