



KWAME VOTES

by

DR. ARTIKA TYNER



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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my Rondo community where I learned the importance of servant leadership and civic engagement.

A.T.



Kwame ran full speed out of the school's front gate to his family van.

His father calls out, "Slow down, please. Be careful."

Kwame replied, "Yes, sir."

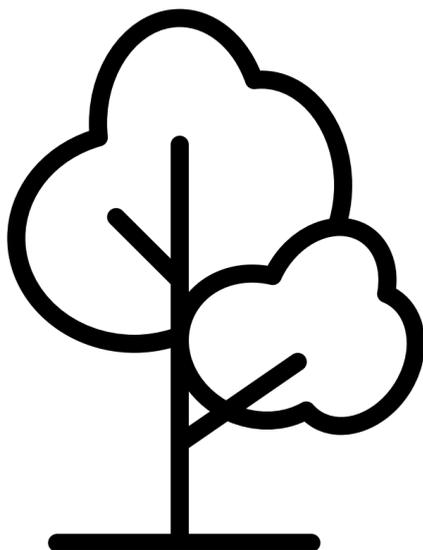
Kwame settled into the back seat. Then, he reached in the front and hugged his father before buckling his seatbelt.

His father turned around and asked: "Why are you in such a hurry today?"





“My friend, Imani, won the election!” Kwame exclaimed. “Our teacher, Mr. Jackson, has been teaching us about Election Day and today was the big day. We even had our student government election today. I voted for Imani because she promised to make sure that no one goes to bed hungry and everyone will have a new puppy. She will also plant a tree on every block.”





“Congratulations to President Imani!” said father excitedly. “It sounds like she will do a great job.”

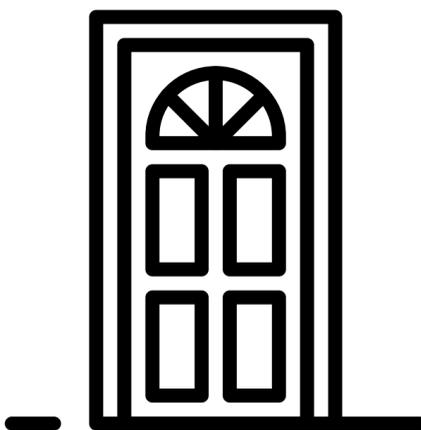
They drove to Grandma Alice’s house to pick up the rest of the family before they headed to the polling place.





As Father drove down the street, Kwame began to hum his favorite song, **Something Inside So Strong**. Father joined in while Kwame started to clap his hands to the beat.

They soon arrived at Grandma Alice's house. They walked together to the front porch and knocked on the door.





Grandma Alice opened the door and greeted Kwame with a big hug. He felt surrounded by love with her warm embrace. Kwame kissed her on the cheek.





Kwame could smell sweet goodness in the air- vanilla and the zest of lemon. It was Grandma Alice's famous pound cake. Kwame's eyes wandered as he tried to find the cake stand. Before he could see it, Grandma Alice sneaked him a warm pound cake slice in a napkin.

Aunt Ruth and Uncle William joined the rest of the family in the kitchen. Everyone enjoyed a slice of pound cake.





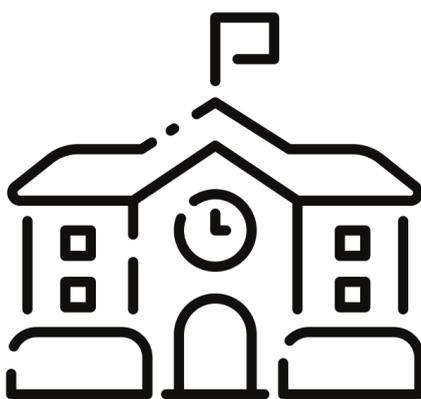
Uncle William asked Kwame: “Do you know what today is?”

Kwame responded: “Yes, Uncle William, it is Election Day. We vote to make a difference in our community.”

“That’s right. Each vote matters. I am excited to see all of the Presidential candidates focusing on protecting the environment,” said Uncle William.

Aunt Ruth joined in: “As a doctor, I am grateful to see a focus on healthcare. This will help people get the medical help they need.”

Grandma Alice shared: “My focus is on the school board candidates. I have to make sure they support good schools for my grandbaby, Kwame.”





The family headed to the van together. Kwame held Grandma Alice's hand and helped her into the vehicle. His father drove the family to the polling place at the local church. The family then walked in together.

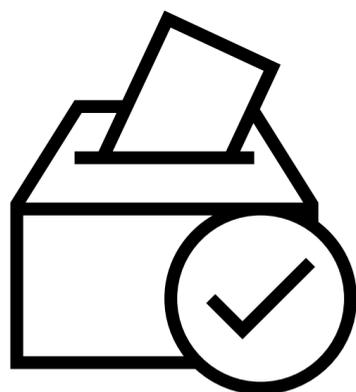
As soon as Kwame saw his mother, he leaped into her open arms. She embraced him and asked about his school day. He shared his excitement about the school election.

"I cannot wait to learn more tonight over dinner. I better get back to work," Mother said. "I have a special job today —"

"I remember, you're an election judge," Kwame said. "You help people to vote and make sure the voting process is fair for everybody."

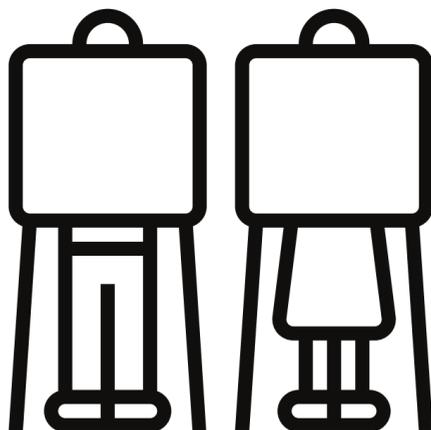
Mother smiled and nodded. "Wow. You certainly know a lot about elections, Kwame," she said.

She returned to registering voters.





Grandma Alice, Uncle William, Aunt Ruth, and Kwame's father confirmed their registration and then received their ballots. Kwame followed Grandma Alice and stood behind her in the polling booth as she completed her ballot.





After Grandma Alice finished her ballot, she placed it in the voting machine.

Next, the election judge handed Grandma Alice two stickers and said, “Have a wonderful evening, Ma’am. Take care, young man.”

“This is the moment you have been waiting for,” Grandma said.

She proudly placed the “I voted” sticker on Kwame’s sweater.

“We did it! Our voices were heard,” Kwame said.

“Voting in an election is your opportunity to be heard, hold elected officials accountable, and have a say in important issues involving our community,” Grandma said.





GLOSSARY

Ballot- sheet of paper used by the voter

Candidate- person seeking to be elected

Democracy- government by the people

Election Day- Tuesday in early November when elections are held. The community votes for President every four years.

Issues- problems or challenges seek to address

Poll- people giving voice to issues in their community

Polling Place- where people go to vote



TIMELINE

1787

The United States Constitution was written.

1789

Most states restricted voting to white male Protestant landowners 21 years and over.

1848

After the Mexican-American War, those living in the territories gained citizenship but were denied voting rights.

1856

Voting was extended to all white men regardless of property ownership.

1870

The Fifteenth Amendment was added to the Constitution to protect the voting right of all citizens regardless of race.

1920

The 19th Amendment was ratified, giving people the right to vote regardless of gender.

1965

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed, giving people of color the right to vote.

1971

The voting age was lowered from 21 years old to 18 years old.



RESOURCES

Learn about the election process

<https://tpt.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/election-collection/>

Organize a voter registration drive

www.vote.gov

Organize a mock election at your school

<https://www.kidsvotingusa.org/>

Learn about the three branches of government (legislative, judicial, executive)

<https://kids-clerk.house.gov/grade-school/lesson.html?intID=1>



About the Author



Dr. Artika R. Tyner is a passionate educator, an award-winning author, a civil rights attorney, a sought-after speaker, and an advocate for justice who is committed to helping children discover their leadership potential and serve as change agents in the global community. She is the founder of the Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute.

About Leader's Journey 365



Leadership Journey 365 seeks to motivate, train, and equip leaders who make a difference in the world by providing community organizing and leadership development training with the goal in mind of supporting civic engagement year-round.

The LJ365 model engages the whole family from children to community elders through an intergenerational approach to community-building.

Learn more at www.ppgj.org.

About Planting People Growing Justice



Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute seeks to plant seeds of social change through education, training, and community outreach.

A portion of proceeds from this book will support the educational programming of Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute.

Learn more at www.ppgjli.org.

Kwame is excited to tell his family who he voted for and why in his school student government's election. To his surprise, his family is getting ready to be part of Election Day. Kwame learns that voting is communication between the government and the people, and because of voting, elected officials can be held accountable, and people can communicate their opinion on how to solve community problems.



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