

# PRESS RELEASE

## **Forty Camden youth participate in Martin Luther King, Jr. Speech Contest at UrbanPromise**

*UrbanPromise will host ages 9-18 in 15<sup>th</sup> annual speech contest*

**Camden, NJ February 23, 2010:**

On February 23, 2010 (6:00pm) at UrbanPromise Headquarters in East Camden, UrbanPromise will host the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Speech Contest. The contest will include 40 UrbanPromise youth (ages 9-18) and an expected audience of 150. The youth are sponsored by an UrbanPromise staff member who meets with them for several weeks helping the participants write and practice their speeches.

The speech contest has had a history of students creatively expressing their own challenges in life and how they desire to make a change in the world.

Richard Gaines, UrbanPromise Academy 11<sup>th</sup> grader, will be competing for the 7 year in a row. "The contest gives me the opportunity to share with others the impact that great civil rights leaders have had on society which is so important because knowing the past prepares you for the future," says Gaines, who has won a 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 1<sup>st</sup> place trophy in previous years and hopes to take home the 1<sup>st</sup> place trophy again this year.

Rhynise Brown a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader who will be entering the 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grade division also desires to inform others on important people in history "the speech contest is not just about winning, I can tell people about Rosa Parks and MLK who stopped segregation."

Many of the winners of the speech contest have been asked to speak at churches, organizational groups, and different events. The speech contest has given these young people a platform for expressing their own ideas and values in changing society.

Johnnie, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader who attends one of two UrbanPromise AfterSchool Program's in East Camden, agrees to give us a sneak peak of the speech he will be giving on Tuesday evening. "If Dr. King's dream hadn't come true we would still have segregation today and that would be a terrible thing for mankind. If I was alive back then I think I would go crazy because I wouldn't be able to play with Jedi, Irving, Steven or Han. Jedi & Irving are Hispanic and Steven & Ham are Asian and I'm African American. They are my good friends."

Gaines explains, "I have self confidence in my ability when speaking in front of large audiences because I know I can influence them."

On February 23<sup>rd</sup> UrbanPromise youth will once again not only be sharing about great leaders but also developing into them.

To learn more about the work UrbanPromise is doing in Camden, New Jersey, visit [www.urbanpromiseusa.org](http://www.urbanpromiseusa.org)

### **About UrbanPromise**

UrbanPromise has one clear mission, to build a city of promise, one child at a time. By equipping Camden's children and young adults with the skills necessary for academic achievement and moreover, life management, UrbanPromise has grown from a tiny summer camp program to a multifaceted institution with a reputation of solidarity and success. Among their many programs are private schools for grades k-12, after school programs, summer camps, and various other recreational and educational programs, each targeting different parts of the lives of Camden's youth. Learn more about UrbanPromise at [www.urbanpromiseusa.org](http://www.urbanpromiseusa.org)

### **Available for comments or interviews:**

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### **Event Details:**

Tuesday, February 23, 2010 at 6pm  
UrbanPromise Headquarters  
3700 Rudderow Avenue  
Pennsauken, NJ 08110