

Subject: From Peace River: Granny D

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To: Undisclosed-Recipients;

FLA.

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Letter from Peace River, Florida

>From Doris "Granny D" Haddock

On the occasion of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, I thought those of us on our long trek should take a moment to reflect. It has been a busy few days, filled with of Dr. King's spirit and memory. Yesterday morning our voter registration trek took us into the arms of Faith Pentecostal Church in Avon Park, in central Florida. The music and energy were inspirational beyond my ability to describe. The Penacostals, once called the Holy Rollers, know how to tap the divinity and the sublime joy of the present moment. It is in the gospel singing and in every clap of the hand--as each instant is felt and celebrated. It is in the spontaneous dancing and expressions of profound connection--the melding of hundreds of lives into one caring and loving community. Though we were of a different race and belief, the ministers welcomed us to the all African-American congregation and, with voices of awesome moral authority spoken from their hearts, exhorted everyone to register to vote as a solemn obligation.

The choir master agreed that we should work together to create a "Wake up and Vote -The Politics of Love Gospel Choir" to tour the other congregations of Florida's African American communities. We will begin that work this coming week. I am imagining that we might get a dozen or more such groups in action in Florida and other swing states.

The African-American vote is the sleeping giant, not only in Florida, but in nearly every state. It is sleeping because people are full of despair. Pastor Brown told us that the people stopped voting when the politicians stopped caring about regular people. We have to break that stalemate with an act of faith and love and patriotism. People are ready to rise to that effort when they are asked to do so face-to-face.

We spoke to the congregation of how Dr. King guides our work: Effort and sacrifice mark the road to meaningful social change. The ministers brought us all up to the front and brought down a blessing upon our trek, that it might be safe and successful.

After the service we headed west to St. Petersburg, where we will be working with a number of groups this afternoon to register voters along the path of the MLK Day Parade. Our van will be in the parade, gaily painted for the occasion by Blue, our traveling artist. The Democratic candidate campaign volunteers are working together to register voters today.

We paused by Peace River along our way to St. Petersburg to begin this message. Peace River, so appropriately, is only a few miles from Troublesome Creek.

While we celebrate the advances of the Civil Rights Movement today, and honor those who lived and died for that moral progress, let us not be afraid to see that our people, of all colors and conditions, are in danger of slipping into a new slavery. We are becoming overwhelmed by

corporate institutions that take away our freedoms, destroy our towns, remove our best jobs, take away our public space and prohibit us from approaching each other as citizens on the corporatized landscape upon which we know find ourselves. No hardware store owner in the days of my youth would dare be so unpatriotic as to tell someone they could not talk politics or pass a petition or register a fellow citizen to vote on their sidewalk or even in their store. What gives these monsters like Wal-Mart and the shopping malls the gall to create zones where we are not free citizens to talk to each other? I do not abide by their rules, but I see what is happening. Thirty-four grocery stores in one town in central Florida closed last week because Wal-Mart is now selling food in new stores so large you cannot see the far walls.

Our middle class, our family businesses, and our consumer choices are being squeezed out. And where is a free press and where are creative political leaders to save us from this? Do you not sometimes feel like you are stuck in a science fiction story where the people have become mindless clones of their former selves, and where all truth is turned on its head?

Well, it is up to us. We must build a better world here beside the toxic world that has grown in our midst. Many are doing that. But we must join our hands and join our efforts in the promotion of a natural economy that serves human needs and does so with proper stewardship of the many gifts that are ours to protect. In self-defense, we must also organize to bring down the toxic culture in ways that are peaceful but effective--starting with a political effort to limit the size of corporations, and drastically. That will be cheaper and easier than increasing the size of government to keep them in check.

As we move along in our voter registration trek, free to enjoy the streams and the lakes, the wonderful people and the ever-changing review of birds and other animals, we are reminded of our freedom and of the joy of living and of companionship and adventure. We are reminded how much of our lives has been stolen from us over the last fifty years! We should not have to be out here on the road to have a taste of it again.

But, indeed, we feel the fresh breeze as we move down the road today. And we meet and travel with such interesting and free people, whose lives sparkle with curiosity and awareness. Those uncloned among us whose eyes yet sparkle and whose minds are yet their own must pledge to each other a new bond of solidarity against the rise of a new slavery and against the forces that apply themselves against our brotherhood and our love and our joy.

Ours is not a struggle between races; It's not a fight between Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives. We struggle together---all of us with beating hearts--for the responsible, joyful community---a place and a politics of human scale. Responsible communities. And these strong and gentle communities shall together make a great nation, whose strength derives from its honesty and mutual understandings and stewardship. As we have seen in our daily conversations on the road, we are a country willing and ready to transform, to let go of our fears, to find our way to a more natural way of life, where we work and prosper as our own masters, and where we nurture the higher potentials of our own lives, and of those among us.

So it was yesterday morning at Faith Pentecostal, and so it must be the other six days of the week.

Sincerely,

Doris "Granny D" Haddock

Ps. Please tell your working friends to set up voter registration stations at their desk at work. They can do so at <http://GrannyD.com>. And if you want to help us raise money for the music groups I mentioned above, let me know or donate at the website. Thank You.