

**Statement of Russell Dickerson III  
at ACLU of Washington Press Conference  
Dec. 7, 2010**

I am speaking today to make known my trying experiences I've had in six years in middle and high school.

Little did I know I would face the magnitude of trouble that I'm looking back on today. I didn't expect bad experiences when I walked through the doors my first day of middle school. It was like a prison sentence that carried on into high school.

Unlike the typical reasons of not wanting to go to school—homework, tests, due dates—I found myself dreading school because I did not know how I was going to be physically harassed, racially harassed, or sexually harassed that day, or by whom. The thought of being called a “faggot” or the “N word.” Being touched in very uncomfortable ways by other people. I was diagnosed with high blood pressure and post-traumatic stress disorder at the age of 14, not something a teenager should experience.

Despite performing fairly well in school, because I do not give up, I felt as if I have not reached my full potential. I've decided to attend further schooling that isn't campus-based due to the fear of it carrying over and continuing, even though I would likely not face the same people that had made my six years excruciatingly difficult. In that itself, I found that I became distrusting of other people. Despite being told that I would be in a different setting, with different people, I was very distrusting of going miles away to the unknown, because I did not want to risk experiencing the experiences I had over again.

I hope that this brings about change for future students in the state of Washington, and perhaps outside of Washington as well, that may face the same systematic harassment that I endured over the past six years. It is disheartening to hear, almost daily, that someone else has become a victim of school harassment, for whatever reason. I am hopeful that another vocal story will bring about change.