

Distinguished Members of the Forum, Esteemed Delegates, and Champions of Justice,

I sit before you today as a descendant of a people whose resilience shaped nations and whose pain still lingers in systems that have not yet been dismantled.

In the USSouth, where I live and work, Mississippi to be exact, corporal punishment isn't just legal—it's alive and well. Imagine this: a young girl in school being told to bend over, beaten with a long wooden board wrapped in duct tape to make every blow hit harder. The words "Mr. Feel Good" scribbled across it like a sick joke, while a 200-pound man uses all of his force to strike her on the butt all because her uniform shirt was untucked. And it's not a crime, it's policy. It's still happening. It's still legal & deeply rooted in a legacy of violence.

Of the 17 U.S. states where corporal punishment in schools is still legal, the vast majority are in the South. These are the same states that once held tightly to the institution of slavery, resisted civil rights, and bore the fruit of lynching trees.

We must ask ourselves: why does corporal punishment persist most in the places where Black bodies were historically dehumanized and brutalized? Why is violence against our children still seen as discipline—when it echoes the tools of the oppressor and oppression once used to control our ancestors? And why black girls are 6 times more likely to receive corporal punishment than their counterparts.

Corporal punishment and violence against our youth breeds a nation of leaderless citizens—conditioned to obey, too afraid to resist, and too wounded to rise against a system that still presses its knee on our necks. It is a violent response to behavior when what our children truly need is understanding, protection, and love.

"Spare the rod, spoil the child"—that's what they say. But here's what they forget: the shepherd never beat the sheep. He used the rod to guide them, not to break them. He didn't punish them into obedience—he led them with care, with intention. He made sure they were safe, headed in the right direction.

Our young people are suffering—and not because they're missing punishment, but because they're missing protection. Missing peace. Missing parents who've had the space to heal their own wounds. Our children are not problems to be fixed with belts, switches or paddles. They are whole humans, deserving of the same grace and gentleness white children are given without question.

It's time to take our hands off their backs and put them on their hearts. On their dreams. On the hurt they don't yet have words for. Our children don't need more pain. They need a village. They need love wrapped in structure. They need US whole.

As we head towards the international day of action to end Corporal punishment on April 30, Let this forum be a place where we call for global accountability. One where girls don't have to go into schools afraid of being subjected to violence against their growing bodies. A global call for an end to state sanctioned violence. Let us challenge the normalization of harm in the name of discipline. Let us say clearly: our children deserve freedom—not just from poverty and injustice, but from pain inflicted by the very hands that should nurture them.

The fight for liberation includes our youngest girls. It's time we protect them, nurture them, guide them like the future depends on it—because it does.

Thank you.