

STATEMENT BY Simon Woolley
Operation Black Vote
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Greetings Brothers and Sisters from around the world.

We found ourselves in a special place here in Geneva that has great history in the struggle for Human Rights. Equally we have a special space over the next few days in which we highlight our individual challenges, share ideas, and above all consolidate our global solidarity.

But who are we and why are we here?

We are minority voice. Sometime we are minority people. Not always of course. In Brazil Black people are the majority and yet like many of us across the globe we are the minority power.

But although this conference is entitled minority issues and political participation, we must not ignore the blinding obvious: That is in the last 700 years global power has been constructed on racial as W E De Bois put it the colour-line.

Whether its on the Indian sub continent, the Middle east, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Africa, The America's north and South, and the Far East division is based on the colour-line.

It's important to understand this historical context because although we no longer have global slavery, colonialism, or 'Jim Crow' racism, we are left with an unwritten racial contract which sadly maintains the status quo.

Governments across the globe talk about race equality, but never truly deliver it. They talk about diversity but never truly embrace it.

Both the majority and minorities are often complicit in maintaining the present situation.

The majority are compliant because the status quo confers great privilege. A privilege so ingrained in every facet of our society-not least politic-that it is no longer seen as privilege.

We, minorities, unwittingly play our role because we readily accept their perception that we are inferior.

How does that manifest? Well, if, three years ago we would have been told that Barack Obama would become vice president of America, our physiological condition of inferiority would have not only accepted that scenario but embraced it.

Obama's victory has taught us to truly believe in our own self worth.

So what should be our focus?

Well, many within our communities are not able to fully engage in the politics of power or governance, simply because they are involved in the politics of survival: finding shelter, a job, and putting food on the table.

So those of us who can be active must be supremely active. It's not enough that you are good or even brilliant. You must be smart.

You must acutely understand your political environment: Where are the pressure points. Where can you get the greatest result with the least amount of effort?

Do your research, do your home work.

Focus on empowering your community. Governments are forced to engage with a powerful block.

If you need to ensure your communities are registered to vote. You, know Dr Martin Luther King had more than a dream he had a plan: step one of that plan was to register to vote African Americans.

Engage in focus lobbying, find political allies, those politicians who will speak with you about social and racial justice.

Where necessary use the gender discourse to make the case for racial equality. White women understand the framework for gender equality. Swap race for gender and it is difficult for them to disagree.

Above all nurture your own representatives. Black representatives that have not been nurtured by the community can do more harm than good. They must be accountable.

And finally Brothers and sisters we must embrace this global unity, this solidarity that states you challenge is my challenge. My challenge is your challenge too.

Thank you.

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