

The 2 Men Wrongfully Arrested at Starbucks Negotiate for a \$200,000 Program to Support Young Entrepreneurs

Rashon Nelson and Donte Robinson worked with the city of Philadelphia on a grant for public high school students interested in entrepreneurship.

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A picture may be worth a thousand words. As for a video? Try 11.2 million.

That's how many times the arrest of Rashon Nelson and Donte Robinson has been viewed, at time of writing. On April 12, the two 23-year-old black men were arrested while waiting in a Philadelphia Starbucks for a business meeting about a real estate project.

In agreeing not to file a lawsuit against the city of Philadelphia, Nelson and Robinson approached city officials with an idea that has now come to fruition: The two will settle for a symbolic \$1 each while the city invests \$200,000 in supporting young entrepreneurs.

That \$200,000 will fund a pilot program for public high school students who are interested in entrepreneurship to develop relevant skills. The details of the program are still being worked out, but "Mr. Robinson and Mr. Nelson will serve on the committee to be established to develop the grant criteria, review grant applications, and award the grant," says Mike

Dunn, deputy communications director for the city of Philadelphia.

“Rashon Nelson and Donte Robinson approached the City and invited us to partner with them in an attempt to make something positive come of this,” Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney says in a statement to *Entrepreneur*. “This agreement is the result of those conversations, and I look forward to seeing the fruits of this effort in the coming months and years.”

On April 12, a Starbucks employee called the police after Nelson and Robinson asked to use the restroom before having made a purchase, and Nelson and Robinson were subsequently taken away by police. Protests and a #BoycottStarbucks campaign followed. Starbucks CEO Kevin Johnson publicly denounced the incident and met with the two men and announced that Starbucks would close its more than 8,000 U.S. store locations for anti-bias training on May 29.

“I sat in front of them, and I apologized personally for what happened – they didn’t deserve this,” Johnson says in a video statement. “We had a very emotional and a very constructive conversation.”

That conversation would later lead to a confidential financial settlement with Starbucks, as well as an offer to fund the completion of the two men’s undergraduate degrees via the Starbucks College Achievement Plan.

Entrepreneur reached out to the attorney representing Nelson and Robinson and will update this story if we hear back.

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