



CONTACTS: binh@visitphilly.com
(267) 603-4512

Khaney@signature57.com
215-514-6495

Visit Philadelphia Hosts Second TED Democracy Fireside Chat, The Power of Participation

Renowned voting accessibility activists Katie Fahey and Desmond Meade share their journeys to empower communities and highlight how every citizen has the power to inspire meaningful change.

PHILADELPHIA, August 21, 2024 – Visit Philadelphia, in partnership with TED, is excited to announce *The Power of Participation*, the second installment of its [TED Democracy Fireside Chat series](#), as the United States approaches its 250th anniversary in 2026.

Taking place Sept. 19, 2024, at Eastern State Penitentiary, political commentator and community organizer Sally Kohn will moderate a thought-provoking conversation between two of the nation's most influential voices for voting opportunity — Katie Fahey and Desmond Meade — whose stories display the substantial impact all individuals can have on creating, inspiring and empowering meaningful change.

“There is no better place to bring a conversation showcasing the power of one’s voice than Philadelphia, where we continuously work to be the ultimate welcoming and inclusive destination in the U.S. for all,” said Angela Val, Visit Philadelphia president and CEO. “Nearly 250 years ago, the voices of our founding fathers ignited the birth of a new nation, one where ideas could be shared, change could be embraced and opinions could be freely expressed. We are honored to perpetuate that ideology today by hosting this important conversation right here in the cradle of modern democracy while amplifying the voices of two inspiring individuals who have championed those often unheard.”

“TED’s mission is to discover and champion the ideas that will shape tomorrow - and we believe that ideas can come from anyone, anywhere,” said Laura Beyer, head of partnerships at TED. “Individual voices, ideas and participation have power. In the second installment of our partnership between TED + Visit Philadelphia, we are proud to explore this impact. Through this fireside chat, we aim to spotlight powerful voices who will educate, inspire and challenge our existing norms around the challenges and impact of civic participation.”

VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

Making a difference does not solely rely on those in high-power positions; it can be driven by the efforts of ordinary people who choose to engage and take action in shaping a better world. Furthering the series' intent to challenge perspectives on modern democracy and exchange ideas about its influence in everyday lives, the conversation will delve into the personal journeys of Fahey, founder of Voters Not Politicians and current executive director of The People, and Meade, a formerly homeless returning citizen and executive director of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition. They will discuss the power individuals have to make their voices heard and how every person's contribution, no matter how small it might seem, has the potential to be impactful. Attendees will hear about how their civic participation challenged existing norms, inspired others and drove progress.

"It is such a privilege to live in a country founded on the concept that all political power is inherent in the people, and I am so honored to be a part of this event in the birthplace of America," said speaker Katie Fahey. "How humbling it is to share the story of how citizens 250 years later are still holding onto the legacy of being unafraid to create a country of, by and for the people — a legacy that started right here in the heart of Philadelphia."

"As someone who had lost the right to vote and fought long and hard to regain it, I have a much deeper appreciation for democracy," said speaker Desmond Meade. "It's this appreciation that compels me to work to ensure that every American has access to and a willingness to participate in the process that will make our democracy thrive."

The main event on Sept. 19 will take place in Philadelphia's Fairmount neighborhood at Eastern State Penitentiary (2027 Fairmount Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19130). Community members are also encouraged to join remotely or in person via watch parties at satellite locations, including Crane Community Center (1001 Vine St., Philadelphia, PA 19107) hosted by the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation and Tierra Colombiana (4535 N 5th St., Philadelphia, PA 19140).

Committee of Seventy, a nonpartisan civic leadership organization that advances representative, ethical and effective government in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania through citizen engagement and public policy advocacy, will have voter information hubs at Eastern State Penitentiary and each satellite location to encourage participants to learn more about voting and how to be active and engaged citizens in their communities.

The event is free, but registration is required [here](#).

More information about community watch parties and the TED Democracy Initiative can be found at visitphilly.com/ted.

VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

About Katie Fahey:

Founder of Voters Not Politicians and currently, Executive Director of The People

Fahey is the founder of Voters Not Politicians, a grassroots, nonpartisan campaign that ran a successful effort to end gerrymandering in Michigan by amending the state constitution in 2018 with 61% of the vote. Her unlikely journey began with a simple Facebook post asking if anyone wanted to help take on gerrymandering in her state, which unexpectedly sparked a powerful citizen-led movement, highlighted in the acclaimed documentary *Slay the Dragon*. Currently Fahey is executive director of The People, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization empowering everyday Americans from all political backgrounds to actively participate in creating a more responsive and accountable government. She was honored in 2022, having her work mentioned by Michelle Obama in the Culture of Democracy Summit keynote address, and most recently, presented a TED talk on making political change as part of the TED Democracy series. She is passionate about spreading her deeply held belief that positive, long-lasting political change not only can, but often must, come directly from the people.

About Desmond Meade:

Formerly homeless returning citizen and executive director of Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRRC)

Meade is a formerly homeless returning citizen who overcame many obstacles to eventually become president of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRRC); chair of Floridians for a Fair Democracy; a graduate of Florida International University College of Law, a Ford Global Fellow; and a published author of “Let My People Vote.” He was recognized by Time Magazine as one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World in 2019 and led the FRRRC to a historic victory in 2018 with the successful passage of Amendment 4, a grassroots citizen’s initiative which restored voting rights to over 1.4 million Floridians with past felony convictions. Amendment 4 represented the single largest expansion of voting rights in the United States in half a century and brought an end to 150 years of a Jim Crow-era law in Florida. Named Floridian and Central Floridian of the Year 2019, Desmond presently leads efforts to empower and civically re-engage local communities across the state, and to reshape local, state, and national criminal justice policies.

About Visit Philadelphia’s TED Democracy Fireside Chat Series:

Visit Philadelphia is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the rich cultural and historical heritage of our city, including its role as the birthplace of modern American democracy. We are committed to making Philadelphia the most welcoming and inclusive city in the U.S. for visitors and residents.

VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

The TED Fireside Chat series is carefully curated to provide an experience that respects diverse viewpoints. We aim to provide our attendees at these Fireside chats with a thought-provoking experience that will be educational, but not alienate anyone based on their individual views or beliefs.

As we approach the nation's semiquincentennial, we strive to maintain a forum that encourages informed dialogue and fosters mutual respect, true to the spirit of the dialogues held by our founding fathers nearly 250 years ago in Philadelphia.

Visit Philadelphia does not participate in political campaigns, nor support or oppose candidates for public office. We expressly disclaim any statement, or inference, of endorsement or opposition of any political candidate at any TED Democracy event, whether made by its speakers, participants or otherwise.

About Visit Philadelphia:

VISIT PHILADELPHIA® is our name and our mission. As the region's official tourism marketing agency, we build Greater Philadelphia's image, drive visitation and boost the economy. On Greater Philadelphia's official visitor website, visitphilly.com, visitors can explore things to do, upcoming events, themed itineraries and hotel packages.

Compelling photography and videos, interactive maps and detailed visitor information make the site an effective trip-planning tool. Visitors can also find loads of inspiration on Visit Philly's social media channels.

Note to Editors: For high-resolution photos and high-definition B-roll of Greater Philadelphia, visit the Photos & Video section of visitphilly.com/media-center.

About TED:

TED is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to discovering, debating and spreading ideas that spark conversation, deepen understanding and drive meaningful change. Our organization is devoted to curiosity, reason, wonder and the pursuit of knowledge — without an agenda. We welcome people from every discipline and culture who seek a deeper understanding of the world and connection with others, and we invite everyone to engage with ideas and activate them in your community.

TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment and Design converged, but today it spans a multitude of worldwide communities and initiatives exploring everything

VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

from science and business to education, arts and global issues. In addition to the TED Talks curated from our annual conferences and published on [TED.com](https://www.ted.com), we produce [original podcasts](#), [short video series](#), [animated educational lessons \(TED-Ed\)](#) and TV programs that are translated into more than 100 languages and distributed via partnerships around the world. Each year, thousands of independently run [TEDx events](#) bring people together to share ideas and bridge divides in communities on every continent. Through the [Audacious Project](#), TED has helped catalyze more than \$3 billion in funding for projects that seek to make the world more beautiful, sustainable and just. In 2020, TED launched [Countdown](#), an initiative to accelerate solutions to the climate crisis and mobilize a movement for a net-zero future, and in 2023 TED launched [TED Democracy](#) to spark a new kind of conversation focused on realistic pathways towards a more vibrant and equitable future. View a full list of [TED's many programs and initiatives](#).