

“Give me Liberty...”

By Preston Love Jr.

Patrick Henry, in 1775, spoke to his fellow colonists, and to the British, when he said, “Give me liberty or give me death.”

Nearly 250 years later, I too, scream for liberty.

I make this appeal not to the element of white supremacists and overt racists. I need not waste my time with that audience. Nor do I appeal to my more progressive, less racist white counterparts, who may share my anguish and pain as to our common view of the realities in America. My appeal is directed toward the large segment of our white American communities. These folks are well-meaning but seem to have amnesia when it comes to the history of white America and its treatment of its Black co-citizens.

Don't you remember that in 1865, in the 13th Amendment to our beloved Constitution, slavery was “abolished.” Yet for centuries, manipulation, via indentured servitude and more, minimized that amendment. And you may have forgotten that that slavery provided free labor to build this country and to build generational wealth for countless whites.

Don't you remember the 14th Amendment, which gave everybody equal protection and civil rights in this country? In 1868, so where did the idea of separate but equal come from? Where did separate water fountains and unequal schools come from, after the enactment of the 14th Amendment?

Don't you remember, in 1870, the 15th Amendment to the Constitution that gave all the right to vote -- as long as you were male? Yet John Lewis had his head beaten, and activists were assassinated nearly 100 years later, still advocating for that right.

Don't you remember the horrors of lynching, well into the 1900s?

We as Americans should have been done with slavery, unequal rights under the law and any impediments to voting by the end of the 19th century, and taking the breath and lives of our fellow man. But it never stopped. It took the brutal, vicious and long civil rights movement to push for the truth of those amendments, and all of the horror that the opposition followed, in the form of Jim Crowism and more. Is America asking the African American to also have amnesia, to not remember these horrible deeds, and for us to ignore our memory of America and its promises, its amendments and its deeds?

We counter the amnesia of white Americans with the historical and institutional memory of the African American.

Need I remind you that the Ku Klux Klan was populated by law enforcement officers? The beating of John Lewis was by law enforcement officers. The killing of key civil rights workers in Mississippi was perpetrated by law enforcement officers. A beautiful 14-year-old, poverty-stricken, innocent black girl by the name of Vivian Strong was shot in the back of the head by a police officer in Omaha.

To be clear, we know the vast majority of police are good people dedicated to their job. But death by the police is nothing new. Are you asking us Black folks to forget? Black people have institutional knowledge of all of that, regardless of their age. It is instilled in them by their fathers, mothers and grandparents

So, in 2020, after a series of years of killings by rogue policemen all over this country, culminated by George Floyd's death and punctuated by the shooting of Jacob Blake, if you have amnesia, then you may be surprised at our sustained anger. Plain and simple, you cannot separate the past injustices by claiming amnesia or indifference.

After the Civil War, called the "Reconstruction Period," there was great hope because of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. But along came Jim Crow. In the middle and late 1960s, there was great hope with the passage of new civil rights laws. But along came the "new" attitude of African Americans, declaring that enough was enough, and America erupted with the race riots and civil disobedience.

In response to the unrest, African Americans saw exponential growth in elected office and movement within corporate America. We had hope again. We even began to run for president: Shirley Chisholm in 1972, Jesse Jackson in 1984, and many others to follow.

We saw economic growth in sectors of the Black community, mostly in entertainment and athletics, and even the election of a Black man to the presidency of the United States. We had not forgotten the past, but we had hope again. Then came a rash increase of racial divisiveness, white supremacy at the highest level, and more rogue police killings of our Black people.

White Americans may have amnesia as to what has happened, but don't ask us to forget. We're demanding reforms in policing and change in all segments of society. The well of hope is getting dry.

My message should be clear. In spite of my institutional, historical memory, should we again have hope or will we have more of the same? "Black Lives Matter," signs abound, but should we have hope of sustained change and reform?

Give me liberty. Together, let's convert hope into healing and real progress. Improve your memory so I can will reduce mine.

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.

What's Next Omaha?

Preston love, Jr.

Part 1

Noted African American scholar wrote “peculiar indifference to the magnitude of human suffering that **racial disparities** in **health** reflect.”, 1906

We are currently suffering from not one, but two Pandemics. They are separate and distinct, but they both contain a dramatic set of similarities, warnings, cries for help, and an urgent need for a “vaccine”.

But first let us reflect on a few historical reminders. I say a few, because there are far too many for me to cover in this short essay. As stated in the first sentence, people of color, in particular African Americans, have suffered from social determinants as it relates to health care since the turn of the 19th century, as per the quote provided by W.E.B. Dubois. Let me be more specific. The presence of poverty, race, diets, job type, density of living, are health determinants that make Blacks, and people of color, more apt to be ill, not be treated and not to have access to health delivery systems. These disparities have been voiced for centuries, from Dubois all the way up to yesterday. However, the demand for recognition of the need for change, have been ignored, misunderstood and denied.

So here comes Pandemic #1, the Coronavirus and no surprise, as we collect and report the data, as it relates to race and other factors, the social determinants of health jump confirm. Blacks and people of color are diagnosed with the virus and are dying at rates that are disproportionate with their numbers. For example, "minorities make-up 27% of the Douglas County population and 73% of the positive cases”

And my point is that nobody has been listening. May I say that these social determinants can be pointed out throughout the full circle of life, i.e. healthcare, criminal justice, educational gaps, employment, community investments; all have been suffering from the same crisis and nobody has been listening.

Pandemic # 2, is systemic racism. Racism and its impact, has been in our country since 1619, when slaves were first brought to this continent. My race has endured slavery, indentured servitude, pervasive Jim Crowism, lynching's, redlining, bigotry, discrimination, the facade of democracy, inequality and social injustice for 15 centuries. Once again, we have a dramatic set of similarities to the virus warnings, and an urgent need for a vaccine.

We thought we had a vaccine with some of the victories of the Civil Rights Movement, and progress sprinkled here and there, but the Pandemic of racism has endured and has grown in spite of our repeated calls for social justice. Not enough have been listening. Nationally we have had scores of documented and public senseless race killings, including recently George Floyd and of Black males by police and others. In my beloved hometown Omaha, we have had two lynching's, shootings by the police of a 15-year-old Black girl (Vivian Strong, 1969), and

numerous other incidents leading up to the current tragic murder of James Scurlock. Our communities and its leaders have been suggesting, and in some cases demanding solutions, making suggestions and recommendations to address these racial determinants and disparities. The death of young Scurlock has, hopefully, opened up the eyes of the entire community of this systemic, racial problem, once and for all. Just like the Coronavirus has opened up the eyes of this community to the aforementioned health and mental health disparities. Now we pray that our community will finally listen.

A vaccine for the Coronavirus is in progress. The vaccine for racism is not. Our Omaha needs to listen, learn and respond to the people of color going forward.

Over the next month, we will continue with a weekly column dealing with, specific suggested actions from the communities affected. We attempt to capture the dialogue and recommendations from the North Omaha Community, in some of the most important areas going forward, including police community relations, criminal justice reform, health and mental health disparities, strategic investments to impact our poverty-stricken community and jobs and wealth development within the community. **What's Next Omaha?, listen.**

Part 2: Next week: strategic investments to impact our poverty-stricken community

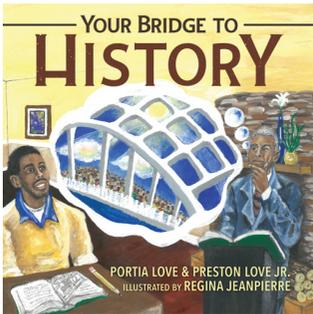
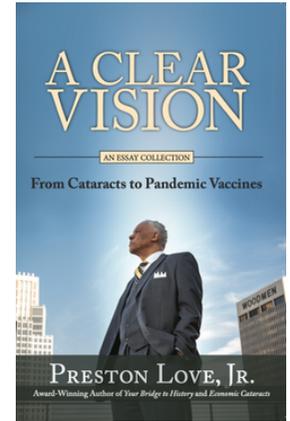
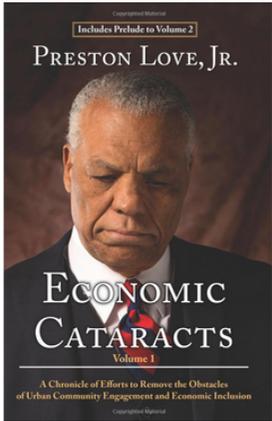
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Racism

with

Prof Preston Love Jr.



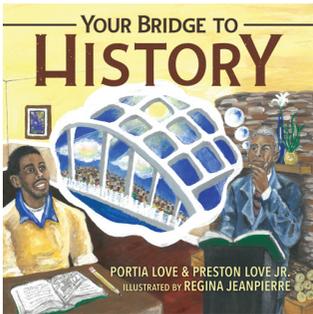
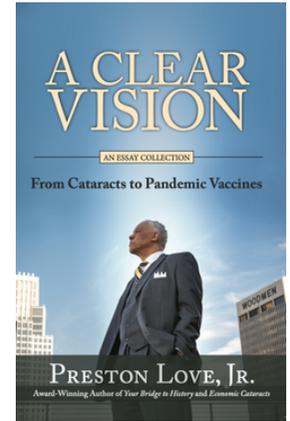
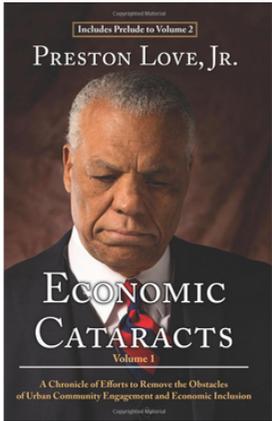
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The Civil Rights Movement

with

Prof Preston Love Jr.



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