

*Students' Plight for
Peace in Chicago*

*Jeremy Del Rio
(New York 2010)
Pushes Back*

*Madison, WI Students
Changing Their World*

 **ON THE
LEVEL**

Going Boldly Into Schools

BREAKTHROUGH IN THE WHITE HOUSE?

Editorial by Jeremy Del Rio, Esq., (New York 2010)

The questions started immediately after the announcement. At first, they were innocuous: "Is Betsy DeVos part of that DeVos thing you do?"

They intensified with each report of her partisanship, and crescendoed throughout the confirmation hearings. Republicans and conservative Christians mostly loved the pick and assumed my support. But many questions from friends in the cities where the nonpolitical DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative works dripped with disdain, accusation, and guilt by association.

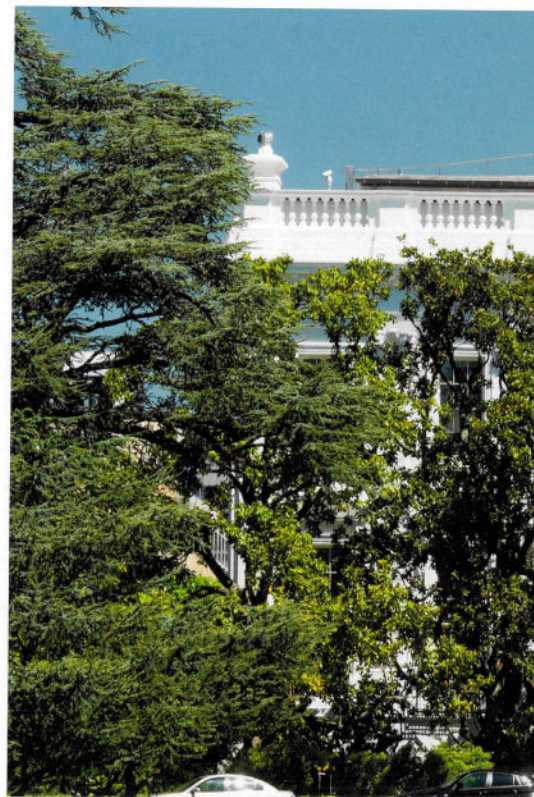
By March, the questions stopped and guilt was presumed. Rolling Stone magazine alleged a decades-long master plan to undermine public education in

"Betsy DeVos' Holy War." They offered DVULI as evidence of the supposed conspiracy, and named me, as a DVULI graduate, and the nonprofit I lead, Thrive Collective, as proof that it was working long before her appointment. They called our arts and mentoring programs a "pretense" for churches to "evangelize" public schools.

Not once did anyone from the magazine speak to me or even reach out for comment. Later, Rolling Stone published a retraction, and an extended response online.

Some DVULI alumni are wondering how to remain loyal to the Initiative while engaging and perhaps resisting a Betsy DeVos-led public education system.

"Let's build together where we can, and disagree strongly but respectfully where we cannot. Then, in both circumstances, the country wins."



Could it be that the values and skills we learned at DVULI offer a path forward?

As alumni, we are uniquely called and empowered to be an interdependent, national network of community youth development practitioners with a shared vision for systems change, to leverage our relationships and scenario plan for education reform that produces accountable breakthrough for the young people we serve.

That may sound like a mouthful, but for graduates of the DeVos



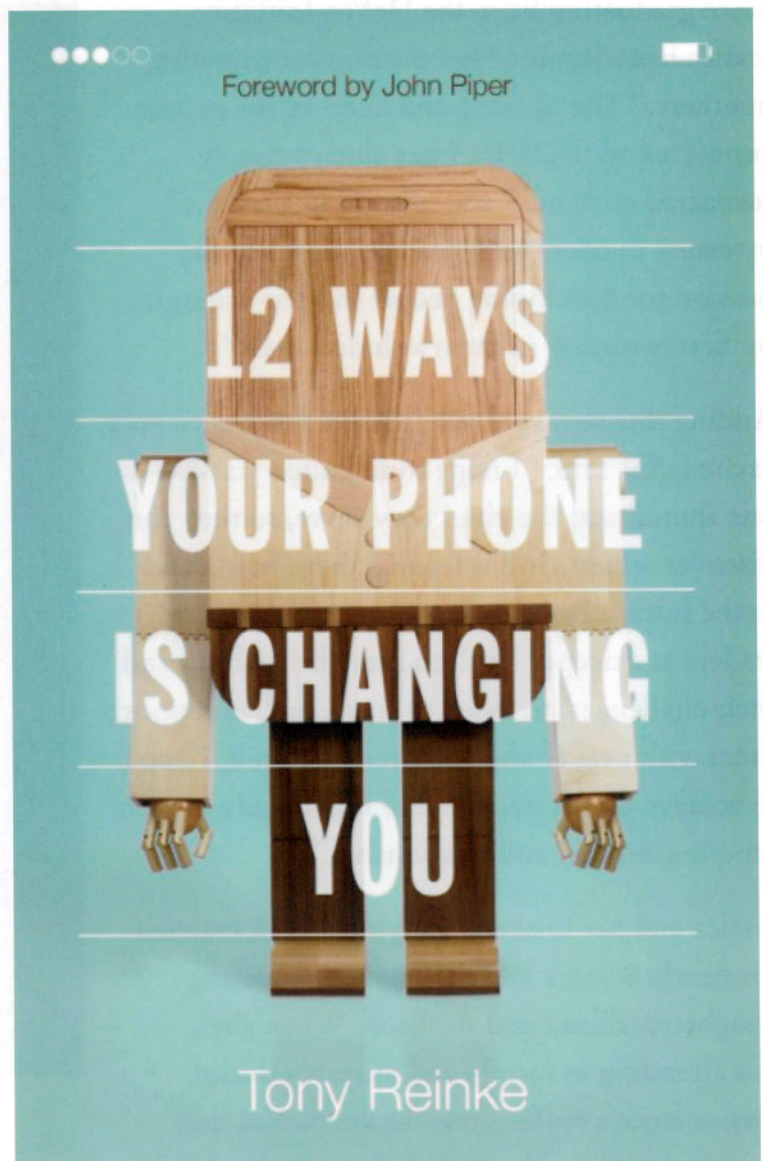
12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You

Resource recommendation by Ron Carter

It's our constant companion. It's typically right beside us when we go to sleep at night and right there to greet us every morning. It even accompanies us to the restroom. This constant companion is none other than our smartphone. Since the release of the first iPhone in 2007, followed by the Android in 2008, smartphones have totally revolutionized the way we orient our daily lives. With these portable, hand-held computers we now have instant access to information, news, people, television programming, video games and music...all with the touch of a finger. But at what cost? In other words, is there a downside to all this "instant availability"?

Journalist Tony Reinke seeks to answer this question in his recently released book, *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*. But the book isn't an attack against the evils of smartphones. Rather, Reinke's goal is to challenge readers to "cultivate wise thinking and healthy habits in the digital age, encouraging us to maximize the many blessings, avoid the various pitfalls, and wisely wield the most powerful gadget of human connection ever *unleashed*." The twelve ways identified by Reinke include; being addicted to distraction, ignoring our flesh and blood, craving immediate approval, losing our literacy, feeding on (what Reinke calls) "the produced", becoming like what we "like", getting lonely, becoming comfortable in secret vices, and more. Get the book and discover the rest for yourself.

This resource can be purchased at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



Introducing Jessica Taylor

by Jonathan Wilson

Jessica Taylor (Portland 2013) has recently joined the DVULI team of liaisons. Jessica has been assigned to local follow up and alumni relations in Portland and Seattle-Tacoma. For the past 13 years, Jessica has done urban ministry work in the Portland, Oregon area. Her ministry focuses on counseling and coaching youth to help them identify their calling and challenging them to develop their own relationship with Christ.

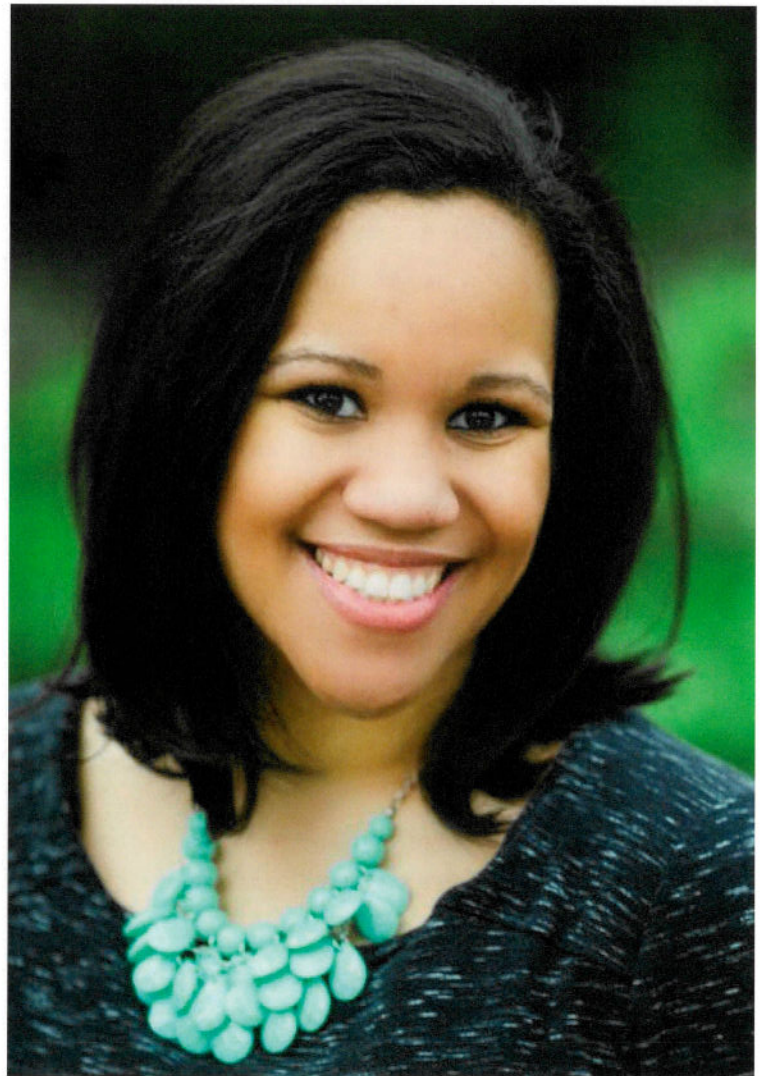
Since graduating from the DeVos Initiative, Jessica has continued her passion for investing in others. “The mission and heart of the people connected with DVULI has always deeply resonated with me,” she says. “The model of investing in committed leaders speaks to my passion for developing people in their callings, by first investing in them as individuals.”

Adding this new role as a Liaison has Jessica very excited. She said, “I hope to reignite a passion in our alumni and the cities they serve, so they can discover where God is leading them now and in the future. I am hoping to get to know our leaders at a deeper level, to hear their stories and their challenges, to listen to them, and to support them with prayer and resources. Overall, I hope to achieve God’s mission and His agenda in each unique situation and relationship.”

Jessica and her husband Eric have been married for nearly 8 years and they have two young daughters, Eliana and Addison. When she’s not attending to family and ministry duties, Jessica enjoys coffee, non-fiction books, and bargain hunting. She seeks balance in her life by “intentionally enjoying life with her husband.”

They are big fans of comedy and love spending time with friends.

You can congratulate Jessica on her new role at jessicat@dvuli.org.





Urban Leadership Initiative, every word harmonizes in the sweet symphonic sound of possibility. We can make it so if we:

1. Remain grateful. We all knew going through DVULI that everything about the Initiative was a gift: the process, training content, social networks, first class hospitality, and so much more. We were thankful then; now even more after harvesting the fruit of the experience.
2. Practice what we preach. One of the hallmarks of Workshop One requires us to climb off the ladder of inference so we can move from debate to dialogue and find common ground around difficult life and community issues. We preach respect for people who think, believe, and live differently than we do. These next four years will provide ample opportunities to model civility in public life.
3. Seize our unique leverage and

breakthrough potential. The fact that a Republican President would appoint outspoken Republicans like Betsy DeVos to cabinet level positions comes as no surprise. Among all the activists President Trump could have selected for the Department of Education, he chose someone who has helped empower grassroots, urban youth workers for two decades with deep social networks and meaningful training around leadership and systems thinking. That history suggests Secretary DeVos may be open to dialogue in ways that may not seem obvious from her record as an advocate.

4. Engage respectfully and with strength. This is not a time to disengage. Regardless of Mrs. DeVos' politics, she comes across as sincere and principled in her convictions. From our experience with the team she helped resource at DVULI, I suspect she is someone with whom people could disagree agreeably and still find common ground to get

meaningful work done. Time will tell if that proves to be the case.

Let's build together where we can, and disagree strongly but respectfully where we cannot. Then, in both circumstances, the country wins.

Jeremy Del Rio, Esq., was the NY City Coordinator in 2010, and has taught Leverage and Breakthrough at NC1 since 2011. ThriveCollective.org

See the Rolling Stone issue featuring the referenced article at: <http://www.thrivecollective.org/2017/04/05/dishonorable-mention-rolling-stone/>

Got an opinion about subject matter impacting your work as an urban youth leader?

*Email: staff@dvuli.org
Attn: Alumni Push Back*

Keeping Peace Alive in Chicago

by Gerald Bell

The city of Chicago is its own unique brand. Even if mainstream media outlets see it as a hotspot for reporting annual homicide rates, that news hasn't ended the life of one of America's most alive and happening cities.

Tiffany Childress Price (Chicago 2002) has been a science teacher there for more than ten years. She works at North Lawndale College Preparatory (NLCP) in North Lawndale, a neighborhood very familiar with the hard times and crime Chicago has suffered in recent years. Fortunately, Childress Price has outlasted many faculty who, after two or three years, move on from the school for numerous reasons – burnout being chief among them.

That Gerald Smith (Chicago 2000) and Marcus Thorne (Chicago 2007) also work at the same school, is perhaps a contribution to Childress Price's staying power. The three are fellow DeVos Urban Leadership alumni who know something about the value of working interdependently. Childress Price, Smith, and Thorne have put what they have learned to work as co-leaders of Peace Warriors, an effort that educates the faculty, staff and students at NLCP about how to resolve conflict in a non-violent way.

“When a student comes into our school as a freshman they go through a mandatory training about the tenets of non-violence,” explained Childress

Price. “They learn about the Civil Rights Movement and how Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders used non-violence to change laws in America. Then they are tasked to train other students how to resolve conflict without fighting.”

Every student at NLCP is given the opportunity to become what's known as a Peace Warrior. It requires additional training and deeper involvement at a leadership level, but many students have found the initiative a fit for what they want in a school culture. Peace Warriors, Smith said, “is not a program” in as much as it is “a philosophy and part of the makeup of the school, and how a person should conduct themselves.”

restore their relationship with one another. They are taught about consequences for their actions and required to write an apology letter to each other and to the school. Those letters are read aloud by the students over the PA system to show personal responsibility of the students and to communicate to the school at-large a willingness to work and restore where they have caused harm.

Once a month a party is thrown for a select classroom of Smith's choosing. Any student in that class who has demonstrated unacceptable or violent behavior is not permitted to attend the party. Also, the Peace Warriors celebrate every student's birthday throughout the school year by



DVULI alumni Gerald Smith (Chicago 2002) (far left), Tiffany Childress Price (Chicago 2002) (third from left), and Marcus Thorne (far right) pose with youth participants of the Peace Warrior program at North Lawndale College Prep.

Peace Warriors has several components beyond the non-violence training. Should a fight take place between students, the parties involved are required to spend a full day together to

giving the student a gift to make them feel valued. Smith also came up with a component that expresses compassion when a NLCP student has suffered the

loss of a loved one and presents a condolence package from the Peace Warriors. According to Childress Price, NLCP has a population of 750 students and more than 250 of them, in a single school year, will face grieving the deaths of either family members or close friends – a lot of which is due to gun violence.

“Our school celebrates peace,” said Smith. “We don’t have armed police officers around here or a punitive system where students feel like they are going to jail when they do wrong. We’ve committed to prepare students for college and in order to do that there are positive things that need to be part of their education experience.”

Like any other school, NLCP is not a place of perfection, and Thorne, who serves as the school’s Dean of Restorative Justice, assumes responsibility for administering disciplinary actions when needed. “I spend a significant amount of time redirecting students and trying to help them embrace reconciliation,” explains Thorne. “I want my students to recognize their power. Too many of them are sent to me and they come playing the victim role. They deny, they internalize, they minimize what’s happened. I try to get them to understand the power that they have is self-control.”

While he couldn’t offer documented data, Thorne says anecdotally he is seeing less recidivism of students with behavioral challenges in his office. He admits there are some he calls “frequent flyers” that he

must confront or correct almost every day. But he is encouraged about the impact of his work and that of the Peace Warriors is having among the student body.

Childress Price shares the story of a 2011 graduate who was a known fighter and popular basketball player during his time at NLCP. He was called Grand Daddy by the students because of his temper and reputation for initiating or participating in fights. Childress Price said after he went through the Peace Warriors’ training he just truly laid the fighting down. She recalls, “There was one incident

“We don’t have armed police officers around here or a punitive system where students feel like they are going to jail when they do wrong.”

at a basketball game when a fight broke out on the court. Normally [Grand Daddy] would have jumped right in, but he said to himself, ‘non-violence is the principle of non-violence.’ And he started pulling kids off other people.”

There is a transformation among NLCP’s students that Childress Price, Smith and Thorne agree is noticeable and energizing. “So many of my students are doing exceptionally well it’s hard to single out one or two,” says Smith, whose office wall bears 8x10 framed photos of numerous students that have excelled academically and as Peace Warriors.

“I have such a heart for our kids,” offers Childress Price. “But I have to say you feel the

gutting away of family here. You feel how families are changing and becoming less empathetic. You feel the effects of every neighborhood and how the violence is taking our humanity from us – like it’s not even sad anymore.”

Childress Price, Smith, and Thorne are hopeful for increased partnerships to support their work at NLCP. “If we don’t share this burden, there is only so much [a person] can give,” Childress Price laments. “There are teachers all over America who have no idea what it means to have lost a student to gun

violence. It’s foreign to them. It does threaten my career in terms of how long I can do this.”

In 2019, the Peace Warriors will celebrate ten years of shaping and instilling non-violence in their school culture. To date, one in four NLCP students are considered ambassadors for peace. While such news may not make headlines, who can deny that it’s a valid contribution to what makes the Windy City a unique and alive American city.

Gerald Smith and Tiffany Childress Price are members of the DVULI Chicago class of 2002 and Marcus Thorne the Chicago class of 2007. All three are on staff with North Lawndale College Prep High School, they are leaders of the Peace Warriors program that operates on the school’s campus.

Change Leaders Changing Their Story

by Kristen Pearson and Gerald Bell

Todd Hipke (Phoenix 2000) had always felt called to community work. When he first got started 20 years ago in Phoenix, AZ he taught in public schools and worked at local community centers. As a teacher, coach, and counselor, Hipke daily confronted the typical at-risk

disagreed with some districts waiting until a child reaches preadolescence or teen years to start addressing the downward spiral they were experiencing as middle and high school students. His contention was that students in his community needed supportive programs in

settling in their new community Hipke discovered that there were residents who struggled with the same issues they saw in Phoenix.

Therefore, he launched World of Change Leaders, Inc. (WOCL). Similar to what was started in Phoenix, but with some refining, Hipke shaped WOCL with the



World of Change Leaders, Inc. seizing every opportunity to empower students and prevent unhealthy influences from attracting their attention.

challenges associated with youth living in disadvantaged conditions (gang activity, poor academic performance, and families in crisis).

It didn't take long for Hipke to become turned off by what seemed to be an oversight in a system where limited resources were being made available to elementary-aged students. He

elementary grades, and in many cases sooner, if they were to successfully thrive.

In 2001, Hipke and his family relocated from Phoenix to Chicago so that he and his wife could pursue higher education. With the same passion and calling for youth, in late 2002, the Hipkes made one more move to the Madison, WI area. After

goal to change the narrative being told about students in the south central community of Madison. He met families there who had relocated from Chicago, hoping to escape gang life and dwell in a safer community. Sadly, those same families admitted that the hardships followed them to their new neighborhood – as many ex-Chicagoans settled in the same areas.

With a focus on students in elementary school, WOCL offers a positive support system that takes a more preventive – rather than interventive – approach to helping kids achieve academically at high levels. The program was first piloted in Phoenix and focused on training teenagers to become role models and positive influences to elementary students. Hipke believed the teens could learn to be positive examples to the younger students and show them how education is the key to a brighter future. In addition, Hipke was convinced you could change the community where disadvantaged youth reside if you help them change their story.

“If I could educate teens to understand leadership, service, and the struggles within the family, [they] could become a free resource to schools, and after school programs,” said Hipke. “They could be role models for the elementary students who would be excited to listen to [them].”

Even in the face of budget cuts and other constraints, Hipke says he has never stopped believing in the teen volunteers at WOCL and their ability to make positive changes in their lives by helping others coming behind them.

At WOCL, teens enroll in a one semester 100-hour class where they focus not only on leadership and being a role model, but also address issues of racism and other real-life struggles.

“We care very much about battling racism by looking at the content of one’s character versus the color of one’s skin,” said

Hipke citing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s I Have a Dream speech. “I strongly believe that so much of racism is tied to the racial isolation of people groups. If we don’t step outside our people group, our perceptions of others will always be formed by family,

“A lot of our kids are going to be the first person in their family to go to college.”

friends, and what media tells us to believe of others.”

Throughout the WOCL training, diversity and changing the story of racism continues to be addressed along with leadership content. After the first month, teens start visiting elementary schools to tutor and mentor younger students who are having academic difficulties and or struggling with behavioral issues.

By the end of the semester, the teens who demonstrate the skill and enjoyment for teaching and mentoring are given the opportunity to enroll in additional semesters and continue through their senior year of high school.

WOCL has programming in every elementary school in the Stoughton School District outside of Madison. There is measurable growth and sustainability being realized as faculty and administrators are seeing impressive results among students. Community partnerships have been formed to create support systems for under-performing students as well as their families.


“Ninety percent of students from 2003 to present say this is the best [training] they have ever taken, and it’s not because of me,” Hipke says. “It’s because young people don’t get to hear good, positive stories in today’s society, and they long for them.”

Many educators and parents may agree with Hipke when he says that too many of the major rap music artists and pro athletes that don’t go to college have influence on children at an early age. And if education is to be valued, that message must reach disadvantaged students before the struggles with school begin.

“A lot of our kids are going to be the first person in their family to go to college,” said Hipke. “They’re now a role model in their community and within their own families. They’re changing the story. The impact on the high school students is immediate. I have had parents tell me their child is a different person (in how they view life) within the first month.”

Todd Hipke is a 2000 Phoenix graduate of the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative. He is the Director of World of Change Leaders, Inc. (worldofchangeleaders.com), and lives in south central Wisconsin. He declined to be pictured with this article so the students he serves could be the focus of any notoriety.

Alumni Updates

 For more, visit:
facebook.com/dvuli



Juan Garcia (Newark 2014) has released a book titled *The Men's Struggle Cycle*.

Gabby Hurt (San Francisco Bay Area 2015) and Mateo Alzate (Dallas 2015) were married on April 22, 2017.

LaShon Tilmon (Los Angeles 2005) recently received the Employee of the Quarter Award from the Rialto Unified School District Board of Education.

Carlos Perez (Newark 2016) and Madalyn welcomed Sebastian Logan Perez on November 17, 2016.

Valerie Wimms (Pittsburgh 2012) is the new Director of Children, Youth, and Young Adults at South Euclid United Church of Christ in the greater Cleveland area.

Chip Pagel (St. Louis 2017) and his wife Angie are the happy parents of a new baby girl. Jubilee Marie Pagel, was born on March 18, 2017.

Zach Chike (St. Louis 2017) and his wife Jennifer are excited to introduce Cameron Zipporah Chike, who was born on April 15, 2017.

Justin Murrell (Pittsburgh 2013) was honored with an "I do" from Candice Williams on March 18, 2017.

Kevin Gilmore (Columbus 2015) was selected by the National AfterSchool Association (NAA) as a Next Generation of AfterSchool 2017 honoree.

Karlos Cobham (Boston 2017) and his wife Sheré are excited to introduce Shekinah Cobham, who was born on May 3, 2017.

Karin Wall (Boston 2000) has published the book, *Is It Morning Yet?*.

