



## PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Tracy Broyles, Executive Director  
215-222.6979 (w) 215-779-1147(c)  
[tbroyles@spiralq.org](mailto:tbroyles@spiralq.org)

### **THOUSANDS OF NORRIS SQUARE RESIDENTS UNITE THROUGH INNOVATIVE COLLABORATION**

Philadelphia, PA – On Friday, May 15<sup>th</sup> over 300 residents of the Norris Square community marched through the streets in celebration of unity and offering the promise of a stronger neighborhood. The Norris Square Parade brought neighbors together by presenting ideas generated during earlier community meetings in a public way. Hundreds of onlookers crowded sidewalks and leaned out windows to cheer the parade as it passed the narrow streets along the route.

“We were sending a message that our streets are not for drugs and violence, but for celebrating our community's creativity and hope. We were taking our streets back for our children and families,” says Eva Osorio, long time Norris Square resident and interim site-director for the Norris Square Civic Association after school program at McKinley school.

Following the parade, the Norris Square Park filled with more than 1000 long time collaborators and passersby for a full line up of local talent, including spoken word performances, the Hunter School step team, salsa dancers, and several youth dance ensembles. The diversity of acts mirrored the strength of diversity among the crowd. This event provided a safe space for celebration, criticism and reflection between communities within Norris Square.

“I haven't seen this many children together happy in the neighborhood like this in a long time. There was no violence. We brought the parents and families out so that they could see the good side of the community. My friends in recovery need this love. They can provide for people in the community and feel connected,” says Richard DeJesus of Richard and Friends in the Community, a group committed to creating a loving, safe and sustaining environment for communities and families.

The evening's festivities ended in a powerful expression of love as strangers and friends embraced arms for moment of silence for all those lost to drugs and violence.

The Norris Square Parade and Celebration is the creative collaboration of Norris Square Civic Association, West Kensington Ministries, al-Aqsa Islamic Society, Richard and Friends in the Community, Weed and Seed, Men in Motion in the Community, and Spiral Q Puppet Theater.

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*Spiral Q Puppet Theater seeks to mobilize communities, empower marginalized people, and illuminate the victories, frustrations and possibilities of living in the Philadelphia and similar urban settings through the construction of full-scale giant puppet parades, toy theater and neighborhood pageantry.*

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