


Greater Sacramento
Young Professionals Debut
**“Vote = Change”
Project**

Developing a voter registration drive and improving civic engagement are the tools the Greater Sacramento Young Professionals will employ to strengthen community activism and increase voter turnout in the Greater Sacramento area under the organization’s “Vote=Change” project.

The Greater Sacramento Young Professionals formed partnerships with several community-based organizations to organize a city-wide voter registration campaign to register 10,000 eligible voters for the 2008 presidential election. The partners include: Sacramento NAACP, Black Women Organized for Political Action, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority and Faith Fellowship Community Church. Each organization received voter registration training from the Sacramento County Voter Registration Office and the Young Professionals that detailed what it takes to implement a successful voter registration drive. The Young Professionals hosted a kick-off rally at the Secretary of State’s office last November 8 to begin the year-long drive.

Sacramento County has provided two voting opportunities per year for the last three years. Published findings from the Sacramento County Office and the League of Women Voters reveal that four out of five Sacramento City Council members were elected in 2004 with less than 10,000 votes, and all four were elected in 2006 with less than 8,000 votes. Consequently, a few thousand votes and new voters could begin to change the landscape of the City Council and policies affecting the entire region. 

Rhode Island Young Professionals Introduce
Speakers Bureau

By Reza Corinne Clifton

The Rhode Island Young Professionals (RIYP) presented “Girl Talk: Dressing and Looking Professional, Interacting with Authority, Dealing with Harassment, Pursuing Opportunities & Promotions,” its fifth Speakers Bureau-Career Panel program last November 13. The session was organized for STARS (Speakers, Tutors, Achievement, Retention, Success), a program of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Job Corps site in Rhode Island, which is designed to reduce the number of 16-24 year olds living in poverty. Another “Girl Talk” is scheduled for March 12, 2008, for middle and high school-aged girls and young women enrolled in the LEAD Mentoring Program offered by the National Coalition of 100 Black Women-RI chapter.

The goal of the RIYP’s Speakers Bureau is to broadcast the voices of yesterday’s students and tomorrow’s leaders. It was ushered in by the organization’s 2007 leadership with a three-fold agenda: advancing RIYP’s tradition of providing mentors and supporting and engaging youth; responding to members’ requests for public speaking workshops and other professional development opportunities; and answering the call to hear from 21st century young professionals representing racially, economically and occupationally diverse backgrounds.

During one of the Career Panel events, seven young professionals spoke to teens enrolled in a special summer program at a public high school in Providence, R.I., which after almost closing less than five years ago for poor performance and lack of accreditation has undergone tremendous reforms. Panelists represented filmmaking, medicine, law enforcement, publishing, financial management, and community/social service work.

Other sites that have hosted Speakers Bureau events and panelists are nonprofits such as Youth in Action, a youth-led organization focused on youth engagement and leadership; the RI College Crusade (formerly RI Children’s Crusade), a federally funded program that provides tutoring, mentoring and scholarships for its eligible clients; YWCA Northern Rhode Island (YWCANRI) that works to empower women and eliminate racism; and the University of Rhode Island’s Alumni Association. The events with YWCANRI, Exeter Job Corps and the March 2008 event have exclusively featured and spoken to women and girls.

RIYP members and non-members alike have volunteered. At the end of October 2007, President Raymond Watson was excited about the direction and the program’s impact in less than a year. “The Speakers Bureau events have not only engaged members, but they’ve also provided yet another entry point into the organization for those who are not yet members. As important as members-only benefits are to an organization like RIYP, it’s clear that in the long run, this program will be one of the reasons people decide to become members in the first place.” 