

Young, educated and voting for the first time

Contributed by WANJIRA BANFIELD

Whether you choose to ride shotgun on the McCain train or lightly sip on the Obama Kool Aid, this presidential election season guarantees to be an active one, especially among the young folks.

With the usage of well-known social networking sites such as FaceBook and YouTube, the candidates' messages are spreading to the young masses quicker than ever before. Not for a long time have young people been so involved and excited about the electoral process. Even first-time registered voters are rejuvenated and energized by the possibilities, and are preparing to head to the polls in November.

Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama has been given credit for massive mobilization efforts among young people either on college campuses or youth organizations around the country. However, his opponent, presumptive Republican presidential nominee John McCain, also credits many of his marketing tactics for enticing young voters.

According to Rock the Vote, the 2008 elections are shaping up to be the year of the young voter with 44 million eligible young votes up for grabs. The number of 18-29 year old voters increased in every state's primary or caucus, even doubling and tripling in many.

Twenty-five-year old Chris Molare has been a registered voter in Broward County since 2004 but wasn't too involved in the process until just recently.

"This election is major and it's going to be different. The primaries alone were exciting. I didn't vote last election season because I felt I was stuck between a rock and a hard place and I chose neither. I see a candidate now though who can benefit all and I want my one vote to really count this time," Molare told the South Florida Times. Molare is planning to vote for Obama.

Mya McKinney, 22, believes this is a tremendous year even for first time registered voters like herself. In 2004, she had to sit back on the sidelines and watch the process from afar.

"I wasn't able to vote at the time last year but I wasn't as interested as I am now anyway, so it didn't matter either way," McKinney stated.

McKinney credits her parents for her recent interest in the electoral process this year.

"My parents have discussions daily about the views of Barack Obama and John McCain and we all go back and forth. Personally, I haven't decided

yet who I'll vote for but it helps that we watch the debates together and really get involved in the process," McKinney added.

Lawrence Brown, 24, former Johnson and Wales University student, recently registered to vote because now more than ever he feels he can't sit back silent anymore.

"I want to help make a change. I want my vote to count and most importantly I want to be heard. Honestly, I'm sick of how things are being run in this country and being registered, I'm in a position to do something about it, so I will," Brown said.

Soon college campuses will be opening their doors for the fall semester all around South Florida and the influx of students will again regroup. All the data and polling in the world can't predict how much of an impact young people are going to have in this year's presidential election. All that's left to do now is sit and wait until the countdown stops and the votes are all tallied up after Election Day in November.

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