

# INSPIRED LIKE YOU

Meet teens just like you who are doing amazing things. Read their stories and be inspired to change the world and achieve *your* dreams!

## “I’M SPEAKING UP TO END VIOLENCE.”

Fighting, drugs, gunshots—this is reality for many inner-city teens. But Gerron, 14, won’t let his surroundings define him.

By GERRON MOSS as told to JANE BIANCHI

**W**hen I’m walking home from school, I wish I could let my mind wander to a football play I’m trying to remember, or the Drake song I’m listening to. Usually, though, I’m too busy watching my back—or wondering if my video-game system will still be there when I walk inside my house.

This is what it’s like to grow up in the Lindsay Heights neighborhood of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I’ve seen corner stores robbed by teenagers. I’ve seen people beaten on the street. I’ve seen a guy shoot at someone out of his car window. I’ve had my house robbed three times. I’m sick of it!

Poverty makes a lot of people do **desperate** things,

but kids and teens shouldn’t have to worry about getting caught in cross fire. It needs to stop.

### FINDING A SAFE SPACE

Lindsay Heights is what you’d call an inner-city neighborhood. The houses are run-down or boarded up, the streets are dirty, and there’s graffiti everywhere. Some people are in gangs, and most

people can’t afford cars or even bus fare. My mom and my older sister both work to support our family, and I’m applying for jobs, but money is still tight.

Since seventh grade (I’m a sophomore now), I’ve found a safe **haven** at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee after school. Someone told me that they had a football team, so that’s why I started going. But once I joined the club, the people there

started to feel like family to me. It’s so nice to know that I can go in and talk to them about anything that is bothering me.

One day, in the fall of 2013, a senior program manager at the club, La’Ketta, heard us all talking about how frustrated we were by the violence. She had a great idea. La’Ketta said: “Why don’t we make a documentary about it?” She found people to teach



I’ve never broken the law, but sometimes people make assumptions about me just by looking at me. I wish they could see me in my suit from the premiere!



JEAN-MARC GIBOUX/GETTY IMAGES (GERRON MOSS)

COURTESY OF FAMILY (MOSS IN SUIT)



La'Ketta gives me the best advice.

## FEELING THE IMPACT

Since the premiere, I've seen so many new faces at the Boys & Girls Club, which means that our message got through to some parents—more kids at the club means fewer kids on the street getting into trouble. But that's not the only effect. We've gotten calls from people across the country who want to show our movie too!



Editing video footage

This experience has taught me that you don't have to be an adult to make change. You don't need to live in a certain neighborhood or be an

us how to use video equipment, and then we interviewed community leaders, like pastors and firefighters. We talked about why the violence is happening, how it is affecting our neighborhood, and what we can do to put an end to it. We called it *Can You Hear Us Now?*

## OUR BIG PREMIERE

The buzz for the film got so big that we were able to premiere it at a real theater—in front of a sold-out crowd of about 1,000 people! I rocked a blue shirt with a shiny white vest and a bow-tie, and I got my hair touched up at a salon. We even arrived in a limo and walked on a red carpet!

I felt like a celebrity. The local TV news channel interviewed me, which made my heart race. And in the Q&A session after the movie, this 5-year-old boy went up to the microphone and asked, "How can I be more like you?" It was the sweetest thing ever.



Mom and me—I hope she's proud!



Interviewing Pastor Marlon Lock



All dressed up for the premiere

"The best part is that the film touched a lot of people and made them think."

elected official either. You can get up one day and decide to make the world a better place. You might feel timid, but trust me: You have more power than you think.

## 3 THINGS GERRON WANTS YOU TO KNOW

1

### Follow the Golden Rule.

If you want respect, it's important to treat others with respect. Be kind to another person if you want him or her to be kind to you.

2

### Let it out.

When I'm frustrated, I vent in my journal. It's like a friend that never lies. It always tells the truth about what's going on in my life.

3

### Seek support.

See if there's a Boys & Girls Club near you at BGCA.org, or ask a school counselor for help finding a local after-school program.

## GERRON'S FAVORITE THINGS ★★★★★



► **MOVIE:** I like *The Karate Kid* with **Jaden Smith**. It's cool how his character transforms his life.

► **FOOD:** I always ask my mom to get me **shrimp** that's sautéed in butter and garlic. It's delicious!



DEREK JETER

▼ **CELEB:** I read a book about **Derek Jeter** that said he was always the first one at practice and the last to leave. He did what needed to be done, even when no one was looking.



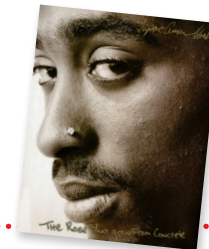
► **TV:** I like to watch *Scandal* and *Graceland*. *Graceland* is crazy! It's about cops that come together to work on cases. There are lies and confessions and love stories—it's got a lot of great action too.



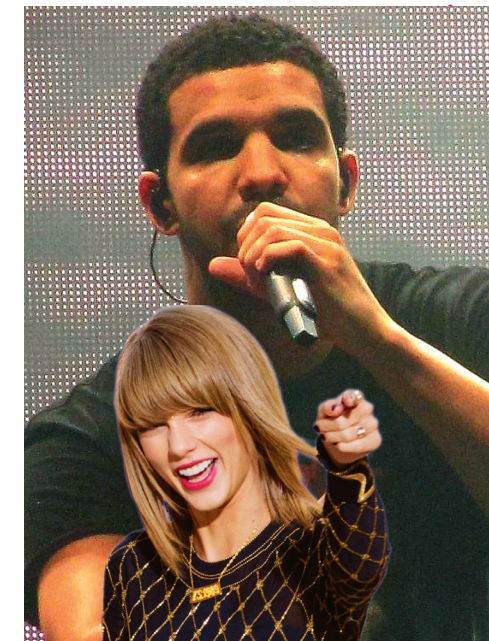
GERRON'S FACE HERE

◀ **DREAM JOB:** I'd love to become a pro athlete, but I also like to think about sitting in an office and **running a big company** someday. I'd love to come to work in a suit and tie and make stuff happen. Maybe I can be a CEO!

► **BOOK:** The late rapper **Tupac Shakur** wrote a cool book of poetry called *The Rose That Grew From Concrete*. We read it together at the Boys & Girls Club.



► **MUSIC:** Listening to music soothes me. When I'm feeling stressed, I'll sit in my room and listen to **Drake**, **Taylor Swift**, and One Direction.



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