

## Hip-Hop Culture Change - Free and AJ Leave BET

Written by Robert ID1734  
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Free and AJ have announced their departure from "106 & Park," after five years of hosting BET's highly rated hip-hop, rap and R&B video countdown show, during Thursday's live broadcast of BET's "106 & Park."

While sitting on the famed "106" couch and holding a cell phone with co-host Free on the other line, a tearful AJ told the television and studio audience, "This is our last live show...But this isn't the last time you'll see us."

This hip-hop culture duo have been a staple on televisions across the country since 106 & Park debuted in 2000 as BET moved its music programming operations from its Washington, DC corporate location to facilities located at the corner of 106th Street and Park Avenue in Harlem. Since then, 106 & Park has been a dominant force among video countdown programs, featuring live interviews and performances by the biggest names in music and entertainment; a rocking in-studio audience; and the top music videos as chosen by BET viewers on the BET.com Website. "They were definitely not let go," Senior Vice President Of Music Programming, Stephen Hill told BET.com. "They've decided after five great years of the highest rated music video show on television that they wanted to do something different."

BET has not made any announcements on future hosts or plans for the show at this time but Stephen Hill assures viewers that the show will go on. "On Monday, we're going to have a couple of folks you've seen on there before and a few other surprises," he says. "You have to tune in on Monday to find out. It's still going to be the top countdown show on the air." A pre-taped show hosted by AJ with guest Miami rapper Trina will air on Friday at 6 p.m. (ET/PT).

"There is nothing like `106 & Park' it's a staple in the African American community for five years and we hope it will continue," AJ said to the audience. "We love you all very much." It was a very emotional moment that Stephen says was a difficult thing for AJ. "It was tough for him to do but that was the way he wanted to do it," he explains. "Usually in television if you someone know someone's leaving, they don't get to go on the air anymore. BET is a family so we wanted him to go the way he wanted to exit."

Both hosts will go on to pursue other interests. AJ announced that he will be opening a new restaurant, Mahogany, in Brooklyn, N.Y. and will continue working with his management company. AJ also announced that Free said that her Website would also be coming soon.

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