

# THEY GOT OUT THEIR FIRST TIME VOTERS

✘ What a place to see this election—from downtown Detroit, in a relatively small precinct in a primarily African-American and Latino neighborhood.

And in this neighborhood, the first-time voters came out to vote.

I won't say exactly what the turnout thus far is (the voting location is at the left), but I will say that of the people who had voted before I left at 4, at least one out of six voters was a first time voter—and that's only counting those voters who were so young that we actually asked or those voters who mentioned being first-time voters at some point in the process (and it doesn't include all those who—because they have vertical drivers licenses—were clearly under 21).

At least one out of six voters, first time voters.

And though, demographically, at least some of the Latino voters might logically be voting for John McCain, they certainly didn't seem to be. The only person I felt certain voted for McCain was a loud, angry Irish-American wearing a Michigan Department of Corrections cap—a white prison guard living among people of color, and treating his neighbors as if he were still in charge even on the outside.

Because this is a small precinct, we didn't really have bad lines, certainly not after the location got into its groove after the early morning rush. There were two problems, above all. First, a lot of the people who said they had been registered by canvassers this fall appeared not to be entered into the registration rolls; if these people didn't have their registration cards, they would be forced to vote provisional ballots. The most heart-breaking of

these was a woman whose daughter said they had registered together (her registration was fine). She said of her mother, "She hasn't voted since Kennedy, but she wanted to vote this time."

The other problem we had was when Latinos had been registered—the problem appeared worst when they had been registered in canvasses—whose registrations had been entered incorrectly in the rolls. We played a kind of 20 questions to figure out what their registrations were. What's your patronym? What's your matronym? Okay, let's try it without the hyphenation. My hero of the day is a 19-year old woman like this. We tried the book, the laptop database onsite, I called the war room and we looked in several online databases, all while she waited at least a half hour. She insisted she had received her registration card but misplaced it. Finally, she decided she'd go home and look for the card. When she came back (her boyfriend brought her both times, and waited patiently both times), we saw they had registered her using her first name as her last name and her patronym (which sounds more like a woman's first name in English than her first name) as her first name.

She voted and she's my hero.

Two more interesting details. First, the City Clerk in DC has added laptops to the polling places so the poll workers can look up registrations in a database (unfortunately, these didn't use wifi so we weren't using a live state-wide database). These are really helpful for getting people to their proper voting location. Better still, apparently the Clerk is deliberately recruiting younger workers to man the laptops. So she's creating an entire cohort of young people who will take on the poll worker function. (One of the women at my location started doing this when she was 16, and voted in her first presidential today as an 18-year old.)

The other thing they're doing in Detroit is making sure there will be security at the polls. They have contracted for security at the polls, so there were two guys out front with Bureau of

Elections t-shirts on; the younger one helped out when we got busy. Also, they've got cops coming through the polling places to make sure everything is okay (IMO, this wasn't intimidating, particularly since the cops were all women and seemed to know some of the poll workers). As I said, there were no problems at my polling location, though apparently there was one polling location where there had been three tense moments by noon.

Lots of people making sure they get to vote, I guess.

Anyway, as bmaz said, if nothing else, this election has gotten a lot of young people engaged in politics. And that's a very cool thing.