

## **We cannot sit idly by and watch our innocent children die**

Written by Rev. Al Sharpton, NNPA Columnist  
Wednesday, 25 November 2009 15:15

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(NNPA) - For decades now, I have traveled across this nation to listen, learn and absorb the concerns and frustrations of the community. I've marched with victims of police brutality, consoled families who have viciously lost loved ones and called for transparency and proper judicial proceedings for those that have been wrongfully victimized by our system. But after years of civil rights activism, and after years of countless troubling incidents, never before have I been as outraged as I am today. On November 16, a 15-year-old girl in the Bronx, NY was walking home from school when a stray bullet struck her in the back of the head. The alleged shooter, described by mainstream media as a "baby-faced 16-year-old" is now held without bail, along with four others – all 23 and younger – who authorities say coerced the young shooter to pull the trigger.

Last month, a Decatur High School junior football varsity player in Atlanta was laid to rest after falling victim to a drive-by shooting. In Baton Rouge, LA, a 16-year-old was shot and killed as two 'men' struggled over a handgun in early October. The shooter in this case – a 22-year-old - is now charged with negligent homicide. And a few weeks ago, a Spelman College sophomore was hit and killed by a stray bullet while walking on campus. Sadly, the list of innocent victims appears to have no end in sight.

The level of gun usage and the epidemic of violence in communities across the country has hit an astronomical level. According to the Violence Policy Center, firearms are the second most frequent cause of death overall for Americans aged 15-24. If we are not fed up and outraged already, the time to stand up and do something is NOW. We cannot sit idly by and watch our innocent children die so senselessly. Nor can we run from the underlying issues that lead some young people to pick up a gun in the first place, and in turn, ruin their own lives.

On November 23, National Action Network, along with community members from around the nation will led a first ever National Day of Outrage. We simultaneously convened at 2 PM EST in cities like Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Philadelphia and many in between. As parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and more join together to honor their lost loved ones, concerned citizens, elected officials and community activists will call for an end to the unprecedented and frightening national epidemic.

We all watched the graphic videotape of the beating death of 16-year-old Chicago Fenger High School honor student Derrion Albert. But what many may not realize is that this high school remains a 'war zone' where children simply seeking an education to advance themselves do not feel secure even in a classroom. How can we urge our kids to strive for higher achievement when we fail to provide them with the basic tools of development? And what can we expect for the future of the United States when our most precious citizens are arming themselves and engaging in warfare on streets in virtually every state.

Unfortunately, the excessive and exponentially growing outburst of violence is not confined to children and teenagers. Last month, a 92-year-old grandmother was watching TV inside her Bronx home when a stray bullet ended her fruitful life. The plight of violence in urban communities is horrendous, worrisome and simply out of control. It is our babies, sons, daughters, grandparents and loved ones that are losing in every sense of the word. I am outraged; the community is outraged. But together we can work to find a sustainable solution

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so that none of us will have to watch another horrific video, witness another tragic shooting or lose another precious soul. We must reclaim the value of life for the sake of our own lives.