



Teresa Sewell/Medill

Marc Ford lives in the South Shore neighborhood, but his political work doesn't stop there. He traveled to New Hampshire to work for Sen. Barack Obama's presidential bid last January.

South Shore student works Obama campaign, inspires others

by [Teresa Sewell](#)
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Sometimes Marc Ford asks strangers in his local supermarket who they're voting for in the 2008 presidential election.

But last Saturday, Ford was glued to the TV in his family's South Shore home, watching CNN and awaiting Sen. Barack Obama's victory in the Wyoming primary. He planned to do the same for Mississippi's polling Tuesday night.

Ford's playing the waiting game now, but this junior at South Shore Community Academy has been quite busy as the 2008 presidential race has heated up.

Three months ago, he was off the couch and actually in New Hampshire celebrating Obama's win in the Jan. 8 primary there. Before that, he was knocking on doors, encouraging his Chicago neighbors to register to vote and cast a ballot in Illinois' Feb. 5 presidential primary.

But it's only been a couple of weeks since Ford has been able to practice what he preaches. He turned 18 last month, officially old enough to vote.

"There's...a lot of young people out there that probably never did this before," Ford said about his campaigning. "I'm proud to be one of those persons that did."

His family feels the same.

"My baby is going to be somebody," said his mother, Serita Ford, with a smile. "He's involved in so much stuff. It blows my mind."

Her son also has campaigned for Ald. Howard B. Brookins Jr. (21st), who lost his race for Illinois state's attorney, and has worked with the wife of Jesse Jackson Jr, Ald. Sandi Jackson (7th).

When Serita Ford attended the MLK Breakfast sponsored by Rainbow Push in January, she was surprised that NAACP members and other movers and shakers in the room knew him by name.

"He doesn't even understand," Serita Ford said, "that the type of people he's meeting right now at his age, people want to meet."

His mother is glad her son does more than hang around his South Shore neighborhood. Though she wishes he would wash the dishes more often, Serita Ford said, "You couldn't ask for a better son."

Ford considers Obama an inspiration, and says Sen. Hillary Clinton lacks that spirit of "hope" that Obama carries. He believes Obama's staying power doesn't just come from winning the black vote. Ford's heard arguments that Obama won't get votes across a wide spectrum of races and cultures, but he disagrees.

"If it was about race," Ford said, "he would have been gone a long time ago."

Ford was able to go to New Hampshire through Mikva Challenge, a political organization for high school students named as a tribute to prominent Chicago politician Abner Mikva. He wishes more of his peers would get involved and understand how voting for a candidate with similar views can change the world in ways they support.

He avoids fighting, drug selling and the cliques he sees at school.

“Some things you just got to stay away from in order to get where you going,” Ford said.

Timothy Ford, who's been in the U.S. Navy for more than 13 years, said it's impressive that his nephew can take big issues and show why people need to talk about them at the dinner table.

“When you're a driving force,” Timothy Ford said, “people notice.”

When Ford is not out campaigning, he tries to figure out what's next in his future. He plans to go to college and major in performance art, history or business management.

He loves politics, but education is his primary concern. It's his guaranteed ticket to a successful life.

“If you don't go to school, you might as well waste away and die,” Ford said. “Nobody is going to give you anything unless you earn it.”

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