



Ministerial Statement

By

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Minister of National Security

Truth Be Told: Youth Rise Against the Violence – A Movement Begins

June 27th, 2025

Mr. Speaker, I rise today with pride, gratitude, and hopefulness, to share with this Honourable House and the wider Bermuda community the profound and inspiring event held earlier this month on June 10th, titled “Truth Be Told: Youth Rise Against the Violence.”

Mr. Speaker, this spectacular and moving event featured teams from five (5) schools across Bermuda who have been working for the last several weeks on anti-violence messages; work that culminated in those teenagers making powerful presentations to a large audience at Pier 6 on Front Street. This event was attended by some of my Cabinet colleagues, Permanent Secretaries, school teachers, students and a throng of parents. The positive energy throughout the building was palpable and captivating, particularly because of the authenticity and profoundness of the teenage presenters.

Mr. Speaker, this event, hosted by the Ministry of National Security, was not merely an assembly or ceremony. It was a moment of truth, courage,

and transformation. It marked a major inflection point in our national conversation about violence, one led convincingly by our young people.

Mr. Speaker, "Truth Be Told" forms part of our Government's broader National Violence Reduction Strategy, and specifically, our Stop the Violence Campaign, which aims to confront the root causes of violence through awareness, education, and direct community engagement.

Mr. Speaker, the event's purpose was clear: to create a meaningful platform for Bermuda's youth to express their voices authentically on the harsh realities they encounter. It posed a challenging question to our society: what happens when we stop speaking *for* our youth and instead listen intently to their voices and hear their stories? On that night, **Mr. Speaker**, we witnessed a compelling and inspiring answer.

Mr. Speaker, over the past several months, students from CedarBridge Academy, Bermuda Institute, Mount Saint Agnes Academy, The Berkeley Institute, and Success Academy boldly chose to be part of the solution to the violence affecting their lives and communities, becoming active participants and leaders in this critical conversation.

Mr. Speaker, each of these five (5) schools created original, student-led media campaigns that explored some of Bermuda's most challenging social issues. With boldness, creativity, and remarkably disarming honesty, they addressed:

- Snitch Culture – Bermuda Institute’s campaign, "Unlocked," bravely tackled the harmful silence that allows gang violence to persist, emphasizing that real strength lies in protecting one's community through speaking out when they know something related to a violent incident. They poignantly told the audience that “we can’t heal unless people tell the truth” and that “silence has not made us safer.”
- Mental Health – CedarBridge Academy’s "The War Within," explored the profound connection between violence and mental and emotional trauma, highlighting the necessity of acknowledging pain and promoting emotional healing and well-being. They told us to “talk before it turns toxic” and that “violence is a scream for help.”
- Youth Stabbings – Berkeley Institute's "One Knife, One Moment, One Chance," exposed the brutal consequences of carrying weapons, urging young people to choose life-affirming paths over impulsive actions. These students told the audience that they had “seen things they should not have had to see” and asked the profound and provocative question “what does the future look like if we do nothing?” Part of their slogan was “a Sharp Choice of Peace”, a fitting pun for knife-related violence in our community.
- The Ripple Effect of Violence – Mount Saint Agnes Academy’s campaign, "The Aftershock,” passionately portrayed how acts of violence deeply impact and hurt families, schools, and entire

communities, calling on everyone to help break the cycle. They refreshingly and honestly affirmed that violence was not just a public-school problem and that it is indeed an “everybody” problem; and stated that violence in our community is not the Bermuda they deserve.

- Gang Recruitment – Success Academy, through their campaign, "Still I Rise," explored why young people feel drawn toward gang affiliation, urging understanding and systemic change to effectively address the root causes of this problem. During this presentation, we were told that the “youth do not just speak, they carry voices” and that our youth need “more consistent father figures.”

Mr. Speaker, these campaigns, created alongside Bermuda’s talented videographers and artists, including Ra’ees Tankard, Dion Greene, Marq Rodriguez, Kyle Hamilton, and Jayde Gibbons, were raw, moving, and unforgettable. They offered a mirror to our society, challenging us to reflect deeply on the state of our community and our collective responsibility for change.

Each of these presentations, **Mr. Speaker**, merits celebration and recognition. Each student who took part demonstrated immense courage and leadership by being a part of this project. They turned their pain into power, their experiences into messages, and their voices into catalysts for lasting change.

Mr. Speaker, allow me now to recognize and celebrate the remarkable students who were honoured on Tuesday night for their outstanding contributions to this powerful movement.

The “Voice of Change Award” celebrated students who bravely and authentically raised their voices to address difficult truths about community violence. Their honesty, valor, and ability to speak forcefully yet vulnerably helped spark meaningful reflections and deeper understanding in our community.

Recipients of the Voice of Change Award were:

- Giana Romeo of Mount Saint Agnes Academy
- Jayden Belboda-Ravenau of The Berkeley Institute
- Cezinee Cox of The Berkeley Institute

Mr. Speaker, the “Creative Vision Award” recognized students who showed exceptional creativity, originality, and artistic leadership. These students played key roles in visually expressing their campaign messages, demonstrating strong design direction, symbolic storytelling, and an imaginative approach that captured the depth and seriousness of their messages.

Recipients of the Creative Vision Award were:

- Jayce Fough of The Berkeley Institute
- Kamaya Lynch-Wade of Mount Saint Agnes Academy
- Kacia Barnett of The Bermuda Institute

The “Impact in Action Award” is a team award celebrating the school campaign judged to have the greatest potential to inspire real-world change in Bermuda. Judged live by a panel using criteria such as clarity of message, creativity, community relevance, and delivery; the Impact in Action Award was awarded to the students of The Berkeley Institute for their exceptional campaign, "One Knife, One Moment, One Chance."

Mr. Speaker, each of these young awardees, and indeed all participants, have shown exemplary commitment and character. While we recognize these outstanding achievements, it is vital to reiterate that every student who participated is a winner. Each one of them is a young leader in our community and their bravery in confronting uncomfortable truths should inspire us all.

Mr. Speaker, I extend special thanks to our dedicated sponsors: One Communications, MS Reinsurance, and Nspire Bermuda. Their generosity and genuine commitment to youth empowerment made this initiative possible and we sincerely applaud them for supporting such a momentous and meaningful programme.

Mr. Speaker, our gratitude also extends to the dedicated educators at each school, as well as the passionate members of our Gang Violence Reduction Team, led by Bishop Leroy Bean, and including Darren Woods, Bishop Lynn Landy, and Cadre Smith. Their guidance and tireless work provided the safe space these students needed to flourish during this project.

Our distinguished panelists Gavin Smith, Deneca Zuill, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Lamb, and Kristen White, provided thoughtful reflections and unwavering support that enhanced the significance and reach of the students' messages.

Mr. Speaker, the "Truth Be Told" event is just the beginning of an important movement in Bermuda; a movement led by our youth and supported by us all. The campaigns presented will soon be widely accessible on social media platforms, including YouTube, Instagram (@stoptheviolencebda), and our dedicated website (www.stoptheviolencebda.com). I implore everyone to engage with these youth-led campaigns, reflect on their messages, and turn their calls for change into action.

This summer, we will partner with young people to co-develop five advisory lessons focused on the core campaign themes: youth violence, truth-telling, mental health, peer pressure, and healing. By embedding Truth Be Told into classrooms, we are ensuring that the movement lives on through meaningful dialogue, youth leadership, and lasting cultural change.

Mr. Speaker, these campaigns mark the beginning of an ongoing, youth-led movement that will continue to grow, educate, and transform the culture of silence into one of courage, truth, and healing. Bermuda's young people have spoken clearly: the violence impacting their lives is not theirs alone to solve. It is ours collectively. The change for which they

are advocating requires each of us to take responsibility, to step out of the shadows of silence, and into the light of active participation.

In closing, **Mr. Speaker**, let us honor these courageous young people by ensuring that “Truth be Told” is not merely a powerful moment, but a lasting movement, and a commitment to a safer, more compassionate, healthy and just Bermuda.

Because, **Mr. Speaker**, when our youth rise, we must rise with them.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.