

The Struggle Continues Can Somebody Please Spare Some Change

Written by Paradise Gray ID4546
Thursday, 13 November 2008 00:04 -

Change has come to America, it's been six days since the historic election day that propelled Senator Barack Obama to the rank of President Elect. Congratulations and condolences go out to the president Elect as he will have little time for celebrating as he still faces the funeral of the Grand Mother who raised him Madelyn Dunham.

Here in Pittsburgh, PA we can relate to Mr. Obama's pain, we barely had time to celebrate the fruits of the labor of the many women and men who dedicated their time registering people to vote, door knocking, phone banking, organizing, raising funds and other activities that led to our President Elect winning the State of Pennsylvania, and the Presidency, before we were mourning more victims of violence in our community.

On the day after the election Justen Anderson a 19 year old who was a witness about to testify in a murder case was shot and killed through a 2nd floor window of his grandmothers house. This Saturday November 8th, 2008 Michael Ross was murdered in his North Side clothing store by 2 masked young men during a botched robbery, later that day 2 teenagers (a 14 and a 16 year old) were shot on Brighton place. A 19 year old man was shot in the head in the Manchester area a few hours later.

Living in places where hope seems so far away, In spite of the mounting pressure of violence, many young black people in Pittsburgh were inspired by Barack Obama, they put in long hours and worked under stressful conditions, I couldn't be more proud of their efforts.

I had the pleasure of working with Khari Mosley of The League Of Young Voters doing (Non-Partisan) voter registration, Get out the vote efforts and election protection on election day. We trained and supervised a group of young people who had never been involved in electoral politics before, in fact many of them had never voted.

Khari insisted that we involve young people who were disenfranchised, written off as "lost" and never invited to be a part of the political process. One of these young people is Nate Brown, affectionately known to his friends and family as "Franchise" (a name held over from his football playing days). Franchise worked with us on election day starting at 6:00 AM on Nov. 4th doing Election protection and "Video The Vote", after working all day helping others to get their votes in, he voted himself for the first time in his life.

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After the polls closed he walked to the North Side of Pittsburgh from downtown, as he walked under the railroad underpass on a North Side street, he was approached by another young black man who asked him for a cigarette. He responded that he didn't have one and kept walking. The young man reaching under his coat and pulled out a handgun and asked Franchise "what else do you have". Franchise told the young man that he didn't have anything for him and kept it moving only to see the guy gesturing with the weapon as if he was trying to fire it at him. For whatever reason, the weapon failed to fire and the young man put it away and ran.

A group of us had also just finished our long days work and had congregated at my house when a visibly upset Franchise came in and told us of his ordeal. Teary eyed, it dawned on me that after all of the hard work that he just put in making sure that other people get their vote counted, he almost didn't live to see the results of his labor nor his own vote.

His first instinct was to round up a crew and hunt dude down, so I hugged him and said happy birthday to him. He stared a puzzled look at me and I explained that he had just been reborn. I asked him "with all of the young black male bodies that we have been putting in the ground in Pittsburgh, why had he been spared? I told him that I believed that he was still with us for a purpose, and he should thank God for his life and every breath that he breathes from this moment on.

Understandably, he was still disturbed as the rest of us headed out the door for the democratic party on the South Side to await the results of the election leaving him to contemplate his fate alone. After we left, Franchise zoned out trying to put the incident out of his head. He turned on the TV to watch the results of the election himself. When Barack Obama was announced the winner he cried and it felt as if a heavy burden had been lifted from his chest, he felt that If Barack Obama could become President, what could he do with the rest of his life.

He felt that he had a divine purpose as he watched images of disenfranchised people from all over the world celebrate President Elect Obama's victory. "I felt a connection to them and the pain that they have experienced in their countries, we think that we have it bad here in America, imagine what poor people all over the world have been through. Footage of Obama's Kenyan tribe really resonated with me, it made me think of everything that we went through from the middle passage to this day".

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He also thought of all of the people who have died whose struggles contributed to Barack winning and he was thankful to God to be here to see it. "I realized that I was at an important crossroad, I was still feeling like I wanted to get at dude, but watching the election unfold made me think that I would like to do my part to help change the conditions that made him try to rob me. I've been in his shoes, I understand his frustrations and anger. I started to think, I ain't mad at dude, it wasn't personal, I don't know him and he don't know me.

Just before he started pulling the trigger, he looked more scared than me."

This experience has helped Nate decide that he wants to return to College and continue his education, He has a liberal arts degree and would like to pursue a Masters Degree and ultimately go after a Doctorate. He says: "I have to squeeze every bit of energy out the life that I have been given, everybody has a path in life to follow, If I get to achieve my dreams it will effect the lives of so many people"

Please read Jeff Chang's blog about one of my other young bucks day at the polls.

"A New Day" - <http://www.cantstopwontstop.com/blog/2008/11/its-new-day.cfm#>

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