

A Rather Usual Event Aimed at Young Black Voters

By Jalissa Breeland

Philadelphia hosted BET's 5th annual Vote Fest at The Met on Friday. The free event scheduled on National Black Voters Day was held to foster and encourage the community of young black voters. The night kicked off with speeches from guest speakers Pastor Carl Day, Sen. Vincent Hughes Council-member Isaiah Thomas and many more. Following the speeches were live performances from Pusha-T, JT, KUR, Karrahbooo, DJ Diamond Kuts and DJ Ricochet.

Host and film producer Yandy Smith was the first to speak to the audience. She said that surviving as a black woman is not always easy.

"We've put in the work, we've gone further and we've achieved so much more," she said. "Yet there is still an economic and wealth gap affecting our community."

It is all about strength in numbers as black voters. Pennsylvania, a major swing state, has the [most electoral votes](#) amongst other swing states. According to [USA Facts.org](#), swing states are "states that could swing to either Democratic or Republican candidates" allowing an equal chance for either candidate to win over that state.

Jamie Worth, a Cheyney University alumni and current Temple University graduate student, was in attendance and said how notable it was for BET to have the senator and Council-member be involved.

"We need people of higher power to be here," she said. "Sure these kids can listen all day to regular people like us but it means much more coming from them."

"I need you to appreciate how much power you have," Sen. Vincent Hughes said, "All rows to the White House come through Pennsylvania. All rows to the White House come from Philadelphia."

Seeing the same demographic group was normal at a targeted event like this, but there were a few people who didn't necessarily fit in that category. Alyssa Parker, a Penn State Abington alumni, said she noticed how there weren't a lot of people that looked like her.

"I'm here because I came with my friends who are majority black. I like to support them in any way that I can and I know that being here, as a white person, is not only important to them but to the others that are here as well. I also think it is a good learning opportunity for me."

The two hour fest provided attendees information on how to vote, where to vote and help on registering to vote.

"This is all volunteer work through The Met," said Samantha Batchler, "I think that it's a good cause to guide our younger brothers and sisters into the right direction." She continues to explain that at the age of 41, she never had these resources and that she is proud to be able to provide this generation with them.

Batchler has been involved with many events and programs that positively impacts the community. Her most long standing volunteer work is with the Big Brothers Big Sisters Independence organization.

The night concluded with another opportunity to bring the community together. Guest speakers shared the stage with some of the most popular artists where they performed their greatest hits.

"When you all get out and vote, don't let anybody tell you it doesn't really matter, things don't happen," said Pastor Carl Day, "It doesn't happen or it doesn't matter if you don't start with the vote."