

My name is Sondra Hollinger Samuels. I am the President of the PEACE Foundation, an organization located in North Minneapolis whose mission is to build a grass roots movement of people across race, class and geography committed to working across our divides to end local violence. The PEACE Foundation is a member of a number of collaboratives and coalitions such as the Northside Policy action Coalition, Northside Youth StandUP!, and the Northside Achievement Zone. Each collaborative is made up of many Northside youth serving agencies as well as major non-profits, faith-based institutions and schools. I mention these collaboratives because our coming together is evidence that there is a movement afoot. We are all resolved to nurture our children into healthy, thriving young adults. And it is to that end that we have all committed ourselves to preventing youth violence in North Minneapolis by working alongside the City to ensure that every youth is connected to a trusted adult and that we intervene at the first sign of risk.

We have committed ourselves to this because we find it totally intolerable that homicide is the number one health disparity in MN between black and white youth....

We have committed ourselves to this because we find it utterly egregious that last year 114 youth between the ages of 15-24 were treated for gunshot wounds at our two major Twin Cities trauma centers, and that at one of the centers, of the 57 youth shot and wounded, 75% were victims of color, with 38 being black and 7 Hispanic....

We have committed ourselves to this because we find it absolutely unbearable to witness the mothers of our community weep at the countless vigils and funerals we have attended and held- mothers like Doris Young, Mary Johnson, and Anne Watson as well as many others- nor can we any longer ignore the silent, unremitting grief of Northside youth like Jordan Williams, Shanice Nelson, or Saina Ahmed, who have all lost countless friends and relatives to the cities' carnage.

So how have we made our commitment tangible? Well through Northside Policy Action Coalition we have worked for 2-years to build a grassroots movement to advocate legislatively for youth violence to become a public health issue. I'm proud to say that this year standing alongside the City of Minneapolis, we have seen the bill pass through both the senate and the house.

Through the NYSU collaborative we are developing youth leaders from a variety of youth programs and organizations, to collectively guide their peers in the transformation of their community through on-going training as well as a series of positive events and activities that they create and host. One on-going monthly event that the youth organize and program on the Northside is called Freestylin' Fridays. Freestylin' Fridays is a place for the youth to feel safe, express themselves artistically and athletically, hang out, and get information on resources and opportunities while interacting with each other as well as adults from the community. Each event averages from 75-100 youth and since its' inception a year ago, there has never been an incident at any of the events.

And through the Northside Achievement Zone, which will officially be launched this month on May 30th, community organizations began gathering in late 2007, inspired by the success of the Harlem Children's Zone, to form a collaborative effort that works to guarantee opportunities for all children growing up in the area of the Northside most impacted by crime, violence, and poverty. Through this effort:

- Collaborative partners throughout the region focus resources in the Zone to support youth and families.
- Emphasis on education and life success creates a vision for the future for individuals and the community.
- Shared messaging about success and opportunities for youth across organizations will impact achievement.

We have incredibly high expectations for the Children in the Zone.

In closing, we believe that all things are possible when it comes to the youth of North Minneapolis. They are our greatest assets! Through youth violence prevention we are doing the things necessary to help them to stay alive and to thrive but we can't do it alone. Although we already have the partnership of the City of Minneapolis through their Blue Print for Action, we now need the support of our other levels of Government, which include federal. Only together can we create the greatest generation of young people that this country has ever seen. And I believe we will!