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### What really matters on Election Day

Print | Comments () Posted by Marcia Dick November 6, 2012 08:57 AM

#### What really matters on Election Day

By Nekita Lamour

As I observe last-minute Get out to Vote appeals for Tuesday, I'd like to share my issues for the 2012 and future elections as an educator who has been volunteering in campaigns since 1992 and had resided in three north of Boston towns since the early 1970s:

- More attention, employment, and services to communities of color, new residents in exurb, sub/urban and Gateway cities and towns.
- Economic Development** – access to small business loans and grants to entrepreneurs of color;
- Youth Empowerment** – More civic participation activities, good internships and trainings for youth/young adults in high-risk communities;
- Close the digital divide** – More efforts for Black and Latino families to have access to the Internet and computers in their homes;
- Hire, retain, and promote** more teachers, psychologists, parent/family/outreach liaisons, school social workers, and other professionals of color in school districts with large linguistic and other ethnic groups. Increase adult role models for at-risk youth in municipalities with changing demographics;
- Improvement of the quality of K-12 public education and access to enriched after school programs in disadvantaged communities;
- Encourage and support outreach and involvement** of diverse community, professionals, and faith leaders in Safety & Crime Prevention trainings and programs
- Local government to provide more sports and culturally relevant recreational activities for boys and girls of color in exurb, sub/urban and Gateway cities and towns;

While I appreciate the calls to civic participations that are happening around the elections, I

believe long-term relationship and outreach has an important role to play in the outcomes of healthy communities. Groups that are affected by the above concerns need to have a stronger relationship among themselves.

All politics are local. There is a need for local government to develop a closer relationship with the changing demographics. If local schools don't have a culturally relevant relationship with parents and families and new communities don't build bridges among themselves, regardless of whoever is (are) elected to office, the rapport and relationships among communities and even individuals will be of utmost importance in order to apply policies made by legislatures and access to resources that will improve the future of communities in general.

Personally, I believe it's a two-way issue. Government needs to put more effort to do outreach in diverse communities. Groups with limited internal leadership need to be more proactive.

*Nekita Lamour, an educator based in Metro North, has been in the field of ELL for over 30 years.*