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Lessons from My Journey (a call to action)

**By
Preston Love Jr**

In this past election, the 2020 general election, I had a special opportunity to observe my Nebraska communities, from a very unique viewpoint.

As a Democrat, African American, in a predominately Republican state, and as a candidate (US Senate), whose candidacy spanned a short 50 days, raised less than \$5,000.00, and failed to have the time to create a campaign structure, my candidacy was unique, to say the least. I submit that my candidacy provided me with an opportunity to see what maybe no other has seen; the complexity, the frailties and yet potential of our time, in this very splintered world. The uniqueness of my journey provided me with the ability to observe, with my eyes and my mind, our Nebraska communities, in all of our rawness.

My campaign theme was simple, and intended to have a charm/cleverness, by the use of my name, with the theme, saying that “There Needs to be Love in the Senate.” But, with the evolution of the campaign and my observation, that declaration of the need for love became profound, serious and a needed mantra. May I offer from my lofty view, the following evidential dynamics of the 2020 election’s uniqueness/distinctiveness:

- The significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, driving a significant desire of voters not to go to the polls, or even focus on the rigors, dangers and responsibility of voting.
- The impact of the leader of our executive branch of government, no matter what your party affiliation, pro or con to Trump, I would guess that we all can agree that the injection of misinformation, lack of truth, and personal-tics instead of poli-tics, may have contributed to this election and this uniqueness.
- The re-emergence of what could be called “The New Jim Crow of Voter Suppression” including:
 1. Targeted purging of voter rolls
 2. Tampering and affecting the postal service delivery of voter mail
 3. Increased voter intimidation
 4. The undermining of voter confidence in the voting process
 5. The rampant reduction of polling places
 6. The rampant reduction in drop boxes
 7. Fake drop boxes
 8. The use of the court system to negate public voting
 9. The prediction that the election was going to be “fixed”
 10. A nation divided among racial lines and raw racism
 11. A test of Democracy

- Racial division, captured in the concept of Black Lives Matter, death of blacks by police and manifested in the heightened demand for justice, change and reform, and fueled by the rise of white Supremacists, and also anarchists, who would love to see the races not only divide, but go to war, and tear this country to shreds.

Anyone of these unique factors, contributing to the environment of the 2020 election, could be significant alone, but in the aggregate, they represented a potential catastrophic, and the most unique election in the history of our nation.

To be a candidate for the United States Senate, in the midst of all the historic and unique election elements, was personally a strange destiny. I want to share clarity, that arose from this complex matrix of factors, and my viewpoint. Said simply, there *is* a great human need for hope, healing, reconciliation of our differences, and yes, love. That's part of my lesson from my journey. But there is more.

During my journey, I interacted with, spoke with, and observed horrible stress, mental health, and pain from the communities all over Nebraska because of the COVID, poverty, lack of jobs, lack of food, lack of knowledge of available resources, or the lack of knowledge *about* available resources, health disparities, incarceration and inequities, all contributing the growth of hopelessness. A bitter lesson.

There is this real world beneath a campaign. Whether it be the campaign for United States Senate, or any other office, the realities are sitting there waiting for attention. Campaigns focusing on attack ads, wonderful television advertising of make believe, raising and spending vast amounts of money and mostly overlooking or not focusing on the deep real world needs of many.

Another lesson confirmed from my journey. The need to change. It was entirely unpredictable that my humble moneyless, and challenging write-campaign, would receive a Nebraska record-breaking 62,000 write-in votes. It is remarkable, but clear, that my votes represented a peephole into the hearts and minds of many, who used my campaign as a way to cry out. A cry to campaigns, 'you don't need to waste money, and waste the voters' time attacking and spending, and, that in spite of the all the unique factors to retard voting, they voted and voted in record numbers as a sign, a cry out for help. If we as communities, do not address the cry's now, sexism, injustice, racism, hate and poverty will reign supreme.

A Call to Action: Public, Private and grassroot sector Leadership. We need to stop dancing around solutions to the raw needs and solutions to the change and reforms. Together we can close the gaps of jobs, injustice, divisiveness, disparities, opportunity, equity and inclusion. Come together, committed but knowing there is struggle in change. Reach out to credible and trusted sources. I suggest we take a mental inventory of how far we have come and how little progress we've actually made since the last breath of George Floyd. I will also say, this in closing, that in words of James Weldon Johnson, creator of the anthem, "*Lift Every Voice and Sing*", we should "*Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,*" and "*Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.*" let's make history.