



GENDER JUST



**BLOCKS
TOGETHER**



Contact: Sam Finkelstein
Tel: (312) 545-6871
Email: sam@genderjust.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: AUG 18, 2009

LGBTQA/GNC STUDENTS AND ALLIES MEET WITH CPS CHIEF, RON HUBERMAN, ABOUT SAFE & AFFIRMING EDUCATION

GENDER JUST SOLUTIONS FOR SAFE & AFFIRMING EDUCATION TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY CPS

Chicago, IL – On August 18, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer, Allied, and Gender-Non-Conforming (LGBTQA/GNC) students, parents, and allies met with top officials from Chicago Public Schools (CPS), including Chief Executive Officer Ron Huberman, about ways to make schools safe and affirming for all Chicago students. “While we know you are an ally on this issue,” said Ahkia Daniels, Gender JUST member, to Ron Huberman, “we want to see what action you’re willing to put behind your support.”

“We agree that there needs to be a change in school culture,” said Mr. Huberman, speaking of the long term transformation that is needed to ensure safe and affirming education on a district-wide and equitable basis. CPS agreed to Gender JUST’s solution of creating a committee of students and community members to address the violence, oppression, inequities, and heterosexism experienced by many within CPS by providing resources to students, professional development curriculum for staff, and accountability for the central office.

Following up from the public forum organized by Gender JUST and attended by over 175 members of the community, Gender JUST in partnership with Blocks Together and Chicago Youth Initiating Change pressed Ron Huberman to implement student-initiated solutions, such as mandatory training for CPS staff and processes for accountability to students. “We’re here because we live this every day,” said Gender JUST member Joshua McCool.

“This could have helped you in your youth,” said Eric Amaya, Gender JUST Leadership Team member and sophomore at Kelly High, to Mr. Huberman “and it will create safer schools for your new child.”

Gender JUST’s Safe & Affirming Education Campaign is a grassroots coalition of students, parents, teachers, and allies working together to fight against heterosexism and violence towards LGBTQ/GNC students in Chicago Public Schools by organizing through an economic, racial, and gender justice framework.

Gender JUST (Gender Justice United for Societal Transformation) is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-generational grassroots organization of Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer, and Allied (LGBTQA) young people, LGBTQA people of color, and LGBTQA grassroots folks developing leadership and building power through organizing.

Blocks Together works to increase the community's capacity to take direct-action to address important issues; challenge members to develop skills to advocate for their community and themselves; address root causes of poverty and inequality; create neighborhood stability by ensuring that resources are invested in the community; and unite residents on the basis of equality to engage in building a social and economic justice movement.

Chicago Youth Initiating Change is an all-Chicago Social Justice group founded by students and teacher to improve the myriad communities of Chicago through social action. We are committed to the principle that for youth action to be successful, it is their voices that must guide the action and they must be allowed to take leadership roles in all aspects of the organization.