

I WILL NOT

DIE YOUNG

CAMPAIGN

“LETTERS TO THE PRESIDENT”

LETTERS TO THE PRESIDENT

AN I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG
CAMPAIGN COMPILATION

I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG

“LETTERS TO THE PRESIDENT”

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FOREWARD

One hundred years from now what will history books say about the Americans of the 21st Century? History, will no doubt attest to the fact that we were the most technologically advanced society in the span of all mankind. Our generation, the brilliant generation, creators of the iPhone and iPad, in fact the generation of me, myself and I, history may insist, was the hallmark of our entire existence. But unfortunately, the only WE that this generation ever learned to identify with was the video game.

Yes, maybe history will say that this great nation called America, in its founding documents, proudly professed the saying WE THE PEOPLE; but in the end SHE still struggled with who the WE actually was. Was the WE, solely the people of middle and upper class America? The messaging in political campaigns certainly suggest this to be true. Or, does it also include the other America, the sore eye America, the one that we try to forget; the one that we drive by on our way to work and pretend that we don't see the widespread homelessness and dilapidated buildings.

It is the other America that we change the channel from when the latest murder is heard through our airwaves, because the NBA finals are more important than screams of another mother who just lost her only son. The other America that loses 7,000 black males every year, and not a penny is donated for the relief effort of this unnatural disaster. FEMA funding never seems to reach the ghetto. Flags are never lowered at half mass for the children who die in the streets of Newark, Little Rock, Brooklyn, Baltimore, Oakland, St. Louis, Detroit, Memphis, Chicago, Milwaukee, Dallas, and Philadelphia. The thought behind it, I suppose, is that resources and national respect are reserved only for victims of real tragedies, i.e., movie theatres or elementary schools in suburban America kind of tragedies. While being shot in a drive by, in a throw away neighborhood, filled with throw away people, waiting to be swept off the concrete and deposited into cemetery dumping grounds does not qualify.

I hope 100 years from now America is still not appalled and shocked by these truths, that WE declare to be self-evident, that all men though created equal, are still not equally treated. Let us emerge out of denial and call it like we see it!

It is in this spirit of truth and freedom for those who have not, that WE, the founders of the I Will Not Die Young Campaign, vow that 100 years from now history will have to also mention, no matter how briefly, that there too existed a group of young souls, out of the depths of the pain, lack of hope and despair, that refused to give into the condescending attitude of America towards them and their peers and decided to do something about it.

They decided to take the power of their pain, out of the barrel of guns and place it on sheets of paper. Their blood, sweat, tears, beatings, uninhabitable housing, tattered clothes, poor schools, and fatherless existence, poured out on sheets of paper, praying that the most powerful man in the country hears them. Do you hear them Mr. President? Do you hear them free world? Do you hear them emphatically chanting the words "I will not die young" and wondering what will WE do America to help them reach their goal? After all, I believe life liberty and the pursuit of happiness is their birthright too!

Do we hear them? Do we really hear them? I suppose the answer to that question is contingent on our collective ability to do something beyond a pat on the back photo op, or a 15 second news story, but something of substance this time. This time around make it something life changing. The type of something that will make history proud that we ended the need to even have an, I Will Not Die Young campaign! Our only prayer to God up above is that we don't have to wait 100 years for that.

I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG CAMPAIGN TEAM

Khalil Coleman | Muhibb Dyer

Dafi Malik | Kwabena Nixon

INTRODUCTION

The I Will Not Die Young campaign (IWN DY) is designed to use theatre, spoken word and advocacy as a vehicle to bring a sense of purpose to the “Lost Generation of Black Males”. The work of the campaign is to inspire young black males taught to murder each other to instead become advocates in saving the lives of one another.

As part of the program male students are charged with the responsibility to design their own destiny. They have been working since the beginning of the year on their personal growth and development, through spoken word expression and various writing prompts. The students have been provided the necessary tools that allow them to redirect their paths from exhibitions of destructive behavior to behavior that is more reflective of productive, empowered future leaders of their communities.

This book is the culmination of the program and represents the young men finding their voices and using them to advocate for what they feel is necessary to achieve their goals. The student authors of the book have put much effort into their letters as well as making changes in their lives. The IWN DY Team acknowledges their dedication and presents you the result of their efforts; The I Will Not Die Young Campaign — Letters to the President.



Dear Mr. Barack Obama,

My name is Alonzo Bailey. I'm sixteen years old and I attend James Madison high school. I'm from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. My whole life changed at the age of four years old seeing my little cousin get shot in the head. Some gang members were having a shootout and one of the bullets ended up hitting my cousin in the head. I was right there to see my cousin's bloody body trying to gasp for air and he just couldn't breathe. Sometimes I wish that my cousin could still be alive, just to see how life would be with him rather than without him. But I often wonder does anybody care about a four year old boy who was shot dead. We were only kids playing outside like we were told to do.

My goals are to become a successful man in life and take care of my family. I just wish that people period, young or old, wouldn't be killed by other people and their foolishness. The neighborhood we live in isn't really for the kids because everybody on the block is either selling or using drugs. I just want to know when people are going to vote for the hoods all around the world. How many more people are going to be killed by gun violence?

I Will Not Die Young!

Sincerely, Alonzo Bailey



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Algernon Jones I go to Madison High School. I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I am 15 going on 16 years old. My birthday is on June 9 and I do not want to die young. Last week a young man died at the end of my block in the morning. I was in the shower and I heard a gunshot. But I always hear gun shots around my house. So I thought that they were just shooting in the air once again. I got dressed and ate breakfast and then I left the house. I started walking down my block and I saw yellow tape. I knew somebody got shot because the police don't

put yellow tape up for a car accident or something. My bus stop was located right where the boy died. And I bet if I was right there I could've been shot too. They had to have the police take all of the students from my bus stop to school. Just yesterday another boy got shot on the next corner over. My mom called me and asked where I was at and was I ok because she thought that could've been me that was shot. The murders are getting too close to my house and I do not want to die young. So that's why I joined the I Will Not Die Young Campaign at my school. This program relates to me and my life. This program really has touched me a lot and makes me want something more for my life. Plus, I don't want any of my family members to die.

I live in a four people house hold; my older sister who is 18, my little brother who is 7 and my mom who is 37. My oldest sister has moved out. I don't want any of them to die because I already lost my grandma to cancer. Yes, Mr. Barack Obama this is my story and why I will and do not want to die young.

Sincerely, Algemon Jones



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Andrew Solomon. I am from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I am a student at James Madison Academic Campus. Milwaukee is a good place to visit if you have money but unfortunately I grew up in the hood seeing and hearing murder left and right. My block, 38th and Wright is rough. With all the fighting I have done I should have been a boxer. Every day was a struggle for us. Sometimes we had only bread and butter to eat. Do you think that you could get full from eating that? Not me. I think to myself, this is my life. So, I did what any boy who grows up in the hood would do; I picked up the drugs and the guns. That is just a little piece of my life.

But let me paint you a picture of a little guy who died on the block.

Five shots fired, three of them held in a little boy's chest. People yelling and running; mom's crying and the sirens sounding as the cop car hits the block. I see this almost daily; this is my life. I see yellow tape like every day and have the memory of that little boy gasping for air. I have been to jail three times and I know it's time to change my life. That's why I joined the I Will Not Die Young Campaign.

Sincerely, Andrew Solomon



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Dakota Bell. I am a young teenager, age 17 and my birthday is June 16. I am from and live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Like most young black men I didn't have or know my father growing up. The one thing I learned about my father is that he was very selfish. When my mother said she was pregnant he said that I wasn't his. Throughout my whole life she has been fighting about and over me with my father's other babies' mothers. I was sad to discover that I have other baby brothers and sisters and big brothers and sisters that I'll never know or will see, but sad things happen in life. Now that I am older I realize that I have had to fight all my life because people criticize me and the young man that I am. I shouldn't have to feel criticized; I should feel encouraged.

We have young people getting shot, killed, and jumped because other people want to be dummies and want to gang bang. This makes no sense. We shouldn't have to fight for our rights to be left alone, to not be pushed around, and especially be stripped of our money, clothing, and other valuable things.

Mr. President why are schools so horrible? Why do so many young people die for reasons not even called for? Why do people just look at us African Americans the wrong way, like "we won't be anything in life, and that we're hopeless and won't get anywhere in life." Mr. President, do you care about young black American boys like me?

I joined the I Will Not Die Young Campaign because I feel it helps me make changes and choices that will lead to a better future for me. They are like a second family to me. I would just like to say that because of this I will not die young.

Sincerely, Dakota Bell



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Jamare Austin and I am from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I am 16yrs old. There used to be a lot of killing and violence in my old neighborhood. I heard police sirens every day and night; shooting every night. I grew up wealthy, everyone in my family worked. I just lived in a bad neighborhood. I witnessed people have a shootout in my old neighborhood. It was hard sleeping at night hearing gun shots every night, fights every night.

Young men between the ages of 15 - 19 make up most of the homicides. More black men die in U.S. ghettos than U.S. Army Soldiers do in combat. Do you care if another young man loses his life over violence? If you die who will be the next President, do you care? What happens when people die and all we do is celebrate and put faces and names on shirts? Don't just read this just to be reading it, visualize it too. Picture it.

I Believe in the I Will Not Die Young Campaign. I want to know what you think. I want to get older and vote. I want to take a visit to the White House. What are you doing in the office black president? You look like me do you care about me? I am asking you to read this. I have never been to Washington D.C. We voted for you now you vote for us. I don't know much about politics, can you tell me more about it? Does it take a lot to be president? Our time is now. It is time for young black men to stand up. Do you ever think to invest in our education? We need more jobs, we need better schools, and we need better police in our

community. A little bit of everything.

I believe in our generation. Our generation is not messed up we just need a little more of encouragement. We need better jobs, schools, police. I will not die young. You don't want us to die young.

Sincerely, Jamare Austin



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Mark Lesueur, I'm 17 years old and I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Mr. President I wonder if you listen to young males. I grew up in a family with a mother and no father. At the school that I go to my friends and peers are dropping out all the time. I grew up seeing friends and family members dying in front of me. I come from a place where families kill or be killed. Do you care about how many family members will die before something is done to change this situation.

Why is it that my brother has a better chance of living than me? I believe there should be more programs like this one to help African Americans. What will you do for us? You look like us but do you care? What's going to happen to my sisters if I'm gone? Who's going to keep them out of the streets?

I believe that you have procrastinated on the issues of black families. We are losing more young black men to violence in the streets of the ghetto than we have lost in wars. Could you do one thing for me, save 7,000 lives every year? I believe that we are the generation that will make changes and I am trying, but I need your help so that I do not die young.

Sincerely, Mark Lesueur

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

HIGH SCHOOL

Dear President Obama,

My name is Darrin Madison. I'm 16 years old and I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I come from a single parent home. I always had a father figure in my life but at the same time he was a bad role model for me. I attend Hamilton high school. I come from the hood where you see and hear guns going off all day long.

Seven thousand young black men die every year due to violence. Us, as young men are being led the wrong way because we have few positive role models to lead us in the right direction. As I get older, I understand the risks I'm putting myself through. But at the same time that is the only way to make it out here. I want to make a change but what change can I make if this is the only life I know? I can only make a change if I know there will be a positive and successful future ahead of me. I don't want to be a part of the 7,000 young black men that die every year. I want to be the one that says, "I'm one that did not die young."

Sincerely, Darrin Madison

Dear President Barack Obama,

My name is DeAnte Brock and I am 15 years old. I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on 9th and Nash. I grew up in Milwaukee with a single parent who has had to struggle on a daily basis. My mom is always there for me no matter what I need. I grew up in a home with no father and I think that's why I have had a terrible attitude. I grew up with gun violence, drug use, and people with no fathers. I grew up with my mom smoking and drinking every day. My mom changed her life around in 2006 and joined Ephesians Missionary Baptist church. I go to Alexander Hamilton high school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and it is a public school.

My lifestyle is alright but I have one foot in the hood and one foot in church and school. My neighborhood is not the best place to grow up. You can hear shooting mostly every night. I just want to see change and

I refuse to be another statistic. I will not die young.

Sincerely, DeAnte Brock

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Demarius Allen. I come from a home with 9 family members and we live in three bedrooms. I have grown up around drugs and gang violence. Hearing gun shots in the middle of the night had me always scared of who it might have been that lost their life. I lived in Canton, Mississippi almost my whole life where people kill for respect. Drugs alcohol and money is the trending topic.

As a young man I have seen my family and friends give up as quickly as they start. One of the only things that keep me going is the hope of showing the people in neighborhoods all across America that there is hope for a person that grew up in a bad community.

Did you know 3 years ago, you were in Jackson, Mississippi? You passed right by one of the smallest towns down south. We felt like you didn't care about us.

There are 7,000 black boys that die every year. One of the reasons I believe there is so much crime is rap artists, because they do what you don't do. They come out and speak even if what they are telling us is wrong. We listen because they support what we do and if you can do the same then you can change things. Will you speak to young black boys?

Sincerely, Demarius Allen

Dear Mr. President Barack Obama,

Hello my name is Desmond Walton, I'm 16 Yrs. Old. I was born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I'm going to talk to you about my background and mainly about how you can help me in this cold world. When I was in 4th grade, that's when I started doing bad things

in school. Then finally my 6th grade year I fell in love with the hood.

Throughout my life I stayed in a single parent home with just my older brother and me. I talk to my dad from time to time but I don't really see him because he's in Chicago with his other kids.

When I was younger I always wondered why we never had a black president. I always thought that a black man didn't have the courage to try it out. But I guess you showed me differently. My question is what can I do to become a president later on in life? If I had the power to run the United States I would try to keep all kids in school so they can get a good education and stay off the streets. There's a struggle in this world and I really don't know how to dodge the bullets. It's hard in this world.

Every time I look at the news I see a little black kid either dead or locked behind bars. I would like to come together and help the world. I noticed that you always say "Yes We Can". My Question is what can we as youth do if you're not even doing it? Do you care about the kids that are dropping out of school at an early age?

Sincerely, Desmond Walton



Dear Mr. President,

I'm writing this letter because I want to change the image of young African American males. My name is Devonte Lowe. I'm 17 years of age living in the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I have lived in the hood ever since I was born, having a hard life, struggling with no help. I was born into a single parent home with no father trying to make a way. I'm asking how you can help me and why do we have the worst school systems in the nation. Tell me why there are more African American young males dying at such a young age.

Mr. President, did you know there are more young black males that die from violence in the United States than the number of soldiers killed in several wars combined? Why haven't you done anything about the

killing? You always say "yes we can". We have faith in you, we voted for you, but will you vote for us. All I am asking, Mr. President is to help lower the rate of young males from any race dying out. I don't want our generation to become extinct.

Again my name is Devonte Lowe from Hamilton high school letting you know that "I Will Not Die Young".

Sincerely, Devonte Lowe



Dear Mr. President Obama,

My name is Eddie Holliman. I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I attend Hamilton high school and I attend this program in my school. It is a type of program that tries to reach young teens to prevent them from being one of the 7,000 black males who die every year.

I grew up on 5th and Capitol with my grandparents. We lived in a bad neighborhood where there was gang violence. My grandparents didn't even let me leave the backyard because it was so bad back then. My lifestyle is good but deep down inside the hood is still in me. I would like to stop the killing that happens every day. I want you to stand up and help us black males get our lives together.

I know you are enjoying that good life because you live in the white house sleeping good. But some of us black males are struggling on the streets. Every day we have to hustle just to get a bite to eat. I just want to live a good life and not have to worry about someone trying to kill me because I'm on the wrong block.

I didn't have a father in my life; he was never there for me. But I know when I have my kids they will be happy because I will be the best father ever. I've been through a lot in my life but I pray to God every day that I will make it out of the hood because I don't want to die young like the 7,000 that do every year.

I want to stop the violence; the killing of each other for the color they

have on or being on the wrong block. So, I wish you would help us. I just want you to make a change because I voted for you, I put my trust in you, so I think you should put your trust in me and stand for us black males that want to make a change like you did.

Sincerely, Eddie Holliman



Dear Mr. President,

Do you care about a young black man like me? Are you aware that 7,000 black boys die every year where I'm from? My family voted for you; would you vote for us? I grew up in a single parent home. My father was never around. My mother has been raising me all alone. Are you aware that it is hard to raise a young black man as a single parent? I have to suffer the fact that I don't have a father figure every day, but somehow I remain strong. Do you care about the black men that drop out of school every year? Kill every day? Steal every day? Can you handle a day in my ghetto? How do we fix the problem? The truth is we don't! Can you imagine having to walk before you crawl? I think about my safety and my life every day. Where would I be in 10 years? Would I live to see you make a change?

My Name is Keshawn D. Aikens and I am 16 years old. I attend Alexander Hamilton high school in Milwaukee, WI. I'm not asking for anything but a CHANGE. Can you make that change? "Yes, we can". Can we?

Sincerely, Keshawn D. Aikens



Dear President Obama,

Why don't you help us; the ones that are on the streets because our parents don't care? It seems like you don't care either because you are just letting the streets take over our country. Why do you spend so much

money on other stuff that we really don't need when we can put that money in most public schools? We need better teachers. We wouldn't need all of these jails if people cared about our black young boys. I think all schools should get treated the same. Why do other schools have better stuff then us? We need more activities and more teachers that really care. We also need more groups like the I Will Not Die Young Campaign.

Dear Mr. President while you are sitting in your comfortable chair just chillin' some black boys are out here with their life on the line. Yes we can have better reading and math scores but that's hard to accomplish when you fear for your life. Can you believe in us like we believe in you? I'm supporting the I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG CAMPAIGN.

Signed by the kid that's trying to chase his dream – Rickey Norman



Dear Mr. President,

I have a question for you; how many African Americans die in a year as a result of gun violence? The answer is about 7,000 black males. I think it's time for a change in this world.

Before you became president what were the things you wanted to change? Did you ever succeed? Did you even try to attempt to try and go through with it? There is still racism going on and it's really bugging me. There is still woman abuse going on. Who is going to do something about?

I was raised with both of my parents until the age of 7. Both my mother and my father got locked up that year. My mother came out within 3 months. My dad did 5 years and 8 months because of drug dealing. The police treated my mom like "oh she probably was involved in it lets keep an eye on her" kind of thing. Not all women are involved in that stuff.

These police officers need to stop taking the innocent and take the guilty. They give the guilty house arrest for what? You think that's

actually going to work? All they're going to do is go right back to the same routine until they end up locked up. And you take the innocent for what? I honestly think you should let them free if they have no proof especially if their record is clean. The police need to be checked. Give them warnings and suspensions. Nowadays people record police in action and they arrest people for no reason. I am a part of the "I will not die young" campaign and these are just little steps that I think will change the world little by little.

Sincerely, Samuel Caraballo



Dear President Obama,

My name is Stephan Baker, I'm 15 years old, and I am from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I grew up in a house without my father, where my mother had to do everything on her own. I attend Hamilton high school, and where I grew up at, I wouldn't want any other young black boys to live. I'm writing you this letter because I want to know if you can sit down with the young black boys that volunteered to be in the I Will Not Die Young Campaign, and have a talk with us about changing the hood.

As I grow older I realize the things you are not doing to help the world, that maybe one day I could do. Living in the ghetto is not good, but a lot of people have no choice, because you as the President are not funding the city of Milwaukee to help change the ghetto. Instead of you helping the needy you provide to the ones who already have. Being the President of the U.S you have responsibilities that you have to handle the right way.

Sincerely, Stephan Baker



Dear Mr. Obama,

My Name Is Wesley C. Johnson. I'm 15 and I am from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. First I want to start off with my background: I come from a

one parent household. My mother takes care of my little sister, my big brother and me with a check that comes once on the first of the month, so by time the 9th of the month comes we are broke.

I don't think you use your power for the right things. When you were running for president you said that you were going to help the world. I have not seen anything new in my state. I wasn't born with the gold spoon. Your campaign motto was "yes we can". Well can we keep black kids from getting killed? Can you help us to get out of this zoo?

We voted for you so vote for us. We need you like you needed our votes. All I'm asking for is you to help us. I'm not asking for a hand out. We need a help center, a holding house for kids that don't have anywhere to go, more safe zones for kids that are being killed for no reason. Help us to not die young.

Sincerely, Wesley Young

Dear Mr. President,

I am a young African American from the inner city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Even though I made it to my senior year of high school I have endured a hard road. I live on 48th and Center and I am working hard to move on in my life. I live in a single family home with only my grandmother and it is difficult.

I refuse to die at this young age. My big cousin was shot and killed on the corner of 19th and Atkinson. That day my cousin became another statistic; one of the 7,000 African American males that die every year. Being that you are the president of the United States, I need your support. I need to know what you are doing to help us. What can you do to ensure that no African Americans or any person dies at the hand of gun violence? What can you do to help me?

My name is Keshawn Coleman and I stay in a disruptive area where you see drug dealers on every corner and I have the fear of dying every day. I want to make it across the stage when I have completed high school. I have big goals and dreams that I would like to accomplish, but I can't do it if I die young in my neighborhood. I want to enjoy all that life has to offer. I want you to help me. **I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG.**

Yours truly, Keshawn Coleman



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Marwon. I'm 18 years old and live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I attend Casimir Pulaski high school. I was raised in a single parent home. I have an older brother, unfortunately he is in prison. I live in one of the roughest areas in Milwaukee. It really isn't important that I give my address because it won't help. You may never see me or any other person who suffers through trying to survive the inner city.

Seven thousand black males die every year between the ages of 15 and 25. We have more young men that die in the ghetto than U.S.



soldiers who have fought in wars. Four out of five of those black males are killed by another brother.

My purpose for writing this letter is to inform you of some things you may or may not know. I am asking for your help to change the statistics. Just last week a 17 year old boy was shot in the park full of kids. As I look around it seems like all the money is going to places that don't even help the hood. You may not know how it feels to lose a close friend or family member to violence, but I do.

I joined a movement because I did not want to die young and I don't want others to die young either, but they do. I never see anything on the television that shows the violence that goes on in our neighborhoods and I never see anything about anyone trying to help the situation. I'm asking that you rise up and take action. I am not asking for much, just to give a black teen something to wake up to or hope for other than who will be the next to die. Mr. President I am asking you to please help our neighborhoods because I refuse to die young.

Sincerely, Marwon Eddmonds



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Mickey Ford and I am 16 years of age. I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I love basketball. I try not to do things that will hurt my family but sometimes I am scared to walk to my bus stop thinking that I will be killed for no reason. I know if I die it would hurt my family. I want to make my mom and dad proud of me. All seven of my little sisters look up to me so I have to make good choices in life.

I attend Pulaski high school and have a hard time focusing on school. I try to make friends with everyone so they won't hurt me, but the truth is they are not my friends. They are here in school for the same reason I am; to learn.

Just a couple of weeks ago there were three deaths near where I live

and it makes me think that I am going to be next because it is so close to me. I'm only 16 years old, but I've probably made more bad choices than a 40 year old man. When I was 14 years old I started gang banging because my mom was struggling. I have set a lot of goals for my life and have failed them. But I want something different for myself.

My family voted for you and now I need you to vote for me as a young black male so that I can make it out of the hood and not die young. I hope you take the time to read this letter because I will continue to try harder and I refuse to die young.

Sincerely, Mickey Ford



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Rashawn Jackson. I am 19 years old and living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I come from a single parent home with four brothers and sisters. I never knew my father and my mother had to break her back to make ends meet. I am just now having a positive role model in my life and plan to go to college in the fall. For me, beating the odds that were thrown at me shows me that I can be anything I want in life. I want to thank you for taking the time to read this letter and know that I will not die young.

Sincerely,

Sincerely, Rashawn Jackson



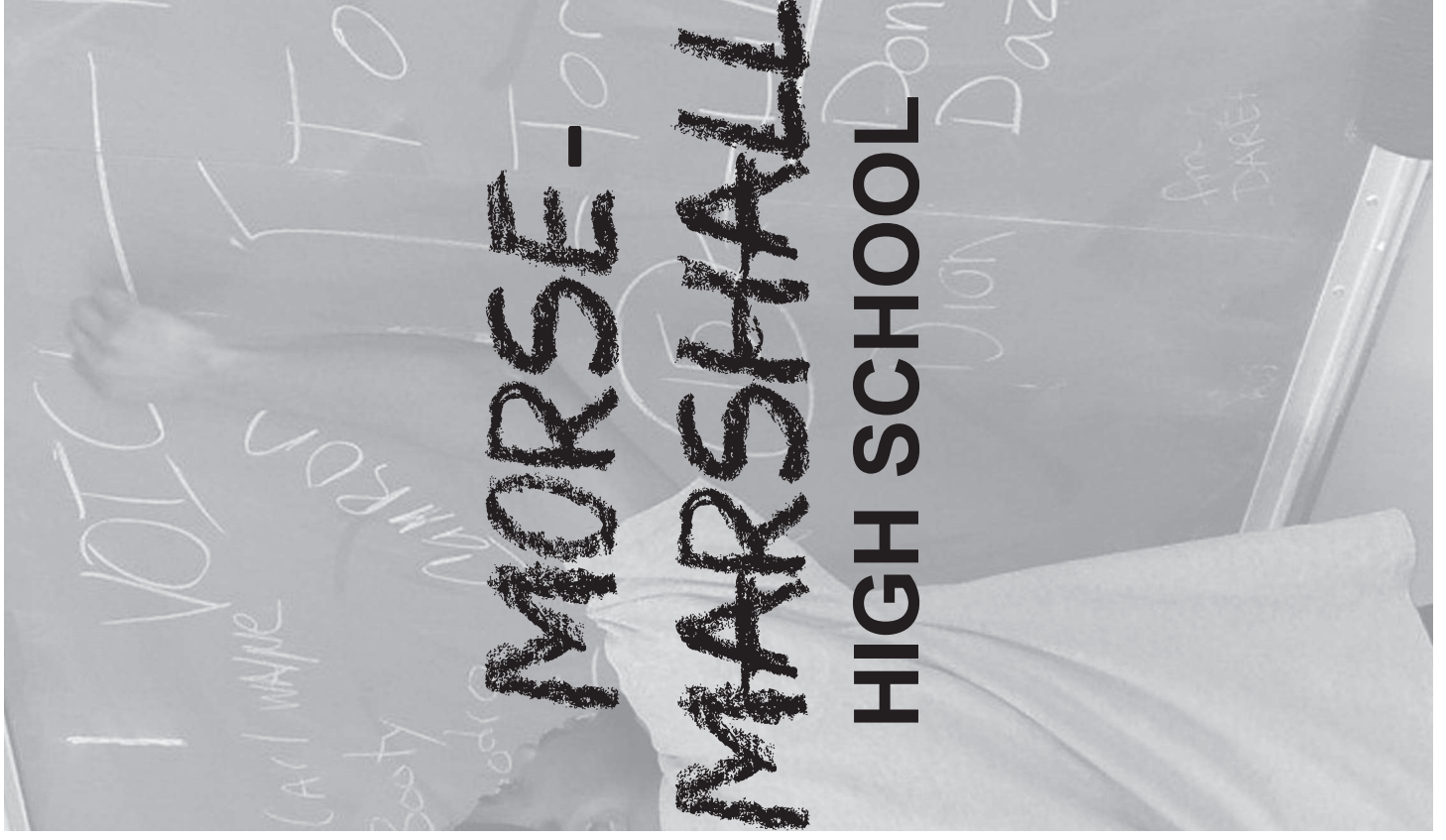
Dear Mr. President,

My name is Donnie Harrington. I am 18. I made it! They say that a lot of young black males don't make it to see age 18. I did because I feel if we all be good and do good, life can be great. Like Drake said, "You can start from the bottom and get where you wanna be". I want you to know that the brothers who are shooting and killing, they really want to be like you. They may not want to say it, so I am speaking for them because they

are not man enough to say.

I want to go to more graduations and less funerals. I'd rather see success ribbons than yellow tape. Just hear me on this Mr. President, Milwaukee is the fourth poorest city in the U.S. I need help with the streets. We need politicians to get out of their seats and get on their feet and pitch in to help make changes. All I am asking is to be heard. We have more young people that need our help so that they do not become statistics. We have to make it big.

Sincerely, Donnie Harrington



Dear President Obama,

My name is Kyle M. Bynum and I am 17 years old. I attend Morse-Marshall high school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I am the middle child of three. I have a younger sister, age 12 and an older brother, age 21. I will be turning 18 this summer. I live with both my parents, my brother and I share the same father but not the same mother. I go to school faithfully, have a g.p.a. of 3.33 and will go to college once I graduate this summer. I come from a family where support is most important whether it be from the family or those who surround you. My environment is not all bad, nor is it all good. Then again, what place is just one of the two? I have heard gunshots in my neighborhood from time to time.

The reason why I write to you today is not for help with these situations we face, but just to read and have a level of understanding. The “world” as I see, is good, but has been corrupted by the evils from temptations that we have placed upon ourselves. We value dollar bills over one another’s life. Why? I do not know. We do not love one another as we should. We view one another as strangers instead of brothers and sisters. This government makes our lives rather difficult, not for all, but makes it difficult for more than some.

Seeing a colored boy successful is rather rare. Seeing a colored boy dead in a casket is rather common in our country. I question why it is that you are the first colored president in all these years. My mind wonders why we are looked down upon, not as inferior, but as people who are not destined to be “successful”.

Now, there is no other place that I’d rather be than right here in the U.S.A. I am proving all of those who said I would never be anything wrong. Even with a daughter, I have been accepted into the college of my choice. I plan to become a neurologist and there will never be anything or anyone who will hinder my success.

They say the mind is most creative when it is asleep; I believe I accomplish such a goal when I am wide awake. This is the reason why

I create those things that people seem to like and the reason why I am able to pass my AP classes with ease; the reason why I write this letter to you. So with that said Mr. President, I only ask for you to read and understand where we come from. I am Kyle M. Bynum and I will not die young, nor will I allow anyone around me to die young.

Sincerely, Kyle M. Bynum



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Eric Thomas and I am 17 years old. I am writing to you from Milwaukee, Wisconsin as a concerned young black boy who is tired of seeing others around me die from violence every day.

I attend Samuel Morse Marshall School for the Gifted and Talented. Every day I come to a school that is filled with security guards and police officers. School shouldn’t have this type of environment where safety is such an issue. Education should be the primary issue.

I live in an environment where people feel the need to get ahead by putting each other down to make a living. I’m tired of hearing about people that look like me dying every day because the murderer was struggling and couldn’t find a job. I’m tired of having to worry about the lives of my family, friends and my own because of the violence in the Milwaukee community.

Sincerely, Eric Thomas



Dear Mr. President,

I know that you are probably wondering who I am but I deserve to be heard. I voted for you. I need someone to listen to me. My name is Steven Owens and I am 18 years old living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I grew up with my mother and her husband. I grew up without my real father in my life. My mother is there for me, but she provides only so

much; the rest I have to provide for myself. I never asked for a handout or someone to feel sorry for me, only to listen to me.

The environment that I live in and what I witness every day are people struggling, drug dealing, and killing. I live in an environment where people get recognition for all the wrong things and little acknowledgment for the right things. I wake up every day and there's another young person added to the percentage of 7,000 black boys that are killed every year.

Last year, on October 19, 2012, I lost one of my closest friends to gun violence. On September, 15, 2004, my nephew lost his dad and he will never again see his father. His father did not even have a headstone. The only time he will ever see his dad is on a t-shirt.

I'm writing you this letter Mr. President because we need supporters and believers like you so that we can achieve instead of just dream. Mr. President, do you know any of the names of the young men that die every year? I can name a couple.

You said "Yes, We can." If the older men I see are not setting the right example, then who am I supposed to look up to?

Why is the quality of education in suburban schools different from inner city public schools? How come we never see our schools on the news talking to students who have made it to graduation? Are we not good enough to acknowledge our success with a newspaper article?

Once we can get a few black boys influenced to do the right things, then others will follow. My goals and dreams are not too big and I'm not asking too much, just an opportunity to be successful like you have been. Yes, I am going to college but seeing the wrong example can easily have me go in the wrong direction. I am trying to stay strong. I don't want to die young. I want to accomplish my goals just like you Mr. President.

Sincerely, Steven Owens



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Ray Harris. I am 18 years old and live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Your campaign was all about "change"; but I haven't seen change. If anything it is worse. My friends and I still have to bust moves to get our money up. You said "change" so why not give us more jobs to stop the need for hustling to support our families.

I would like to know how you feel about the 7,000 young black men who die every year. I need help getting a job, so tell me what in school have teachers taught that will prepare me for real life situations like how to get a job or how to file your taxes? My goals are to be a good person and to be authentic. I want to be different from others and see more than just my city and the homies I run with. I will not die young.

Sincerely, Ray Harris



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Tracy Thomas and I am an 18 year old African American young man who resides in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I live with both my parents and 4 other siblings who are all extremely supportive and uplifting. My life is great and I have my head on straight. I have been accepted to both Langsten University and Tennessee State University. Although my life is great, the environment that I live in is not. The public education that we receive is mediocre. The teachers don't care about the students; they are merely there to earn a paycheck. They are not concerned with what we learn or how we learn.

When will you do something to stop this mistreatment, deception, and brainwashing of African American males? Sometimes I actually believe you are like those public school teachers. Nothing is being done to end this inequitable treatment of African American boys. I don't understand how you could accept this. Most of all, I don't understand how you could be a part of the African American minority and do

nothing.

I know young men who have recently dropped out of high school to go live life the wrong way because they needed to help support their family. Many of my friends are drug dealers because they are forced and/or brainwashed into this behavior.

I am very thankful for the life I always had but I am disappointed with the life that others are living. My brothers, “our brothers,” are struggling. Why won’t you do anything?

Almost every day I see you on television and you appear to me as more a figure of the media than you do our president. I am a president; I am a president of myself. I will be that successful mechanical engineer that I dream of becoming. I have been working hard and striving to reach my goal. I refuse to die young. I will not die young!!

Sincerely, Tracy Thomas



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Michael Denzel Harris. I am 18 years old and live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I grew up in a good neighborhood with my mom and dad. My parents brought me up right and taught me how to show respect and have common sense. I have been bullied all my life and at times no one would help me at all.

I am a senior at Morse-Marshall high school where the environment there is nothing but violence, racism, bullying and just straight disrespect. My concern is for all these young people who have had to grow up in a bad environment because when they wake up some of them end up hurt or dead. When I was bullied, I got beat and no one did anything but make it seem like it wasn’t a major issue. Every day someone kills themselves because they are being bullied and abused on a daily basis. This is a major issue because those young people who die are the same ones that would have made a difference in our world.

Mr. President, I am not asking for anything special. I am telling you that this act of violence is not something to be overlooked. I don’t want my nephew or niece or any of my future children to experience what I went through. I think that we could create more programs all over America teaching young kids and teens about the serious ramifications of bullying.

Mr. President I hope you take the time to seriously read this letter, because this isn’t a normal letter from some excited teen, hoping you will read his letter. This letter represents years of pain from the hatred that I had to witness. Now, I don’t care if you get on it right away because I know you are a busy man, but understand that America needs more change. I am just the man to help with that. After high school I plan to spread the word and help eliminate the hate.

Thank you Mr. President for your time and to show you my appreciation I promise I will not die young.

Sincerely, Michael Harris



Dear Mr. President,

As you know life may be hard, but now that you are a National figure I wonder if you know what it is like to struggle anymore. Not to be disrespectful but do you care anymore? As a kid I learned that “every man can gain a title through a success, but a man doesn’t need a title to be successful.” As a president you are supposed to be the leader of the nation. Did you know my uncle is a leader of a nation of gangster disciples? And as you said, “yes, we can”, they were saying, “Yes we can destroy this neighborhood and these people.” They set out to corrupt the minds of my peers and I.

Mr. President, please do not help us out of pity; our families did not vote for you out of pity. Read my letter and remember I am a child of your nation. Lead me, don’t leave me behind. I want to be someone, but

with no jobs and a poor school system how can I when I feel like my president abandoned us.

I don't want a hand-out; I want a better chance. You're called the voice of the people but your voice is barely heard in my neighborhood. Your name brings hope; my name brings sirens. Your name brings faith; my name is lost amongst thousands of young men likely to be dead before they reach the age of 25. Your name meant change; my name is estranged. I ask that you listen more often because we will be heard.

This letter is from Dravonn Bankhead of the I Will Not Die Young Campaign.

Sincerely, Dravonn Bankhead




Dear Mr. President,

My name is Isaac and I am 17 years old and live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I attend Morse-Marshall high school. I can play any sport from baseball to football. My neighborhood, I really couldn't tell you what it is like anymore because I don't go outside after my friend was shot in the alley and paralyzed. He was on his way to college but was turned around quickly after he wouldn't give up his cell phone.

The issue that you and the government can't seem to see is that you spend 7 billion dollars on a war in the Middle East, but can't spend 7 billion dollars on the war right here in the streets of the United States. You need to spend money on our failing school system instead of the assumed destination of young black men; the prison system. If you gave us a sufficient source of knowledge, then we could go to college instead of those prisons that you pay so much money for.

But I will thank God, not you and my government after I make it through college and onto my successful life, because I will not die young.

Sincerely, Isaac Kramer



Dear Mr. Barack Obama,

My name is Amere Talik Graham. Remember the name because you are going to hear it again someday. Why? Because I am going to be somebody.

I am from Milwaukee, Wisconsin and 18 years old. I was born in New Jersey. Since my parents each had severe alcohol and drug addictions I moved around a lot. I moved to live with other family members and even foster homes because family tossed me aside. I have been to group homes, abused and exposed to constant violence as a child. My older sister and I went through most of these issues together. My sister still suffers from trauma caused by these terrible past events.

I attend Morse-Marshall high school and I am currently a senior. I live a fast and hard life. I live in a neighborhood on 6th and Locust where people get shot or end up overdosing off drugs just about every day. About 13 days ago a 16 year old boy was driving from his family's house and he just gave out and died. It turned out that he had been under the influence of drugs.

There is a drug house across from my house. I am sick of hearing gunshots outside of my house every other night. I'm tired of people muggin' me or trying to fight me over ten dollars! I should not have to live like this. With all the issues that go on in my life I can't even find the time to get to know myself. I don't know who I am. I'm out here just lost. And when you are struggling most people turn a blind eye to you.

Every now and then there will be a holy person that will be a Good Samaritan and help out. Mr. Barack Obama, I am asking you to be that Samaritan, be my Good Samaritan. I need more education and need to go to college so that I can be successful. With all that I have been through, I have come too far to stop now. There have been many times that I have felt like giving up, but then I find myself trying all over again. Quitting is not in my blood. I want to live long. I want financial freedom.

Just give me something that I can work with. I hope that I hear from you soon.

My name is Amere Graham. Remember the name, because I will be somebody someday. I have finally found my voice. I hope that you're listening. "I Will Not Die Young."

Sincerely, Amere Graham



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Javis and I am a 17 year old growing up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I was raised by my mother and grandmother. I don't really know my father, but he is the one missing out on a great young man. I attend Morse Marshall School for The Gifted and Talented. I'm an athlete and love to play basketball.

The issue I want to bring to your attention today is the killing of one another. Racism isn't the issue because white people are not killing us anymore. They are relaxing and letting us do it ourselves. This concerns me because who is to say that one of the 7,000 black boys that were killed could not have been the one who found the cure to Aids. Do you have an answer for why we kill each other over "In God We Trust" (money) or Jordans. I don't want to turn the TV on and find out that another brother bites the dust. I want to ask you for an outlet for young brothers who live in these situations but don't really live that life. I don't want to worry about going to the store and wondering if the sounds I hear are fireworks, realizing it was actually the sound of a pistol taking another life.

Have you heard about the I Will Not Die Young Campaign? We come together to discuss and exercise our thoughts about how the world is going. People ask do I think that a simple program can change my life; you would be surprised Mr. President. I would also like to tell you about an extraordinary man named Kwabena who I put my trust and belief in;

a man that is doing great things for young black men.

I'm not asking for you to simply read this letter; I am looking for you to reach out and help during this crisis. President Obama, I promise, that I will not die young.

Sincerely, Javis McPike



Dear Barack Obama,

My name is Devon Shumpert. I am 18 years old. I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I attend Morse Marshall high school. I have lived a hard life. I barely had my father in my life. My brothers and I were abused with knives, cords and bats and I just want to show my mother and other family members that I can still be successful despite what I've been through.

Mr. President I never give up and always keep my head held high. I have worked so hard putting in applications, trying to find work, but I still don't have a job. How am I supposed to live without a job? Mr. President I just need your help to get to the top and then I will help others. I want people to know that young black men are not all like what they see on the evening news.

I love life and I want to grow up and be something. I want to help my mother out because she has always been there for me. I will be attending college in the fall but I'm worried about how I will pay for it. I take my life seriously and I am tired of seeing my black brothers' faces on a white t-shirt. It is time for a change and this time that change should include people like me. I hope we have the chance to meet face to face. I will not die young.

Sincerely, Devon Shumpert



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Keon Bland, I'm 16 years old and I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. My whole family voted for you and we honor and appreciate all that you have done so far. But the public school systems are failing my peers and me. The teachers don't care anymore and some of the principals have checked out also. I'm not the best student when it comes to academics but I believe if I had better tools I would be better. My life is a mess right now and things are going all bad. We spend most of our time at school so why isn't it a comfortable safe place to go?

My purpose for writing this letter to you is to inform you of all the foolishness that is going on in our community. How do they expect us to be prepared for college if all we do is stay trapped in a building all day with security guards like wardens in a prison? I think it is fair to say that my life is not a joke and I don't have any time to waste. Because Mr. President, I would like to go somewhere and be something in life. I look forward to hearing back from you Mr. President. I know that you know what it feels like to have all the odds against you. Maybe one day when you have some free time on your hands you can call me and we can bounce ideas off one another and see what we can do to make a change. My number is (414) 748-0197. Even if you don't ever get this letter, I know that someone will and they will help this get to you. I will not die young.

Sincerely, Keon Bland

P.S. "I Will Not Die Young" is a program that is helping little black boys like me become more than just a statistic. The program is based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Maybe our group can meet you for dinner.



Dear Mr. President,

I'm a person from Milwaukee, Wisconsin and I didn't address myself by name because the world never does. They address me as a statistic; a little black boy from the hood. According to what the world believes I shouldn't be alive or I should be in jail. Do you know the death rate of people in the U.S.? Did you know that of the total death rate 7,000 black boys just like me die due to gun violence? But the difference between them and I is that they fell into the statistics and I refuse to.

I attend Morse-Marshall high school and wonder why they can't afford school supplies but they can afford to put cops in the school to keep us blacks locked up.

See, I could sit here and tell you my story but my story is the past and there's nothing you can do to change that. But you can help to change my future and the future of every black boy in America. It is funny how they can put more money into a prison system than they do schools to keep people out of prison in the first place. My school has old text books; ripped and all, but they can afford to put millions into war. Speaking of, did you know that more black people die in the hood than soldiers in combat?

I didn't write this just because it was a part of my program. I could have just not showed up for class. I wrote this because I heard the impact that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made when he wrote "letter from a Birmingham jail". If he made a difference, why can't I?

"I Will Not Die Young." I wasn't just telling you the name of a program that I belong to that actually cares. I was telling you what I refuse to do. I also refuse to be economically hurt to the point that I feel I have to sell drugs. I refuse to go to jail. I refuse to be treated as if I am unequal. I'm not asking for gold rings or chains but I am asking for help. And since I refuse to be what the world calls me, I'll tell you who I am.

Dear President,

My name is Chris and I am 13, and I have already been arrested and received a ticket for 144 dollars. There were three shootings recently. My cousin died in jail at age 23, about a week ago, one of my uncles is in jail for 7 years and my other uncle died at the age 22. Another of my uncles died at the age of 17. My family has been poor for a long time.

About a year ago a girl got killed on the playground at Westside II, that's where I attend school. She got shot in the head. My mom was telling me this today. I said I didn't care, but when I thought about it more and replaced the girl with my sister and my brother it changed my thinking. I wear all black for when I gang bang. But that's what I want to change in me and in the community.

I will not die young,

Sincerely, Chris Brady.

P.S.

We need gun control so the violence can stop and better jobs so single moms like my mom can support their children.



Dear, Mr. President,

My name is Davion Crumble. I am 14 years old. And I attend Westside Academy II. I was born in Los Angeles, California. I moved here to Milwaukee, Wisconsin when I was 2 years old. I am writing to you, to inform you about what has been going on here. The other day across the street from my school there was four shootings. Almost everyday someone is dying. For what though? That's what I am wondering. Am I next? I don't want to be just another face on a hoody or a jacket or someone putting teddy bears on a tree for me. And I am not just speaking for me I am speaking out for every young black man who is afraid to speak out. I believe in myself.

We need change for our community. We really don't need more



jails what we need is more schools. Every year there are more and more students being put in classes, stopping our education because the teacher has to stop teaching the class to deal with distractions. Why do schools get 10 thousand dollars for each student for our education and 70 thousand dollars for each person that is in prison? Do you care about our education?

I'm also tired of seeing young men that are younger than me, out here shooting and selling drugs and more. What do you think that they are doing that for? Because they don't have that inspiration that lets them know that they are going to graduate from school and become something in life. So they just turn to drugs and guns. Our brothers are getting locked up for nothing nowadays. We are getting pulled over because we are black. That's disturbing. The other day a white man was just chasing our young black women. Do you think that the police are trying their best to catch him?

I'm demanding change! What are you willing to do for me? For us? For the future? I want people to know me for great things not because I was killed due to gun violence; "I will not die young". I am thankful for this program because its helping me change each step of the way. When I was 10 years old I witnessed my step father get shot on our way to the barber shop. What do you think about that? Each year more than 7,000 young black men die to gun violence. I heard that you came out of the black community. So please don't try to act like you don't know what we are going through. That's the only thing that's going on here is black on black crime.

You are my inspiration because you made it. So that showed me that I can make it. I am not typing this letter out of hate I am typing it out of hope.

Sincerely, Davion Crumble



Dear President,

My name is Dawonyae Robinson. I like what you do, but in order to make it better, then I personally think that you should be trying to help the poor people instead of the rich people. They already have everything; don't you think poor people deserve some thing too. They are people just like you but just with less resources.

See you like to help the rich people so everyone can like you. But that isn't what's up. I look at you cool because you came from the same place as my mama and my mama respected you because you made it. But she stopped because you are not really helping anybody that we know. Everybody still looks up to you because they have no choice, but the people you aren't helping are really the ones that voted for you. But if you are constantly ignoring them when reelection day comes around you will not be president any more. Maybe you don't really care, but when another man takes your spot then you'll care. You should really think about that because your real friends are the people you grew up with; that kept you out of trouble and were your inspiration.

Also the most important people in my life are dying because of gun violence. Certain people think that the gun law is a game that you can play around with. That's how others get hurt.

I know you know what's going on in these places; your own people are dying because you're not standing up for our rights. But it's cool though because we are out here making it work. While you are sitting in the white house eating steak or some fancy dinner, they are out here robbing and killing to get a hot dog and maybe just maybe a side of chips or something. I'm telling you how hard it is out here but I will not die; I promise. I'm just being honest for my black people.

Sincerely, Dewonyae Robinson



Dear Mr. President,

Hey my name is Deontay Winters. I live in Milwaukee and I'm in the 8th grade. I'm tired of my family and friends and other people getting killed in Milwaukee and other cities. I don't want to turn on the news and see other people getting killed. Why can't we turn on the news and hear that people are making it in life instead of hearing that people are being killed every day. They are being shot, killed, beat, raped and other violent things. People are doing the wrong thing just to get money so they can feed their families. If all these people had job's and stuff to do in life they wouldn't have to be in the streets just to get money.

Mr. President if you truly love us like people say you do you will come and see us? Some of us have dreams. To keep it real, I don't want to be rich; I just want money so I can take care of my family. So we don't have to ask anybody for any thing in life. I also don't want to be one of seven thousand that die every year. I just want you to know that's why I'm with the "I will not die young" campaign.

Sincerely, Deontay Winters



Dear Mr. President,

I'm a student at Westside Academy 2 and my words to you might be irrelevant but I'm going to address them anyway because I'm not hesitant. They say every black man came from kings but some don't see the thrones. Somebody say scam, the gun go blam, because they didn't watch their tone. African Americans die every day in these black streets; pow, pow, laid them down; add another to the stat sheet. We believed you when you said change was coming. As I look around dead bodies on the ground. I don't see a change in nothing. I had a cousin in them body bags they stuffing. They can't break me; made of steel like them guns they bussin. I heard you from the "Chi" the nickname is, "Chiraq

the war zone." Why don't you step off the pedestal and give back. You can toss it away throw it in the trash. Be prepared to do it again because this letter won't be the last. I aint tryin to sound rude or brash but I had so many friends lose they life over work and cash; or little youngin I4 getting time because they found his stash. They got stashes because they can't get jobs. Nobody wanna be a felon but they looking for a place to rob. Tired of seeing mothers in that black dress weeping and hearing the sobs. Wish you can stop it in the streets, it's no order. Help stop the burying of our precious sons and daughters.

Unsigned



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Isaiah Sutton and I'm 14 years old in a hard city called Milwaukee. I hope this story finds you; I've had a lot of emotions and thoughts building up in my head. To keep it real, I really think my life is going to end one way or another so I'm trying to reach out to you before it's too late.

Mr. President I truly need a better life now and later on, so I can be a success in life. My possibility of getting a summer job is very poor not because my grades or anything, but my mistakes and record with the law because of my past.

I lost everything when my little brother died including my hopes and dreams. I'm afraid of the sleepless nights where I lay awake thinking about my little brother and crying over his death.

I'm not trying to touch your heart; I want it to reach your soul. I'm trying to get an education, but this struggle to stay out of the streets is pulling me back to what I do best. I must say it again I don't want you to read it; I want you to feel it.

The outcome of my life I am not sure; but I'm confident that I will not die young.
Sincerely,

Sincerely, Isaiah D. Sutton

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Javan Moore and I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Mr. President 7,000 black boys die every year. More young black boy's die than U.S. soldiers every year. I witnessed my brother get shot in his chest 3 times.

We need your support Mr. President not just me but everyone. I think you really don't care about us. You don't even know I exist. But I don't want to be in that 7,000 people that dies every year, Mr. President. Do you know the names of the 7,000 people?

I'm thankful for the I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG CAMPAIGN. It's the only way I can express myself. I think they helped us more then you did. If you don't care for me I'll still care about myself. I'm just asking you for help because they say closed mouths don't get fed.

My fellow Americans have to sell drugs, rob people and it all goes on... I bet you don't know that my school is across the street from the hood. We hear gun shots during class. We're trying to learn but we can't because we're paranoid that a bullet will come through the window at any time. What can you do to help us?

I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG!

Sincerely, Javan Moore

Dear Mr. President,

Hi my name is Jhohauanus Taylor. I am 14 years old. I attend Westside Academy 2. I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I have 6 sisters and 4 brothers. Three of my brothers and I were shot in the same week. I lost my dad at the age of 9 to a heart attack; he had half of a heart. Nobody told me he died until 4 days after he died. I have a sister that's somewhere in this city but I just don't know where she is. I don't know her age, when she was born, or who her mother is. My older brother is in jail for 20 years for having 2 sacks of marijuana in his left pocket. I need help. I've

been shot 3 times in my life twice in 1 year; once last year. I'm tired of seeing my sister going to school with an attitude because her dad can't drop her off. My mom got shot in her shoulder in front of Marcus Theatre just as we left her. I'm tired of seeing my brothers in caskets and nice suits every other day. I'm tired of seeing my momma struggling to keep us safe and her momma out of the hospital. Like I said I have been shot 3 times in my life and I am only 14years old. When I go to sleep at night all I hear is sirens all day all night, gun shots, ambulance alerts and house crackling from house fires. We need your help. I walk around every day to say thanks to my brothers that I don't know. I've been in house fires and cross fires. How are you going to stop that?

We need something to look forward to; to believe in. I would like to see one of my brothers be the first black national swimmer. Everything else is all for the whites.

Everyday there's 12 white tee's with red food coloring on the front of the shirt. One question; how did you get to where you wanted to be? More black boys die in the ghetto than U.S. soldiers; that's not going to be me because I will not die young.

Sincerely, Jhohauanus Taylor

Dear Mr. President,

Hi my name is Obrey Haynes. I am 14 years old. I am from Milwaukee Wisconsin. I attend Westside Academy 2. Our school is a good school but it is in a bad area. April 30, 2013 three people were shot in less than an hour. One of the shootings was across the street from our school. Another one was by my house. My friend and I got stopped by the police because they were looking for some young men. I am only in middle school.

Do you know in the United States 7,000 young black males get killed every year? I hope one of those young men won't be me or any of my family or friends. I dream one day that there will be a time without

violence anywhere around the world. So Mr. Obama could you help our school and Milwaukee. I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG!!!!!!!

Sincerely, Obrey Haynes



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Rickcoby and I'm 14 years old. I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. My family is not perfect. Most of my family grew up in the hood although some of them didn't. I am a student at Westside Academy 2.

I am growing up in a hood where people be shooting and fighting. My environment is in the hood where people get shot and robbed. The people out here need your help. Just last night 4 people got shot. These people do not care who they shoot.

Four out of five people die at the hands of another black male. I'm tired of hearing gun shots every single day. I just want you to help these people. We need more schools and no more shooting. All my life I have been hearing gun shots.

I want to see what it would be like to live to see the age of 80. I believe in myself. But we need more people to come together and stop the violence.

There are people who don't have jobs; people need jobs. There are many young boys out here dropping out of school.

More black boys die in the ghetto then U.S. soldiers in combat. I'm just asking to help the people out here. What do I got to do to not die young? I go to bed to gun shots. We need peace out here in these streets. But I will not die young.

Sincerely, Rickcoby Minor



Dear Mr. President,

My name doesn't matter because I don't even know if you will read my letter, but I'm 16 years old. I stay in Milwaukee Wisconsin. I attend Washington High School. It's not as bad as everyone says it is. We have very smart kids here at Washington they just make the wrong choices. I'm smart myself. I stay in an ok environment. Where I stay at there's a lot of robbing and not that much shooting.

The hood that I'm from there is shooting and killing every day. I stay in a house where there is a single parent and a sister and brother. We use to stay on 15th and Keefe where all the killings happen. Then we moved on 21st and Atkinson where all the crack heads and all the drugs are. I used to be out here in the streets but I calmed down a lot. I want to know, why do you put more money in prisons then in school? We barely have textbooks to study. But one thing I could say Mr. President is that I will not die young because of the choices that I made. Mr. President I wanted to ask you if you can help me help my friends make the same choice I made by not dying young.

Sincerely, Deangelo Wade

Dear Mr. Barack Obama,

I'm 16 years old and I live in Milwaukee Wisconsin.

See where I'm from my family was friendly and nice. Momma was poor couldn't pay the price for food and clothes. After Dad died time began getting old; I began to be always sad so I had to hustle day and night selling candy and water.

Brother used to try to follow in my footsteps; but he seen me panhandle. He wanted to try but I'm like why? This ain't the life you wanted to live.

I wanted to be better, seeing my baby cousin get shot in the head so

I was willing to Change. But the game is full of pain and struggle so I promise my momma and sister that they will be able to live better and different.

And see I go to Washington high school. Used to gangbang but found out it wasn't nothing in it. But see Mr. Barack Obama we need change and good programs like I Will Not Die Young. It's so fun and real life action; because my life is based on it.

Mr. President, tell me what would you do? Don't know my life; you don't know why momma praying every night hoping that her baby boy makes it home safe at night. Still to this day it still hurts me deeply. Mr. President without black there's no me.

Sincerely, Delane Nelson

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Jerry Truss. I am 16 years of age. I am from and live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I go to school at Washington High School. I stay in a single-parent home with my mother and my older brother. I grew up in the middle to low class neighborhoods on the Westside of Milwaukee. And I live a lifestyle of consistently going to school and playing basketball. I believe without school, success couldn't be possible at all. And I use basketball as a tool to get me to college, hopefully receiving an athletic scholarship.

I have issues with what's going on in the world right now with our young black men. I believe that society doesn't give us enough opportunities as we should have. In some ways that is our own fault but we deserve the same opportunities as others. I think that the causes of not having those same opportunities are due to how some choose to act. But, I choose to be different; to be an example. And I will not die young.

Sincerely, Jerry Truss

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Nathaniel Jines and I'm 16 years old. I live in Wisconsin in Milwaukee. I need help with family. I see you show love to your kids my family doesn't show love to me. I think it is because I'm not their real son. My real mom is white and my real dad is black. They gave me up when I was born. My life has been hard for me not knowing who my mom and dad were.

The I Will Not Die Young program is like a family to me. They show me that they care and it is changing me and making me want to live my dream. It made me stop drinking and stop being mean to people. But what do you do to live your dream and how do you get it? Help me so I won't die young.

Sincerely, Nathaniel T Jines



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Quinton Williams. I am 16 years old and am from Detroit and currently live in Milwaukee. My whole life I have been exposed to the wrong elements such as drugs and violence. Even though my mom tried to shield me from it she couldn't because she was a single mother raising a growing boy by herself. So I started watching and emulating the people around me who were doing the wrong thing. And being a little kid I had no choice in the life I had because I was born into a place some can only compare to HELL (Detroit). So I did what I know which was survive by any means even if it meant committing crimes to keep some money in my pocket so Moms don't have to worry about me like that. And I can't seem to find a job no matter how hard I try because they do not think I will do right.

Dear Mr. President, do you care; because to me it does not seem like you do. My home town has been turned into a warzone by lack of

police presence and drugs. This has cost me so many friends due to the violence. Dear Mr. President I just want you to understand what I'm facing and understand I do what I do for a reason. I don't want to be a criminal. I want to be a gunsmith but regardless of all this I will not die young.

PS. Try to make a change.

Sincerely, Quinton Williams



Dear President Obama,

My name is Shannon Sanford. I am 15 years old and I live in the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I am an African American freshman at Washington High School of IT. The lifestyle I live is three things: dangerous, unpredictable, and challenging. I am trying to make it out of here the best way I can by getting good grades, getting in scholarship programs, and playing basketball. The environment I live in is crazy. I don't feel safe walking home after basketball practice. I have been jumped and robbed, and I have to walk with my little cousins everywhere they go because I'm afraid something is going to happen to them.

Another concern I have is that, Milwaukee Public Schools is one of the worst school system in the United States, Why is that?? I'm just asking for some changes to help keep my peers and I from dying young.

Sincerely, Shannon Sanford



Dear Mr. President,

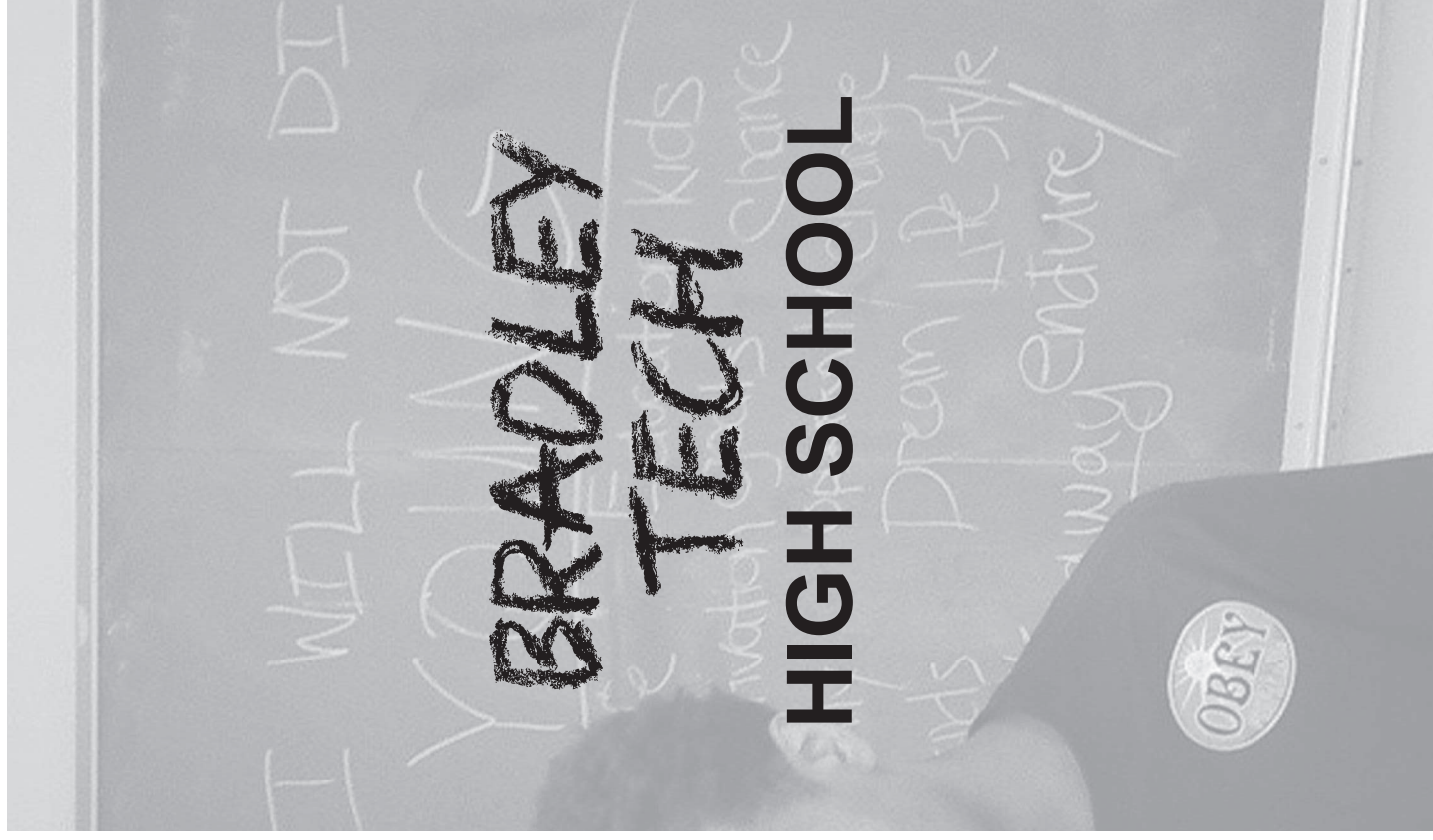
I'm a 14 year old male in Milwaukee, Wisconsin whose name is Tramin Chaney Jr. Mr. President why can't I spend a day with you at the white house? I want to know how it feels to be president.

To me, my parents are sometimes motivated but then again they are sometimes very confusing. The school I attend is Washington High.

This school is not what many would call a good school. I am writing you to ask why, why, why don't you ever visit Washington High school President? Mr. Obama why can't I work at the white house with you? I mean do you care? If you really care you will write back. Obama why can't I be treated like your children why, why, why, can't you and Michelle adopt me?

When I get out of high school I would like to be a flight attendant or maybe even a psychologist. Once again I ask can I ever visit you? Maybe we can have lunch or something. Trust me your response will help me live to the motto "I will not Die young."

Sincerely, Tramain Chaney Jr.



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Charles Lane Jr. My nickname is CJ. I was born on the north side of Milwaukee, Wisconsin and raised on 23rd and Brown where crime is to be expected more than war. To tell you the truth yesterday I don't remember where I was; space, Mexico, all I know is that I woke up praying to God that the next day would be better than the day before. It didn't change it was the same thing murder, death kill, murder, death, kill repeating itself like that Drake song "started from the bottom now we here."

"Click" that's the onomatopoeia of the .38; the same .38 that feeds him and his little sister at night because his big sister don't care for him no more. His mama and his daddy gone everyday doing God knows what and his brother is so addicted to weed that it became his nickname. What is weed? Some may call it a drug; some may even say it's the motivation that gets them through the day. Some may even say it's a part of their daily schedule that covers for school, work and taking care of their kids. It wouldn't be like that if they hadn't been labeled as a no good, non-working, weed smoking, no child support paying, nigga slaying thug. It shouldn't have to be like that when somebody has to wake up and instead of smelling coffee they smell a pipe burning and women screaming, "No stop; get off of me". When you were in Chicago did you get up to make coffee or stop those women from being treated so poorly?

Sincerely, Charles Lane Jr.



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Damian Williams. I am 17 years old and I am from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I am a young black man coming to you in dire need. In my city I have seen things that no seventeen year old should see. To be honest it's a shame that people are afraid to go to school or ride the city bus because they might not get home. I live in a country where

one day my son will look at me and say dad why do I need school and education and I will look at him straight in the eye and lie and say for your future for your life but on the inside I know that's not true and that geometry or science will not get him a job working at a fast food place paying \$7.25hr. You said that you would bring change, but where is it? This country needs change and you are the change that I believe in. I need your help. I hope you understand this.

Sincerely, Damian Williams



Dear Mr. President,

My Name is DaRonte Reed. I stay in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on the rough streets of Hampton where hundreds of boys who look just like me call home. This land that we call land of the free; I would rather call it ghetto America. You should know that we are fighting more than just a war against Afghanistan. We are fighting with each other right here in America. I hear about a new young soul lost every day. I'm glad it's just one and not two or three like what was once the norm. I'm not blaming you for what goes on in my hood; I'm just speaking for my hood. I'm speaking for the ones who want to say something but don't have the heart. I'm speaking for the ones who are behind bars. I'm speaking for that hustler on the street; the kids who are running from gun shots; I'm speaking for the mama who is waiting up for her son or her daughter to come home. I'm speaking for those who can't speak anymore because someone took their life.

Dear Mr. President we shouldn't have to pay rent to stay somewhere and our safety can't be assured or our things can't be protected. Dear Mr. President I know hundreds of people who work but don't punch a clock; who work but don't got no boss but the street. I know people who don't work at all and would rather let the system take care of them. There are even some who want jobs but can't get them because their background.

So they have no other options but to take and steal to put a meal on the table and money in their pocket. The world is out of place and it isn't even your fault but help is needed. There are too many bodies dropping and not enough standing. I refuse to die young. I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG!!

Sincerely, DaRonte Reed



Dear Obama,

My name is ----, I'm 16 years old & I steadily get stopped & checked by the police. Every day I feel like it could be my last day. All I see around my city are shootings, muggings, & abuse. Yet nothing can be done to help. In one of my old houses while my family went to a party, I stayed behind because I felt sick. Next thing I hear a knock on the side door and it was 2 men. The first man wore a mask with a gun & the other kicked in the door. My house was robbed with me at gunpoint and surprisingly that wasn't the first time I was at gunpoint. The first time was when I was 13 and a cop pulled a gun on me as I went to go pickup my football from the ground. He thought I was the full-grown black male that he was looking for. Do you think there are cops who actually care about all citizens? How many more black citizens are killed by cops than white citizens? Have you ever lived in fear of being killed the next day, before you became president?

Unsigned



Dear Mr. President,

I am an AFRICAN boy born in the United States. I was born and raised in New York City and I have witnessed the largest act of terrorism on American soil. So did my mother who was born in Senegal, West Africa and came to America in 1993 to seek a better life. But she has come to live a life of terror and is petrified of the people of America. She can't write her own letters, read her own books or hold a conversation

with a person with a college level vocabulary but my mother has three businesses. My father co-owns a clothing company called Belchez. She has opened up numerous businesses that benefit your nation but your nation does not benefit her at all. She has no green card, no citizenship, and no Visa papers but I'm very proud of her to do better than the citizens of this nation. I'm from 127th Street, St Nicholas Projects in New York. But now I live in Milwaukee moving to see a better education here only to be proven wrong. Just another little black boy on Cherry Street who was told he can't be what he wants to be. Another black boy who witnessed his neighbor murdered. I've seen women expose themselves, sell themselves, strung out on drugs that my acquaintances sell and use.

At times I start thinking why did my mom travel 3,803 miles for me to witness this. My distant relatives fought for MY education, for MY rights. But why am I still denied of that power. But I see my people abuse that power every day. I have all Honors classes and I play Varsity basketball for Bradley Tech as a freshman. I have witnessed more horrible things than most elderly war veterans have in their lifetime. It's a war out in America a war of knowledge, words and power but the opposition firearms, drugs, prostitution, robbery, carjacking. Day by Day I am losing friends and family. Mr. President I ask nothing but your promise of CHANGE. CHANGE for us, Change for the future, Change for this country, for this world. Why do I ask you? Because you can make it happen you are the most powerful man in this country and in this world. We just want results.

Sincerely, Khadimoul R. Fall



Dear Mr. President,

I am in the 10th grade and I go to Bradley Tech high school and this is my first year here. I live on 19th and Nash where I was raised and where I became who I am today. To most people you would ask about

this neighborhood it's dangerous and there are always shootings. From someone who is from there I would tell you that it's all just about money and about girls. I lost family members and friends over there due to hood violence, I even lost my closest cousins to the jail system over the same thing. One thing I can't say is that I regret being from over there but I do regret the choices I have made and the things I did to people. I am not perfect and neither is anybody I know. I can't be judged by anyone but God. I grew up in a single parent home raised by my mother along with my sister and 3 brothers. My mom did everything she had to make sure we had the best clothes and the things we wanted in life and we did. My Dad was in jail most of my life so I grew up looking up to my brothers and cousins who basically raised me to have the swag and the way that I act. That's why I do anything to get money and stay finding ways to get money because the way I feel that's all I need and my education so that I could take care of my family so they don't have to do the things I am doing and the things I did.

Unsigned



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Mouhamed Fall; I'm an 18 year old young black man from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As you sit comfortably in your chair, I sit in a hard chair writing to you. I'm asking for you to hear me out and take time to listen to 7,000 young black men that die every year, who don't have a voice.

Every day I have to look over my shoulders as I walk through the hood. I wonder if you know how that feels. I'm pretty sure that's how the 7,000 young black men felt when they HAD feelings. I'm their voice as you let these words flow through your head.

As my world stick on this paper, I'm wondering if I can survive to see tomorrow. Just the other day I heard you are bringing the troops back

home, but Mr. President Do you know there's a war in my hood? And I always see you on TV smiling and waving your hand like everything is good. I want you to hear my voice before I become one of the 7,000.

I remember when your slogan was "CHANGE", but I don't think you know what that means. I got a question for you, CAN MY HOOD CHANGE? Mr. President answer my question and write me back so at least I and the 7,000 young black men can have an answer and some hope for better days. "I am my Brother's keeper and I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG."

Sincerely, Mouhamed Fall

P.S. I will be sitting in this hard chair waiting for a reply.

Signed- One of the 7,000 alive hoping to have their voice heard.



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Oliver Smith. I am a 16 year old, African American male living in Milwaukee Wisconsin. I am a 10th grader at Bradley Tech. I live with my momma and my aunt and 3 little sisters. I have a good lifestyle. My environment is not that good. The issues in Milwaukee are that somebody is getting killed almost every day over petty things. It's time for a change in the environment for our young black males. A couple of ways to help us is by helping us clean up the streets of Milwaukee. I'm tired of young black men killing each other and I know I'm not the only one. I have goals I want to pursue. I want to be able to see my little brother grow up and make something out of his life and make sure he stays on the right path and the same for my little sisters. I want to be a basketball player if not that then a music producer for sure. It's kind of hard doing that in Milwaukee. You have to worry about people turning against you. You can't trust everybody. But I know who to trust that's

why my circle small. So I'm going to make it in life! My name is Oliver Smith and I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG!!!

Sincerely, Oliver Smith



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Raymello Alexander, I attend Bradley Tech high school, & I'm a junior. I live on the east side of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Holton & Burleigh to be exact & it's not easy living here. I live with my mom, her boyfriend, & my sister & her boyfriend.

My family is okay at the moment, but there are still other lives I'm concerned about. Young black males are dying rapidly & this should not be happening now that we have a black president. It shouldn't be happening period, but especially not with you in office.

You have the power to help us get it together. 7,000 black males die every year due to gun violence & you decide to basically let guns be legal as long you're over 18? 21? & have a piece of paper that says you're qualified to have that gun. I honestly believe that will increase the killings here in the United States.

We're destroying a generation that we're supposed to be perfecting. I'm not saying that all of this is your fault, but you're playing a part in it. I understand your job is not easy, but neither is living on the east side of Milwaukee. I don't want to just remember you because you were our first black president, but because you actually made a change like you said you would. You've achieved greatness; you did what every parent told their young black child they could do.

They always told us that we could be the president if we want to, the first black one. We didn't think it was possible, we never thought we would see a day when we had a first black president & then you came along & made history. You truly showed us that anything was possible & we really appreciate that. Well at least I do, I can't speak for everyone

else. But I want to thank you Mr. President, thank you for showing me anything is possible as long as I put in that effort & never give up.

I'm not asking you to cater to African Americans or anything, but I am asking that you give us something to fight for. Give us hope. Some people don't think things will ever change, but I feel with the help of U.S citizens & our president; we can really change this crazy world we're living in.

There are kids out here that really want things to change, not all of us are out here shooting guns, killing each other, joining gangs, & selling drugs. Some of us are planning our future & getting ready for greatness, but when you snap back into reality, you ask yourself "are things ever going to change or get better?" & from the looks of things, you can't truly say things will change; at least not anytime soon. All you can do is have hope. So that's what I'm doing right now, just hoping. Hoping I can help change the world soon or that you can soon.

"Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek." – Barack Obama. These are your words. Now let's stick to them & make a change.

Sincerely, Raymello Alexander



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Raymond Alexander from the Eastside of Milwaukee. To tell you the truth, it's rough out here. I want to know why you're allowing this to happen. There are little black boys out here killing each other and there's nothing going on to stop it but jail, prison, or another death. You say you're trying to bring America together. But to me In Order For America To Be Together, America Needs To Be Alive!

It isn't a joke out here. Especially for young black boys because people are out here giving us hard times. While we are struggling to get ours,

others are having the same thing handed to them. There are fights almost everywhere we go. Nine times out of ten it's black people fighting each other. There are guns going off almost every day around my block. It's hard to take my little cousins and brothers and sisters to the park because there's a possibility something might happen to them.

I go to Bradley Tech High School and we got about 20 police officers with like 30 security guards walking around all the time. Our bathrooms are even locked. I want to make it in life, but America is practically holding me back.

How do young black boys stay out of trouble when we can't get a job? How else are we expected to get money if we don't hustle for it? This isn't easy for us. I'm sure most of us don't want to do what we are doing but we say "Gotta get it how you get it."

And then for you Mr. President Sir, You expect for all the black people to respect and worship you for being the first black president. No! I want to respect and worship you because you actually did something for us out here; because you are helping the black community. That's what I want to respect you for.

I'm 16 and I can barely get a job. All I got right now is a ball in my hand or a hard chair, ripped book, a little pencil and an angry teacher left to get me to where I'm going.

Seven thousand black boys, not men, BOYS, around my age are dying every year, while you riding in limos, flying jets, talking with other countries. We think we got to rob, kill or sell to get money around here. You say that you want little black boys to do something, but hold us back and punish us for trying. I'm out here on Buffum. I want to live as close as I can to your house. I'm waiting on you to do something about this. And I appreciate you reading this; now let's see what you do!

Sincerely, Another Black Boy



Dear Mr. President,

Hello my name is Romello Rashawn Pennie. Today is the day my little brother died (May 9). It hurts waking up knowing the one you love the most can't have his life because a no caring person took his life. I wonder why when people kill people they don't care about how their family will feel about the situation.

I am an 18 year old black man that stays in the hood where shooting and drug rates go up every day. At an early age I lost my little brother to some nonsense. I believe you have to be tough & ready to ride in these streets when the time comes. If you cared about us so much why you don't come visit our school or have a get together for young black men to motivate us to do better and accomplish things like you did.

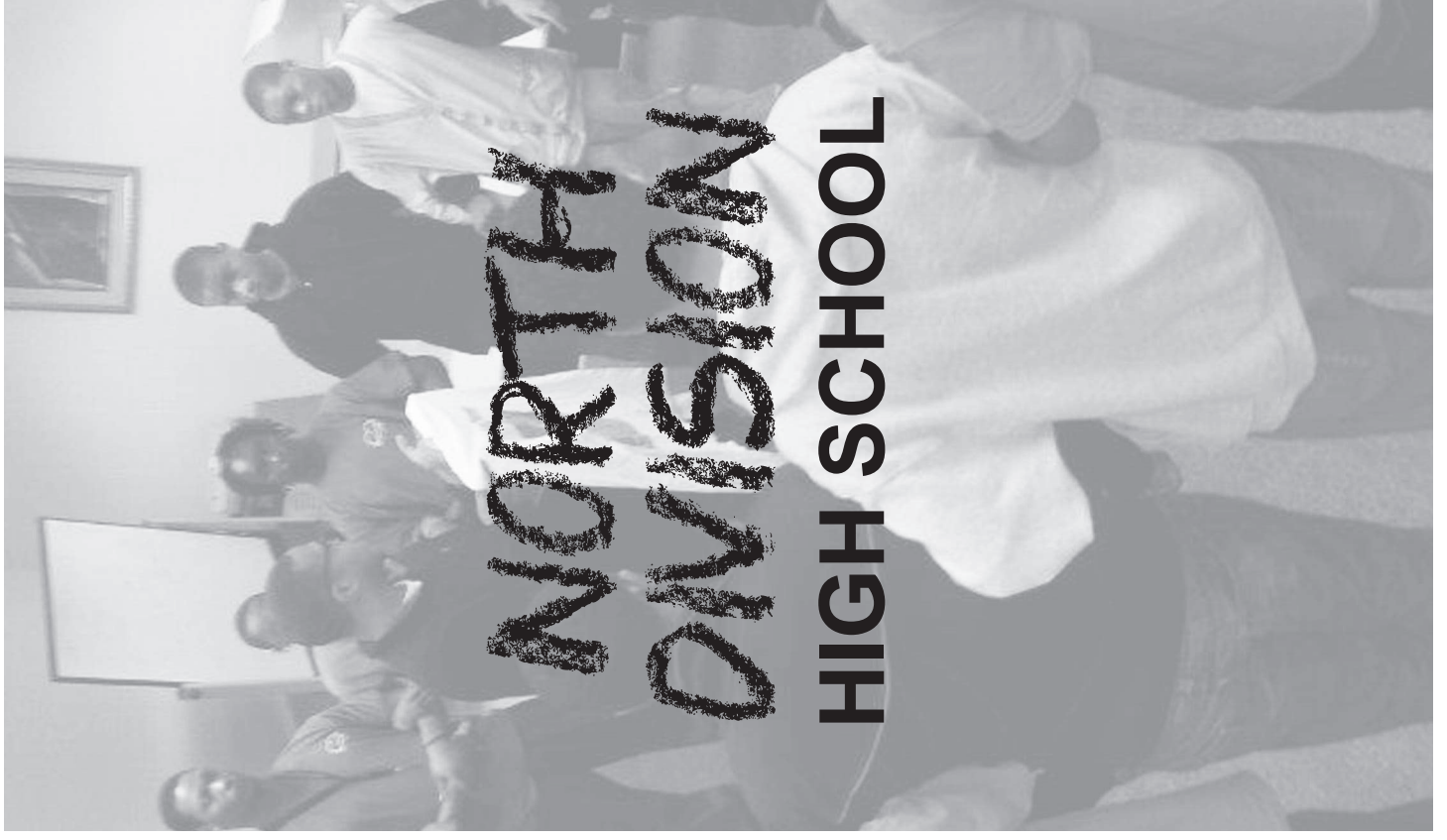
I feel I shouldn't have to watch my back when I walk through my own hood. One day one of my neighborhood friends (sister) was shot twice after we got into a little fight with other people. If praying makes things better why when I pray my close ones get killed or hurt. If you invited us to the white house or came to see us we could change our lifestyles. When I was growing up my mother was on drugs so when you tell people it will get better you don't know what we go through in this savage world.

I look forward to meeting you if I can just hear a word or two that could make me change my life probably even my brother sister or family members. If I can just talk to my brother see his face or hear his voice again life would be so much better. Since I'm in this world I'm going to live my life like my brother could have but no longer can. I'm happy I made it to 18 my brother died at 3 he couldn't even go to high school or college.

I will not die young because if I do that's going to hurt my granny, my mother and all the ladies that's in my life that cares & loves me. Every day I wake up I say to myself nobody could do better than me; I'm on a cloud where it's hard for other people to reach. Shout out to my hood

(Atkinson) my team (MTA). Those brother keepers and I'll do anything for my people to be safe out here. I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG

Sincerely, Romello Rashawn Pennie



Dear President Obama,

As a senior student of MPS (Milwaukee Public Schools) I have done a lot of growing over the years and realized my childish mentality had to change. So, my senior year I became the best student I could possibly be and personally I wish I had more time to fix my high school mistakes. I joined a program called Flood the Hood with Dreams: I Will Not Die Young Campaign and that's when I realized that my life problems were no comparison to some of the traumatic obstacles that these other students face on a daily bases. So I think about all the times I see on the news about some teen being arrested over a stupid crime, but they neglect to show the kids who are trying to do good for themselves or the fact that there's more funding in prisons then there is in programs like this that's going to prevent us from doing senseless crimes.

If you ask me I feel like you have your priorities ALL MESSED UP!! So question is how much do you really care? But no matter what you care about or not I still REFUSE TO DIE YOUNG!!!!!!

Sincerely, Keon Irving



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Armani. I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin & I attend North Division High. I live on Hampton where I hear sirens every day; where people get beat up & robbed daily. I live with my brother & sister, my mom & grandma, and nieces & nephews; where only one person supports everyone. I live where the streets are riddled with bullet shells, roaches & rays. While you're living good in your nice house people are starving & homeless trying to get some money for their next meal. People get killed a lot around here because people are broke & we're all just trying to make a living & support our family.

The government needs to stop spending money on all that unnecessary stuff & start spending money on the United States People. Mr. President

your people are struggling trying to support their family & themselves. I try to support my family by "Stacking Paper" in these streets as much as I can. You need to stop talking about politics & get to connecting with neighborhoods like mine because the longer you wait 7,000+ little black boys like me die every year. But not me because I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG.

Sincerely, Armani Henderson



Dear Mr. Obama,

This is a letter from a young black man that won't die young. My name is Bennett Mays Jr. and I am trying to make a change in the world. I wonder do you think about us Mr. Obama. I grew up in a bad neighborhood but I always try to better my life.

I've been told lots of times that I won't be anything. When I lost my cousin John I lost a part of me. Now at this part of the letter I am hoping you are still reading. I know you're a very busy man, but just take time to read the rest.

Did you know that 7,000 black boys die every year? More black men die in my city "Milwaukee" than in the war. Do you really care about us? If so, show us because I can't see too much change. I'm tired of having to see dead bodies and moms crying.

I know you're happy to be president but now what about us? I want to be great someday too and I shouldn't have to leave my city to do so. When is the last time you talked to a young black man about his problems? I am a 14 year old boy with problems just like everyone else. Mr. Obama I just want to make a change in the world for the better.

I just want my voice to be heard all over the world like yours. I'm not the only one with these problems. The girls have more problems than us males. They are disrespected every day. I just want to see a change not just hear about it. You know what we go through every day. You grew up

in a not so good neighborhood also. I know you heard of people dying and getting hurt. How did that make you feel? Do you still think about your childhood life? It's no disrespect I just want you to feel how I felt as I wrote this letter.

Sincerely, Bennett Mays Jr.



Mr. President,

Hello Mr. Obama you may not know of me yet, but I am a student at North Division High School. I'm 17 year old 10th grader that wants to be successful. I just need help to find the right road to succeed in my life and environment. I don't really have a problem with my life; everything's fine. I just want a good job to help around the house and be able to support myself.

The only problem me and my brothers in the I Will Not Die Young Campaign have is that we never really had any one to show us the right road. We don't have money; all we can do is live.

My plan has always been to be a relaxed person, to protect my own, and make sure that they live to be successful in their life. My family and basketball is all I have and I know it but I want it to be more. I want to be the greatest. I want everyone to remember me for the good things I do for everyone; to know that I was always there for everyone no matter if it was money or somewhere to live; I was their brother's keeper. Well, what I am really trying to say is that besides helping my brothers I plan to do these things for everyone.

Sincerely,

Sincerely, Darrion Washington



Dear Mr. President,

What's up Mr. President? My name is Desmond Jones. I'm 16 years old and I live in Milwaukee. I'm from 37th and Hampton Ave and over there you can't walk without a gun or you will be a victim to violence. Everybody wants to be rich so there's a lot of robbing and killing going on. While you're sitting in your soft chair or flying in your fast jet we are in the hard streets living our fast lives day by day not caring about what happens, not caring about nobody and their family; we all just want to be rich. If you get caught snitching you will pay the price; you will either get killed or beat. But I will be the first young man off 37th and Hampton to make it out and be rich and try and save some of my brothers and sisters and we will be screaming I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG!

Sincerely, Desmond Jones



Dear Mr. President,

I'm Exavier Sandifer and I'm 15 years old. I go through pain every day. Do you know how it feels? Probably not. I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I see bad stuff happening every day; police beating on people. Where I come from there's no such thing as a black kid being a president. I got little siblings; do you think I want to end up in the streets? No, but that's the way it is. I am my brother's keeper trying to keep them on track, but its murdering going on. Please do something. People are getting paid off of violence. Why are the jail houses so big? Because they want people to go to jail. You think it's all good living in the white house. Well come to the hood and try to change a law.

Mr. President 7,000 black males die a year. Do you think I want to be one of them? No, life is hard. There is black on black murders going on every day. We worry about being shot walking down North Avenue. We need more programs to help our communities. Do your job.

You recruit people for war; why not recruit for people to help in the

hood? Mr. President I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG and I'm not having it. I'm going to be the best I can be. Milwaukee, Wisconsin is one of the poorest cities. Help me I'm not trying to become the next Obama, MLK Jr., or Malcolm X, I just want to help MAKE A CHANGE...

Sincerely, Exavier Sandifer



Dear President Barack Obama,

My name is Jason Johnson and I am 16 years old. I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I live on 23rd and Center, where someone gets shot every other week. Why is our city so violent? Why can't black young men get a job in Milwaukee? Why aren't there more programs to help black men succeed?

I think there are a lot of things you could do that would help us to be more successful than we are now. We need help Mr. President and you are in a powerful position whereas you could do a lot to help the people in our community.

Everyone believed you were going to be the next big American Hero since Martin Luther King Jr. While you have bodyguards protecting you and your family 24/7 we only have ourselves. Where are the bodyguards to protect us in Milwaukee, Wisconsin? We need better police systems, because the one we have now is not doing enough to protect us.

I go to North Division High School and people really think this is a terrible school. North Division is probably the poorest MPS High School in Milwaukee, but I think it's doing more to help young black males and females than any other school. I think more should be done to this help this high school to continue helping us out.

I used to be real heavy on smoking weed and fighting; until this I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG CAMPAIGN came along. This program changed my life in a tremendous way. I love this program; this is one of many programs that we need to help young African Americans. I know

everyone will not use these programs to their advantage, but it will help A LOT.

I love basketball Mr. President and will hopefully graduate from Duke University and I will one day be very famous. This is one program I will donate the majority of the money I make to.

Good bye Mr. President I hope to hear from you in the future.

DREAMSSSSSSSSSSSS

Sincerely, Jason Johnson



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Ledary Keeler and I'm 15 years old. I live in Milwaukee Wisconsin. I attend North Division high school. I come from a household of 6, three sisters, my mom, stepdad and myself. I live on the east side of Milwaukee, in a high crime area of the city. There is a lot of gangbanging and drug dealing in my neighborhood. I want to do right but it's hard with all of the things going on around me. It's not safe to walk to family member's houses at night.

Why is it so hard for a young man to get a job? My family voted for you so why haven't things changed yet for us? Mr. President I think that more jobs for young men will be the solutions for most of the problems in my neighborhood. People not having money is the reason why people start selling drugs.

Sincerely, Ledary Keeler



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Maceo Powell. I'm from the hard streets of Chicago. I'm 17 years of age. I live in Milwaukee (WI). I come from a family that didn't have anything and my brother put his life on the line to take care of me. I go to school at North Division High School and I'm in the 11th

grade and I will not die young.

I come from the west side of Chicago where there were vice lords that didn't care for anybody. Can you go back to my block and put the people that need help in a house like your family where they can eat like your family? I'm not going to be one of the 7,000 black young men that die to gun violence. I just really want to make it to see my kids be a better man than I am. Can you help my school basketball team?

Sincerely, Maceo Powell



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Marctavius Johnson. I am 18 years old and I am from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. My family is from Little Rock, Arkansas but I was born in Milwaukee. I go to North Division High School. My life is not all that great. I come from a rough place where blacks hardly make it to the age of 18 or even just past 25.

All my life I had to overcome many obstacles and some of them were not good choices. In middle school I had a pistol to my face with my little brother by my side just looking. It's not much I could have said or done if the man would have decided to pull the trigger. In my eyes I would have just been another black child dead in the newspaper. Mr. President have you ever had a gun pointed at you while you were walking home and the robber tell you don't move or he will kill you even if he don't want to?

Mr. President I wonder why it is so hard to get a job but easy to slang drugs. Why our own black Queens selling their precious bodies just to make some quick cash. I have 7 young sisters and I refuse to let them live in the streets or to ever think about selling their body.

I was in the 9th grade when I first got introduced to the gang life. I have 4 brothers that are younger than me and every day I tell them don't be like me or ever think about joining the gang. Not all men or women dream to live homeless, but we do dream to be able to care for ourselves

and our family.

Mr. President have you ever have to duck in your kitchen while cooking for your brothers and sisters; while they are outside playing with their friends and out of nowhere a man come from behind the apartment shooting two automatic pistols and don't care what he hits?

Every day I feel like I'm living in danger on the North side of Milwaukee. I don't say this because this is the hood; I say this because some people choose to make bad decisions because they make choices based on how they were raised.

Mr. Barack Obama I hope to hear from you soon and while I wait I will try to continue to make good choices with my life and be a better role model for my brothers and sisters. I don't dream to be famous but I do dream to become a man. I am also proud to be the first from my family to ever get a chance to write you Mr. President.

Sincerely, Marctavius Johnson



Dear President Obama,

My name is Maurice Hampton and I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I am sixteen years old. I come from a middle class family. My definition of middle class is not RICH but, surviving comfortably. I am a sophomore in high school and I have plans to be the first male in my family to attend a GOOD college.

So, with that being said, I would like to ask you for more jobs for teenagers. When you do that, it will give a lot of opportunities for young black people to do something constructive. Instead of selling drugs to get by, they could have a job to pay them LEGALLY.

As a young black male, there isn't really a lot of things to do without finding yourself in trouble so all I ask is to keep me busy! I feel like it's time for the United States to actually put a foot forward when it comes to helping the youth. There are some things out here in Wisconsin, but

those are also limited.

I would love to have the honor of speaking with you in person. I'm currently in a program called the "I Will Not Die Young" Campaign and I plan on doing just that! So, thanks for listening and I hope you take my idea into consideration.

Sincerely, Maurice Hampton



Dear Obama,

My name is Raymone Howled. I'm 14 years old. I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and I stay on 8th and Wright. It's hard for me right now I just lost my grandmother and it's been hard for me to stay focused. I play basketball; I'm very good at it. I play inside this gym called "Northcott". I need money to buy shoes and other stuff I need.

There is always somebody dying young in my community. I see people who do drugs every day. I do not want to be like them. I don't want to do any of that.

My school I attend is called "North Division High School". I wish I can move my family out the hood. I go to school every day and I have a dream to become an educated young black person. I don't want to become a kid that's going to jail, or having a gun on me. I want to become someone that never did what I want to do.

My daddy's name is "Raymone Howled." He is struggling every day going to work working for white people anything he does they would try to fire him. I want to become a person who helps other people. My mom, her name is "Tekeda Lewis," has 5 kids and they all go to school. I do anything that she asks me.

We need more money to become what you are; not very wealthy but at least have money to take care of my family. I don't want to be the next person to die young added on that list.

Sincerely, Raymone Howled

Dear Mr. President,

You don't know my struggle. Mr. President I'm off 25th and Burleigh where you have to slang to hang and young black males like yourself don't get the chance to see the age 25. Mr. President I had faith in you. Why does it seem as if you don't have faith in us?

Mr. President why are 7,000 black males dead and more locked up every year when those black males could be in your shoes or have a career ahead of them? Mr. President why do you and your family get to lay their head under a big white house when my moms have to struggle to pay the next bill?

Mr. President why are you spending so much money on war and leaving MPS hanging? Why does life have to be so hard for our race and community? If I was the President of this nation young people would never have to worry about walking down the street and getting shot. Mr. President one thing I know is I Will Not Die Young!!!!!!!

Sincerely, Tevin Bailey



Dear President,

My name is Alexander Townsend, I am 16 years old, and I live in Milwaukee/Wisconsin. To be honest our peaceful world is becoming more corrupted each and every day. I know I always wanted to be a soldier to protect our nation, future, and families, but I don't have the correct given equipment. The way I see it my life is unlucky because the one girl I loved is gone, and I don't want others to lose their loved ones. When I was fourteen I prayed to God to have my life than take others. I demand Redemption.

"Nothing Is True, Everything Is Permitted"

Sincerely, Alexander Townsend

Dear Barack Obama,

My name is Cavanaugh Smith and I am a 16 year old black boy from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. My mom is not from this country. She is from Jamaica and her name is Michele Bailey. I love my momma a lot. I don't know when she came to America, but I do know that she didn't have much coming here. She started off in New York, and then she moved to Milwaukee. She used to go to one of the best high schools in Milwaukee, but she couldn't finish high school because she had to take care of her mother and send money to her brothers and sisters in Jamaica for them to come here. Today, she is doing well for herself and her four kids. If she can make it, I know I or anybody can make it. But, coming from the fourth poorest city in America, it's hard to make it.

See where I come from, fast and easy cash are drilled into the heads of young black boys like me. If you don't make money, you don't eat. That's why the streets are calling most young black boys. Instead of putting our heads in books, we would rather run the streets and spoil the dope fiends. I don't want any handouts, nah, I didn't come here for that. I came here to demand your help. In this world, you can't ask any more because it won't be given to you. You have to demand what you want now. I came here to help us, young black boys, get back to the top.

You ever heard that Drake song, started from the bottom? Nah, we didn't start from the bottom, we started at the top. We were once kings and queens, now we are at the bottom. Now we are thugs, drug dealers and we are killing each other. We don't pledge allegiance to the flag no more. We pledge allegiance to the almighty dollar. We kill each other for paper with faces and numbers on it. Are our lives really worth a couple dollar bills? What we need is the I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG CAMPAIGN in every school. We also need a place where we can go when things get hectic at home, at school or on the block; a place where we can just chill and have fun.

Sincerely, Cavanaugh Smith



Dear Mr. President,

I heard you are from the block Mr. President. The block we call Chicago, where we get killed for trying to be something. The block where we sit in a house with no food or water. The block where we are the man in the house. A block where the women have to act like a man to take care of the house. The block where we carry guns to stay safe. The block where we teach each other how to die. How to push that rock, how to shoot them guns, how to be the man on the block. Your block where we vote for you but you don't vote for us.

At a time you called this your block. Why don't you support your block? You decided to leave us for your new life. I bet you don't know a single name out of these thousands of young black boys dying on the block trying to get money or something they need. When we voted we hoped for the best but nothing changed but rappers saying "our president is black." We don't want to die young; we want to see our old ages. We want to be able to look back at our lives and say oh yeah we did do that and that.

We look up to people like you Mr. President, black males that actually made it in life; a black male that showed the world that we aren't all the same. We want to be like you. We want to break statistics and say forget the man that tell us we won't be anything or just be another black dude in jail or dead on the street. As a young black male in Milwaukee, Wisconsin I want to see the light Mr. President. I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
By a young black boy named,

Sincerely, Dakota Scott



Dear President,

My name in this letter is not important because my voice is not speaking only for me, but it is also coming from all the people that suffer as bad as or even worse than me. I speak on the fact that it is harder for me to breathe everyday then it is to make it through high school.

The city I live in has the worst and poorest zip code in the country known as a Food Desert. If you don't know what a food desert is, it's an area that doesn't have any organic food/grocery store in a one mile radius form their own homes.

I was part of the great campaign that got you where you are because I believed that you would change my life. The only change I see is the excuse rappers use when they do something ignorant "My president is BLACK!!" My friend walked up on me and revealed to me that he found a job where taxes aren't taken from his money. He said selling drugs is the true freedom to make money.

But back to the point; I've lost a lot of things at my young age. Through all that I am a young activist that speaks on systems of oppression that I thought getting people to vote for you would end. I laugh at the naive thought now, kind of tickles me. All the faith I put in you makes me feel sick. You could change that though!

So what I'm asking of you is to change that feeling in the pit of my stomach. To live up to the expectations you made me put into other people lives. Stop me from being ridiculed for being a liar in my community. But most importantly, STOP ME AND MY BROTHERS FROM DYING YOUNG!!

Sincerely, The voice of the Minority that can't live, Darius Scott



Dear Mr. President,

My name is De'finnes Ferguson. I'm a young black male out here trying to make it with a dream in a place they call Killwaukee. I'm a young black male that's trying so hard to get a job to support myself and someday my family but can't because the color of my skin. I'm a young black male trying to rise above the hatred and stereotype I was labeled and actually become someone successful like you dear Mr. President. I challenge you to come live the life I live every day for just a week. Dear Mr. President I'm here to tell you I will never die young and one day I will meet you to show you how far I made it.

Sincerely, De'finnes Ferguson



Dear Mr. President,

My name is D'Quis Terrell and I'm 15 years old. I'm from and live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Now let me tell you a little about my background. I have 3 little brothers and a mom that I was living with. My mom didn't have the money, which is so sad to say, our lights got cut off. She's living at her friend's house and I'm at my aunt and uncle's house. I was the man of the house so I'm selling drugs to make a living and to get my family back into a house which all the bills will be paid. I'm going through something and going through it for a while now. I WISH IT WAS ALL OVER!!

I go to school at Harlod S. Vincent High school. It's not the best school but this is what it is. My life style is hard and I wonder if you can walk a mile in my shoes. I'm going to sleep every night wondering why me? Why do MY FAMILY and I have to go through this? You have police officers that are supposed to protect us and all they do is help make the problem worse because all they worry about is their selves and there family. As long as there getting paid and have them BLUE uniforms on with a BADGE they can do anything they want. To tell you the truth where I grew up we were taught to hate the police like Boosie said F@#k

The Police.

Mr. President I have wanted to work since I was like 10 years old; no lie. I think I deserve a job. Most jobs don't really want people like me to work at their company because I'm a young black male and they think we're all bad and going to kill of each other. Some think we're going to steal or get the place robbed. I don't think of them wrong for thinking like that because some people are like that, but I'M NOT LIKE THAT AT ALL!!

I live on a street name Hampton known as HPT. This is a place where there is lots of fighting, shooting, dice gambles, weed selling and families crying because there young one is laying on the ground taking in his last breath with 6 bullets in him.

We need a change; MORE JOBS, LESS KILLING, MORE PEACE, AND A PRESIDENT TO DO HIS JOB AND PROVIDE FOR THE NATIONS AND YES THAT IS US. We're living in a drought and it's not doing anything but killing our people. The white man doesn't care that's what he want anyway. We are not doing anything but hurting ourselves. One thing I can tell you MR.PRESIDENT I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG. One more time I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG.

D'Quis Terrell



Dear Barack Obama,

My name is Eric Butler. I'm 18 years old. I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Just like you used to live in a grimy dirty place, I live in one called Killwaukee (Milwaukee). The murder rate is high. I can't leave out of my house without thinking about being shot or getting killed from a stray bullet or from somebody who doesn't like me. I just had a friend who got killed in broad daylight at a public park and no one knows who did it. Back in 2012 I lost my mother.

I made a change to not do things that I used to do but I fell back into

my old ways and getting in more trouble and fights in the streets. I had to watch my back everywhere I went until I joined a group called “save or sons” and our chant is “I will not die young”. So, now in my life I’m making a change for the better, and it is working.

But I’m writing this letter to let you know that you’re helping other countries and you need to help Milwaukee. We need the money for the “hoods.” Make a change in the hood so we can all grow up and not worry about having food to eat or when they are going to get their next meal. My city isn’t looking for a handout we are looking for A CHANGE WE CAN BELIVE IN.

Sincerely, Eric Butler



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Jashawn Ford. I’m from Milwaukee Wisconsin. I am a young man who has come from many different places and by that I mean many good and bad situations. For example before I was born my biological father left and to be honest I don’t think he never looked back or thought about it twice. My step dad has been their but he’s also a man with many flaws like being in and out of jail half my life. I excuse his flaws because he’s been a provider for me for the most part. When the men of the house weren’t dependable things around me got hard.

But I’m raised by a strong and beautiful African American woman; my mother. She gives it her all in everything she does and that’s because it’s all for us. She is truly the dearest thing to me in this world because it is her and my brothers and sisters that keep me sane and prevent me from making the wrong choices. But to be honest I don’t think I can last much longer. By that I mean I don’t know how much longer I can pretend not to see the tears and frowns upon my loved ones faces. You don’t know how much I would like to change that.

Sometimes I get so tired and stressed just thinking about it. I also

need the right environment and the people around me need to change. I hate it when people treat it as if that’s only a dream when it’s not. I believe it can and will be a reality.

I am an African American male and will never be just a statistic. When I say that, I don’t mean that I’m perfect, because I am human and will make mistakes. But understand this I only want the best for me and everyone I love. That’s why I will never be out their selling drugs and taking lives. I want to make the money that won’t burn pockets and destroy hearts. I want that money that can heal hearts and provide without any bad cost.

What I want from you Mr. President doesn’t matter; it’s about what I need and what I need is just an opportunity. I understand that you’re just one man and maybe what I’m asking is too hard, but all I really want you to do is just try. And I’ll know when you’re trying when I see the changes that come. I honestly don’t believe this letter is going to change anything but I honestly don’t care all I want is too let you know what goes through the minds of a young teen in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Sincerely, Jashawn Ford



Dear Obama,

I know you don’t know me. I know how you live but do you know how I live? I tried to get a job at the age of 10 to keep myself out of the streets but I couldn’t because I was too young. So I had to hustle another way; not in a bad way but in a good way like shoveling snow, cutting grass, raking leaves and anything else that nature would give me. But if nature didn’t give me anything then I would have to break the law and gamble.

Do you want to change the world because in my eyes you don’t? Why, think about this if you have a single mom that is struggling and you have to get money the illegal way to put food on the table and put clothes on

your back, you would take that chance and do what you got to do? But you still got extra things you will need in life; like you want to have fun to take away stress, pay bills which is stressful, pay taxes which is also stressful and at the end it is like a big receipt of stress.

Life is short in a hood with no one to change it but it took for my mama to take me and my brother out of a hood that we stayed in for me to focus on life. And as I got older I realized how important life was so I had to change. So I'm not saying this to make a big letter I'm saying this to you so you can make the world better. I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG.

Sincerely, Jeremiah Grant



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Marquise T. Howard. I was born and raised in Milwaukee Wisconsin. I come from a strong Christian background but I can't help the things I do. To be honest I really want to go to college and play football but smoking weed is playing a huge role in my life.

The peer pressure where I come from is so crazy. I shake up gang affiliated handshakes but know nothing about them or not enough to shake it up in the first place. I always had this dream to be where you are but I guess truly I don't think I will make it.

When you think of the Midwest you think of Chicago but I think of Milwaukee. I'm scared because I know how Milwaukee is and for the most part I don't want to die young. I just want to say I made it. I don't want any handouts but just take notice in what Milwaukee has; smart kids that need help but really need teachers and coaches that actually care and better schools to attend. You see, my only role models are ball players or drug dealers so you can do the math on that one.

Sincerely, Marquise T. Howard

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Shaquille Clark. I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I go to Vincent High School, and I am writing this letter because I need help in Milwaukee; not just problems at home but on the streets. It is really getting crazy. People are dying for no reason, getting shot for no reason, getting robbed and it's like the people don't care. The sad thing is that it's not the adults that are doing this it's really the teenagers, to me. All they really need is a man in their life to tell them the right from wrong or even teach the rights of reality.

It's like every bit of freedom we get those few kids always take it away. A situation happened 2 years ago at the mall. Teenagers all went to the mall around Christmas time just to go fight and a huge riot broke out at the mall. People were even shooting in the mall. To me it really doesn't make any sense the things the kids in Milwaukee will do just to get there name known or as they say some "Fame". They have really good leadership programs in Milwaukee. If the kids would get into the programs instead of trying to get some "Fame" then Milwaukee wouldn't be as bad as it is.

People really need to just worry about themselves; those people aren't doing anything but making their future harder. They think the things are cool that they are doing, and it is a little word called "Karma" that is going to catch up with them in the future. And they are going to end up dead or in jail at a young age. I promise that "I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG".

Sincerely, Shaquille Clark



Dear Mr. President,

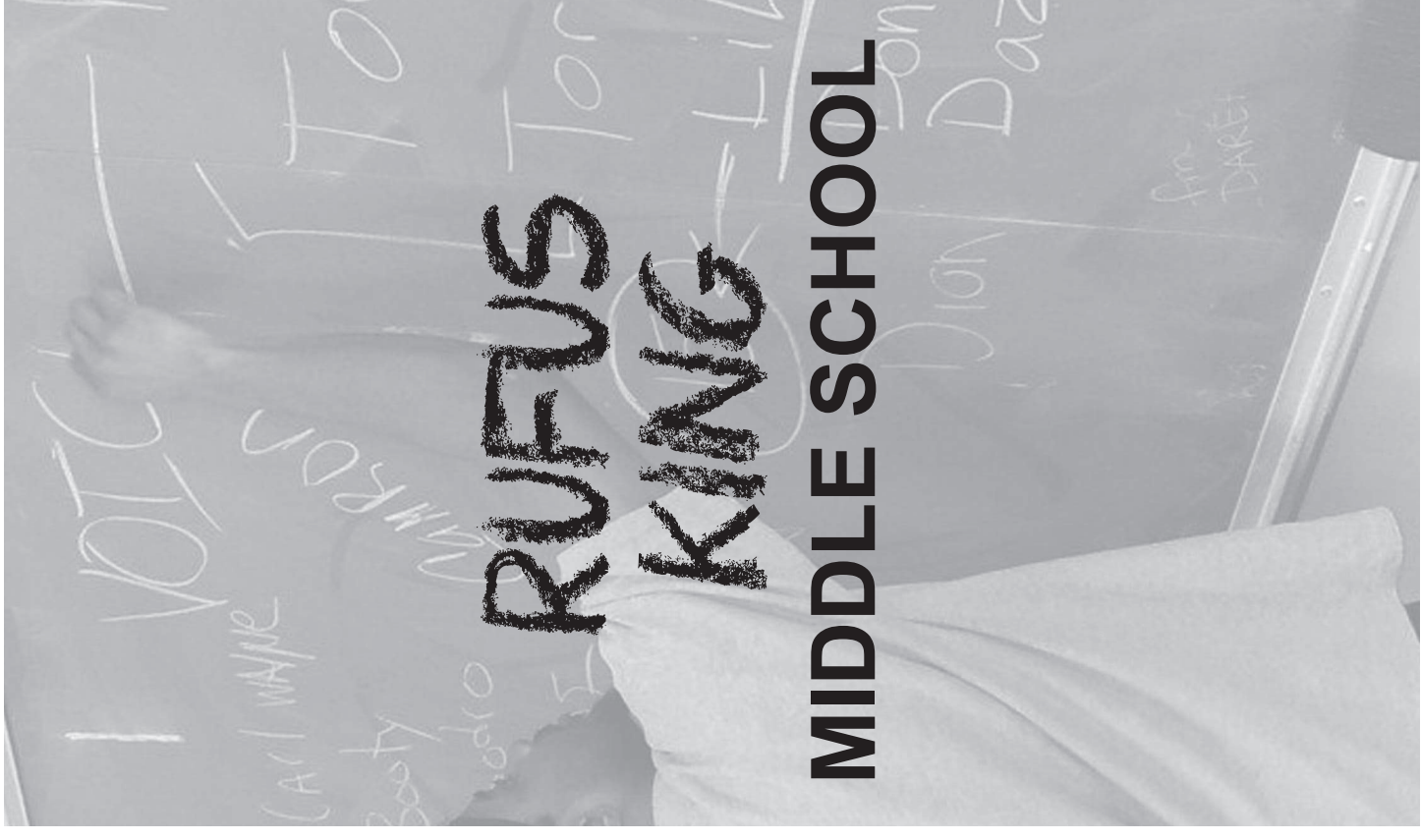
Why do I struggle? When was the last time you ever sat down and talked to a young black male like me? Every other young black boy where I come from is poor in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

My name is Walter Townsend I'm 16. I come from a murder capital. I watch FOX news and hear hundreds of bad things day and night about what goes down in my city.

I can't find a job to support my family and do my own little fun things that any other random 16 year old high school student would do. I'm just saying my moms, pops, granny, auntie's and uncle's voted for you because we are die hard to see a change in our country; the United States Of America. What my family and I would love to see happen from you Mr. President is more jobs, less trouble out here in these hard rough streets, second chance programs for the felons.

I want to see my momma, auntie, sister's and every black soul able to support themselves and not have to live off the system; month to month paychecks and food stamps. We die trying to see our race 100% successful. We are tired of struggling night and day living in these Do Or Die (HOODS) I WANT YOU TO MAKE LIFE EASY AND SAFER FOR OUR BLACK BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

Sincerely, Walter Townsend



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Antwon Brashear, I am 14 years old and I attend Rufus King middle school. I'm an eighth grader, who is very smart and often looked down upon.

Mr. President I live on 21st and locust, and I watch my mom struggle with bills but she thinks I don't know. I never let her know that I know and the way she takes care of us you wouldn't even know. Murders happen around my hood every night. Some nights we'll go to sleep to gunshots and other nights arguing. Mr. President I am asking for your help. I'm not asking for money I'm asking for a simple neighborhood clean-up. It's got to the point where when we hear gunshots we act as if it's natural.

In school teachers call me dumb and say I will never make it. That's one of the reasons why I get in trouble instead of proving them wrong I prove them right. From what I've heard about your childhood teachers and others said you wouldn't make it but look at you now. I am also asking for change in the schools. Believe it or not teachers are the biggest bullies ever and they continue to pick on students because they are a teacher and they're in control of your education. I am not searching for a handout I'm searching for a solution.

In the white house you and your children are safe from the outside world, but in my hood everyone's a target just for you dressing better than the other person. There are violent beatings and killings all the time and I'm getting sick of it. We can't wear flashy things because we would get beat or killed for it.

Ps. I would love to have a face to face meeting with you to discuss these problems.

Sincerely, Antwon Brashear



Dear, Mr. Obama,

My name is Breon Greer, I'm 13 years old, and I am writing this letter from my school Rufus King Myp. I'm writing this letter to you to ask you for something very important. But first I'm going to tell you what I've been through coming up.

I've been through things like this, almost getting hit by a truck, almost falling from the top of a tree, being eaten by 1 or 2 coyotes because I did not listen to my two friends DeAndre Stewart and London Smith when they tried to tell me a coyote was creeping up on me because I was walking into its territory.

So what I am trying to say is this can you try to upgrade the size in the k5 to 8 grade school buildings because I go to a school right now with only a 6th-8th grade maximum and all of us can barely move through the hallways without getting crowded or getting into fights with the other students that is in the 6th or 7th grade because we accidentally bumping into them. So can you Mr. President try to upgrade the middle school buildings like the one I am in.

Okay, another thing I would like to say is separate the hood rats from the nice working people that are trying to make a living for themselves and their family. If you write back I am going to let you know that I am from the I Will Not Die Young program.

Sincerely, Breon Greer



Dear Mr. President,

My name is Jadelyn Rowlett and I am 14 years old, I live in Milwaukee Wisconsin. I live with my mom and dad. My dad has a full time job but mom doesn't have a job. My main concern is why jobs can't hire people under 16. You persuaded my parents to vote for you somehow. Do you know how hard it is seeing my mom struggle like she does to hear her tell me that she can't find a job just to help out with bills? And I

know you can relate to what I'm going through. It's embarrassing! I'm not begging you I just obviously need your help.

I am the first boy from 22nd and Hopkins to write you a letter. With all of the crime that's happening, I honestly question if my family will end up burying me because of gun violence. We deserve a safe place to live with no violence. I look forward to hearing back from you.
I will not die young campaign.

Sincerely, Jadelyn Rowlett



Dear Mr. President,

I grew up in Milwaukee Wisconsin on 18th and North. Now I live on 67th and Villard. You probably never will meet or hear from anyone from my neighborhood. But here I am afraid to walk in my neighborhood. There are about 7,000 young black males that die every year; I feel that that is very unnecessary and is uncalled for and can be prevented not by just putting more people behind bars but giving support to young black boys like me. I have had to go 6 years without my father from the age of 6 to the age of 12. Those are a lot of birthdays; many times when I needed a positive male role model in my life that he wasn't there.

I've been through a lot in the past years. I made a lot of mistakes and thought about doing things that should never cross a teenagers mind. I'm sometimes afraid of walking around the corner because I'm going to be honest I'm afraid of dying. I'm afraid of being a disappointment to the people who have helped me in life. I wake up in the morning not expecting to get back home safely.

You lived in Chicago so you might know what my neighborhood looks like, feels like, and the things it influence me to do. But now I am in the 8th grade participating in the "I Will Not Die Young Campaign" which has shown me a new prospective on life and has saved my life. I go through things that I have kept in but during these past couple of weeks

I have let a lot of things off my chest and tried things I never would have thought about. Programs like this should be provided to more young black males to reduce that number of 7,000 dying every year.

The things that even happen at school where we are supposed to be safe at isn't safe to me. The things that go on, fights and other things that aren't supposed to happen; it's scary. I ask that you just read my letter and take it to heart and do whatever you think is necessary.

My mother has been a great provider to me and I've had it pretty good but I know people that don't have it as easy and need help. I'm going to try and make a difference in my community but with your help I can make an even bigger impact and make the "I Will Not Die Young Campaign" known across the United States.
I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG!!!!!!

Unsigned



Dear President,

I'm Jordan Burnett. I have been raised in the hood; the hood that kills each other every day. I live in a hood where people just don't care what they do; like smoke weed, sell dope and kill. Over 7,000 BLACK boys died this year because black people's behavior. My cousin was stabbed in the neck just for saying no to something stupid. Barrack your name is powerful in black people eyes. Show us that we can be stronger if we just work together and make our children's future better. My family voted for you Barrack Obama and now the only thing that we want is your help to stop black people from dying on the street.

Sincerely, Jordan Burnett



Dear Barack Obama,

My name is Marquel Clements, age 15 and I live in Milwaukee Wisconsin. I'm not trying to tell you what to do but I'm just trying get your help. I know you don't know me but you don't know what half of the people in the United States go through. But I don't think it's fair we sit out here and struggle and you sit in a big white house every day. I never hear about a black boy my age meeting the President because half of them are being killed or are doing the killing. I want to be the first to meet you.

I'm trying get out these streets I have a dream to get signed and be a rapper. I hope you can help me because my family voted for you so I hope you can help us I'm not telling you to just help me but show me some support. Can you come visit us and help us out? Can you just help me out I time? I'd like to meet you. Just give me one shot to become a superstar is that too much to ask for I just don't want to see my family struggle no more. I believe in you so I hope you believe in me and I hope I get to meet you it was always my dream to be a rapper and sing a song in the white house.

Sincerely, Marquel Clements



Dear Mr. President,

I am not begging or asking for a loan or handout. I am 14 years old living in Milwaukee Wisconsin with my mom, a single mother with two children, struggling but still making her way for us and while she's still at work all night I'm trying not to be pulled in by all these bad influences that's surrounding me, keep shaking my hand trying to put drugs in it. I'm pretty sure you know about the 7,000 boys who die every single year which doesn't make sense. You control basically everything so you should know why my people are dying every day and I don't want my mom to worry about seeing my blood stains inside the concrete on a street where no one cares. Or want my mom to see me dressed all nice but for no

reason because I'm dead already laying there while she's crying and I should be there with her comforting her.

As a matter of fact I shouldn't because no one should have to go through that if you are truly doing your job. I'm not trying to disrespect you I just want you to hear me out and my mom voted for you and all we ask for was for you to just make a change I want to make a change to help my people and give to my people all I can. I will never give up and I'm letting you know that I will not die young. We need help and more jobs for younger people to keep us out of trouble. And just in case you didn't see I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG...

And I expect to be hearing from you soon it will be a great pleasure.

Sincerely, Musa Muhammad



Dear Mr. President (Barack Obama),

Can you do something about what's happening? I'm Stephan you have to help us. You're living the good life in D.C. Why do you think black people kill each other? To get what they want that's not right. I have seen a lot for my age I'm 13 and I'm not begging I just want help.

I have lots of dead friends. How many do you have? We voted for you as one of us we thought you would help your black people. You should feel our pain. Think if I die will you come to my funeral? Your black folks thought it would've been a good idea to help you so you can help us. You are sitting there with your feet up in the air with maids and stuff like that.

We are struggling to live. Why do you put more money in jail and prison then our schools? I want to be something good can you help? I look forward to seeing you I will not die young.

Stephan Quantrell, Milwaukee, Killwaukee

Why do you think we call it that?



Dear Mr. Obama,

I live in a house with four brothers and I feel like they pick on me and not my other brothers. As far as school goes, I need to start going to class on time and the teachers need to stop putting me out of class so I can do more work in my classes. But when I go to class on time they put me out still so I be like forget it for real. I think because it's the end of school they just putting me out so I won't pass.

You up in your office being good you need to come to Milwaukee and help people stop killing people. Do you know what happen on 23rd and Center?

You need to talk to the people and see what they on. Why is it more jails in Milwaukee and not more schools? We need to go out to help old people and young people to stay out of trouble and take them guns away so can you please help us.

I WILL NOT DIE YOUNG

Sincerely, Terrion Arnett



Dr. President,

My name is Tyrell Wrencher. I live on north 19th and Melvina. I go to school at Rufus King Middle school and I need your help. There are all these people dying because of gun violence. Over 7,000 black male are gone because of the streets so I am asking for your help. I'm a little black boy from the hood who is looking for someone to help and support our young black kids and community. My cousin died because you won't take the guns away from the bad people.

My mom is still crying because what happened to her grandson who got shot over some weed. We were close. Our dream was to make it to the NBA together but now what..... He's gone because you didn't take the gun away from bad people. You don't know how it feels to wake up every day and know that someone you know was shot over some

nonsense.

Mr. President we all need you. If I was the president it will be a whole lot different: like you can't carry a gun without a license and schools would not be like jails.

Sincerely, Tyrell Wrencher

My Brother
Do you hear me
Would you shoot yourself
You think with that gun in your hand
I'll fill you with that brain in
your head you get power
Do you think your son would be
scared of his father
Are you under his bed that's why
Are you over his head that's
why he's going to never meet you
Can you be a father
Can you be a brother
~~brother~~ want your mother to suffer
Do you want your father to suffer
Do you know he ain't been hear
I know he ain't been fair
Look at me
Do you hear me
Put that Gun Down
Let me help you turn your
life around.
Do you hear me now
I am my brother's keep
I will not die young campaign
Mouhamed Fall

I Will Not Die Young — Letters to the President

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