

Project For Effective Discipline

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Press Release
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SENATOR FEDERICA WILSON AND PROJECT FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE ANNOUNCE “SPANKOUT DAY 2006”, OPPOSING CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN

Miami - April 28, 2006 - Parents and teachers are uniting with officials in demanding the end of corporal punishment of children on SpankOut Day 2006, a national day of action. Recently, public outcry over the death of Martin Lee Anderson at a boot camp in Bay County, Florida has been a flashpoint for opponents of institutionalized corporal punishment. SpankOut Day supporters claim that Anderson's death, allegedly caused by a fatal beating, demonstrates consequences such punishment may lead to. According to the Department of Education, the number of incidents of corporal punishment for the 2004-2005 Florida school year is 7819. It is still used in 41 of the state's 67 counties.

Senator Wilson, a featured speaker, has been vocal on the issue. Last week she attended a Tallahassee student sit-in opposing the state's response to the death of Anderson, and the use of corporal punishment in correctional boot camps. "These facilities have taken advantage of our young black men," she says. "They use choke holds to make them say 'yes Sir' or 'no Sir'. Our children have no voice."

Betsy Kaplan, the former Dade-County School Board member and staunch advocate for children's welfare, will speak on the issue this Sunday. "I feel that corporal punishment is legalized child abuse. Furthermore, it is violent and sets a standard of violence." In the 1980's, Kaplan testified before the state Congress attempting to make corporal punishment illegal, and feels that the receptive attitude in Dade County will achieve this goal.

According to organizers, such mobilization is long overdue. "After thirty years of going before the legislature children are still getting hit," says Project for Effective Discipline founder Shaloma Shawmut-Lessener. "Hitting a child is the worst betrayal an adult can commit."

The SpankOut Day 2006 press conference will be held at 4 p.m. on Sunday April 30th, at Books and Books of Coral Gables, located at 265 Aragon Avenue. Non-violent discipline strategies will be taught by experts, and legislative tactics will be presented by officials. Additional speakers include former Representative Roberta Fox, former Representative Cindy Lerner, and local ACLU Executive Director Howard Simon. The "Hands aren't for Hitting Art and Creative Writing Contest for Kids" will be announced, which will feature exciting prizes and a chance for children to display their work. Press and the public are invited to attend this free event.

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