

Title:

Black Youth Vote! National Civic Education Training Tour Promotes Voting In Iowa

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Summary:

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Article Body:

As part of ongoing efforts to motivate young people to engage in the political process, the League of Young Voters Education Fund (LYVEF) recently teamed up with the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation's (NCBCP) Black Youth Vote! (BYV!) for an innovative civic participation training at North High School in Des Moines, IA. The youth later participated in the Black and Brown Forum Presidential Debate.

Organizers underscored the importance of voting in the Jan. 3, 2008 primary even though people of color make up less than six percent of the Iowa population. "We are working diligently to educate young people on the role the primaries play in the political process," said Rob "Biko" Baker, LYVEF organizing director. "We used edutainment - spoken word and writing exercises - to tie the struggles faced by young adults to the power of the vote."

"Young people must learn the entire process. From getting youth-oriented issues on the table during the primaries, to holding elected officials accountable once they're in office," adds Melanie L. Campbell, executive director and CEO of the NCBCP. "This is one of many trainings we are hosting across the country to educate young people on the importance of voting and teaching them how to mobilize their friends and family around issues important to them."

Last month Black Youth Vote! hosted a comprehensive training in Washington, DC

to prepare state BYV! coordinators to go into their community and galvanize young voters. Nearly 80 youth organizers from across the country engaged in interactive workshops and panel discussions to train them on voter registration, mobilizing young voters, voter protection, and educating the youth on issues impacting their demographic.

"There are a number of issues important to Black youth including the unprecedented levels of African American incarceration, high school expulsion rates, and their economic future," said Jordan Thierry, BYV! national coordinator. "Black Youth Vote! connects the dots between voting and resolving issues effecting their everyday life."

"It's a new day in America. Black youth under 35 represent nearly 50 percent of the Black American electorate," says Campbell. "Black youth have the power to impact the serious problems confronting the Black community. Their movement was energized with the historic participation of young voters in the 2004 election, followed by the massive demonstration in Jena. Black Youth Vote! is helping to channel that movement energy into the 2008 election cycle," she adds.

Black Youth Vote!, (www.ncbcp.org) the youth division of the NCBCP, is a national grassroots coalition of organizations and individuals committed to increasing political and civic involvement among Black men and women aged 18-35. Founded in 1996, the youth led organization educates young adults about the political process and trains them to identify issues and influence public policy through participation. BYV! has been instrumental reversing the downward spiral among young voters and educating voters who are increasingly disenfranchised from the electoral and legislative process.

The League of Young Voters Education Fund (<http://youngvoter.org/iowa>) empowers young people nationwide to participate in the democratic process -with a focus on non-college youth from low-income communities and communities of color. Founded in 2003, LYVEF makes civic engagement relevant by meeting young people where they are, working on issues that affect their lives, and providing them with tools, training, and support to become viable players in the civic process.