

**Remarks to the Fourth Annual New York City Transfer School Conference
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Good morning ladies and gentleman. It is an honor and a privilege for me to be here.

Many years of observing the many things that holds us, the people, back from being united leads to what I want to share with you today.

Generations after generations, the people still follow the same footsteps hoping for change. But how? Do not let my clothes deceive you; this is not who I am. We live not only in two different generations, but in two different worlds.

The generation before mine told me education lies in school. For us, education is a word commonly misused because schools for us are the very being where these wars rage. I am forced to be intimidating. I am forced to live a lifestyle that does not fit my lifestyle. I am a perfect example referred to by the Willie Lynch letter of 1712, given on the banks of the James River in Virginia and speaking on how to keep black people enslaved for centuries. How? A unique artist interpreted the speech in a picture: one black man with a gun to another black man's head. In 1493, Christopher Columbus enslaved my people. Almost 600 years later, instead of being liberated, my people have enslaved ourselves by drawing from the perspective of our oppressors.

Time and racism play a significant role in defining the children of this generation. We as people have to change how we view each other. Death after death after death leads me to believe that the very guidance I thought my generation had, has faded into the very shadows of my generation. Scared of what? The image of the streets? The thought that we are violent? Fear is often an illusion created by the mind to justify the very reason why we believe we can't do something.

We are children. Do not look at us by stats or what you hear; look at us as if you would look at your own children. The very thing that makes Liberation a successful school is that the staff understands the importance of being a person. Teachers' biggest problem and where they fail the most in reaching students is that they believe they have to be teachers. Take away the clothes you wear, the school methods, and the people who influence you. Can you honestly say who you are?

Liberation has some of the most dangerous people you could meet in our school

building. They are successful because of the staff. Teachers there realize that the key to breaking through to students is in listening with the intent to understand and not with the intent to reply.

I have lost three friends of mine in the last month. All three killed in Brooklyn. All three victims of what seems to be our modern day warfare. My generation is hopeless. We are being told that our dreams are as far off as our building numbers. Where may my brothers rest? I was told the only place for peace is in a box buried six feet under.

I am gifted beyond measure, confined by a prison designed for my people. A prison they call projects, with three-inch thick glass, three-inch stainless steel doors, with one way in and one way out. I am free; I am not supposed to be contained. Free the minds of this generation or we will forever be enslaved, forever build love through hatred, passion through anger, and ambition through jealousy.

Liberation never will be just a school to any of the students that attend. Liberation will and forever will be a home for those that are lost or spit through a system designed to fail us. That is what a transfer school can be for us.

My greatest asset is that I was homeless. Sleeping in a hallway on a piece of cardboard, I never felt happier to wake up and go to school: my school, my home, my resting place. A place where Latin kings, Bloods and Crips all get along and where the dangers of the war on the street can't reach us. I mean a life, being yourself, free from everyday struggles, worries, threats. I'm sad to say that this place only lasts a few hours a day so I hold on and cherish these hours. For the first time in all of my schooling, my school has shown me that even in the darkest room the dimmest light can still shine. A place where tranquility exists and the only dangers are laughter and where your greatest enemy is just the word itself.

We are all humans created equally under one God. Who are any of us to say differently? Why can't I be the next Eric Thomas? Why can't I lead a nation to peace? Why must we make everything about ourselves? The most generous act is still a selfish deed for your own satisfaction.

I was told it would be best to close this with the overall message of hope. Sadly, that is not what I came here for. Hope is just another word to bypass the ongoing problems. We have to be the change that we wish to see in this world.