



## INTRODUCTION

Does our generation care about America's future? I do not know and I cannot speak for all, but in 2018 the SGA did notice a spark of fire among our students. The SGA held educational events to bring to light the political issues of our generation in the hope that they would then choose to become active in any elections ahead. SGA knew we needed to start somewhere to get students active in politics; therefore, we were on a mission to ignite a political wave of interest among students.

For centuries the younger generation has not participated in elections for many different reasons. Some will say, "My vote doesn't matter and will not make a difference." Others might reason, "Why should I vote when you have an invisible hand who dictates the votes anyway?" Finally others will say, "I do not know how to vote and do not care to vote. I do not know what to believe because of biased information." Reflecting upon those statements helped SGA understand why students were hesitant in participating in elections. It was time for change. Time to put those suspicious reasons to rest. Time to educate our students about voting and what trustworthy resources to use in order to feel comfortable making their selections when they cast their vote. This would be a small step into developing "A New Kind of Texas."

These past midterm elections on November 6, 2018 were shaping up to change history forever and SGA wanted to be a part of that change. Their mission was to get the younger generation to vote and be educated in their choices. The Richland Votes with America Rally allowed students to come together to celebrate the importance of voting. Actress and activist, America Ferrera along with Grammy winning artist, Alicia Keys and internet sensation Liza Koshy came to campus to pump up the students. As part of the Rally, our celebrity guests also did a Chronicle TV Live Event called the Round Table Talk. They were joined by students from different

organization on campus to discuss their views on political issues and how we should come together as a nation. This event was going to influence and change the minds of the Millennials in our community and possibly around the world. Our goal was to rally all the students to vote in these elections.

### WHY RICHLAND...

At this point you may be asking yourself, how did Richland get handed this huge event? And we don't blame you for wondering. As it was all happening, we were wondering the same thing. Let us explain. There are two sayings that truly fit this situation. The first being, "It is not what you



Event Flyer

know, it is who you know.” And the second being, “Hard work pays off in the end.” The SGA had been working closely with two wonderful ladies who serve as Volunteer Deputy Registrars (VDR) for Dallas County to get a service learning program set up at Richland called Richland Votes. Kelly Drablos and Dorit Suffness worked with SGA throughout the summer and fall semester to help register students to vote on campus. In their efforts to register new voters, the SGA set up tables, held events, spoke in classrooms and basically did everything they could to get people registered. They were successful in registering 1143 new voters with the help of the Richland Votes VDRs. These ladies, in turn, were working with the Student Voter Initiative (SVI) in gathering tracking data for all those new voters. Therefore, when Terry Bermea from SVI contacted Mrs. Drablos to inquire about which college they should approach about holding a rally, she gave them Richland’s contact information. She told them that not only does Richland have the space to hold a rally but also that Richland had early voting on campus for 2 weeks plus then they were a polling location. Most importantly, Mrs. Drablos told the SVI that Richland had an SGA that was hard working and passionate about students voting. She told them about all the events that they had done up to this point for voter registration and education. Then before we knew it SGA had the opportunity to host the “Richland Votes with America” Youth Voter Rally on October 23, 2018. Of course that was just the start. The event did not come all wrapped up with a pretty little bow on top, there was a ton of work to be done.

### HOW IT ALL HAPPENED...

It was a Thursday afternoon at about 4:30 PM when Kelly Sonnanstine, our advisor, noticed the message light blinking on her office phone. When she checked the messages, she found a message from the Student Voter Initiative (SVI) asking if Richland College was interested in hosting a voter rally with America Ferrera, activist and actress, the following Tuesday. Miss Kelly immediately called back to get the details so that she could relay the information to the executive administrative dean and assistant to the president. After multiple phone calls and texts, it was finally confirmed that Richland College and the SGA would indeed host the “Richland Votes with America” Rally featuring America Ferrera and friends.

The Richland College Student Government Association presents

# RLC VOTES WITH America

Music Food Games

A Youth Voter Rally featuring award winning actress and activist **America Ferrera**

Tuesday, October 23  
11:45 am - 1:30 pm  
Richland College  
Fannin Breezeway

STUDENT VOTER INITIATIVE VOTOLATINO+

Richland College  
DALLAS COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

Higher Education That  
Actually Gets You Hired

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Once the event was approved and the confirmation was sent to the representative of the Student Voter Initiative, the real planning began.

When we first got this exciting news from our advisor it was a lot of work to do in a short period of time, but we divided and conquered to make it happen. Miss Kelly immediately contacted the executive board of our SGA to get feedback on how we could make this event extra special for both our students and our guests. Edward Sesay wondered what exactly they would be doing at this rally. Would they be setting up and cleaning up? Would they be acting as security? And the big question that came up was, “Can we meet the guests?” Together the eboard and their advisor put together a schedule of events. They wanted to get as many people/students as possible involved in this event. Eboard members contacted the dance and music departments to see if we could secure any student performers. The Speaker of the House, Makayla Logan, contacted different clubs on campus to see if they would be willing to have someone speak on stage before the guests arrived. We had flyers and posters up around campus before 6:00 PM.

On Friday, the Student Media Department was contacted to see if they would cover the event as well as host a roundtable discussion featuring our guests and a diverse variety of student leaders. The Police Department was contacted to arrange for extra security. The Richland Communications Team was contacted to help with publicity and sending out official press releases to the local news agencies. Facilities assisted with event logistics and set up. The budget was secured to provide food and drinks for those attending and decorations were purchased and made. Club advisors were contacted to secure speakers from different constituencies on campus. By Friday afternoon, 99 percent of the event was ready to go, but then at about 4:30 PM, Miss Kelly’s phone rang again. It was Terry from SVI with some more news. Alicia Keys would be joining America Ferrera for the event.

### **THE BIG DAY...**

By 7:00 AM on Tuesday morning, Miss Kelly and the members of the SGA were outside setting up the event. Balloons and bunting decorated the stage and tables. Tables for clubs and non-profits from the area lined the side of the breezeway. The first of the soon to be 3,500 students attending the event began to arrive at about 8:00 AM. The entire campus was buzzing with excitement. We started serving the first half of the 108 large pizzas at about 11:30 AM with the 2 sheet cakes following right



Serve them pizza and they will come

behind. That equaled 1296 slices of pizza and 468 slices of cake. The plan was to have student leaders from about ten different clubs on campus participate by addressing the crowd prior to our guests arrival.

At approximately 11:45 AM, Sinbad, a local radio personality and director for social media for the Latino Voter Empowerment Coalition (LVEC) took the stage. The crowd also heard from special guests Dr. Shannon Cunningham, Executive Vice President for Richland College and Eric Cedillo, the Founder of the LVEC. Between speakers Sinbad hosted some trivia



Kimberly Le, ASA pumps up the crowd

games about elections and also reminded students about early voting on campus. At approximately 12:30 PM student leaders and representatives from the Black Student Association, the Asian Student Association, the Male Achievement Program, the Women’s Initiative Network, Pride at Richland College, TJCSGA, and the SGA each took 2-3 minutes to address the audience about why voting, no matter what party, was important to their particular group. Many of their statements got cheers of support from the crowd. One student leader mentioned that voting



Zairia Buchanan, BSA - speaks to the crowd

was important “because it our right, duty, and job to do so.” Another mentioned how we should “fight for our generation and make the future a better place for the next generation.” Still others mentioned that equal rights and equal treatment of all people in America was important to our democracy. The black limos arrived about about 12:45 PM and Emmy winning actress, America Ferrera, YouTube sensation, Liza Koshy, and Grammy winner, Alicia Keys emerged to the cheers of “Richland Votes.”

### THE RALLY..

America Ferrera opened the event by acknowledging the importance of the midterm elections. “We are up here at Richland talking to you all because we know and believe in our hearts that there’s nothing more important

going on in our country right now than you all on this campus.” She reminded students that the outcome of this election was in the hands of the younger generations and that this is an opportunity to decide who will be the leaders of this country. “Texas matters. Texas is a model for the entire country. What you all decide to do in the next 13 days will affect every single American,” Ferrera said.

“Are you on fire? Are you a first time voter?” Alicia Keys asked when she got on stage. She was answered with a massive roar of the crowd. In reference to first time voters, Keys said, “We need you. We need you so badly because everything that has happened before has not been good enough for us. And we don’t have to tolerate the things that we don’t want to go on in our democracy.” Keys mentioned that there was nowhere else that she would rather be than with students.

Liza Koshy, a Texas native, empathized with students. “There are no dumb questions,” was her rally cry when the topic of being an educated voter came up. She continued, “You need to go online and educate yourself. I see y’all using Twitter. I want you to use that same voice to vote and I want you to vote early. Vote today.”



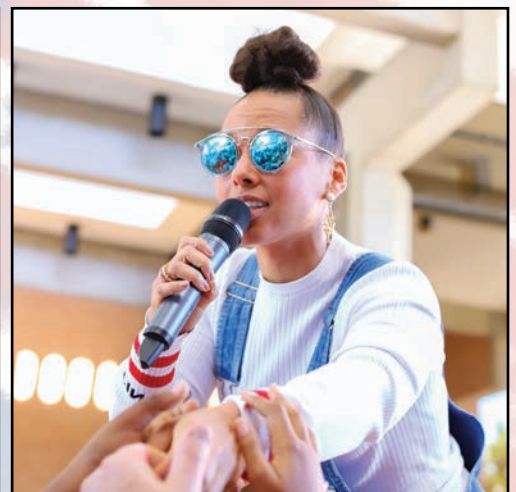
Panoramic view of the rally



America Ferrera



Liza Koshy



Alicia Keys

## THE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION...

The roar of the crowd could be felt in chairs where the delegates waited. While the celebrity guests pumped up the crowd to go vote, the student leaders waited downstairs in the TV studio for their round table discussion with our guests. After the conclusion of the rally and once the celebrity guests made their way to the Richland KDUX TV Studio, they were able to sit down with a group of student leaders representing many walks of life at Richland College. Each student group was able to ask the celebrity guests questions while this was all being filmed for KDUX WebTV. Although there has been a renewed interest in getting young people out to vote, Ferrera believes there are still people who think their vote doesn't matter. In response Keys said, "One reason that you know that your vote matters and your voice matters so much is because they are literally trying to stop you from voting." Koshy emphasised that status and popularity have very little to do with the power of your voice. "No matter how big or how small your platform may be, voting is a lot easier than marching." At a march, you have to yell and scream to have your voice heard. But in an election, all you have to do is vote. Keys followed up with "There is power in all votes. Let no one take your power away."



The Round Table Discussion



Speaking with Pres. Haya Qazi



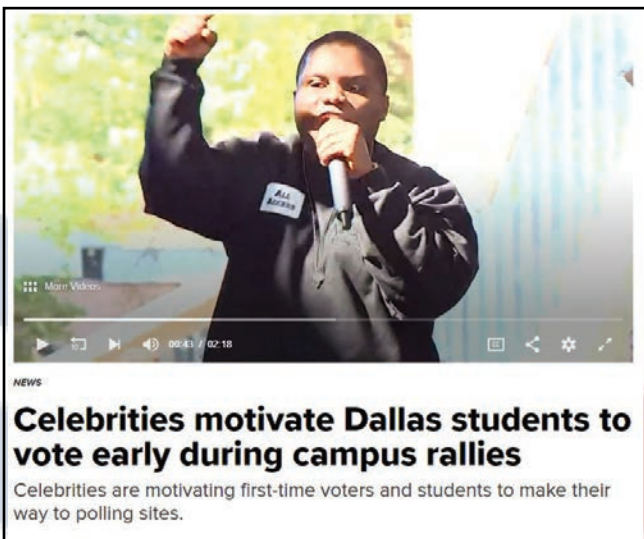
Liza and the guys



Upon learning of a new citizen

## THE PRESS...

The rally itself was a huge success and covered by multiple news outlets including a local radio station, the local NBC, CBS, and ABC affiliates; print media was also present. The Dallas Observer called to get some follow up information the next day for an article that was forthcoming. The following morning Richland College was on the front page of The Dallas Morning News. If people in Dallas did not see the paper, they may have seen the headline on Alicia Keys' Instagram. Her caption read "We gonnn be alright!!!" Richland also got a mention on America Ferrera's SnapChat where she, Alicia Keys, and Liza Koshy did a live stream that lasted for about 45 minutes. "Richland was LIVE... Like potentially the livest spot in the world. Like, It was LIVER than LIVE," said Alicia in the video.



Left to Right from the top: WFAA News broadcast; Dallas Morning News Online video; Dallas Observer; Dallas Morning News front page and Alicia Keys' Instagram



10:52 am, 2/20/2019

# aldíadallas

**Dallas: America Ferrera, Alicia Keys y Zoe Kravitz promueven el voto temprano en Richland College**

Este lunes arranca el periodo de voto temprano, de 7 a.m. a 7 p.m.

ESTÁ AQUÍ: INICIO METROPLEX AGENDA DFW: ALICIA KEYS Y AMÉRICA FERRERA EN RICHLAND COLLEGE

## AGENDA DFW: Alicia Keys y América Ferrera en Richland College

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HOY DALLAS / 22 OCTUBRE 2018

americaferrera was live · 20h ago

Im Texas!!! Beto all the way!!

carmelo617 Omg love ur show

voicenlove

brantrev24 Voted in Texas today!!!

01:34

Mobile Uploads

LVEC Latino Voter Empowerment Coalition

"The Truth is the air we breathe is political, the water we drink is political, your school tuition is political, like how much debt you will have after college is political, like whether you parents have to retire at 60 or work till they are 85, is political, our lives are impacted by every decision our elected officials are making, and they don't look like us, they don't live lives like us, and that is wrong!" - America Ferrera to the Students of Richland College #TuvoteCuenta #WeStandUp #SomosMas

Like Comment Share

Write a comment...

People You May Know

JoeLian HlawnCeu (Cung Tha Lion)

Richland CHRONICLE

Vol. XLV Issue 10 November 6, 2018

Why your vote matters

Pages 6-7

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Richland Student Media

LAVACA HALL

Alicia Keys, America Ferrera and Liza Koshy's Girls' Trip to Dallas: VOTE!

172,402 views

8.7K 121 SHARE 3% SAVE

Alicia Keys 2 Published on 26 Oct 2018

SUBSCRIBE 3.2M

ChronicleTV LIVE ...

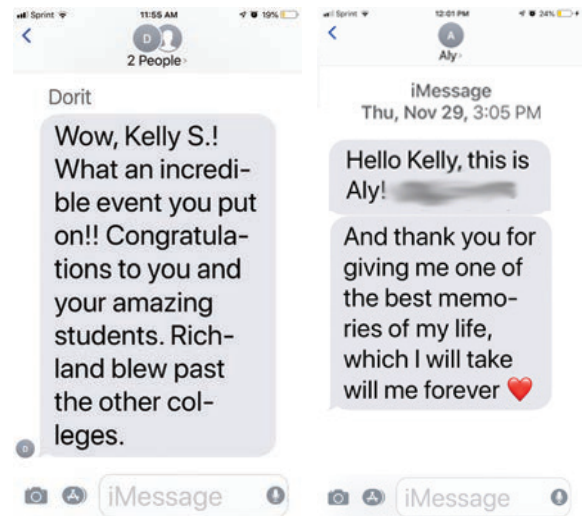
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YouTube

ChronicleTV LIVE EVENT Alicia Keys, America F...

Clockwise starting top left: Aldia Dallas Online; America Ferrera's SnapChat live; Richland Chronicle; Richland Chronicle TV online; Alicia Keys' Youtube channel - Girls Trip Video; LVEC Facebook; Hoy Dallas News

## THOUGHTS FROM OUR STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY...



"I am so grateful to have been chosen for this special opportunity to speak on behalf of the Asian American population about voting and being politically involved in society.

Speaking to my peers is something that I will never forget."

-Kimberly Le, Asian Student Association



"This event was truly awe inspiring. Standing among the crowd, I could literally feel the energy pulsating around me. Even though I can't vote yet, I already feel inspired to understand the political world around me. "

-Avery Self, Phi Theta Kappa

### CONCLUSION...

All in all, the event was a massive success that had campus buzzing for weeks afterwards. After the event ended, and after running the numbers, we were pleasantly surprised in finding our voter turnout to be at 74%, higher than the turnout of Dallas County which sat at 54%, and especially higher than the age group (18-25) we were targeting, which sat at a low 37%. All in all, this very successful event was an important step for us to build our "New Kind of Texas.



Girls Trip Photo - Alicia Keys Instagram



# Richland College

DALLAS COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

February 18, 2019

Texas Junior College Student Government Association

2019 Convention

Dallas, TX

Dear TJCSGA,

On behalf of Richland College, I, Latrenda Thomas, Associate Director of Student Support Services at Richland College due hereby affirm that the event called “Richland Votes with America” did in fact take place at Richland College on October 23, 2018.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at

[LThomas1@dccd.edu](mailto:LThomas1@dccd.edu).

Sincerely,

Latrenda Thomas

Associate Director, Student Support Services