

To the Springfield school committee:

May I first say how grateful I am for your service to our nation's children. It is a cause I share in with you, and I am always honored to speak among you. I am writing, as you might have guessed, to address the recent controversy that some of you find in my book, *The Other Wes Moore*.

Of course, as this book is an autobiography of my life, I perhaps come with some bias, but I hope you see at the same time why this story is so essential to share. I believe that the truth, even in its ugly moments, offers a valuable lesson. On the rare occasion, I have heard objections to the content of *The Other Wes Moore*, as some people criticize that the story is at times hard and certainly not what we hope for our children to live in, but the fact stands that this story is true to life, not only for me and the other Wes, but for countless people like the students in your district and millions across America, growing up with the struggles of a tough neighborhood or single parent homes.

Even if these students don't read or talk about my story in school, I'm sure many of them would recognize the streets I grew up on. I meet with young people across the country and discuss the story of my life and of the other Wes', and I am constantly touched to see so many of my readers feel they know the people in this book personally, because for that rare moment, they are truly open to considering these lessons.

For many of my readers, hearing a story about someone like them - someone who struggled growing up in a family like theirs, on streets like theirs - resonates more powerfully for them than reading about people and places they couldn't envision. For that very reason, I think it all the more important to bring *The Other Wes Moore* into schools and offer students a healthy space to discuss this. To talk about even the dark realities of my story and their own lives in the presence of their peers and caring teachers can be a powerful way to help them think of how they might make choices when caught in difficult times. And what better time to begin considering their futures than at the age of 13 and 14?

Naturally there is a time and place for everything, but I implore you to consider how these students might benefit from beginning to rethink their paths now, to benefit from the perspectives of those who have lived through it - and suffered for it, before it's too late.

The Other Wes Moore is not a book about crime, drugs, or gratuitous violence for entertainment's sake; it is a story of how two boys grew up and made choices to become the men they are today. It is the truth of my life and of so many people in America today. We all have an obligation to share such stories and to consider the importance of teaching personal responsibility to our children.

Please feel free to reach out to me personally if you would like to discuss this. I thank you for considering my thoughts.

My best,

Wes

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