

## New Campaign Launch to SRC

Written by DeVante

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Hello, my name is DeVante Wilson. On Wednesday February 17, 2010 I spoke at the SRC to inform them that we, Philadelphia Student Union are launching our new campaign to end violence in schools and in communities. Everyone stated that the speech was nice and captured the entire audience. Here is the piece:

Good afternoon Chairman Archie, Commissioners, and Dr. Ackerman

My name is DeVante Wilson, Student Body President, at Carver High School, and I am currently a Senior. I am apart of both the City Wide Student Government and the Philadelphia Student Union.

I am proud to be here today to announce to you that we are gearing up our new campaign. A simple type of school reform strategy geared toward meeting all forms of violence physical or systematic with nonviolence. We, the Philadelphia Student Union, see violence as unjust actions that hurt our chances of survival and having a good life. We are talking both about the fighting and violence between students as well as inequities in our school system. This includes bullying, negative school climates, physical and emotional harassment, and also the under-funding of our schools; young people being silenced, and the inequalities between our schools and communities.

Our campaign has three basic parts we want to accomplish. First, we are organizing young people and adults to take a pledge to reject violence in their words, thoughts and actions. The second part of the campaign is to bring communities together to identify the root causes of violence because you need to be aware of what you are facing in order to take action. The last

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part is the action, to stand up against injustice.

I am talking about real, successful, student-created solutions to rejecting violence in our schools, influencing how violent situations are dealt with, as well as ending the school to prison pipeline. During a student summit held by the Philadelphia Student Union, we did an activity where we were in teams and we had to accomplish certain tasks. The first team had more than enough materials. The second had just enough, and third had barely any. We later reflected that our schools and communities are like this. The materials represent the inequalities in our environment and our learning. These inequalities lead to the birth of violence in our young people and in our community.

One of the things I noticed is that less resources means less opportunities. I noticed that my life is good because of all the opportunities I was presented with. I want everyone to be presented with the opportunities I have and not only that; I want everyone to have a good life in general. To know that most schools don't get the same amount of resources and that not all schools have a safe environment brought a sharp pain to my heart. I think there is a connection between the resources and the environment in schools.

Violence in schools is unacceptable. Most students are glad to be at school because it is an escape from the violence they are surrounded by at home or in their personal life. So how does it make them feel better when students are not safe when they are at school? I've been exposed to violence before so I know the feeling of not feeling safe at school, but it really makes me feel terrible when I hear students say they fear coming to school. Violence hurts us ALL

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mentally, physically, and emotionally, and that is why our campaign is to stand up to demand an end to all forms of violence in our schools and communities. We, the youth, are in the forefront of this movement, because we are the ones who are most effected. We all believe that students should not be demonized or criminalized but supported to stop violence before it starts. My fellow peers here with me today recognize that all students need to come together and create a safe school environment for everyone. We are standing up with students from North Philly, South Philly, West Philly and all over the city against Violence and injustice with a Nonviolent approach because Injustice anywhere is a threat to Justice everywhere.

On MLK day we mobilized over 600 people to stand with us to address the root causes of violence and put an end to it.

We are speaking at the Citywide Student Government meeting in efforts that they help us in this endeavor, especially since they have an anti-violence committee. For, today we are announcing this campaign to you and asking for your support.

Will you support us?

Thank You