



JUSTICE FOR ROMY PRESS CONFERENCE

Friday, May 14, 2021

Time: 7:30 a.m.

Location: P.S. 361

1957 Nostrand Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11210

On Friday, May 7th, 12-year old **Romy Vilsaint** lost his life after a series of attacks and bullying at school. He was sent home to die. No reports. Nothing.

Join the Vilsaint Family, Elected Officials, Advocates, and Supporters as we demand #Justice4Romy!

Romy Vilsaint (Source: Vilsaint family)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Sabrina L. Rezzy

718-940-0428

rezzys@nyassembly.gov

Justice for Romy Vilsaint Press Conference

(Brooklyn, NY) -- On Friday, May 14th at 7:30 a.m., **Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn, and Council Member Farah N. Louis** are holding a press conference with the **Vilsaint family** to demand an independent investigation following the death of

12-year-old **Romy Vilsaint**, after an ethnic bullying incident and attack at PS 361 East Flatbush Early Childhood School. The press conference will be located at 1957 Nostrand Avenue, Brooklyn, NY, 11210.



Photo Credit: Vilsaint Family; Picture of Romy Vilsaint

Leaders including Assemblymember **Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn**, Council Member **Farah Louis**, Assemblymember and Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislative Chair **Michaëlle Solages**, Assemblymember **Kimberly Jean-Pierre**, Assemblymember **Mathylde Frontus**, and District Leader **Josue Pierre** shared the following statements in support of the Vilsaint family.

"Romy Vilsaint should be with us today," said **Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn**. "It is unacceptable for any child to be afraid to go to school because of bullying, harassment, and violence. Many immigrants face ethnic bullying. Yesterday, I extended my

deepest condolences to the Vilsaint family. Although we cannot bring Romy back, we can demand accountability and justice for him. All of Brooklyn must demand justice for Romy."

"It hurts to see another family lose their child because of the pervasive bullying in our public schools. Romy's death was a preventable tragedy compounded by a lack of transparency, communication, and accountability. No child should ever feel ashamed or belittled for any reason." said **Council Member Farah N. Louis, Vice Co-Chair of the Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus.** "It is inexcusable that after entrusting their child in the care of the New York City Department of Education, the Vilsaint family must now plan for his burial rather than celebrate his graduation."

"It is disheartening to see a school interaction result in the loss of a student's life. I extend my deepest condolence to the Vilsaint family," said **Assemblymember Michaele Solages,** and Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislative Chair. "Bullying is an epidemic and we need to be firm in denouncing it. I stand in solidarity with the family, Assemblywoman Rodneyse Bichotte-Hermelyn, and the Brooklyn community in their pursuit of answers."

"Words cannot adequately express how heartbroken I am by the devastating loss of Romy Vilsaint, a young Haitian-American boy who was just beginning to make his mark in life. As a mother of two young children, I cannot even begin to imagine the pain and heartbreak that accompanies the loss of a child at such a young age amidst such grotesque circumstances. Our schools are supposed to be sanctuaries for our children where they go to learn, grow, and better themselves for a promising future, and the fact that Romy is no longer with us because of injuries he sustained while simply attending school makes his loss that much more devastating." said **Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre.** "My heartfelt prayers are with Romy's loved ones during these unimaginably difficult times and I pray that we can all find the collective resolve to end bullying and root out and address the deep-seated, institutional failures at play so that no family has to experience this kind of loss ever again."

"It is absolutely devastating to hear of what happened to Romy Vilsaint. I am saddened by his loss but also angry because his death was completely preventable. It is hard to

fully comprehend how children can bully each other to death during school hours. We must do better and we must protect our children,” said **Assemblymember Mathylde Frontus**. “Forty years ago, my family experienced a similar tragedy when my uncle moved to Brooklyn from Haiti and experienced bullying at the hands of fellow students. He was also hit in the head and died at the age of 13. Romy’s death is a grim reminder that we have been seeing the same patterns in our school for several decades and the cycle must be broken. The school must be held accountable and must answer questions regarding what exactly happened to Romy and how to make sure it never happens again.”

“Bullying has become so common in our schools that rather than watching out for the signs and symptoms that our kids are showing us, we look past them until it gets out of hand. What happened to Romy Vilsaint was violent and tragic, but it could have been prevented. Romy should still be here with his family today.” said **District Leader Josue Pierre**. “We need more trained mental health professionals in our schools engaging our young people and identifying issues early on to prevent this from happening to any child. My heart goes out to the Vilsaint family and they will be in our prayers as they cope with this shocking loss. But as elected leaders, we now have a duty to ensure that such acts of violence and bullying does not continue to happen in our schools.”

"Bureaucratic incompetence cannot be allowed to kill our children. Bullying in our schools should not be covered up by school administrators and staff. The proper bullying incident report protocols and injury guidelines were not followed in this incident. Romy should have been taken to the hospital. As an immigrant and public school parent, I cannot fathom the loss and sadness of losing a child. We expect our children to be safe at school. This must not happen to another child. Romy’s family deserves answers. Those responsible must be held accountable."— **Sadio Yaya Barry**, President, Senegalese Association of America and NYC School Safety Coalition.

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Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn represents the 42nd Assembly District in Brooklyn covering Ditmas Park, Flatbush, East Flatbush and Midwood. She is currently the **Chair of the Subcommittee on Oversight of Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBES)**, and serves on the following committees: **Housing, Government Operations, Education, Banks, Health, and Higher Education**. She is also a member of the Task Force on Women's Issues and sits on **Governor Cuomo's Domestic Violence Advisory Council and Mayor De Blasio's MWBE Task Force**.

