

April 12, 2017

Dear Friend,

***“I was locked up and mad at the world. I thought my life was over. I thought I did not have another chance.”***

Second chances are critical in restoring hope. Second and even third chances allow the young and old to reclaim dreams and courageously tread the often difficult process of prevailing and living life to the fullest.

Equan has reclaimed his dreams and the Chicago Urban League is assisting him in his journey. For too long, he had been deterred from pursuing the endeavors that countless youth in more fortunate circumstances would naturally pursue. It was his community environment, the peer pressure and the instability of his family home that did not allow him to see an alternative. At the age of 13, Equan joined a gang and later this decision influenced him to drop out of high school. As the years passed, his involvement in the streets only deepened. One spring day in 2016, he was arrested for unlawful possession of a weapon. He served a three-month sentence in the Cook County Correctional Facility and it was in that dim place that his eyes were opened when his counselor referred him to the League.

***“I was ready to give up on life.”***

Upon being released, 19 year old Equan was burdened with the limitations of wearing an electronic monitoring bracelet. Yet, as soon as he called the League, he felt reassured. The staff in our *Opportunity Works Youth Jobs Initiative* made all the necessary calls to obtain court travel authorization for Equan’s commute to the League for a GED enrollment information session and to participate in several job interviews. Today, Equan is hopeful about his future and appreciates the opportunities that have become available, including his first part-time job at McDonalds and having a support group at the League. To continue our work with Equan, *Opportunity Works Youth Jobs Initiative* staff will help him develop short and long-term goals to complete his GED, pursue an associate’s degree and eventually become a motivational speaker.

***“Now, I just want a positive life and positive people around me. If I stay with positive people, I can be all that I can be. The League is helping me keep on the right path – they call me to make sure I am good.”***

As one of the bedrocks in the City of Chicago, the League is addressing social system break-downs through advocacy and research as well as providing program services, leadership development, and career and entrepreneurship training to approximately 10,000 African Americans from distressed Chicago neighborhoods every year.

Partner with and invest in the League to help more individuals, like Equan, through exceptional guidance, coaching, and linking them to the work experience they need to secure good careers in adulthood. **Your gift, regardless of the size, will do much good.** On behalf of the League’s Board of Directors, staff and volunteers, I thank you sincerely for your financial support and commitment to this important work.

Together, we are making a better Chicago!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Shari Runner'.

Shari Runner  
President and CEO

**P.S.** Double your impact! Ask your employer if they have a matching gift program or visit our giving page at [www.matchinggifts.com/TheChicagoUrbanLeague](http://www.matchinggifts.com/TheChicagoUrbanLeague).