



Young Men's Educational Network

YMEN's mission is to prepare young men in North Lawndale for leadership by helping youth grow in their faith and character, develop a love for learning, and use their talents to serve the broader community.

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YMEN needs 100% participation to help us purchase the College and Career Residence!

This building is adjacent to the Trout House and is in foreclosure. This two-story brick building is now listed for \$40,000. With additional work we can acquire this \$250,000 asset for \$113,000!

IT IS NOT JUST A BUILDING!

The residence is a part of a much BIGGER dream to help YMEN college and career students own their first home... in NORTH LAWNDALE.

How do you revitalize a neighborhood?

Answer: By bringing back strong neighbors!

We've got the hood...
We're just trying to bring back the neighbors!

After getting a college degree, YMEN students can live in this starter home, build up equity to have a down payment and buy their first home.

Just think what this project will do: Bring leaders back to the neighborhood, help YMEN guys become home owners, and strengthen the community by bringing skills and men of character back to Chicago's west side!

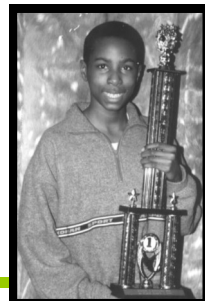


In celebration of YMEN's 13th birthday help us to raise \$113,000

If each person on our mailing list donated \$113, YMEN would have \$113,000 and we would own this BUILDING!
Help us reach 100% participation by giving a gift of 13....

**\$13, \$113, \$313, \$1113, \$3113,
\$13,113...\$113,000???**

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MARCH 2009 MAKING IT PERSONAL

WHO are these kids?

Answers on page 4...



YMEN is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation, all donations are fully tax-deductible.

YMEN's newest intern, ETHEREAL WATTS helps lead trip to MEMPHIS



Below: Visiting the Civil Rights Museum and the Lorraine Motel where Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated.



My Experience In Memphis Tennessee

By Ethereal Watts
YMEN INTERN

The Memphis Tennessee trip was an amazing experience, for both the YMEN students and myself. The trip to Memphis from Chicago took ten hours, including bathroom breaks, lunch and dinner stops. When we finally reached our destination, we put our heads down to rest at the Holiday Inn Express Hotel. The hotel was beautifully decorated with eloquent paintings, fascinating plants, great continental breakfast, and amazing rooms.

The next day we were off to see the great National Civil Rights Museum at The Lorraine Motel, where Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated. At the entrance, you are welcomed by a great piece of artwork that shows you the struggle of African-Americans in the United States.

From there, we entered into a room that speaks to the importance of the great women of the civil rights movement--they were called The Freedom's Sisters.

A few of those great women were: Ella Jo

Baker, Mary McLeod Bethune, Shirley Chisholm, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King.

From there we moved through the time line of African-Americans, beginning with their capture as slaves to their present state as great leaders of today. The next room was dedicated to the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr; starting as the founding president of The Southern Christian Leadership Conference to his demise.

In that room, you are actually standing where he stayed in his last hours. After that great historic museum, we headed to a barbecue joint called TOP'S Barbecue. The food was GREAT! After lunch, we headed back to the hotel for some relaxation and play time.

Later that night, we went to the ballet for a great show. Sunday morning, we went to a church for a worship service. Later that day we went to the famous B.B. King's Blues Club on Beale Street. While there we ate some great food, had live musical entertainment, and even did a little shopping on Beale Street.

Afterwards, we headed back to the hotel and prepared to return home to Chicago the next day.



Dare 2 B King! [What if the prince lives?]

By Milton Hardnett

D2BK is a mentorship program - facilitated by YMEN, being held at four different schools. D2BK reaches nearly 80 junior high students every week. We work with these students on-site, reaching them in their environment, mentoring and teaching them about the possibilities waiting inside of them. The purpose of the program is to reach those "at-risk" youth who stand on the edge of a socioeconomic cliff--teetering above the possibility of a life lost to the streets like their brothers around them. The program speaks to them in the "King's language," teaching respect, leadership, followership, and integrity. D2BK brings together troubled students and seasoned male mentors who know what these young men are going through to teach them how to climb out of their despair and lead them down a better road.

The statistical information of North Lawndale's educational system is staggering, even mind boggling; the school drop-out rate is over 50%, only 3% will receive a bachelors degree, above 70% of the male population ages 18 through 30 are unemployed and 10,000 of the young African American males in North Lawndale have had some interaction with law enforcement and the criminal justice system [68% of the entire community is in some form of the criminal justice system--whether that be incarcerated, on parole, on house arrest, or otherwise.]

If there were a program like D2B King around when I was coming up - I believe my life would have been a lot different; I was raised with no father in the home; dropped out of school and became very much involved with the criminal justice system even to the point of serving time in prison. This is what the great majority of the children in this community have to look forward to without the Dare to Be King Program. This also verifies in my mind how important it is to have this program.

I wish that some of you reading this newsletter could come to the schools and experience the powerful and positive impact that is taking place in the lives of the 80 students we are working with through the "Dare to Be King program."

Join us on our journey down the King's path.

DaQuan Bush has given his life to CHRIST

By Daquan Bush, recorded by Milton Hardnett

The night before I gave my life to Christ I was at home watching the movie "Coach Carter." In one scene the question was asked, "Do you want more from life?" It felt as though the question was being asked directly of me and I began to think to myself, "Yeah, I really do want more from life," because in the movie they were getting shot up and selling drugs and I thought to myself - I really don't want to be like them.

I began to think about how I needed to change my life in order to be successful. I thought about how I should give myself to Christ and let Him deal with it and hope that I would eventually be an overcomer.

The next day I went to the youth program in Teen-Town in the 5th City. The guy was talking to us about changing our lives and saying he knew that we wanted God and that we were tired of what we were doing - and that we just didn't know what to do. He said that we needed to show God that we wanted Him in our lives. They prayed for me and had me lift my hands in the air and tell the Lord that I wanted Him and say yes to Him and I did that over and over - then the tears began to come down my face and I could feel my heart really wanting Jesus; but at the same time a little piece of me wanted to stay back; but I think I overcame that little piece. They prayed for a good twenty minutes over me and after that I decided to just try and show improvement every day, like going to school every day, to stop smoking and drinking and partying and just stop doing all the things that I used to do.

It felt really good, as if nothing was holding me back anymore. It felt like I was a new person.



Making Men Through Mentoring

By Marcus Thorne



More than two years ago YMEN took the risk of extending our ministry by partnering with several other organizations in the neighborhood. That “risk” is called Making Men Through Mentoring (M3) and during this time we have learned and invested a ton. Through our partnership, we have worked with over one hundred young men—in addition to the young men that we normally mentor. For those who are unfamiliar with the nuts and bolts of M3, it works through once-per-week small group mentoring sessions and through bi-monthly workshops. The workshops bring together the entire community of mentees for training in one of our five outcome areas – work ethic, academics, life skills, safety and leadership. The weekly sessions help develop camaraderie and positive peer pressure, reinforcing the training.

During one of our weekend workshops earlier this year, we were challenged by the story of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old Chicago boy who was kidnapped, tortured and killed for whistling at a white woman in 1955. By refusing to keep the casket closed on his deformed and bludgeoned body, Emmett’s mother, Mamie Till, helped spark the civil rights movement. In spite of significant evidence, the two men charged with his murder were acquitted. How could those two men be found innocent of that heinous crime? How could they have the unmitigated gall to sell their story, confessing to his murder in *Look* magazine only four months later? After witnessing some of the venom of those times, we broke into small groups for discussion. Does injustice still exist? Where does it exist? What can we do about it? Just as men stood up in those desperate times, we knew we needed to stand. We stood to serve, delivering gift bags to nursing home residents at Sacred Heart (1550 S. Albany Ave). The weather wasn’t the best. In fact, just as we were leaving NLCP, a blizzard began. But that’s what men do—we walk through tough weather to do what’s right. The folks at Sacred Heart welcomed us into their residence and we—over 50 African-American boys and young men—passed out gift bags to them. It was a fantastic event. We learned that with our hands and feet we are to serve! Special thanks to the Storehouse of World Vision for providing the gifts.

Xavier Ramey
Director of Development
YMEN



WHO are these “kids”???

Xavier completed his Bachelor of Science in Economics at DePaul University in 2007.

He secured his first apartment with saved cash 9 days after he was legally able to sign a lease at 18 and has been rather independent since. He spent a year as an intern at a real estate company, and did contracted marketing and merchandising work with a few companies. Xavier then got a summer internship at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange when he was 19 as a trade clerk which led to a position as junior trader by Christmas then eventually a full trader by the time he was 20. He left trading at 21 to finish his Bachelors, working at a downtown hotel to get some customer service experience for a year, and then accepted a job at **YMEN as their Development Director.**

Percy Ollie Jr. (PJ) graduated from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana in May 2005.

Percy is currently working at Verizon’s corporate office in downtown Chicago as a Financial Analyst. Percy has also ventured into the entrepreneurial world. He is the co-founder of an investment group (Power I Holding, Inc), and the Founder & Photographer of (Ollie Photography, Inc).

Percy has managed to turn his hobbies and dreams into profit generating corporations which are paving avenues of other opportunities to come.

Percy currently sits on the **Board of Directors for YMEN** where he is allowed to provide input on the direction of the organization.

Percy Ollie
Board of Directors
YMEN

