

Judy Williams

Congressional Forum 5.01.09

Thank you for giving me the time to talk to you today.

My name is Judy Williams and I am 18 years old, I have lived on the north side of Minneapolis most of my life with my family.

I wasn't a violent youth growing up but have witnessed a lot of violence in my time. I see people being abused by their parents, family or have seen someone being murdered in my community. My friends at school have buried friends and family.

My biggest concern is that violence seems normal. You shouldn't just say violence is normal—People have seen so many people die that they become numb to it. I don't want people to have a regular reaction to a homicide. They should be affected, upset and concerned.

In 2006, I can recall my sister, a friend and I walking down West Broadway and saw a young man had been shot. My little sister was shocked, nervous and afraid and in a state of high concern and has not been exposed to it. As I looked around, others just looked down and kept walking, not affected at a young man's death—they were numb. At that moment, I vowed that I would not let my little sister be numb to this.

What it takes to change this, is that the community has to change how we react to it. We cannot accept it. We cannot accept that children are on either side of the gun. Someone will go away for ever.

I don't want violence to happen to me or any of my family or any other family living here. If you feel you deserve more--- than you go after more. WE deserve more, we have to go for more. It won't be done overnight. We have to work hard and I'm up for the challenge, systemically and strategically and creating a new chapter of building peace and ending this old chapter of violence--- all at the same time.

That is why I'm involved with the programs and activities that I am.

Youthrive/ PeaceJam

Minneapolis Youth Congress

Beacons

YMCA

Northside Youth Stand Up- Peace Foundation

Kwanzaa Church- Nia Imani Youth Center

MY Next steps:

1. Young people build peace... others end violence. We are building on a positive, not focusing on a negative.
2. I'm interested in focusing on a youth and teen advocacy program—advocate for issues in their community and that they feel need to be addressed immediately. The moment you mend one leak, another one needs to be mended... and if you take too long, things keep popping up and you waited too long. Work on one issue per year. If everyone votes that that is what has the most energy, then we focus and get that dealt with. Focus on issues. Focus now. Get youth to focus and rally a community to move on issues that are important for them.

Let's build peace, not just end violence, let's have decisions with us that are about us. Let's work hard for AND with the youth in our communities!

Thank you for your time today. Be Peace.