

Letter To The Editor: Executive Director Calls for Support, Not Violence, for Alton Youth

by Dorothy Hummel

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To Whom It May Concern:

I write to you today with a heavy heart, echoing the sentiments of our entire community, as we mourn the tragic loss of a 13-year-old girl, Ra’Niya Steward, to a senseless act of

gun violence. The recent drive-by shooting that claimed her innocent life has sent shockwaves throughout the City of Alton, leaving us grappling with grief, anger, and an urgent call to action.

At the YWCA, our mission is deeply rooted in eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all persons. The devastating loss of this young girl underscores the pressing need for us to confront the pervasive issue of gun violence and its disproportionate impact on marginalized communities.

What makes this tragedy even more alarming is the fact that the perpetrators of this heinous act were themselves mere teenagers—16 and 19 years old. It is a stark reminder of the urgent need to address the root causes of violence and provide our youth with the support, resources, and opportunities they need to thrive in a safe and nurturing environment.

Reducing gun violence requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond mere legislation. While sensible gun laws are crucial, we must also address the systemic inequities that contribute to the cycle of violence in our communities. This includes investing in education, mental health services, and community-based programs that empower young people and offer constructive alternatives to violence.

Furthermore, we must engage in honest conversations about the intersections of race, gender, and violence, recognizing that marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by gun violence and systemic injustice. We cannot truly achieve peace and justice until we confront and dismantle the structures of oppression that perpetuate violence and inequality.

As a community, we must come together to mourn, to heal, and to take meaningful action. We must stand in solidarity with the family and loved ones of the young girl whose life was tragically cut short, and we must honor her memory by redoubling our efforts to create a safer, more equitable society for all.

In the face of such senseless violence, let us reaffirm our commitment to building a world where every person — regardless of race, gender, or background — can live free from fear and violence. Let us work tirelessly to ensure that no more lives are lost to the scourge of gun violence.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Hummel

Executive Director

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