



**“Dear Young People” Call to Action Excerpt  
by Nakia Johnson, FPWA Program Manager, Training & Development**

*Dear Young People,*

*Dear Leaders of now, today, tomorrow, and many tomorrows to come!*

*You are powerful! You are social change makers! You are advocates!*

*This year’s YEM cohorts began in Queens on February 20th and closed in Brooklyn just yesterday on April 5th. During that time, so much has happened in the world—none of it coincidence. While in Queens, we commemorated the 53<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the death of Malcolm X. While in Brooklyn, just this Wednesday, we commemorated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. Just recently, young people, sharing your very ages, spoke eloquently at the March for Our Lives, proving the power that young people hold in these very times.*

*During both YEM cohorts, we discussed, and sometimes discovered, the stories of change-makers like Kalief Browder and Claudette Colvin. We dissected the injustices of the criminal justice system, organizations like ALEC, and current news. We said their names: Saheed Vassell and Stephon Clark. **We said their names: Saheed Vassell and Stephon Clark.***

*Think about the campaigns that you created during YEM, addressing issues like youth homelessness and food justice and improvement to school lunch programs—all of these bright ideas, talents, and input shared in the span of four, short days. Then, take a moment to think about your futures and when compared to what was accomplished in four, short days, how limitless the possibilities are.*

*If there are days (and there will be those types of days—those moments) when you’re doubting what you can do and questioning what you can achieve, days when external voices question what you are capable of and who you think you are for doing what you’re setting out to do, in those moments, I ask you to (to quote a wise friend of mine) make the distinction between being deserving and being worthy. As humans, we are imperfect—perfectly imperfect—to be exact. We all make mistakes and will, at times, feel less than deserving. There is NEVER, however, a time when we are not worthy. We are always, ALWAYS worthy. You are worthy!*

*Dear Young People. YOU—yes, you, and you, and you, and you, all of you, are powerful, brilliant, and worthy ADVOCATES! You can change the world, and in me, in us, you have supporters and allies.*

*We can’t wait to see ALL THAT YOU WILL DO!*