

William Kellibrew, Violence Survivor Sleeps Out for Peace

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What's Up with That Brother?

Distressed from living in a whirlwind of violence, William Kellibrew plans Tuesday night Sleep Outs to bring attention to violence and call for a registry to expose violent criminals



William Kellibrew Sleeps Out for Peace

Washington, D.C. – William Kellibrew had tucked away the gruesome memory of seeing of his mother and brother shot to death when he was 10-years-old. A wintry chill no longer reminded him of the bitter sting of metal pressing against his forehead when his mother's ex-boyfriend stuck a gun to his head that tragic day. And, William rarely thought about witnessing his grandfather, overwhelmed by grief from the brutal double murder, shoot his neighbor the next day.

William is a survivor. After years of counseling and mentoring, rather than turn to anger and violence, he learned to mask his pain by overachieving. At 34-years-old William has overcome and accomplished a lot.

Everything changed two weeks ago when William's god-sister and lifelong friend, Tiffany Gates, was stabbed to death as she pleaded for help with a 911 operator. Gates' death resurrected the horror of his mother's violent murder. Like Gates, William's mother, Jacqueline

Kellibrew, also dated a man with a violent past. She met her killer within one month of his parole after serving 11 1/2 years for murder and rape.

William says he was paralyzed by anger and pain when first notified that violence had taken another loved one. "But, my spirit told me not to wallow in grief. I didn't know what to do, but I had to do something for my god-sister, for me and every other victim and survivor of violence," he said.

"I am so tired of living in a whirlwind of violence. I need to scream out to America ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. In the sixties they sat down when blacks were oppressed by others. Now, we're oppressing ourselves, so I decided to lay down for peace," William adds.

On Tuesday William neatly placed a couple of warm blankets and a homemade sign on the freezing ground and snuggled up in front of the John A. Wilson Building for the first of his weekly "Victims and Survivors for Peace Sleep Outs." The Wilson building houses the office of the Mayor of D.C. and is named after John A. Wilson, a Chair of the D.C. Council who committed suicide in 1993.

"Thank goodness people heard about the Sleep Out in the media because I was not prepared for the freeze that night. I was fed up and determined, but not prepared," William said. "Kind, thoughtful people came by during the night to show support. They brought food, soup, snacks and even chairs to sit in. I will be more prepared for the cold next week."

Every Tuesday night William will hold a Sleep Out at a different government building in DC hoping to bring much needed attention to the issue of violence in America, and urge the public to support a registry of domestic abusers so convicted offenders cannot hide their violent past from innocent people. The next Sleep Out will be held Tuesday, Dec. 9, at the D.C. Superior Court on 500 Indiana Avenue, N.W.

The response to the first Sleep Out has been remarkable. William said he is receiving calls from people who want to help, and people in violent situations who need help. He has formed a coalition of individuals and organizations to support him in his efforts, including: the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCBCP), Black Women's Roundtable, Black Youth Vote, R.O.O.T. (Reaching Out to Others Together), Hip Hop 4 Humanity, After The Trauma, A Mother's Heart, and the National Center for Victims of Crimes. Delores Mae Jones, a domestic violence survivor; Dr. Margaret Moore, former Director of D.C. Department of Corrections; Lisa "Too Fierce" Foster, champion boxer and survivor of child abuse; and Bev Smith, host of American Urban Radio Networks, "The Bev Smith Show," also pledged their support.

Melanie L. Campbell, executive director and CEO of NCBCP said, "With all of the tragedy in his life, it is by the grace of God that this young man is still standing and not wreaking havoc on the community. Violence is a priority issue for the National Coalition's Black Women's Roundtable and we support William 100 percent."

William, a national coordinator for the NCBCP's Black Youth Vote, adds, "It's time to send a message that we will not continue to allow violent criminals to hold our community hostage.

Tiffany was a vibrant 33-year-old daughter, sister, and friend to many, ruthlessly stabbed to death in her own apartment while U.S. Marshals stood outside. The country should be outraged by this and other acts of violence that permeate our society.”

To join the coalition or for location information contact Brandon Wallace at 202.271.7409 or email at wallace.motley (at) gmail.com. Follow Williams blog – <http://kellibrew.blogspot.com/>

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