



MEDIA ADVISORY

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PRESS CONFERENCE: A Call for Equity in the Fulton County School System

The Partnership for Southern Equity will be holding a special press conference to address the treatment of students of color across metro Atlanta and Fulton County, and to sound a call to action to overhaul our student disciplinary system to provide more transparency, protections for accused students, and make way for more equitable outcomes. The press conference is scheduled as follows:

What: A Call for Equity in the Fulton County School System

When: Monday, July 31, 2023, 9:00 a.m. Eastern Time

**Where: Fulton County Schools South Learning Center
4025 Flat Shoals Road, Union City, GA 30291**

Who: Partnership for Southern Equity Staff

Why: At the onset of a new school year, it is important to raise critical questions about how many young Black men will have their promising futures derailed by an educational system that inhibits the ability to nurture their potential, and how few have support systems that can amplify and hold systems accountable for unfair and biased treatment of those often more marginalized.

For interviews or additional information, contact:

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Partnership for Southern Equity is holding a press conference to bring attention to a pressing matter concerning the treatment of students of color across metro Atlanta and Fulton County.

There has been a consistent and troubling trend among metro Atlanta schools involving school discipline and disparate outcomes for young males of color. Throughout schools across the country, young Black men are being suspended or expelled at a rate almost 3.5 times greater than Caucasian students. According to the State of Georgia's K-12 Student Discipline Dashboard, in 2021, Black students in DeKalb County, despite making up 68% of the student population, accounted for 82% of disciplinary actions. Similarly, in Atlanta Public Schools, 79% of students are Black, but account for 91% of disciplinary actions. Even more troubling, according to an investigative report by the AJC, nearly a third of all expulsions in the first half of the 2022 school year were of freshman students, raising a troubling concern regarding whether our student disciplinary process is overly punitive.

This is the case of Fulton County student, Zaire Byrd. Zaire is a member of the Partnership for Southern Equity family as a remarkable participant in our 2022 Summer Business Intensive entrepreneurship program. He has since started his own photography company and has exhibited tremendous potential and dedication to his educational and entrepreneurial endeavors as a student in Tri-Cities High School's magnet program. Unfortunately, during the 2022-2023 school year, he was unjustly expelled following an isolated incident, which was also his first disciplinary offense.

We are concerned that decisions like these happen far too frequently for our students of color and offer the potential to derail their learning experiences and disrupt their long-term economic potential. This process lacked transparency, was marred by administrative missteps, and left the family and students involved with very few protections.

Furthermore, we were dismayed at how Fulton County incentivized Zaire to enroll at their private alternative program, despite testimony and data illustrating that students who enter the alternative education program are more likely to experience negative social, educational, and economic outcomes. Exacerbating this issue has been the unprofessional treatment of the family by Tri-Cities leadership and administration, reflective of administrative oversights, significant delays, avoidance, intimidation, a refusal to meet with the family and a failure to uphold their own promises for the students involved.

This experience raises a significant question about how many young Black men, like Zaire, will have their promising futures derailed by an educational system that has not shown the ability to nurture their potential, and how few have support systems that can amplify and hold systems accountable for unfair and biased treatment of those often more marginalized.

The Partnership for Southern Equity's Just Opportunity portfolio believes that access to equitable educational opportunities with necessary support systems are critical to successful economic development. In our quest to address racial and economic disparities, and to improve Georgia's standing in economic immobility, local schools must facilitate learning experiences, inclusive of a restorative, whole child, approach and centered in equity.

The press conference is designed to provide a call to action for Fulton County and the Georgia Department of Education to overhaul our student disciplinary system to provide more transparency, protections for accused students, and make way for more equitable outcomes.