



NEWS AND POLITICS

Teen Activist Kenidra Woods Organized the Hope for Humanity Project Rally in St. Louis

“If we can conquer division, we can conquer anything.”

By **Taylor Crumpton**

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[Kenidra Woods](#) is no stranger to activism — she’s been at it since she was 13. And last weekend, she launched the first-ever [Hope for Humanity Project: National Rally for Peace](#), an event that took place in her hometown, St. Louis.

The now 17-year-old, who previously appeared on *Teen Vogue*’s [gun control cover](#),



founded the Hope for Humanity Project, and organized the June 30 rally in response to the ongoing [gun violence](#) issues her community faces. “Pain in my community and all over the nation inspired me to organize this rally,” she tells *Teen Vogue*. “I felt so sad, and then bringing people together immediately came to mind.”

At the event, attendees heard from individuals with experiences of gun violence through various art forms, such as storytelling and songs, and the people those stories came from were intentionally diverse. The Hope for Humanity Project was founded on an [intersectional](#) framework that highlights shared issues — such as sexual abuse and immigration — impacting those in the community. That was reflected in Saturday’s group of speakers, including Congressional candidate Cori



Bush; Heather Taylor, president of the [Ethical Society of Police](#); Madi Tierney, an advocate for sexual assault victims; and Becky Morgan, a leader for [Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America](#). “I decided on an intersectional approach because everyone deserves to be heard,” Kenidra says. “I know what it feels like to feel ignored, insignificant, or like no one’s listening. Every person is unique and we all have stories that someone needs to hear in this world as a source of hope.”

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While the speakers Kenidra chose may come from different backgrounds and walks of life, she noted that the one thing they share with each other (and with her) is the decision to “choose love over hate and humans over race.”

Kenidra and her friend Grace Eikel, another St. Louis activist, addressed race in their speech entitled, “I’m white, I’m black.” “Why is it that whites are on the front lines for gun violence, but when my black brothers are gunned down in the streets by racist police, most of them hold their silence?” Kenidra asked in her speech.

[Black teens](#) have long advocated for progress on the issue of gun violence in their communities, but are rarely seen in mainstream media

coverage on the issue. Kenidra is working to change that. “It feels so good to have black voices elevated in this discussion, considering it affects us daily,” she says. “We feel like we matter, as we should. It also shows our white counterparts that it’s OK to pass the mic, because we all deserve to have it.”

“We are always stronger together, so if we can conquer division, we can conquer anything,” Kenidra says. “I want to be a part of the conquering.” In terms of what that means for the future of the gun violence movement, she stresses the importance of advocating around the issues of [sexual assault](#), [mental illness](#), [self-harm](#), [domestic abuse](#), and [women's empowerment](#).

In the meantime, the Hope for Humanity Project: National Rally for Peace created a [space](#) for individuals to share their

experiences of gun violence with each other and begin to build a movement from the emotional pain they shared. “The overall event was emotional after hearing so many heart-wrenching but inspiring stories,” Kenidra says. “I felt very overjoyed to see everyone still standing and still pushing forward with their activism, despite many hardships faced. It’s also so refreshing to know that I am not alone in this fight.”

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