

Received: from mercury.its.state.ms.us
by governor.state.ms.us; Thu, 08 Mar 2001 09:58:57 -0600
Received: from mx1.its.state.ms.us ([192.42.4.253]) by
mercury.its.state.ms.us (Netscape Messaging Server 4.15) with
SMTP id G9VZ1500.N4Y for <governor@governor.state.ms.us>; Thu, 8
Mar 2001 09:58:17 -0600
Received: from its.state.ms.us (sun1old.its.state.ms.us [192.42.4.37])
by mx1.its.state.ms.us (8.10.0/8.10.0) with ESMTP id f28FvWq16940
for <governor@governor.state.ms.us>; Thu, 8 Mar 2001 09:57:32 -0600 (CST)
Received: (from nobody@localhost)
by its.state.ms.us (8.10.0/8.10.0) id f28Fwcj23807;
Thu, 8 Mar 2001 09:58:38 -0600 (CST)
Date: Thu, 8 Mar 2001 09:58:38 -0600 (CST)
Message-Id: <200103081558.f28Fwcj23807@its.state.ms.us>
To: governor@governor.state.ms.us
From: rin023@hotmail.com (Erin Griffith)
Subject: Comments to the Governor

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
Erin Griffith (rin023@hotmail.com) on Thursday, March 8, 2001 at 09:58:37

Issue: READ ME! Education

Street_Address: PO Box 2204

City: Silver City

State: NM

Zip_Code: 88062

Phone: (505) 388-4591

Message: I am a twenty-three year old writer attempting to give some insight into school violence. I am a survivor of "teenagers of the '90s." I am not writing this as a pretty face on a camera, or an intimidated youth afraid of what I will face tomorrow if I say what I feel.

The question that faces America today has been masked as "How do we prevent these tragedies from happening in schools?" instead of the slightly more difficult- "What is causing these events?" Media determines our thinking, thus we automatically jump to the solution without determining the cause.

The children that are creating massacres are the same profiles as those which caused a sensation ten years ago by blowing their own heads off. The symptoms have merely been focused outwards. We have learned to become adjusted to the suicides. Every highschool class today "loses a few" on the road to graduation. The reasons are simple. If you placed any adult into the same situation as many of these students with no "way out", there would probably be the same consequences. It is not about guns, would we rather they knife people in order to get attention?

Those of previous generations cannot comprehend the meaning or extent of teasing in today's world. It is not the fun-filled joshing of the old-days. During my teen years, myself and others included recieved threats of stabbings, frequent theft of personal items, threats of gang rape, constant name-calling, (including sexual slurs) and very often unreported physical violence. Unlike adults who find themselves in this situation, there is no way out. Given the social confines, and the measure of the law, these students have not merely convinced themselves of their helplessness- we have no way to help them. They cannot simply find a new workplace as adults can. Under the same circumstances, wouldn't you crack? Maybe just a little? Right now, we have failed our children by not giving them better options, just better funding.

Upon enrollment, a student is given a social sect. If in any way they try to remove themselves from that sect without being adopted by another beforehand, they will have no protection. They will be left to the wolves. (I was dumped in the mud by five guys, a week after I left the dance team) Anyone convicted of a crime has been advised to remove themselves from the situation that led to the behavior in the first place. Our highschool students do not have that option.

I was close to suicide before my parents offered me a chance at private school

l. And I had a perfect relationship with my parents. I was ecstatic to finally have another way out. This option was only available because my stepfather was retired and could volunteer at the school every day for three years to pay for the tuition (he still paid school tax, though I was not attending public school).

This is not a letter about the voucher program, however. It's deeper than that. Check the statistics on highschool drop out rates. How many have a history of being bad students? I know plenty of dropouts. The majority that I have had contact with were not bad kids; they liked school. They could not however, handle the torment. Often they obtained their GED and began taking college courses at an extremely young age. To them, dropping out of highschool was the smartest educational choice available.

Popularly Misunderstood Concepts:

Q. Why don't troubled teens talk to their school-provided counselors?

A. Because other students will see this and call them crazy.

Q. Why don't they talk to their parents?

A. Because their parents are the last people that view them as "normal teens" Why ruin that fantasy? If parents do not have the income to relocate or afford tuition to a private school they cannot do anything to help the matter besides give their teens advice in how to fit in, which will only reinforce the idea that there is something wrong with them.

Unfortunately, talking about it does not change the situation and teenagers know this.

So how do we give our youth a chance to help themselves? Vouchers are an option. Or a universal online highschool with standardized testing and curriculum for students to choose if they have reported problems. Both private school students and homeschoolers should be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities that are sponsored by public schools. This would prevent isolation.

I strongly believe that measures such as making home schooling much more accessible would relieve students of their feelings of helplessness. If a child is in an abusive home environment, we remove them from the home. Why should we not expect the same from schools? Give students a way out that does not require further stigma. Not all people are socially adept. Some never will be. Our youth need to know that it is possible to have education without negative social interaction. For too many, the two go hand in hand. Thus, child murderers are heroes among other students. They got revenge. They'll probably be tormented less in prison than in highschool. Of course students will copy this behavior. Like the threats today, at the local highschool and junior high at Silver City, N.M.

-Respectfully, Erin Griffith
PO Box 2204
Silver City, NM 88062
(505) 388-4591

P.S. A copy of this letter has also been mailed to every Senator as well as other Congressmen, Governors, and White House Representatives. (Some may call this overkill, I call it thorough)

submit: submit
