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Community Groups Gather for Dismantling School to Prison Pipeline Symposium ***100 Stories in 100 Days Campaign Comes to Atlanta***

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ATLANTA, GA – **On October 9, 2010**, students, parents, educators, elected officials, community advocates, lawyers and judges will gather at Big Bethel AME Church, 220 Auburn Avenue, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., to form the foundation of a community-based, statewide plan to dismantle the School To Prison Pipeline or STPP. The day-long symposium will kick off the Dignity in Schools Campaign National Week of Action and feature roundtable discussions, workshops and panel presentations.

The keynote speaker will be Sharon Hill, executive director of Georgia Appleseed and former juvenile court judge. A lunch hour panel will include State Representative Alisha Thomas Morgan, State Senator Donzella James, Atlanta Public Schools Board Chair Khaatim El and Fulton County Schools Board member Catherine Maddox.

The School To Prison Pipeline refers to a disturbing national trend in which students are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. The "Dismantling the School to Prison Pipeline" symposium series is jointly sponsored by the Atlanta Community Engagement Team, ACLU of Georgia, Georgia State Conference of the NAACP, Gwinnett STOPP and Interfaith Children's Movement and will be held in Atlanta, Savannah, Macon, Dalton and Valdosta.

Georgia has taken important steps to change the climate in our public schools by banning solitary confinement; recognizing the drawbacks of zero tolerance policies; involving the community; and focusing on educational excellence. Yet, the sponsors of these symposia agree that there is still much work to be done when, in 2009, Georgia children lost 1.8 million days of instruction due to in-school (ISS) and out-of-school (OSS) suspensions.

Topics for discussion include focusing on demographics and statistics; navigating the school system; being your child's advocate; organizing in your community; identifying resources to help your child succeed and ensuring accountability from elected officials through engagement. Parents and students will be asked to share their experiences with the pipeline as part of the 100 Stories in 100 Days campaign. Real stories gathered in (or during) the 100 days preceding the legislative session are essential to bringing the issue to the forefront and mobilizing communities and elected officials to take action. All events are open to the public, but registration is required. For more information, visit www.acluga.org.

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