

# ***Empowerment Summit*** **Youth in City Detention Center Explore Life-changing Resources**

By Alan King  
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In his motivational message, Dr. Andre Bundley, director of Extended Learning Programs for Baltimore City Public Schools, recently challenged more than 150 youths languishing in detention centers to stay fit for the "righteous fight" by making decisions to strive to become better men and women.

"What makes it righteous is having a standard to which you subscribe to that you look at, and that you deal with everyday," Bundley said in his keynote address. "Most men and women, in order to move forward, they have to have a standard that guides them and serves as their compass."

Bundley's remarks came at the 2nd Annual Youth Empowerment and Awareness Summit held at the Baltimore City Detention Center, or BCDC, on East Eager Street in Baltimore.

The summit grew out of focus groups that the Family League of Baltimore City (FLBC) conducted inside the BCDC at the end of 2007. The league discovered the youth division did not have enough community-based resources, and not a lot of people in the community -- even on the city and state level -- knew that this population of young people existed.

"We also learned that they

[detained youths] were apathetic -- just did not have a lot of hope; and really felt like their lives, as they were, was the best it was going to get," said Mischa Toland, the league's community development coordinator.

The organization's Baltimore City Disproportionate Minority Contact Reduction Initiative teamed up with the Division of Pretrial Detention and Services' (DPDS) Juvenile Program and the Eager Street Academy School #370 to organize an annual conference where representatives of various programs -- including family therapy, educational opportunities and drug abuse treatment -- would go inside the BCDC to do presentations and hand out brochures to detainees. The summit also included guest speakers and three 30-minute break-out sessions.

In one of the sessions, Robert Murphy, dropout prevention specialist for the state Department of Education, discussed the key to decision-making.

"You've got to plan more. You can't just go half-hazardly through life," Murphy told a group of young men, nodding knowingly to his message. "Unfortunately...a lot of young people go through life [that way] and it ends up biting them in the behind."

That message resonated with Corey, who's awaiting trial for

attempted murder.

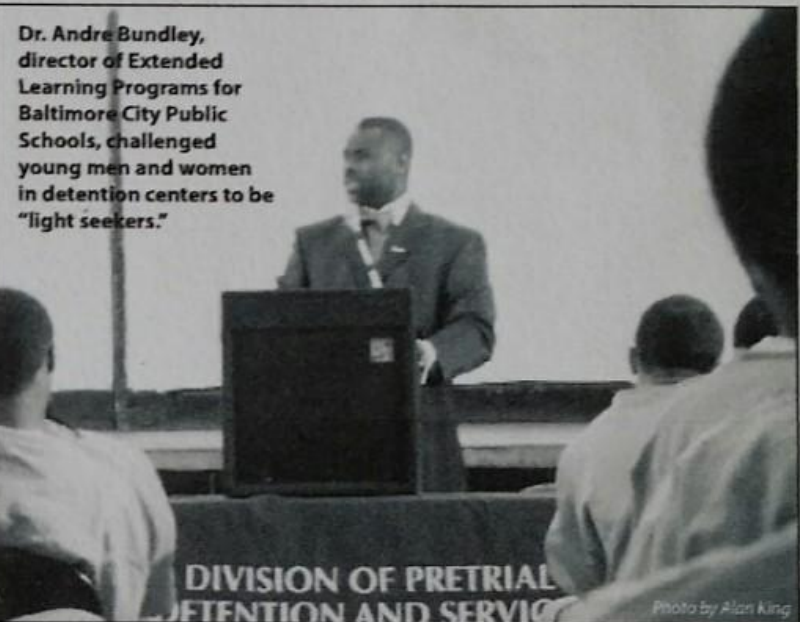
"You really got to know what you want out of life; be ready to go after your goals," the 17-year-old said. About the challenges outside, he added, "Most of us need a guide...just somebody that's really there for us."

The BCDC, a pretrial detention facility for any person committed or transferred to the custody of the Commissioner of Pretrial Detention and Services, averages more than 3,000 detainees daily (20,000 annually).

To ensure help for people like Corey, Department of Juvenile Services Secretary Donald DeVore said his department has case managers in the facility to track the youths.

"What we want to know is that when they leave this facility that they have supervision plans, treatment plans...opportunities for jobs," DeVore said. "It's the idea of sharing that information with them and preparing them to access."

Additional support comes from DPDS's juvenile service program that includes the Eager Street Academy, a public school inside the detention center that's staffed with



**Dr. Andre Bundley, director of Extended Learning Programs for Baltimore City Public Schools, challenged young men and women in detention centers to be "light seekers."**

faculty from the city's public school system.

"A lot of these young people would not be in school [if they were out of here], but because they're here they're in school, and they're going to school daily," said Howard Ray Jr., commissioner of DPDS, which is under the state Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. Of the summit, he added, "Seeing people come in and taking some interest in them, it helps in terms of their behavior while they're here as well."

During his speech, Bundley led the youths in a call-and-response: "Minute by minute..." ("Minute by minute..."), "hour by hour..." ("hour by hour..."), "if truth is light..." ("if truth is light..."), "then knowledge is power." ("then knowledge is power.")

And discovering that power would require them finding their internal compass, Bundley noted.

"There are many of you who don't see the light, yet," he said. "You've got to have that compass that gives you direction."