

**Russell Dickerson, Jr. Statement
at ACLU of Washington Press Conference
December 7, 2010**

Russell Dickerson, Jr. is the father of plaintiff Russell Dickerson III.

Today, we have filed a lawsuit against the Aberdeen School District in Aberdeen, Washington. After six years of turmoil, worry and grief, we have decided that as stakeholders and concerned parents it is the responsible thing to do.

The Aberdeen School District has to be held accountable for its actions and inactions. We have placed our children, our biggest investment, in the care of the District. The District has not only failed our children, they have also failed students and parents. Every parent should be concerned when our children are in the care of a school district where there is no accountability.

Going to middle school and high school is supposed to be a memorable experience, something that we can cherish as we grow into adults. It's not supposed to be the worst time in your life. When students are allowed to dictate the culture of an entire school District, then there is a problem that has to be addressed immediately. The district has taken for granted the effort that we and many parents have taken to teach our children to be respectful, honest and hard-working.

This lawsuit is to bring about change in the culture of the district. A culture that is supportive of diversity or difference. Teachers have to really listen and care when students come to them with concerns. Understand your students and realize that each one is an individual and treat them as such.

The Administration has to listen to parents when they bring concerns to them, not just brush them aside. Administrators are supposed to understand the parents' concerns regarding their children and show true empathy; not only that, but follow through and take action. They also need to understand that each parent and their children are individuals. Our children are our future. Shouldn't we all want the best for them?

The damage that has been done to my son is irreparable, because the school district did not take seriously the concerns that were brought before them. Hopefully, this lawsuit will prevent other parents and children from going through what my family and I have been through the past six years.