



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

## Dozens Attend Senator Sanders' MLK Day Debate on Obama Administration

JAMES SANDERS JR. January 17, 2017




In recognition of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, State Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village, Far Rockaway) held a debate on the Obama Administration and posing the question of whether it was fruitful or fruitless. Some 100 people attended the event which was held on Sunday afternoon at the Black Spectrum Theatre in Jamaica, and featured political and historical experts as guest debaters.

The debate was moderated by Dr. Ron Daniels, president of the Institute of the Black World 21<sup>st</sup> Century and distinguished lecturer at York College. It followed traditional public forum debate rules, with each side presenting an opening argument, followed by an opportunity for each team to ask the other any clarifying questions, a rebuttal, a summary, and questions from the audience.

Senator Sanders along with Dr. Lessie Branch, a senior research fellow at the DuBois Bunche Center for Public Policy at Medgar Evers College argued the fruitless side, citing a decrease in socio-economic wellbeing for African-Americans, specifically declines black wealth, income, retirement savings and home ownership, along with an increase in poverty.

“The situation black folks find themselves in is dire and getting worse,” Sanders said. “I have all kinds of facts and figures, but I want to focus on the housing market meltdown. Black people lost more than 40 percent of their wealth that they made from slavery in four years, most of them under Obama. In four years more than 40 percent of everything that you gathered together in 400 years went down the drain.”

Branch made three arguments. First, that Obama’s rhetoric spread optimistic color blindness in an age of inequality. Second, that rhetoric disempowered black-linked faith and collective action focused on stagnated socioeconomic parity. Third, Branch stated blacks need narratives and a social movement to realign their socio-economic perceptions with their socio-economic reality.

