

¹Black Votes Matter

Part 1— Preston Love Jr.

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Black Lives, Black Poverty and Black Votes Matter.

Protests to bring attention to all these critical Black matters should be non-stop. The efforts to address and eradicate these injustices should be our community's full time effort. My focus in this and future articles is directed toward our votes (or lack thereof). It is my contention that our poverty is the dominant factor that has created the horror of the other two "matters," lives and poverty. In my recent book *Economic Cataracts* (2015), I develop the relationships between our poverty and our dismal voting, and suggest the immediate and long term need for Economic Inclusion. Our community needs wealth. Stated simply, poor people have trouble caring or participating in a system that is failing them. Poor people are trying to survive or surviving in a small but separate crime-filled culture within. Voting is not on the list of their to do's. I don't agree with this logic. In fact, I believe we are making things worse by buying into this "I could care less" scenario.

This new column, "**Black Votes Matter**," will be devoted to the upcoming election in 2016. My hope is to generate alternative and provocative thought by providing our community with more information. My hope is also to generate strong voting and voter participation so as to generate positive results for our community.

Let's begin by focusing on two very important "anniversaries" this past month. The 50 year anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the 1 year anniversary of the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO. There is linkage.

The 1965 Voting Rights Act is without question the most significant piece of legislation in our modern history, arguably greater or at least rival to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The law provided once and for all the teeth necessary to implement the intent of the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution (1870). The law changed the entire landscape of America. The law officially launched the political revival of black America and its final spoil, the presidency.

¹ BVM.1

The law was significantly watered down and crippled in 1995 when the US Supreme Court dismantled and pulled most of the teeth from the Act. The *New York Times* stated,

"The Supreme Court eviscerated the Voting Rights Act yesterday (1995). A 5-to-4 majority, determined to find the United States no longer required to help blacks achieve significant numbers in Congress, held that the law cannot be used to justify race-conscious districting. The Court implied that if the law actually maximized black gains in the national legislature it would be unconstitutional.

Prodded by the Justice Department, Georgia created three districts in which blacks could elect a Representative of their choice in 1992. For blacks to win in 3 of the state's 11 districts was not out of line, given Georgia's 27 percent minority population and a history of no black members of Congress for a century after the Civil War. But the Court now finds the line-drawing impermissibly race-based, not excused by the department's invoking the voting law.

The decision is bad law, sanctimoniously delivered. 'Only if our political system and our society cleanse themselves' of discrimination, Justice Anthony Kennedy said for the Court, 'will all members of the polity share an equal opportunity to gain public office regardless of race.'

That shows profound disrespect for Congress, which passed the voting law in 1965—and renewed and strengthened it several times since then—to provide political justice without waiting for America to cleanse itself of prejudice. Despite the Court's contrary suggestion, the nation's most effective civil rights law is fully authorized by the Constitution, which gives Congress the power to enforce the 15th Amendment, giving blacks the vote, by appropriate legislation."

Additionally, the court gutted the section that gave the Justice Department powers over discriminatory voting practices in nine southern states.

Immediately after the decision the conservative Republican Party began throughout the nation and including good old Nebraska to suppress the black and minority vote by any means, largely via Voter ID legislation.

The linkage to Ferguson, MO.

Ferguson, Missouri: population 22,000, 67% African American, high poverty, double digit unemployment, power to singlehandedly elect the Mayor (which includes the appointment of the Police Chief), power to singlehandedly elect most of the city council, School Board, etc. Yet what did the facts reveal? White Mayor; White Police Chief; five white city council members, one Black; Six members of the School Board—one Black; 53 members of the police force—three Blacks. The result: over-reaching administration and police department, and death to one black life. Why!! Because the black residents of Ferguson did not realize that their votes mattered and voted at a mere 8%.

Recently the landscape changed in Ferguson. This past April, they finally got that point. They increased turnout to 29% and elected two new Black members to the city council, interim Black Police Chief and more. Their **BLACK VOTE IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE**.

The question is when we, North Omaha, will get the point and get busy and vote to better our situation? Our **BLACK VOTES MATTER**. Next Issue, we will investigate what's at stake.