

An Immigrant and an Anchor Baby Walk Into a Polling Place on November 2nd

Written by Rocsi Diaz and Rev. Lennox Yearwood, Jr.



One of us is an immigrant, who was born in Honduras, moved to the U.S. at the age of 2, received her citizenship in 2008, and voted for the first time in a U.S. election the same year. And, one of us is the first person in his family to be born in the United States, and now over half of his family members are U.S. citizens.

Although like in most "anchor baby" cases, being born in the U.S. played no role in family members becoming citizens.

This November 2nd we will both head to the polls to take advantage of our right to cast a vote.

Immigrants of various religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds have a long proud history in the United States. Yet, anti-immigrant rhetoric in this country is escalating, and being translated into anti-Latino sentiment. As a result, proposals and policies that are based on racial profiling are being promoted and implemented, which is an assault on all people of color in this country.

The vocal minority who champion anti-immigrant positions will continue to spread hate. Their hate, however, will not change the fact that we are voting this November 2nd in the midterm elections, and so will millions of other Latinos, African Americans, Asian Pacific Islander Americans, Middle Eastern Americans -- native born and naturalized citizens of color. In fact all the hate we have been enduring of late is emboldening our communities' get out the vote efforts.

The [Hip Hop Caucus'](#) national campaign, [Respect My Vote!](#) is educating young people of color and mobilizing them to the polls for the midterm elections.



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Young people are not waiting for change. They are pushing to make change happen. Over the past two years young people have been the most outspoken for real immigration reforms like the DREAM Act, as well as comprehensive federal reform. Moreover, young people have been the most active in pushing back against racial profiling laws like SB 1070 in Arizona. Young people are at the forefront of these movements today.

As a co-host on BET's 106 & Park, and the President and CEO of the [Hip Hop Caucus](#), respectively, our jobs are fun, but at the same time we take our business seriously. This is real. [Respect My Vote!](#) is a serious and powerful message, because we see young people fighting for change every day and we want them to succeed, and we want our country to succeed.

To remind us why we must vote, people often invoke the memory of the courageous leaders who lost their lives fighting for our voting rights. We should always remember the struggle for voting equality in this country, but in all reality, we also have our own current-day reasons to get out and vote.

To name a few reasons: [Racial profiling](#) initiatives are being adopted by local law enforcement in different parts of the country. The unemployment rate for African Americans last month was [16.1 percent](#) and for Latinos it was 12.4%, compared to 9.6% for the nation as a whole. Over [65,000 undocumented students](#) graduate from High Schools in the U.S. every year and are financially blocked from pursuing college because of outdated immigration and education laws. The national High School graduation rate for African American males is at [47 percent](#). Recent indiscriminate [immigration raids](#) have traumatized thousands of families, and violated basic civil and human rights of immigrants, including legal permanent residents. These are just a few examples.

Young people have the power and the will to stop this madness. Young voter turnout has increased in every midterm and presidential election since 2000. In 2008 more young people voted than in any other election in U.S. history.

If we keep the movement growing by voting in higher and higher numbers, and being more and

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more vocal and active on the issues that matter most to us, like immigration, health care, jobs, education, and the environment, politicians have no choice but to respect our votes.

So [pledge to vote](#) today, and join us on November 2nd, 2010 at the polls. Respect our vote, we respect yours!

Rosci Diaz is Co-Host of 106 & Park, BET's flagship show. She is heavily involved in the community and creator of Rocstar Foundation which donates money to public schools in her native New Orleans to help rebuild public schools. Follow her on Twitter [@Rocsidiaz](#) .



Rev Yearwood is the President and CEO of the Hip Hop Caucus Education Fund. He is a minister, community activist, and organizer, and one of the most influential people in Hip Hop political life. For more information on the Hip Hop Caucus visit [HipHopCaucus.org](#) and follow him on Twitter

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