Ron Anderson Asked to Be a Panelist at Dallas Conference

At the request of the Woodson Center, I was asked to be a part of a panel at the Old Parkland Conference in Dallas in May. The inspiration for this gathering came from the economist Thomas Sowell, who organized the Fairmont Conference (originally called the Black Alternatives Conference) in 1980, bringing together a distinguished collection of individuals who thought about racial inequality in a different way. The organizers of this conference in Dallas stated that they “believe another such conversation is desperately needed in these polarizing times, and we selected a diverse group of public intellectuals, academics, journalists, and practitioners to reassess the conventional approaches to racial disparities and to offer their own insights on how best to create more opportunities for the social and economic advancement of all Americans.”

Conference organizers included Glenn Lowry, Jason Riley, Ian Rowe, and Shelby Steele.
I was part of a panel discussion called "Success On The Ground: How Local Leaders Are Reshaping Hearts, Minds, and Communities." I was joined by Sylvia Bennett-Stone, Jon Ponder, and Bettye Tyler, and we were asked to share the lessons we have learned from operating successful organizations in communities across the country.

It was an honor to be invited to participate in a conference with such an august group of thinkers, policymakers, and practitioners.
Kevin Briley, CEO of Ascend Education, visited Project Reclaim recently in order to present us with the 2022 Gold Medal Award (our first award was in 2020). The Gold Medal Award was established in 2010 to honor the schools or districts that best demonstrate a dedication to ensuring that all students become successful at math. The strategies employed by this year’s Gold Medal honorees made use of Ascend Math, an online individualized math instructional resource, to address unfinished learning, accelerate math learning and outpace growth targets.

In his submission for Project Reclaim of Minden, Math Instructor Ryan Lattier wrote, “Students have gained a higher interest in engaging and are continuing to perform at or above grade level expectations.”

“Congratulations to Project Reclaim of Minden students for the perseverance and hard work that led to their exceptional results,” said Kevin Briley, CEO of Ascend Education. “We are extremely proud of the important job the educators at Project Reclaim of Minden are doing to help their students succeed in math, gain confidence, and positively advance in life.”

He continued, "this year we have heard countless ways in which schools have addressed unfinished learning using Ascend Math. These educators reported grade-level growth, improved test scores, and many other positive touch points and outcomes. We are so thankful for our Gold Medal schools, what they are doing to support their students, and the ways they have shared their models to help other educators accelerate math learning."

Project Reclaim of Minden will be featured on the Ascend Math website throughout the next year and received a plaque commemorating its success. The complete honor roll can be viewed at https://ascendmath.com/ascend-math-gold-medal-2022/
Members of our Youth Leadership Council were recently given an assignment: write a mini-grant to support a program that they would like to provide to the other Project Reclaim participants. This activity was designed to help to reinforce their research and writing skills. Utilizing a format presented by the Executive Director, they developed a curriculum that will assist the other participants in learning about careers in Culinary Arts, Graphic Design, and Engineering. The $500.00 that was approved for this mini-grant will go towards meals, participant incentives, and items of appreciation to the presenting guests. Congratulations to our young leaders: Matthew Anderson, Angel Stewart, and Sha’Myracle Stewart for a job well done!

Zikerrion Baker, a former Project Reclaim participant and outstanding player for the Minden High School Crimson Tide, recently visited our participants to share the story of his success. He is now a cum laude graduate of Ole Miss University. He spoke with the participants about persevering, not letting other people limit what you think of your own potential, and the importance of education. We are very proud of Mr. Baker, and we look forward to having him visit us again very soon.
Hi! my name is Saniya Kemp. I have been a participant in Project Reclaim for a couple of months now. I am a Pepstepper at Webster Junior High School. Project Reclaim is a Leadership Academy that teaches you how to become a better student, leader, and citizen. They also help you with your homework and they give you tutoring. Project Reclaim has helped me a lot. I say this because before I started coming here I was not very sociable. I was also very shy. Most importantly though, it has helped me become a better person in general.

Hi! My name is Harmoni’ Lard. I have been a participant in Project Reclaim since sixth grade. I am now going to the seventh grade. I cheer and run track. Project Reclaim is a good place to go to if you want to be a leader. Project Reclaim helped me to be the person that I am today. Project Reclaim is more than a Leadership Academy, they help me with my work when needed. This program has helped me a lot.

Project Reclaim also provides help with our homework and tutoring. My growth level has been good as well. I say this because at first my grades didn’t look the best. Since being in this program my grades are now A’s and B’s. On the other hand, this program has helped me to be successful and become a better citizen.
My name is T’Kaya Flournoy. I have been a part of Project Reclaim since 2009 when I was in high school. I was one of the students that the teachers said, “had potential, but didn’t want to do any work.” I used to always get put out of class because I didn’t listen to what my teachers said. I was going through a lot that was going on in my household. Somedays I wanted to run away, somedays I wanted to go to school to get away from home, and some days I just didn’t want to be here at all.

When I started Project Reclaim, I had to go every Wednesday. They would take me out of class. I was so happy to get out of class because that meant I didn’t have to do any work. As the Wednesdays went by, Mr. Anderson talked to us about him coming from where he came from, what he had to go through, and where he is now. To me that message meant if he can do that and come from all that, so can I. He helped me so much. I was a shy person, scared to speak in front of multiple people. When he invited me to come work for him after so many sessions, I saw growth within myself. I’m no longer scared to speak for myself. My past doesn’t define me. What I went through will not hold me back from what I need to do for myself.

I say this to let people know that no matter what you’re going through or have been through, there are people that are willing to help you through anything. You just have to be willing to help yourself. That’s what Project Reclaim, the students I was once working with, and Mr. Anderson showed me.
Interview subjects for the Project Reclaim podcasts.

Speakers for our Youth Leadership Academy sessions.

Tutors in math and language.

Service learning projects.

We will be reaching out for help in the following areas:

- Interview subjects for the Project Reclaim podcasts.
- Speakers for our Youth Leadership Academy sessions.
- Tutors in math and language.
- Service learning projects.