

## **Student Voices: Philadelphia Voter Registration**

**KIRA SHEPHERD, Student Voices Project:**

*So the whole idea of this training is... we are charging you as student government representatives with the task of doing voter registration assemblies at your schools.*

**MATTHEW ZACCAGHNI, the.News Student correspondent and student government leader:**

As student government leaders at Philadelphia's public high schools, we have a lofty goal: get 6000 of our classmates- who will turn 18 by Election Day- registered to vote.

**CAMILLE YOUNG, Student government leader:**

I think that a lot of times we don't get out and vote because we feel that we're not important.

**MATTHEW ZACCAGHNI:**

You know you have a bunch of adults in a room saying, "Ok, well what do we think kids want." But kids never get a say.

Historically, very few had a say. Before the Civil War, states set their own rules and most barred all but white male property owners from voting.

In 1869, Congress passed the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, granting African American men the legal right to vote. It wasn't until 1920 that women won the same right with the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

**DEBORAH ZUBOW, Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth:**

In some countries today, women still don't have the right to vote.

**MATTHEW ZACCAGHNI:**

When we go back to our home schools, we will use the history of the hard-won privilege to convince our classmates the importance of exercising that right.

**CAMILLE YOUNG:**

I think with a lot of the historical information, um, they're going to like really jump on the bandwagon and say well, you know, why shouldn't I vote. I'm a citizen of America. I do have the right to vote. My voice should be heard.

**MATTHEW ZACCAGHNI:**

In 2007, Philadelphians have a good reason to be heard. Voters will be electing the city's next mayor and 17-members of city council.

**FATIMA NELSON, Committee of Seventy:**

You need to be aware of what issues that you want to push in this particular campaign, what the questions that you want to eventually be able to ask a candidate who someone is saying I want to be your mayor.

**STUDENT GOVERNMENT LEADERS:**

*I see guys get arrested and then when they get out of jail, it's hard for them to get a job // I think another issue is the drugs // The gun violence, like many people that get killed before they're even the right age to vote*

**MEGHAN KRISS, Student government leader:**

I liked what they were talking about. They were talking about, you know, different problems in Philadelphia that can be solved and how we can solve them.

**CHANEE LAY, Student government leader:**

Sitting in this room today with the group of kids, from different high schools, seeing that everybody was here for the same thing, the same positive attitude and wanting to contribute the same attitude and take it back to their school, it really motivated me

**STUDENT GOVERNMENT LEADER:**

*How many people like to have control over the decisions in their lives?*

**MATTHEW ZACCAGHNI:**

2-months after the training seminar, we rounded up nearly every senior at our school for a voter registration assembly.

*By actually going out and registering to vote, you are taking control over the decisions in your lives.*

Some of our classmates didn't need much convincing.

**STUDENT:**

*We all should vote. There's no excuse or reason that a person in the United States of America should not vote.*

**MEGHAN KRISS and STUDENTS IN AUDIENCE:**

*We have some question and answer trivia questions for you for t-shirts. Which amendment gave youth the right to vote, changing the voting age from 21 to 18? Kristen? // 26<sup>th</sup> amendment // Yes.*

*The right to vote in the US began in 1779 for white men with property. Which amendment gave people of color the right to vote? // 15<sup>th</sup> amendment*

**MATTHEW ZACCAGHNI:**

We helped students fill out their voter registration forms. And then they explored the workings of an actual voting booth.

**DONNA FRISBY GREENWOOD, Director, Office of College & Career Awareness, Philadelphia School District:**

Young people oftentimes don't vote because they're intimidated by the machine. And so by having the machine here, it gave young people an opportunity to go into the machines, see what it's going to look like, and then relieve some of that tension.

**STUDENT:**

*Oh, that was fun!*

**MATTHEW ZACCAGHNI:**

Being actually able to go out and get people excited and to vote, I thought was really important and they can enact a change on the issues that they feel most strongly about.

**LIA BATISTE, W.B. Saul Agricultural Sciences High School:**

If I do this, maybe we'll have a positive and more active leader, and we'll have more opportunities

**MEGHAN KRISS:**

It's a young adult actually being heard and making a difference.

**MATTHEW ZACCAGHNI:**

For more information on how to register to vote, visit the Student Voices website. Matthew Zaccaghni for Student Voices and the.News.

**MAN HELPING STUDENT and STUDENT:**

Suppose you decide to change your mind // OK // Suppose you want to change something. Suppose you decide...