

## STUDENT PHOTOGRAPHERS' ROLE IN THE PENNSYLVANIA EDUCATION FUNDING REFORM CAMPAIGN

In 2008 Critical Exposure, a DC-based non-profit, worked with the students of Youth United for Change in Philadelphia and with students from two high schools in Western Pennsylvania. Students learned basic techniques of photography and took pictures depicting inequalities in their schools.

Student photos were exhibited in Philadelphia's City Hall, in a major downtown shopping area in Philadelphia, and in the Pennsylvania State House in Harrisburg, where a reception and rally were held. In addition the campaign created a YouTube video and materials for legislators, all of which featured students' photos in order to illustrate the blatant inequities in the Pennsylvania school system.

*"I had something as small as a camera, but to me it meant so much more. The opportunity to take pictures was my first time to finally be heard, not only by my friends and family, but by the media and public. Being part of this program I learned that even the smallest thing such as the camera, can give you power and you need to use it in a way that benefits you and your society."*

– Christina, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade, Philadelphia

Student photographers helped the Education Law Center and Good Schools Pennsylvania to win a landmark victory: **the Pennsylvania state legislature increased education funding by \$275 million and changed the way it distributes education funding in order to benefit underserved schools.**

According to Baruch Kintisch, one of the campaign's lead organizers, **"Without [photographs], student voices would not have been heard in the same way. They inspired and taught us how to help students express their voices and helped us become much more focused on the power of students speaking for themselves, visually through photography and through their writing. Our campaign would definitely not have been as successful without their work."**



"OUT OF ORDER"

Ken (11th Grade), Sto-Rox School District

"I took this photo to depict the state of despair that parts of our school are in. Although we are used to visuals such as this in our school, they affect our thoughts daily. We feel as though we do not deserve better. Therefore, we are less inclined to strive for better."



"OVERCROWDED GYM CLASS"

Dorales (11th Grade), Edison H.S., Philadelphia

*"Every student deserves to go to a high quality school because we are the future of the world. We deserve to come to school and not have to worry about the conditions we learn in."* - Julia (10th Grade), Sto-Rox School District.

### Make your Voice Heard!

*Through Your Lens* is a national student photography contest to raise awareness about the importance of healthy school buildings and safe learning environments for all students and teachers.