

09.04.07

The Youth Empowerment Session

Posted in [Youth Empowerment Session](#) at 3:30 pm by Administrator

Saturday August 25th, 9:30A.M. The Youth Empowerment Session was held at Mt. Sinai Full Gospel Church. Children from the pre-k to college students, and parents were involved in a full day of workshops and recreation. Test taking skills, time management, overcoming peer pressure, achieving academic goals and Gang Awareness were just a few of the topics covered. Free school supplies were given to all registered participants and of course no one was turned away. Representatives were present from Jersey City, Bayonne, Newark and Irvington.

The keynote address was delivered by Benjamin Wilson of the Gang Awareness and Intervention Network, (G.A.I.N.). Ben Wilson relayed his personal experiences to his audience generating response from the young and the old. When asked, what is located at exit 7-7A of the turnpike most of the youth responded Great Adventures or Six Flags. The older portion of the crowd stated the prison. Which is exactly the direction Ben wanted to take the children . He gave a vivid and chilling tour of life in a state correctional facility, from arrest to court to incarceration. He told them the truth about the criminal justice system and explained the “commissary or canteen ” system. He explained how your homies don’t or rarely come and visit. They don’t put money in you commissary. He told of the stress placed on the mothers who usually make this trip alone or with the dedicated girlfriend. The focus was unfortunately on the mothers because there was the usual shortage of black men involved at this session. Most of the men present were either working, or participating as presenters.

Ben did not just take them on the ride to the jail and drop them off. He gave them avoidance techniques to use when the peer pressure rises. He briefly advised parents of some of the signs to look for in their children regarding gang involvement. **EDUCATION or INCARCERATION** appears to be the repeating theme. Education is the key to success. Education is the key to slowing down this ever growing gang menace. Ben stated we have not arrested our way out of a drug problem. We have not arrested our way out of a prostitution problem and we will not arrest our way out of a gang problem.

We want to thank Bishop Mays for opening up her doors to the community, for what we hope is the First Annual Youth Empowerment Session. Often, we have criticized the black churches in the city for practicing Sunday religion but forgetting about the community Monday thru Saturday. Mt. Sinai Full Gospel Church has been a example for all to emulate. I would like to personally thank Desiree and Chris Wright and all the members of the Developing Better Kids Foundation. Without their help and guidance this event would not have been possible. We look forward to many more successful partnerships in the future.



Datgangster911.com