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October 15, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to submit this letter of support to Mr. John Richie and Scrub Brush Productions, LLC and the production of their documentary film, *Murder Through the Eyes of a Child*.

The impact of Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent failure of the federal levees placed a national spotlight on New Orleans and exposed the poverty and deprivation of many of its residents. On August 29, 2005, the very day the levees broke, the Census Bureau released a report on poverty in the nation, finding that Orleans Parish had a poverty rate of 23.2 percent, seventh highest among 290 large U.S. counties. So long before the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans' social infrastructure was failing. New Orleans public schools were some of the worst in the country, shackled with child poverty, crime, high drop-out rates and low test scores. While disheartening enough, many of these young people were exposed to violence, addictions and illegal activities a part of their everyday lives; violence tied to poverty and educational failure.

New Orleans continues to lead the nation in its murder rate with the vast majority of perpetrators and victims being black males under the age of 25. The impact of this violence spreads far into our community. Combined with our failing school system, many - if not most - of our young people have very little opportunity for success. With violence and death surrounding them, many do not dare to envision a future.

Since Hurricane Katrina, we have a duty and opportunity to make the city's social infrastructure stronger and more equitable than it was before. While great strides have been taken in recovery, Orleans Parish is still struggling, and the ongoing consequences of Katrina are particularly acute for adolescents, who are especially vulnerable to trauma.

Many of us in the community are working hard to right the social wrongs that plague our city. Liberty's Kitchen is a nonprofit providing at-risk youth employability skills training through our food service-based operations. Our mission is dedicated to transforming the lives of New Orleans youth by providing a path to self-sufficiency.

But in one the most violent cities in the country, actually the world, this is sometimes a daunting task. At the end of each day, our students return to their neighborhoods, often fearful. We recently had one of our students endure the shooting s of three of his closest friends within the span of one week. These were all separate incidents and one young man was fatally wounded. The impact on our student was profound and for a brief time, we thought we might lose him completely to his despair. This scenario is played over and over again in our city on an almost daily basis.

All of us at Liberty's Kitchen fully support the film and strongly believe that the message that it so convincingly conveys must be told. We can no longer afford to ignore our children - children who are affected by violence every day of their lives. This is not violence resulting from war, but violence on the streets of an American city, violence killing our young people and killing the hopes and dreams of those they leave behind.

Sincerely,


Janet Gorence Davas
Executive Director
Liberty's Kitchen, Inc.