



PHILADELPHIA

FEDERATION of TEACHERS

Jerry T. Jordan, President
AFT Town Hall on Gun Violence
December 15, 2021

Good evening, I'm Jerry Jordan, President of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. Thank you Randi for hosting this important town hall this evening. But let me say this, the fact that this town hall is necessary should upset all of us. Because it means that as a society, **we still haven't gotten it right**. We still have shirked out collective responsibility to protect our children, our neighbors, and our communities.

I'm joined today with some really remarkable advocates and people, each of whom has experienced tragedies that I wish I could say were unthinkable. But the fact is, what they have endured is not unthinkable in our society. **Because we have allowed it.**

To my co-panelists **Abbey**, **Fred**, and my fellow Philadelphian **Destiny**: I'm honored to be here with you, but I wish it weren't necessary.

I'd like to talk for a couple of minutes about the gun violence crisis that is tormenting my beloved city right now. I've lived in, and loved, Philadelphia my whole life. I graduated from West Philadelphia High School, and I've spent my career working towards a better, more equitable tomorrow.

And what I've seen unfold this year simply breaks my heart.

In 2021 alone, as of Monday, there have been **529** homicides. That number should shake every one of us to our core.

In the last several weeks, here are just *some* of the lives we have lost:

- **Samir Jefferson**, Age 14, was waiting for the bus in broad daylight, when he was shot 18 times.
- **Kanye Davis**, Age 16, was ambushed and killed after being shot 8 times.
- **Marcus Stokes**, Age 13, was walking to school and never arrived at his seventh grade classroom.
- **Samuel Collington**, Age 21, was gunned down in an attempted robbery.

- **Sykea Patterson**, Age 24, was walking with her young twins in broad daylight when she was gunned down.
- **Jessica Covington**, Age 32, was 7 months pregnant, and was returning home and unloading gifts from her baby shower when she was slain.

I don't have all the solutions. But I do know this: **if we continue to reject our collective responsibilities, we will continue to lose family, friends, students, and community members.**

And we also know this: we need more resources in schools. We need social emotional learning; we need social workers; and we need more school counselors.

These resources will not be a panacea. But we need a comprehensive, community based strategy to address the crisis of violence, and a key element of that must be equitable investment in public education.

Thank you again Randi, Destiny, Abbey, and Fred for your leadership in the days past and the days ahead.