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THE JAHMOL NORFLEET VIDEO PROJECT

“JAHMOL’S VISION: CREATING PEACE IN THE WORLD OF TEEN HANDGUN VIOLENCE”

The mission of the Jahmol Norfleet Video Project is to reach at-risk youth and promote non-violence. The Video Project is currently producing a documentary called Jahmol’s Vision, based on the life of Jahmol Norfleet, 20, who was shot to death outside his Roxbury home on November 28, 2006. Jahmol was exceptionally charismatic, and in the year prior to his murder he led a peace movement among the youth of Boston. Now his younger sister and a close circle of friends struggle every day to fulfill Jahmol’s vision of peace in the streets. The video focuses on the challenge facing these “kids” to stay committed to promoting peace even in the horrific climate of escalating teen handgun violence.

TEEN HANDGUN VIOLENCE

Boston is facing an epidemic of teen handgun violence that is killing our youth and creating a climate of fear and hopelessness. Jahmol had helped reduce the shootings, but since his death the problem has gotten much worse. The murder rate in Boston is up 50% over this time last year, a year that was already one of the deadliest on record. Just in January 2007, youth violence in the neighborhoods escalated to new heights, when three boys under the age of 15 were killed by gunfire. The police, politicians, and community leaders have not been able to solve this problem or reduce the violence.

THE HOPE

Jahmol Norfleet was a ray of hope. At 20 years of age he was an acknowledged leader among his peers and had made a commitment to bring peace to teenagers in Boston’s neighborhoods. After being grazed in the head by a bullet on his way to high school, Jahmol had started carrying a gun. But, after serving a one-year prison sentence for unlawful gun possession, Jahmol declared his determination to turn his life around and lead youth throughout Boston in putting their guns down.

Jahmol’s efforts earned the praise of Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, the Boston police, the community and the clergy. Both during his life and following his death, his peace-making efforts have drawn significant local and national media coverage. He was featured in a cover story by *USA Today* on March 6, 2007.

In the weeks before Jahmol was murdered, he came to believe that he and his friends should create a video chronicling their struggle and efforts so they could spread their movement of teen peace to a wider audience.

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

In the aftermath of Jahmol’s death and in the midst of ever-deepening teen violence in the streets of Boston, it is even more important that his sister and friends produce this documentary video and not give up on Jahmol’s vision. A core group of these youth are being apprenticed to work as Associate Producers on *Jahmol’s Vision*.

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The involvement of Jahmol's friends in the production and presentation of the video will deepen the anti-violence impact of this project. The youth will be given responsibility in the project and provided with critical skills that teach them to look forward to their future and foster a sense of hope and optimism to replace the narrow prospects they may now be experiencing. In addition to creating the video itself, City Mission Society is developing a companion curriculum to emphasize the theme of non-violent conflict resolution. We will also organize a Youth Speaker's Bureau who will be trained to lead discussions of the video.

THE TEAM BEHIND THE VIDEO

Jahmol's Vision is being produced under the auspices of the City Mission Society of Boston, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The City Mission Society is an urban social justice agency serving over 3,000 people each year. It is the oldest multi-service agency in New England, with 190 years' experience addressing the educational, economic and social needs of impoverished area residents.

CMS has formed a Task Force to oversee the production of the video. The Task Force is composed of representatives from churches in Jahmol's neighborhood such as Pleasant Hill Baptist Church as well as the Boston Ten Point Coalition, Span, Inc., and downtown churches such as Old South and First Church in Boston. We have deliberately brought in a wide range of people in order to make the point that youth violence does not affect one neighborhood alone, but is a concern for the entire city.

The producer of *Jahmol's Vision* is Tony Bennis, a multi-award winning television and film producer in Jamaica Plain who recently produced three short teen anti-gun-violence videos. The director of photography and editor is Mike King, an award winning producer/editor who has directed teen anti-handgun violence videos in the past.

Teah Norfleet, Jahmol's younger sister, who recently graduated from high school and a core group of Jahmol's friends are being apprenticed as Associate Producers and Production Personnel on the project.

DISTRIBUTION

Jahmol's Vision will be shown in schools, community youth centers, boys and girls clubs, houses of faith, etc. with a youth speaker available to lead interactive discussions. Because it is being produced professionally it will be in a format that can be aired on broadcast and/or cable television networks.

The production of *Jahmol's Vision* has begun. If you are interested in supporting this important initiative, please send your check, made payable to CMS or go to our website to donate using a credit card.

IMPORTANT WEB LINKS:

City Mission Society of Boston: <http://www.cmsboston.org/>

USA Today Cover Story on Jahmol Norfleet: http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-03-05-gangs_N.htm

Start Peace Mini Documentary (a related project): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L20IMDZ5Lac>