

"It made me proud": by Rodresha

Traveling with Mission Graduation to Washington, D.C. last month was the most exciting trip that I have ever been on. I had the opportunity to view many sites and buildings that I had previously only seen on television. I knew they were real, but seeing them in person for the first time almost didn't make them feel that way. It was amazing. The most exciting part was when we went to the White House, something that I never thought I would have the chance to do. I also liked the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington Cemetery. It made me proud. While I was there, I talked to a fifty-year old woman who visits the cemetery often. She told me that this was the first time she had seen an African American soldier guarding the tomb. That also made me proud.

Experiencing D.C. makes me feel like I can do something important one day. I'm not sure yet what that will be, but I am starting to understand the importance of my education to that end.

Rodresha is an 8th Grader at Vance Middle School



Middle School Friends: Fellow Vance Middle School students and Mission Graduation participants, Rodresha and Rekena, spending time with one another.

Streets Ministries would like to thank Konica Minolta Danka Imaging for their printing services.



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Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Psalms 82:3-4

Gaining Perspective, Engaging the World

I remember the night that a good friend gave me and my son, Matthew, courtside seats to a Grizzlies game a few years ago. It just so happened that we were playing the 76ers, and Allen Iverson was the marquee player. I had watched him on television many times and knew he was fast. However, sitting courtside with an eye level perspective was radically different. From that vantage point, you actually felt the speed and acceleration, and it became very clear why he passed people as if they were standing still.



You grow up hearing about shootings and watching incidents of violence on the evening news. At night, in the distance, you hear the sound of ambulances and police cars rushing to a place where a tragic incident has taken the life of someone who had a conflict with someone else. Most of the time we roll back over and go to sleep or refocus on our favorite sitcom we had been watching prior to the untimely disruption. However, I vividly remember having someone shot ten feet from me in the early days of Streets Ministries. The sound of the shot and the sight of someone falling from a bullet wound is forever etched in my memory with a crazy surreal clarity.

I was living in an integrated neighborhood on the day that Dr. King fell silent on the cold concrete of a downtown Memphis Hotel. I can picture it as if it were yesterday. We did not know how to react as an indescribable tension engulfed our block. Not until that moment did I understand the importance of the life of this great Christian leader. I cannot help but remember that day whenever I tour the National Civil Rights Museum.

Tomorrow, Debbie, the kids, and I are hopping in the car and traveling out to Colorado for a week thanks to the generosity of some close friends with a home in the mountains. For two of my kids, it will be their first time to see real mountains. For me, it will bring back memories of sitting on a mountaintop as a high school sophomore and experiencing the great majesty of God's creation and not just reading about it.

As you flip the pages of this newsletter, you will read about the rich firsthand experiences of Mission Graduation students - young people who have grown up with a worldview based on limited opportunities to venture outside of the confines of an oppressed community. You will read about their experiences as they engage with a world they have only read about or seen on television up to this point.

At Streets, we are equipping young people in two ways. The first is to know the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and what it commands us to do as we grow in our relationship to the Creator. Second, our young people must be aware of the world around them, past and present, in order to speak to the needs of a fallen culture.

Are we aware of the world around us? Are we allowing our engagement in our culture to be limited to newspapers, television, Twitter, and Facebook? Do we understand being in the world and not of it?

Your Brother in Christ,

Ken

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Anonymously Unique: by Andreana Brown

"You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me." Genesis 16:13

Washington, D.C. sits on a hill and showcases our achievements as a country. Each monument and museum tells a story, not just of a moment in history, but of a person whose act or deed was found worthy enough to be honored. A city filled with so many monuments such as this reminds you of human frailty. At the same time, these monuments remind us just how each of us has the ability to make positive choices that can cast us in a greater light. Such was an unexpected benefit from our recent Mission Graduation trip to D.C.

Mission Graduation is an incentive based program run on the campus of Vance Middle School by Streets Ministries. Its goal is to help encourage students to do the right things while keeping them on a path that leads towards graduation. This past month, as a reward for the top 27 students enrolled in the program this past year, Mission Graduation and its advisors traveled by bus to our nation's Capitol. Upon arrival, one of the first sites we visited was the Arlington National Cemetery. I was proud of the students and the amount of instinctive reverence shown at the Tomb of the Unknown soldiers. Later, we learned about the years of discipline and studying required to become one of the few members of the Army able to guard the tomb. It is actually one of the most highly ranked roles a soldier can have. And although those they guard could not be identified, some only leaving behind a foot



1600 Pennsylvania Avenue: Mission Graduation students and their advisors pause for a group photo prior to their White House tour.



A different kind of mall: Zandria, Matthew, Johnetta, Solomon, and Terrance have a little fun while visiting the Washington Monument.

or arm to be buried, they are given 24 hour watchmen just as if they were a president or king. That type of respect was astounding to both myself and the students.

Being in D.C. reminded me of the simplicity of our own lives. We would all like to be recognized by having our name placed on a building or our likeness carved in marble. It is kind of what makes online social networks and personal websites so appealing. Yet, when our bodies cannot be identified, God still sees us. He knows our name and reminds us that we are His children. He stands watch over us day and night, never sleeping, forgetting our position, title, or area of town we grew up in. He treats both the pauper and king the same.

The Mission Graduation students selected to go on this trip are not only known by God, but to us as students that have shown themselves to be socially and academically mature. This trip was a reward for all the hard work and perseverance they showed throughout the school year. While working alongside them, it has been a gift to know their names, their stories, and the qualities that make each of them unique.

Andreana is Streets' Mission Graduation Director.

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For more information about Mission Graduation, please visit us online at www.streetsministries.org.

Empowering a Tangible Future: by Sarah Lawrence Allen

The recent Mission Graduation trip to Washington, D.C. was more than just a reward for our student's hard work; it was an opportunity for our kids to dream about their future and what it could one day be. But perhaps more important than that, it emphasized the individual work necessary between today and that future to achieve that dream. With that, the importance of doing well in school became tangible in a way it previously had not.

This past school year, the Mission Graduation staff intentionally talked about college with students and emphasized that the decisions made right now will help, or potentially hurt, the opportunities you may have in the future. Sounds simple, but as you may remember from your own days in middle school, it can be hard to see past the moment when you are a teenager. Many are more concerned with their MySpace profiles, the latest mp3's, You-Tube, and Facebook than they are learning how to solve one-step equations in Pre-Algebra. But if those one-step equations go left unsolved, then how can we ever expect to learn the more complex equations in Algebra II? This is our challenge as program advisors.



Perspective: Rekena, a Mission Graduation 8th grader, pauses to read an inscription at Arlington National Cemetery.



Headphones: Mission Graduation students learn about the history and architecture of the Capitol Building during a guided audio tour.

With so many students not wanting to dream beyond the party at the Crystal Palace skating rink next Friday night, conversations about the future are often not well received. The future is too intangible. However, our trip to D.C. broadened many student's perspectives about the future. For the most part, the majority of students living in the neighborhood go places only their feet can take them. This limits their worldview. While visiting D.C. however, many students had their eyes opened to life outside of their immediate neighborhood. This translates into thinking about the future. For many, for the first time. For example, while visiting the Pentagon, several of our students asked what they had to do to one day work there. "Did you go to college?" one student asked a Secret Service officer. This is why we went to D.C.

As a Mission Graduation Advisor this past year, I have learned that we work with bright, talented, and creative kids who all deserve the right to not only dream, but dream big! With that, it is my hope that the students who went on this trip may now see the link between trying hard now and reaching a future they have dreamed of.

Sarah Lawrence is a Mission Graduation Advisor for students in the 8th grade.

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What We've Been Up To

- April 21st, Whitney and Carmen attended a chapel service held at **St. Mary's Episcopal School** as part of receiving a Community Fund Grant from the school. Proceeds from the student run fund will be applied towards our annual **Streets Summer Institute** programming.
- May 5th, Streets hosted a Volunteer Appreciation party for all the students and volunteers who had helped make this past semester such a great success.
- May 5-6th, Mission Graduation students and their advisors participated in a community service project at **Le Bonheur Children's Medical Center**. As a part of the service project, students worked together on several arts and crafts projects as well as performed a step routine for the kids.
- May 14th, students in the Rec Center at 430 Vance were treated to a visit by the King and Queen of **Carnival Memphis**. As a part of the visit, students received beads, candy, and were entertained by the Bovevils.
- May 28th, John took a group of middle school students to "Gospel Skate Night" at the Crystal Palace. As a part of the trip, the students were treated to a Gospel rap concert featuring **Lecrae** and others. A good time was had by all.
- May 17th, Streets, along with the **Emmanuel Center** and the **ICOC**, hosted a Baccalaureate Party for the graduating seniors of Booker T. Washington High School in the Rec Room.
- June 1, a youth group from **Independent Presbyterian Church** came to Streets to give the bleachers in the gym a good scrubbing after a hard season of basketball use.
- Throughout this years edition of Summer Institute, **Fleming / Associates / Architects, P.C.** and **Southernsun Asset Management** have volunteered to provide lunch for students enrolled in the program.
- The week of June 15th, **Sycamore View Church of Christ** came to Streets to run an Elementary VBS for students in the neighborhood.



Volunteer Appreciation: Students and Volunteers meet for pizza, fellowship, and a slide show during Volunteer Appreciation Night.



First Year: Mentor Felicia McNeil and Melvinesha enjoyed getting to know one another this past year. It was the first year for both in the program.



Pathways Mentorship: Bob Smith, a longtime Pathways mentor, spends some time with Donnie, a Booker T. Washington student.



What's Coming Up

- June 18-19th, Streets will be offering free eye exams and corrective lenses to residents in the neighborhood.
- From June 22nd through July 17th, the **Mission Graduation** staff will be hosting a Summer Enrichment Camp for students. During this time, students will engage in academic pursuits in the morning and enrichment activities in the afternoon. Highlights will include martial arts classes, dance and photography lessons, as well as a study centered around the Rwandan Holocaust through Immaculee Ilibagiza's book *Left to Tell*.
- Beginning July 27th, **First Evangelical Church's** youth group will be hosting a summer VBS at the **Highland Heights** facility. Each evening, the group will move to our downtown site to eat, clean up, and spend the night.
- Thanks to a generous donation, Streets has been able to take students to every **Memphis Redbird** homegame.
- All summer long, Monday and Tuesday nights will be Movie Night at Streets. Students from both the **Foote and Cleaborn Homes** as well as the **Highland Heights** community will be filling the Rec Room to enjoy a movie, snacks, and much needed break from the summer heat.
- In an effort to continue to be out in the community, Streets has scheduled several neighborhood events this summer including pool parties, a skating night, bowling, laser chase, and community softball and basketball games. It is a great way for Streets to engage with other ministry partners in the neighborhood as well as share with those who may have not yet come through our doors.
- Over the coming summer months, Streets will be taking over 100 elementary, middle, and high school age students to various camps all over the country. During this time, please pray for the students and their safety as many of them will be traveling great distances by bus. Please also be in prayer that God's Kingdom will be advanced as campers enjoy themselves at camp.



Head First: Fondarius, a Georgia Avenue Elementary student, shows no fear as he goes head first down the water slide ramp.



Water Day: Mosaic United Methodist Church volunteers helped run a recent "Water Day" at Streets Ministries Downtown.



Cooling Off: Students from both Georgia Avenue and Downtown Elementary enjoyed a waterslide and pizza party after VBS.