

WorldLink

A program of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego's Kroc School of Peace Studies

Volume Eighteen Since 1997



Student delegates discuss global issues at WorldLink's 18th Annual Youth Town Meeting. Photo by S. Stotelmyre

Why You? Why Now?

Written by Aileen Seo, Scripps Ranch High School

Why you? Why now? Choruses of this call to action reverberated through the crowd of students who streamed into Shiley Theater for WorldLink's Closing Plenary at the 18th Annual Youth Town Meeting. After students heard from a series of speakers throughout the day on various topics, including *Identifying Violence*, *Healing through Medical and Alternative Therapies*, *Transitional Justice*, *Restorative Justice*, and *Violence Prevention*, they hummed in excitement from their thoughtful and engaging discussions.

Ted Miles from Catholic Relief Services (CRS), who serves as relationship manager for youth and religious education, took the podium first to engage students in an activity that demonstrated the nature of peacebuilding. To begin, he asked the 700 delegates to cross their arms. Without thinking, some students placed their right arm over their left, while others naturally placed their left arm over their right. Then, Miles asked everyone to switch the placement of their arms.

A soft laughter and murmur spread throughout the theater as students placed their arms in an uncomfortable and new manner. "Sometimes entering into this work of peace and justice [...] is like folding your arm the wrong way. It is going to feel extremely uncomfortable," said Miles. There may be uncomfortable and disturbing realities in our world, "but despite discomfort, something drives us forward: the will and the power of the human spirit."

Reaching back into a profound experience, Miles told the audience of his colleague, Archbishop Pedro Barreto, who found himself face-to-face with the bleak realities of La Oroya. A city in Peru, La Oroya had unregulated mines that had been polluting the streets and the environment for years. The black dirt and acid dust in particular had poisoned the rivers and the air.

During one of the youth trips led by Ted Miles in Peru with CRS' Called to Witness program, students asked, "What can we do?" Archbishop Pedro replied with three conclusions: The need to build awareness, the impor-

ance of announcing good news when denouncing evil, and the need for Americans to change their lifestyles. "Part of what we all need to do as peacebuilders is to recognize our indirect and direct contributions towards the injustices of the world," Miles said. He expressed, "We must work to change first ourselves and then those around us." He urged students to be okay with feeling uncomfortable as it is a sensation that must be overcome in order to bring change.

Following Miles, Wendy Sternberg, the founder of Genesis at the Crossroads, shared her story. Dedicated to using art for peacebuilding and expression, she explained that she was a physician practicing medicine in Chicago before she realized that she had not given her passion in art enough oxygen to thrive. Sternberg then began to pursue art as "a creative and neutral convener and a universal language [...] that could work across incredible divides," linguistic or cultural.

Sternberg encouraged conference delegates to experience the world and

"live out loud," and allow artistic expression to move us. She posed two incredibly striking questions, "Why you? Why now?" — for which she asked all attendees to think carefully and be clear about who we are, be bold with our ideas, step outside of our comfort zones, and experience people and the world in their realities, not our own. "There is a Malala in each one of you," expressed Sternberg, full of passion and tenacity to construct a better world.

Mark Wexler, co-founder of the anti-slavery organization Not For Sale and final speaker of the 18th Youth Town Meeting, began by elaborating on a reality that he had slowly woken up to — high levels of human trafficking in our world, including in our local neighborhoods. He shared the dismaying fact that human trafficking is the second-leading crime worldwide and an industry worth \$150 billion. "There is an incredible hope, however," Wexler told students. "It's you. Every day you go to school, every day you go to work,

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The mission of the WorldLink program is to connect youth to global affairs by creating an environment in which young people may consider global citizenship and responsible local participation.

This year’s student-selected theme was:
“Healing the Wounds of Violence”

addressing five subtopics: Identifying Violence, Healing through Medical and Alternative Therapies, Transitional Justice, Restorative Justice, and Violence Prevention

The 18th Annual Youth Town Meeting Sessions

Building Bridges of Understanding
Presenters: Scott Silk, director, Hands of Peace California
Khalid Abudawas and Roxanne Corbeil, youth leaders, Hands of Peace California
Moderator: Andrea Fimbres Prieto (IMAN)

Called to Witness, Called to Act
Presenter: Ted Miles, relationship manager for youth and religious education, Catholic Relief Services
Moderator: Jorge Cordova (Colegio Ibero Tijuana)

Can Restorative Justice Make a Difference?
Presenters: Anthony Ceja, lead coordinator, SDCOE
Justine Darling, restorative practices coordinator, SDUSD
Moderators: Osama Mezgouri (National University Academy) & Chelsea Luo (Poway High School)

Caring for Victims Overcoming Trauma
Presenter: Zuzana Vasiliauskaite, international intern, Institute on Violence, Abuse and Trauma
Moderators: Alan Hiraes Ahuatzin (CETYS Tijuana) & Kellie Allen (High Tech High School)

Creativity: A Transformative Power
Presenter: Hulya D’Arrigo, clinical social worker, A Reason to Survive
Moderator: Pablo Bejarano (Bonita Vista High School)

Daring to be Just in Nepal
Presenter: Ramesh Kharel, senior superintendent of police, Nepal Police
Moderator: Sonya Jacobs (La Jolla Country Day School)

Embracing Diversity to Heal Racism
Presenter: Arno Michaelis, author, *My Life After Hate*
Moderator: Nicole-Ann Lobo (Cathedral Catholic High School)

Ending Violence by Changing Perceptions
Presenter: Dan Stacy, founder and CEO, Circles 4 Change
Moderator: Brianda Herrera Nuñez (CETYS Tijuana)

Exploring Transitional Justice in Different Countries
Presenter: Steven Vigil, conflict mitigation and development specialist
Moderator: Christian Iñiguez Figueroa (IMAN)

Healing through the Arts
Presenter: Wendy Sternberg, founder, Genesis at the Crossroads
Moderators: Angelica Marasigan (John Muir High School) & Dakota Barksdale (San Diego High School)

Identifying and Combatting Sex Trafficking in San Diego
Presenter: Charisma De Los Reyes, human trafficking and CSEC liaison, Child Welfare Services
Moderator: Yoko Tsutsui García (IMAN)

Providing Alternatives to Gang Life
Presenter: Alex Sanchez, co-founder and executive director, Homies Unidos
Moderator: Quetzali Altamirano (IMAN)

Slavery: We Must End It
Presenter: Mark Wexler, co-founder, Not For Sale
Moderator: Carolina de la Torre Martínez (CETYS Tijuana)

Storytelling in Rwanda: Healing Wounds
Presenter: Dydine Umunyana, youth peace ambassador, Aegis Trust
Moderators: Rahja Williams (John Muir High School) & Alexandra Martínez (Colegio Ibero Tijuana)

Youth Implementing Justice
Presenters: Steve Luttbeg, law teacher, Crawford HS Academy of Law
Youth Leaders, Crawford HS Academy of Law
Moderator: Alexis Parkhurst (La Jolla Country Day School)



This year’s design was created by Janine Goetzen,
2015 WorldLink fall media intern

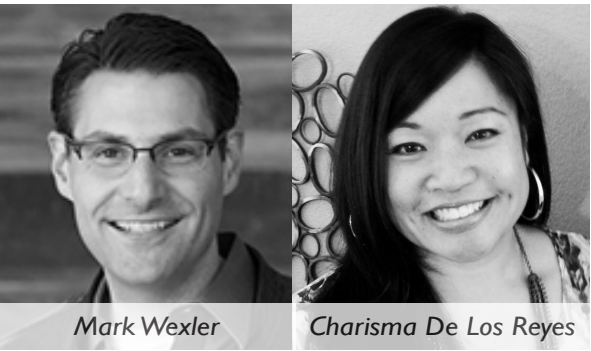
Participating Schools

Academy of Our Lady of Peace, Cathedral Catholic High School, CETYS Universidad Tijuana, Colegio Baja California de Rosarito, Colegio Ibero Tijuana, Colegio Reina Isabel Real Del Mar, Colegio Reina Isabel Sacramento, Crawford High School, Escondido High School, Francis Parker School, Highland Prince Academy, High Tech High Chula Vista, Instituto Mexico Americano Noroeste, John Muir High School, Kearny High School, La Jolla Country Day School, National University Academy, Olympian High School, Pacific Ridge School, Preparatoria Federal Lazaro Cardenas, San Diego Early Middle College, Sierra Vista School - GRF, St. Augustine High School, Sunset High School, Sweetwater High School, The Bishop’s School, and The Grauer School

Participating Youth Organizations: Advancing Students Forward, Global Arms of Advocacy Program of Girl Scouts San Diego, Ladies Leadership Program of Jewish Family Service of San Diego, and Outside the Lens

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Anthony Ceja, MSW, served as a volunteer for Mother Teresa of Calcutta for eight years. After receiving his master’s degree in social work from San Francisco State University, Ceja began working in the area of gang prevention and intervention among youth. He is a lead coordinator for the Student Support Services Department at the San Diego County Office of Education, where he has developed his expertise in restorative practices and trauma-informed care, and has collaborated with law enforcement to provide gang prevention education in schools and the community. Ceja co-chairs the North County Gang Prevention/Intervention Committee and helped to develop the North County Comprehensive Gang Initiative and Project CLAIM, a networking and training opportunity for former gang members and those who support them.

Hulya D’Arrigo is a licensed clinical social worker at A Reason to Survive (ARTS), a nationally recognized organization that provides, supports and advocates for arts programs that heal, inspire and empower youth facing adversity. D’Arrigo provides psychosocial support to children faced with emotional, physical and developmental challenges. She also oversees ARTS’ therapeutic arts program, HEAL, and supervises the Expressive Arts Institute. D’Arrigo was born and raised in Istanbul, Turkey, where she studied fine arts, and then moved to the U.S. and majored in psychology with a minor in art. She later received her master’s degree in social work from San Diego State University. Additionally, D’Arrigo worked at San Diego Hospice as their pediatric medical social worker for seven years.

Justine Darling, MA, is a PhD candidate in education at San Diego State University and is currently piloting a restorative justice program as the restorative practices coordinator for the San Diego Unified School District. Darling has led over 60 community-building circles and over 70 restorative conferences to address harm and hold offenders accountable for their actions. She has presented on restorative justice at the School for International Training Symposium in Kigali, Rwanda, and the International Council of Indigenous Grandmothers in New Zealand. Darling’s best practices guide is used by universities interested in implementing restorative justice in an effort to reform conduct systems.

Charisma De Los Reyes is a senior protective services worker for Child Welfare Services and an adjunct professor at the University of Southern California’s School of Social Work, teaching in the school’s global immersion program. She has been a community organizer and activist for more than 20 years, engaging in social justice and advocacy work around women and girls’ issues, both locally and internationally. De Los Reyes informs and trains wide audiences on the dangers of commercial sexual exploitation and consults to shape countywide policies and procedures across systems and disciplines. She currently holds the position of human trafficking/commercial sexual exploitation of children liaison for the Health and Human Services Agency, Child Welfare Services, County of San Diego.

Steven M. Luttbeg and **Crawford High School Academy of Law** participants, including **Larissa Galeana**, **Mei Ling Lazo**, **Bao Ly**, **Chelsea Marcus**, **Alan Obregon**, **Phuong Pham**, **Knaija Posey**, **Emily Yun** and **Marta Ziblim**, are consultants to the San Diego Unified School District, preparing a report with recommendations for expanding the use of restorative justice within the district. The Crawford High School Academy of Law is a California Partnership Academy, which originated with the support of the California State Bar Association as a pilot program to create a pipeline from high school to law school for underrepresented populations. There are now 11 academies throughout the state. Students are exposed to the law through rigorous and relevant programs such as youth-led teen court, mock trial and peer mediation.



Arno Michaelis is the author of *My Life After Hate* and works with Serve 2 Unite, which engages students creatively with a global network of peacemakers and mentors in partnership with Against Violent Extremism, The Forgiveness Project and Over My Shoulder Foundation. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Michaelis was deeply involved with racist skinhead organizations, a reverend of a self-declared racial holy war, and the lead singer of the hate-metal band Centurion, which sold 20,000 CDs by the mid-’90s and is still popular with racists today. Single parenthood, love for his daughter and the forgiveness shown by people he once hated helped to turn his life around.

Ted Miles, MA, has worked for Catholic Relief Services since 2005 as the relationship manager for youth and religious education. He also oversees Called to Witness, an international program that provides youth with global first-hand experiences to work for solidarity, peace and justice on various issues including migration, peacebuilding and youth violence prevention. Miles has an MA in psychology from Bucknell University and a BA in psychology from Loyola College, and was a Jesuit volunteer for two years in Belize and Guatemala.

Ramesh Prasad Kharel, MPA, is the senior superintendent of police and commandant at the Nepal Police Junior Officers Training College in Bharatpur, Chitwan. He has over 25 years of experience in investigations and patrol, vice and narcotics, anti-trafficking, community policing and special operations. In a country known for widespread corruption, he has been instrumental in cracking down on political criminality and impunity, and has embraced public-police partnership to break crime syndicates and eradicate the cultivation of drugs. Additionally, Kharel has served as a United Nations peacekeeper in Bosnia, Sierra Leone and Sudan. He has a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in public administration from Tribhuvan University in Nepal.

Alex Sanchez, an internationally recognized peacemaker, is co-founder and current executive director of Homies Unidos, a Los Angeles-based organization that develops and implements violence prevention and intervention programs. Sanchez’s commitment to disenfranchised youth and their families is rooted in his own personal journey having been a gang-involved youth and a target of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Los Angeles Police Department and Salvadoran national police and death squads. His family migrated to Los Angeles during the height of military repression in El Salvador. After being involved in gangs and serving time in state prison, he was deported in 1994 to El Salvador where he met the founder of Homies Unidos, Magdalena Rose Avila, and others striving for social change. This turning point marked his commitment to improve his life and to help other youth do the same.

Scott Silk, **Khalid Abudawas**, and **Roxanne Corbeil** work with the award-winning Hands of Peace, an interfaith organization founded in Chicago that develops peacebuilding and leadership skills for Israeli, Palestinian and American teenagers through the power of dialogue and personal relationships. Silk, an educator, mediator, and lawyer by trade, and Abudawas and Corbeil, high school students at Pacific Ridge School, helped launch the California program of Hands of Peace in the summer of 2014, which welcomed more than 20 Israeli, Palestinian and American teenagers to San Diego to foster long-term peaceful coexistence in an interfaith setting.

Dan Stacy, PhD, is founder of Circles 4 Change, a nonprofit that builds relationships by changing perceptions. This system-spanning organization recognizes and addresses the issues that youth face today, and provides the personal awareness and relationship-building skills necessary for change. An adjunct faculty member at City College and San Diego State University, Stacy works with youth in San Diego’s juvenile institutions and also in various elementary and secondary schools throughout the county. The Circles 4 Change curriculum provides youth the skills necessary to recognize and heal the wounds they have perceived and experienced, and identify and cease the violence they have done to themselves and others.



Wendy Sternberg, MD, founded Genesis at the Crossroads, a nonprofit organization that conducts peacebuilding work through artistic, arts-integrated education and humanitarian initiatives worldwide, emphasizing the healing aspects of the arts and its power to transform our world. Sternberg forged national and international partnerships with more than 35 institutions on four continents, and founded Saffron Caravan, a program that unites musicians from Iran, Afghanistan, Cuba, Morocco, Israel, India and the United States for cross-cultural collaborative performance and educational programs. Under Sternberg’s leadership, Genesis boasts over 100 award-winning programs, internationally acclaimed by the United Nations, Kennedy Center, Rotary, the king of Morocco, the U.S. State Department and the British Council.

Dydine Umunyana is a youth peace ambassador for Aegis Trust, an international organization working to prevent genocide, and founder of the nonprofit Umbrella Cinema Promoters, which provides Rwandan women with education on filmmaking and storytelling, demonstrating its role in trauma healing. Umunyana’s family fled its home in Kigali, Rwanda in 1991 when she was a child, amid the mounting hostilities between the Tutsi and Hutu peoples, which culminated in the Rwandan genocide in 1994. After the genocide Umunyana was reunited with both of her parents and learned that several of her family members had been killed. Through her participation in an Aegis Trust peacebuilding education program at the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre in 2009, she became committed to dialogue between people for understanding shared histories.

Zuzana Vasiliauskaite, MA, is an international intern at the Institute on Violence, Abuse & Trauma (IVAT) at Alliant International University. She is originally from Vilnius, Lithuania. As part of her one-year program at IVAT, she serves as assistant editor for five international journals on issues including family violence and child and adolescent abuse and trauma, and is involved with the department of Professional Clinical and Forensic Services at the Family Violence and Sexual Assault Institute. Vasiliauskaite has a master’s degree in legal psychology, with a focus in trauma psychology. Since 2005 she has volunteered in the Vilnius Women’s House in Lithuania, and from 2012 to 2014 she worked as executive director and as a consultant in their Specialized Help Centre for women experiencing domestic violence.

Steven Vigil started his career with the National Coalition for Barrios Unidos, a California-based nongovernmental organization that promotes peace and development in communities affected by youth violence and gang warfare in the U.S. and Latin America. He joined the United Nations and has worked in several capacities at the U.N. Secretariat in New York and in post-conflict peacekeeping missions, including East Timor, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan and South Sudan. He worked as the deputy program manager for the Conflict Mitigation and Stabilization Initiative in South Sudan, and co-chaired the Transnational Advisory Group in Support of the Peace Process in El Salvador; a grassroots multidisciplinary coalition experienced in violence intervention and prevention programming focused on the 2012-13 gang truce in El Salvador. Most recently, Vigil was a visiting peace practitioner at the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies and was an audit adviser for the 2014 Afghan presidential election audit.

Mark Wexler found his vocational direction while working with street children in Durban, South Africa. He returned to San Francisco in 2006 to co-found the global anti-slavery organization Not For Sale, which involves individuals in the abolitionist movement through a variety of grassroots initiatives and innovative new technologies. The organization has several international projects to identify victims of human trafficking, collaborate with local law enforcement and provide survivors with essential aid after they have been rescued. Since its launch, Not For Sale has provided in-depth services to over 6,000 survivors of trafficking and at-risk people around the globe.

Today’s theme will take a closer look at various forms of violence, from full-scale wars to domestic abuse, each with the ability to leave lasting scars. [...] As globally aware citizens, it is our responsibility to recognize and treat these scars, whether we can see them or not.

— Ian Harkness and Sonya Jacobs, WorldLink interns

Identifying and Combatting Sex Trafficking

Written by Olivia Zaller, Coronado High School

“Imagine a world where girls are not for sale,” asked Charisma De Los Reyes as she launched into her discussion on human trafficking at WorldLink’s 18th Annual Youth Town Meeting. A San Diego County social worker for thirteen years, De Los Reyes has spent her career identifying human trafficking, particularly the sex trafficking of young girls, locally as well as internationally.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation, or CSE, has become a pressing problem in San Diego that has dramatically increased in recent years. To put this into perspective, De Los Reyes explained that in San Diego alone, \$96.6 million can be made a year from sex trafficking. “Let’s identify CSE,” said De Los Reyes as she displayed a slide which listed street walking, pornography, survival sex, escort agencies, private parties, video chats and gang-based prostitution as common forms of CSE.

As the briefing session progressed, delegates steadily became more shocked, and many asked how and why CSE happens in a city like San Diego. De Los Reyes explained that sex trafficking victims are not protected by the court of law because when sexual acts are exchanged for objects of value, like money or food, the crime is not considered “rape” but “prostitution.” Since prostitution is illegal, the incorrect assumption is that sex trafficking victims are at fault for partaking in an illegal act.

How does sex trafficking even happen? This is a complex question with many reasons for why such horrendous

acts occur and go unnoticed. It can start when a child is recruited for prostitution, some of which occurs in middle and high school campuses through older girls who have been forced to recruit more girls by their pimps. Recruitments can also take place on the streets, with the most targeted groups being runaway youth and youth who have been kicked out of their homes.

De Los Reyes asked the student delegates, “What do you think a runaway child would be feeling in the first twenty-four hours of being out on the street?” The answers ranged from “sad” to “hungry” to “cold” to “awful” before the discussion continued. As predicted, all of these answers were and are correct, and because of this, runaways are likely to respond to any predator who may approach them and offer food or a “safe place to sleep.”

Recruiters often loiter by popular spots for runaway youth at night with containers of fast food, warm clothes, and the promise of safety and security to lure their victims. According to De Los Reyes, recent statistics show that as many as one in five homeless youth will be approached by a recruiter within forty-eight hours of being on the street. There are approximately 2,500 youth on the streets on any given night in San Diego. It is within these first two days that a child is most vulnerable, making an easy target for a recruiter.

Forms of recruitment can include befriending, coercion, glamorization and force. In such a negative mental state and with nobody to lean on, it is not

surprising that seduction serves as the number one recruitment tactic of young girls. This concept of “seduction” continues throughout a victim’s career, which typically lasts four to seven years before they are considered “old.” Recruited at a young age, many of the victims have never felt loved before, so they see the faux seduction as a form of love, choosing to stay with their pimps even as prostitutes.

Furthermore, victims often see their abuser as benevolent when he chooses not to harm them. Distorted thoughts like these cause young girls to stay in this abusive cycle. However, many who have realized that they are in an extremely dangerous situation want to leave but don’t know how. “Once they’ve been in the system for a couple years, it becomes impossible to leave. The pimps see them as a profit at this point, not a person, and they will do everything in their power to avoid losing them,” emphasized De Los Reyes as she talked about the abusive realities of CSE.

To keep victims from leaving the system, pimps threaten to hurt their younger siblings or even their babies. For this reason, these girls see no escape, which seems to satisfy the question, “Why don’t they just leave?” that many of the delegates posed. De Los Reyes closed the briefing session with a video made by a CSE survivor, who stressed that she just wanted love, a father figure, and a family. Following this, De Los Reyes reminded the delegates, “The laws are only as good as we enforce them. Now, it’s up to you.”

Shocked after realizing the extent of this crime interwoven in cities like San Diego, Rory Fallmer from The Grauer School remarked, “The most shocking thing about the lecture was the numbers. I had no idea so many girls my age are involved in sex trafficking. It made me want to do something about it.” After three powerful briefing sessions, De Los Reyes felt hopeful that student delegates would join the fight against sex trafficking in San Diego, and not stop there but continue to help combat sex trafficking worldwide.

To watch Charisma De Los Reyes’ briefing session, visit WorldLink’s YouTube page at www.YouTube.com/user/WorldLinkIntern. ■



Mark Wexler at Closing Plenary.
Photo by C.Valera Gómez

Why You? Why Now? Continued from page 1

you are adding tools and resources to your toolbelt. Now what matters is how you use these tools.”

He gifted the audience with the story of a woman by the name of Kru Nam, an artist in Thailand who began to dedicate her life to healing children on the streets through art. Ultimately, she decided to care for a group of children who were trafficked, which quickly grew from about a dozen children to almost sixty to now over 100. According to Wexler, Kru Nam found her calling as an exemplary artist but also a modern-day abolitionist on a crusade for these children. “Think about where you are going in your life and how you are going to marry [your skills and passion] with the cause of justice,” Wexler urged the students. “What skills are you going to add to your toolbelt?”

The closing plenary came to an end with an address by WorldLink interns, Chase Garcia and Nicole Martindale. Garcia and Martindale spoke of the cyclical nature of violence and the need for healing through art, reparations, prosecutions, and restorative justice. As we learned throughout the Youth Town Meeting, offering realistic hope through sustainable opportunities is just as important as identifying issues and problems. As Garcia and Martindale exclaimed, “Youth *can* make a positive impact on our world and *can* contribute and achieve a brighter and non-violent future. So it is up to *all* of us to put our influence to great use.”

To watch the Closing Plenary, visit WorldLink’s YouTube page at www.YouTube.com/user/WorldLinkIntern. ■



Students listening to Charisma De Los Reyes. Photo by E.Alvarez

Healing Yourself and Others

Written by Lily Bollinger,
Outside the Lens (High Tech High International)

Dydine Umutyana is an elegant, soft-spoken young Tutsi woman, born in Rwanda just before the genocide. In 1994, the hatred and discrimination of the Tutsis, a minority ethnic group in Rwanda, turned to genocide with the Hutus killing over 800,000 people in 100 days — a death rate five times higher than that of the Holocaust. Yet, more than twenty years later, it is remarkable to see Dydine Umutyana, a youth peace ambassador for Aegis Trust, devote her life to geno-

cide prevention and turn her pain into a gift for the world.

Growing up in the wake of a genocide, she faced the ultimate devastation both in her country and inside herself. However, at the age of eighteen, she came to the realization that, “If I survived, that was something I should appreciate and accept, and I needed to live my life.” From there she discovered, “If I can heal, everyone can heal and [even] heal others.”

In 2012, Umutyana founded the

nonprofit organization Umbrella Cinema Promoters that teaches Rwandan women and girls the art of filmmaking as a means of storytelling and healing. When asked about the reason she chose film as her creative outlet, Umutyana said, “Writing helps me turn my imagination into reality. But I can share my stories with so many people at once with film.” She explained that she stands tall as the woman she is today because of her experiences that should have made her cynical and pessimistic.

Umutyana emphasizes the need to listen to others’ stories in order to understand, to stop the cycles of hatred, to unite and not divide, and to ultimately heal wounds. During the session, Umutyana asked the student delegates to

pair up and take one another’s hands. She then asked each person to close their eyes. At first, nervous glances and hesitant body language demonstrated the students’ reluctance, but slowly anxious smiles and pursed lips melted into a peaceful quiet.

After a few moments of silence, Umutyana asked each student to pose two important questions to their partner: “What is something that has affected you in life? Do you still feel the weight on your shoulders?” Again, hesitation to share slowly turned into open expression and honesty about their individual hardships. Looks of understanding and somber nods followed solemn words and pensive expressions. Ryan Kazemaini, student from The Bishop’s School,

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Every day you go to school, every day you go to work, you are adding tools and resources to your toolbelt. Now what matters is how you use these tools.

— Mark Wexler, Not For Sale

Ending Violence, One Classroom and Courtroom at a Time

Written by Ivanna Quiceno, Mater Dei Catholic High School

When discussing restorative circles and peer mediation, conference speaker Bao Ly shared, “It is very important to exercise respect and empathy. Many times emotions get in the way, but you just have to keep your cool. You have to really be present so that the people who are sharing will feel more comfortable.” Ly is one of several students at the Crawford High School Academy of Law, who together serve as model innovators dedicated to violence prevention and achieving positive change.

The Crawford High School Academy of Law is one of eleven California Partnership Academies in the state that expose students to the law through rigorous and relevant programs such as youth-led teen court, mock trial and peer mediation. Students at the Crawford Academy of Law are currently serving as consultants to the San Diego Unified School District,

preparing a report with recommendations for expanding the use of restorative justice within the district.

Steve Luttbeg, law teacher in the program, remarked, “The students have really helped us to develop these restorative justice practices where we figure out ways to resolve a problem in a positive and constructive way. This is valuable not only to the perpetrators, but also the mediators.”

At WorldLink’s 18th Annual Youth Town Meeting, student Alan Obregon spoke about his experience first-hand with implementing teen courts at Crawford High School. If a teenager commits a misdemeanor at school, such as assault, vandalism, or petty theft, or engages in chronic misbehavior on campus, an arresting officer sends them to teen court as an alternative. The student must admit and take responsibility for his or her actions before continuing the trial. Only

then can the peer jury ask their questions and come to a unanimous decision.

A sentence can include writing a letter of apology to the victim, engaging in community service, composing an essay, participating in anger management or substance abuse workshops, or attending jury duty. If their sentence is completed within ninety days, then the court drops all the charges. They found that 98% of offenders that go through teen court do not commit another crime. On the other hand, with a criminal record and a stay in juvenile hall, teenagers have difficulties in continuing and completing their education or obtaining employment. Obregon shared, “I’ve been a teen juror for three years, and it feels nice to help my peers out. It’s like I’m giving them a second chance at life.”

With the help of Social Advocates for Youth San Diego, which trains high school students to become jurors, teen courts are held every Wednesday night in San Diego’s downtown courthouse and on the 1st of every month at Crawford High School.

Emily Yun, the next student speaker, addressed peer mediation. A form of negotiating, two parties fill out an application stating their point of view and stance on the problem. Through a six-step plan of mediation, a trained mediator (a peer) gathers the different points of view, identifies the parties’ common interests, and evaluates each alternative. Before the session ends, both parties must reach an agreement and sign a contract stating that they will follow it. If they disagree, they can set a time for an-

other meeting. Yun shared her own positive experience with peer mediation, stating, “Many relationships have been rebuilt and restored [even if] it can take several meetings to do so.”

Following Yun, student speaker Larissa Galeana explained Crawford’s restorative circles, through which students sit in a circle and discuss a particular issue with guidance from a neutral facilitator. In these circles, students build a sense of community. The person holding the talking piece is the only individual allowed to speak, which allows each student to listen and reflect.

Through this restorative practice, several students become aware of the commonalities between the group. The facilitator will connect the discussion to real world issues with the hope that the participants will apply what they have learned and experienced to their daily lives. Galeana expressed, “Many times, students refer their friends to the restorative circles or peer mediation. If they think something violent might happen, they want their classmates to go through preventative measures.” As a result, schools with restorative circles have reduced their rates of expulsion and suspension.

All of these practices require confidentiality and, more importantly, support to allow members of the community to feel safe. Restorative justice can prevent violence and keep adolescents out of dangerous situations. It can bring peace, heal wounds of violence, and mend bonds that have been broken. Through the leadership and fortitude of these young agents of change at Crawford’s Academy of Law, students in San Diego and Baja Mexico will begin to learn the meaning of restorative justice and its everlasting impact. ■



Speakers from the Crawford High School Academy of Law addressing restorative justice.

Photo by M. Ramirez Servin

Embracing Diversity to Heal Racism

Written by Erika Zepeda, CETYS Tijuana

“I have my own wounds of violence,” said Arno Michaelis, author of *My Life After Hate*. “I will never forget the harm that I’ve done. But that harm drives me to be dedicated to making a positive impact today.”

Arno Michaelis was only sixteen when he was introduced to several white supremacist groups. He would later become a leader in this hateful community and recruit more individuals to join the movement. A known racist, Michaelis tattooed a swastika on his middle finger so he could “flip off” anyone who confronted him. Michaelis recounted, “I loved to make people angry.”

As a white power skinhead, Michaelis became the lead vocalist for the hate metal band Centurion. However, as he continued to dedicate himself to these close-minded, fundamental ideologies, his reality came crashing down. After per-

forming a rowdy concert of racist music, his friend left on a beer run, but never returned. He had picked a fight and was shot and killed.

That same night in 1994, Michaelis realized that death or prison was very likely to take him away from his daughter. This event sparked a moment of realization within Michaelis. After seven years perpetrating violence as a racist skinhead, Michaelis decided it was time to change his fate and break away from the movement.

Through the kindness shown to him by the people he once hated, Michaelis decided that peace, love, and compassion would guide his life. In 2010, Michaelis began to share his story and then, in 2012, helped establish Serve 2 Unite, a group dedicated to fostering student leaders who strive to create nonviolent environments in their schools and surrounding communities.

According to Michaelis, the fun-

damental ideology of white supremacy was “exhausting to be a part of, because the world isn’t a fundamental place.” From the standpoint of a white supremacist, there were no grey areas, just black or white and good or evil. As Michaelis explained, “I refused to acknowledge their humanity. I didn’t consider anyone who wasn’t white to be a human being.”

Now, Michaelis believes that the kindness that people treated him with, even after he refused to acknowledge their humanity, was what changed him. He encourages everyone to be nice to everyone they meet: to hold the door open for someone, to smile and listen to others. These are simple deeds, but Michaelis claims those “innocuous acts of kindness are what changed the course of my life.”

To watch Arno Michaelis’ briefing session, visit WorldLink’s YouTube page at www.YouTube.com/user/WorldLinkIntern. ■



Arno Michaelis interacting with students delegates.

Photo by M. Kime

I’ve been a teen juror for three years, and it feels nice to help my peers out. It’s like I’m giving them a second chance at life.

— Alan Obregon, Crawford High School Academy of Law

Healing Yourself and Others

Continued from page 5

remarked, “She taught me the power to understand and open up to others. We stand stronger together than we do alone.”

Umunyana ended the session by reminding students that ambition and energy concomitant with youth must be paired with humane and compassionate intentions. “Most of the young people were the perpetrators in Rwanda. The youth did the genocide because they had the energy to kill. But if you use that energy for good, you can’t be stopped,” she explained.

In response, one student raised her hand and posed the question, “But if we’re young, how do we do good? We don’t have much power. The only people making a change in the world are wealthy and powerful.” Umunyana enlightened all of the students by saying, “You do not need money or richness to change the world. You do not need power to do good. You can still be the light for others — all you need is courage.”

To watch Dydine Umunyana’s briefing session, visit WorldLink’s YouTube page at www.YouTube.com/user/WorldLinkIntern. ■

Daring to be Just in Nepal

Written by Elias Jinich, Francis Parker School

Ramesh Prasad Kharel embodies the definition of courage. In the midst of a country plagued by crime and corruption, Kharel stands out as an individual willing to risk his career for his nation’s well-being. With twenty-five years of experience in the Nepalese police force, Ramesh Kharel serves as an integral advocate against Nepal’s rampant corruption, human trafficking and drug cultivation.

Kharel explained that due to “the active connivance of authorities with crime, criminals, and smugglers, [Nepal is] still one of the least developed countries in the world.” After arriving as the new chief of police to the Siraha District, a region in southeastern Nepal, Kharel became aghast at his predecessor’s words. “He didn’t brief me about law abiding citizens and law breakers of the society,” nor about the district dynamics or crime, but rather “briefed me how much money he used to collect.”

Kharel’s words reflect the staggering amount of corruption in the Nepalese government and police. According to the Transparency International Corruption Index, Nepal was ranked 126 out of 175 in 2014. The United States, by

comparison, is ranked 17.

For Kharel, the people’s safety constitutes the supreme law, and he needed to honor that belief. “From the very first day, we as a team started curbing crime in the Siraha district,” Kharel continued, “The same thing happened in the Parsa district.” A member of the public once called him “a stupid policeman” for refusing to take bribes and claimed that because of that, he had “lost 1 million U.S. dollars in ten month’s time.”

Nevertheless, he continued to battle corruption for the sake of his values and the betterment of his country. For instance, he once charged Prabhu Shah, a minister of land reforms, for murder. In the words of Ramesh Kharel, “we did not surrender; we prosecuted” despite the fact that it was “very difficult to differentiate political parties and criminals.” Unfortunately, due to the decision of charging Prabhu Shah, Kharel was forced to resign, which demonstrated the high levels of on-going crime and corruption in the country.

According to Kharel, the key to the overwhelming task of fighting corruption is raising public awareness and engaging the people “as changemakers and

stakeholders of the society.” Particularly, Kharel has focused on youth collaboration, believing that the “participation of youth and law abiding citizens is a must.”

In 2012, the Nepalese police announced a five-month long nationwide awareness campaign. Through this, the police mobilized youth, partnered with representatives of civic and social organizations, visited drug-affected areas, and organized rallies to educate citizens about the dangers of drug cultivation. The initiative “achieved an amazing result,” and drug trafficking decreased on a national scale.

Before Kharel came to the Parsa District, the local police often turned a blind eye to the illegal trade in exchange for payments. Within one year, the cultivation of marijuana and opium decreased significantly in the Parsa District, long considered the drug capital of Nepal.

Kharel’s exemplary leadership and resolve helped his country to transition towards more legal and corruption-free operations. A country cannot have true freedom unless it honors and upholds the rule of just laws. Kharel’s efforts in standing up for the law and mobilizing youth are inspiring, and serve not only as a guiding light to peaceful conflict resolution but also a call to action in addressing socioeconomic divisions and human rights. ■

Examining Violence in Its Many Manifestations

Written by Terra Giddens, University City High School

WorldLink high school students Christian Iñiguez Figueroa and Nicole-Ann Lobo welcomed more than 700 of their peers from San Diego and Baja Mexico to the Opening Plenary at WorldLink’s 18th Annual Youth Town Meeting. The opening session provided new perspectives on trauma healing, violence prevention, and the cultivation of justice.

WorldLink interns Ian Harkness and Sonya Jacobs introduced this year’s student-selected theme “Healing the Wounds of Violence,” and said, “Today’s theme will take a closer look at various forms of violence, from full-scale wars to domestic abuse, each with the ability to leave lasting scars. [...] As globally aware citizens, it is our responsibility to recognize and treat these scars, whether we can see them or not.”

Harkness and Jacobs explained that every voice matters. By incorporating what we each have to offer, we will reach a world with democracy and peace. “There are so many high school students, so many adults who let apathy take hold. We’re in this theatre today because we don’t believe that to be true, because we won’t succumb to apathy. Every occupied seat in this theater is a vote of confidence, a spark of hope for the future,” said Harkness and Jacobs.

As the plenary proceeded, four amazing experts spoke about their own experiences in facing adversity, and expanded on their own challenges and successes in addressing violence in its many manifestations. Through their sto-

ries, horrific moments in history were revealed. Many lives around the world experience hunger, oppression, and war, while others remain unaware or apathetic. The distinguished speakers have each created a sense of hope and trust within various communities around the world, and have assisted in building a future where people live with awareness, empathy, and integrity.

The first presenter was Anthony Ceja, lead coordinator at the San Diego County Office of Education who works on gang prevention and intervention among youth. Through his work with various San Diego high schools, Ceja is contacted by school administrations for guidance on how to reduce their suspension and expulsion rates. In response, Ceja emphasizes the concept of restorative practices, which brings all stakeholders together in a cooperative process while building respect and empathy for one another.

Ceja explained, “From the principal to the custodian, from every senior to every freshman, we need to develop relationships that are based on respect and trust [...] and not based on fear and control.” This form of thinking emerged during his experience as a volunteer with Mother Teresa of Calcutta over the course of eight years. Ceja uses the knowledge and compassion he learned from Mother Teresa to build a future of mutual respect, cooperation, and peace.

Following Ceja, Dydine Umunyana was the next panelist who powerfully portrayed the impact each person can have on the world. Umunyana is a youth



Christian Iñiguez Figueroa and Nicole-Ann Lobo open the conference.
Photo by H. Saldaña Toledano

peace ambassador and founder of the organization Umbrella Cinema Promoters, which introduces filmmaking and storytelling to Rwandan women and youth as a form of trauma healing. She revealed her personal story about living life as a survivor of genocide in her home country, Rwanda. She used the painful reality of the genocide to awaken her overall view on humanity. Instead of proceeding to live a life of revenge and hatred, she decided to live a life of healing and restoration.

She has since dedicated herself to helping other young people, from Rwanda and around the world, to tell their stories and use this process as a form of healing in their own way. Although we may find ourselves in difficult situations, we have the power to choose what outlook to have. Umunyana explained, “This world is ours, and we are the future leaders. It’s up to all of you to see things in a positive way.” We must empower ourselves to find the good in a precarious situation, albeit challenging, and focus

on the good in order to make positive change.

Next, Arno Michaelis, author of *My Life After Hate*, expanded upon the belief that small, individual acts have the power to heal and restore. Michaelis spoke about his own personal transformation. “I was a white power skinhead leader, organizer, and recruiter,” said Michaelis. “In many ways, I set the stage.” It was through the small acts of kindness shown to him by people he once hated that he realized the importance of peace and the practice of peace. Today, Michaelis works with the organization Serve 2 Unite, which reaches more than 600 teenagers who design and implement service projects in Wisconsin promoting non-violence and inclusivity.

Ramesh Kharel served as the final panelist for the opening session. Kharel is a Nepali policeman who shared his powerful message on destroying corruption wherever it stands. It is difficult to speak and work against corruption and impunity, however this was the goal Kharel

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You do not need money or richness to change the world. You do not need power to do good. You can still be the light for others — all you need is courage.

— Dydine Umunyana, Aegis Trust and Umbrella Cinema Promoters

La Misión de WorldLink

Traducido por Marthapaola Martínez, CETYS Tijuana.

El programa de *WorldLink* tiene como misión conectar a jóvenes con asuntos globales a través de la creación de un ambiente en la cual puedan asumir una ciudadanía global y una participación responsable en sus localidades. *WorldLink* fomenta el pensamiento crítico y el entendimiento de dinámicas que dan forma a pólizas internacionales y economías globales, así como de la diversidad cultural y las preocupaciones locales.

La conferencia anual de jóvenes de *WorldLink* (*Youth Town Meeting*) proporciona la oportunidad de discusiones entre líderes, expertos, activistas y jóvenes provenientes de diversos contextos alrededor del mundo. Invita a la juventud a involucrarse en asuntos globales y a contribuir a una atmósfera civil y responsable en la cual, a través de una visión de justicia y paz, se logren construir comunidades diversas cada vez más entrelazadas.



Foto por P. Nordland

¿Por Qué Tú? ¿Por Qué Ahora?

Escrito por Aileen Seo, Scripps Ranch High School. Traducido por Carlos Valera Gómez, CETYS Tijuana.

¿Por qué tú? ¿Por qué ahora? Coros de este llamado de acción resonaron en la multitud de estudiantes que acudieron al *Shiley Theater* para la última sesión de la décima-octava conferencia anual de jóvenes de *WorldLink*. Después de que los estudiantes escucharan a una serie de oradores tratar varios temas a lo largo del día, incluyendo *Identificando Violencia, Aliviando mediante Terapias Medicinales y Alternativas, Justicia de Transición, Justicia Restaurativa y Prevención de Violencia*, se oía el entusiasmo de las interesantes discusiones.

Ted Miles de *Catholic Relief Services* (CRS), gerente de relaciones para la juventud y la educación religiosa, tomó el podio para involucrar a los estudiantes en una actividad que demostraba la naturaleza de la construcción de paz. Para empezar, les pidió a los 700 delegados que cruzaran sus brazos. Sin pensarlo, algunos estudiantes colocaron su brazo derecho sobre su brazo izquierdo, mientras que otros naturalmente pusieron su brazo izquierdo sobre el brazo derecho. Entonces, Miles les pidió a todos que cambiaran la posición de sus brazos.

Una leve risa y un murmullo se escuchó a través del teatro mientras los estudiantes colocaron sus brazos de una nueva e incómoda manera. “A veces iniciar este trabajo de paz y justicia [...] es como cruzar los brazos al revés. Va a sentirse extremadamente incómodo,” dijo Miles. Puede que haya incómodas y perturbadoras realidades en nuestro mundo, “pero a pesar del malestar, algo nos mueve adelante: la voluntad y el poder del espíritu humano.”

Remontándose a una significativa experiencia, Miles le contó a la audiencia sobre su colega, el Arzobispo Pedro Barreto, quien se encontró cara a cara con las tristes realidades de La Oroya. Una ciudad en Perú, La Oroya tenía minas no reguladas que han estado contaminando las calles y el medio ambiente por años. La suciedad y el polvo ácido en particular han envenenado los ríos y el aire.

Durante uno de los viajes de juventud dirigido por Ted Miles en Perú con el programa *Called to Witness* de CRS, un estudiante preguntó: “¿Qué

podemos hacer?” El Arzobispo Pedro contestó con tres conclusiones: La necesidad de crear conciencia, la importancia de anunciar buenas noticias cuando se denuncia el mal, y la necesidad de que los americanos cambien su estilo de vida. “Parte de lo que todos necesitamos hacer como constructores de paz es reconocer nuestras contribuciones directas e indirectas a las injusticias del mundo,” dijo Miles. Expresó también que: “Debemos trabajar para cambiarnos primero a nosotros mismos y luego a los que nos rodean.” Le insistió a los alumnos que aceptaran el sentirse incómodos porque es una sensación que se debe superar para poder alcanzar el cambio.

Después de Miles, Wendy Sternberg, la fundadora de *Genesis at the Crossroads*, compartió su historia. Dedicada a usar arte para la creación de paz y la expresión, explicó que era doctora y practicaba medicina en Chicago antes de darse cuenta de que no le había dado suficiente atención a su pasión por el arte como para que ésta floreciera. Fue entonces cuando Sternberg comenzó a perseguir el arte como una “forma creativa y neutral de atraer gente y un lenguaje universal [...] que podría trabajar a través de increíbles divisiones,” lingüísticos o culturales.

Sternberg alentó a los delegados a experimentar el mundo y a “vivirlo en voz alta,” y a permitir que la expresión artística nos mueva. Ella hizo dos increíbles preguntas: “¿Por qué tú? Por qué ahora?” — para la cual le pidió a todos los presentes que pensarán cuidadosamente y fueran claros sobre quiénes somos, ser intrépidos con nuestras ideas, salir de nuestras zonas de comodidad, y en experimentar personas y al mundo dentro de sus realidades y no las nuestras. “Hay una Malala dentro de cada uno de ustedes,” expresó Sternberg, lleno de pasión y tenacidad para construir un mundo mejor.

Mark Wexler, co-fundador de la organización antiesclavista *Not for Sale*, y el último orador de la décima-octava conferencia anual de jóvenes de *WorldLink*, empezó explicando una realidad de la cual poco a poco se había percatado — altos niveles de

trata de personas en el mundo, incluyendo nuestros vecindarios locales. Compartió el desalentador hecho de que la trata de personas es el segundo crimen más común a través de todo el mundo y una industria con un valor de \$150 billones. “Hay una increíble esperanza, sin embargo,” dijo Wexler a los estudiantes. “Son ustedes. Cada día que van a la escuela, cada día que van a trabajar, están aportando instrumentos y recursos a su cinturón de herramientas. Ahora lo que importa es cómo utilizan estas herramientas.”

Concedió a la audiencia la historia de una mujer llamada Kru Nam, una artista en Tailandia. Ella comenzó a dedicar su vida a ayudar a niños en las calles por medio del arte y decidió encargarse de un grupo de niños que fueron traficados, el cual rápidamente creció de aproximadamente una docena de niños a casi sesenta a ahora más de 100. Según Wexler, Kru Nam encontró su llamado como una artista ejemplar pero también como una abolicionista contemporánea en una cruzada por esos niños. “Piensa hacia dónde estás dirigiendo tu vida y cómo vas a casar [tus talentos y pasiones] con la causa de la justicia,” Wexler les preguntó. “¿Qué habilidades le agregarás a tu cinturón de herramientas?”

La conferencia anual de jóvenes de *WorldLink* llegó a su fin con un comunicado de los internos Chase García y Nicole Martindale. García y Martindale hablaron del ciclo natural de la violencia y la necesidad de aliviar mediante el arte, reparaciones, procesos a juicio, y justicia restaurativa. Tal como aprendimos a lo largo de la conferencia, ofrecer esperanza realista a través de oportunidades sustentables es tan importante como identificar los obstáculos y problemas. Como García y Martindale exclamaron, “La juventud puede tener un impacto positivo en nuestro mundo y puede contribuir y lograr un futuro brillante y sin violencia. Así que depende de *todos nosotros* emplear nuestra influencia de la mejor manera.”

Para ver esta sesión, visita la página de YouTube de *WorldLink* en, www.YouTube.com/user/WorldLinkIntern. ■

Atrevido a ser Justo en Nepal

Escrito por Elias Jinich, Francis Parker School.

Traducido por Aimee Tsuchiya Ramírez, Federal Lázaro Cardenas.

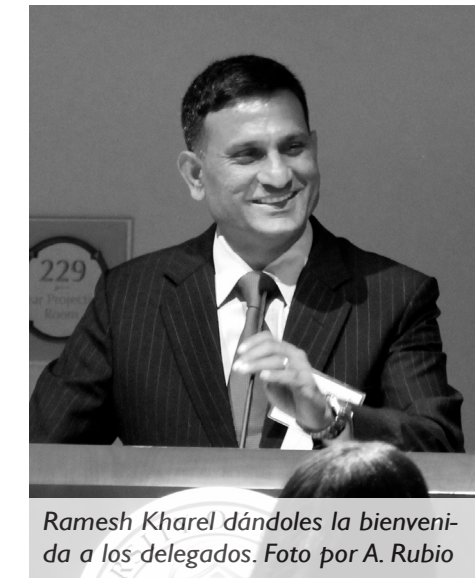
Ramesh Prasad Kharel engloba el concepto de valentía. Dentro de un país donde el crimen y corrupción es algo muy común, Kharel es reconocido como un individuo dispuesto a arriesgar su carrera para el bienestar de su nación. Con veinticinco años de experiencia en la fuerza policíaca de Nepal, Ramesh Kharel es un defensor contra la corrupción, al igual que la trata de personas y cultivo de drogas.

Kharel explicó que debido a “el consentimiento de las autoridades de crimen, criminales y traficantes, el país sigue siendo uno de los menos desarrollados del mundo.” Al llegar como el nuevo jefe policíaco en el Distrito Siraha, una región en el sureste de Nepal, Kharel se sorprendió de las palabras de su predecesor. “Él no me explicó sobre el acatamiento de la ley hacia los civiles o los delincuentes de la sociedad,” ni siquiera sobre las dinámicas o crímenes del distrito, en vez de eso “me explicó de cuanto dinero acostumbraba reunir.” Las palabras de Kharel reflejan la increíble cantidad de corrupción en el gobierno y la policía de Nepal. De acuerdo al Índice Internacional de Corrupción Transparente, Nepal fue evaluado en el lugar 126 de 175 en el 2014. Estados Unidos, en comparación, estaba en la posición diecisiete.

Para Kharel, la seguridad de los ciudadanos constituía la ley suprema y necesitaba honrar esa creencia. “Desde el primer día, nosotros como equipo empezamos a combatir crímenes en el distrito de Siraha,” dijo Kharel, “al igual que en el distrito de Parsa.” Una vez un ciudadano lo llamó “un policía estúpido” por rechazar soborno y declaró que por eso Kharel “perdió 1 millón de dólares en un periodo de 10 meses.”

Aun así, el continuó combatiendo crimen por el beneficio de su país y sus valores morales. Por ejemplo, hubo una ocasión donde levantó un cargo de homicidio a Prabhu Shah, ministro de reformas de tierra. En las palabras de Ramesh Kharel, “No nos rendimos, nosotros procesamos” aun y cuando “era muy difícil diferenciar los políticos de los

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Ramesh Kharel dándoles la bienvenida a los delegados. Foto por A. Rubio

La juventud *puede* tener un impacto positivo en nuestro mundo y *puede* contribuir y lograr un futuro brillante y sin violencia. Así que depende de *todos nosotros* emplear nuestra influencia de la mejor manera.

— Chase García y Nicole Martindale, estudiantes de WorldLink

Aliviando Heridas Personales y de Otros

Escrito por Lily Bollinger, Outside the Lens (High Tech High International).
Traducido por Erika Zepeda, CETYS Tijuana.

Dydine Umunyana es una joven y elegante mujer de voz suave. Su nacionalidad es Tutsi y nació en Ruanda justo antes del genocidio. En 1994, el odio y la discriminación contra los Tutsis, un grupo étnico minoritario en Ruanda, se volvieron en un genocidio en donde los Hutus mataron a más de 800.000 personas en 100 días — una tasa de mortalidad cinco veces superior a la del Holocausto. Sin embargo, más de veinte años después, es notable ver a Dydine Umunyana, una Embajadora de la Paz de la Juventud de Aegis Trust, dedicar su vida a la prevención del genocidio y convertir su dolor en un regalo para el mundo.

Creciendo en la estela de un genocidio, se enfrentó a la devastación final tanto en su país como en ella misma. Sin embargo, a la edad de dieciocho años, llegó a la conclusión de que, “Si yo sobreviví, eso fue algo que debería de apreciar y aceptar, y tenía que vivir mi vida.” A partir de eso descubrió que, “Si yo puedo mejorar, otras personas se pueden mejorar y [aún] ayudar a otros.”

En el año 2012, Umunyana fundó la organización sin fines de lucro *Umbrella Cinema Promoters*, la cual enseña a las mujeres y a las niñas de Ruanda el arte de hacer cine como un medio para contar historias y para llegar al alivio emocional. Cuando se le pre-

guntó acerca de la razón por la cual eligió la película como su salida creativa, Umunyana dijo, “La escritura me ayuda a volver mi imaginación en realidad. Pero puedo compartir mis historias con mucha gente a la vez utilizando el cine.” Explicó que es la mujer que es hoy gracias a sus experiencias que la deberían de haber hecho cínica y pesimista.

Umunyana hace hincapié en la necesidad de escuchar las historias de otros con el fin de entender, de detener los ciclos de odio, de unir y no dividir, y finalmente aliviar heridas. Durante la sesión, Umunyana pidió a los delegados estudiantiles que formaran parejas y que se tomaran de la mano. Luego pidió que cada persona cerrará los ojos. Al principio, miradas nerviosas y un lenguaje corporal vacilante demostró la oposición de los estudiantes, pero poco a poco sonrisas ansiosas y labios fruncidos se fundieron en un tranquilo silencio.

Después de unos momentos de silencio, Umunyana le pidió a cada estudiante que plantearan dos preguntas importantes a su pareja: “¿Qué es algo que le ha afectado en la vida? ¿Todavía se siente ese peso sobre sus hombros?” Una vez más, la inseguridad de compartir se convirtió poco a poco en una expresión abierta y honesta sobre sus dificultades individuales. Las miradas de entendimiento sigui-

eron palabras solemnes y expresiones pensativas. Ryan Kazemani, estudiante de *The Bishop’s School*, comentó: “Ella me enseñó el poder de entender y de abrirme a los demás. Estamos más fuertes juntos que solos.”

Umunyana terminó la sesión recordándoles a los estudiantes que la ambición y la energía relacionada con los jóvenes deberían estar vinculados con intenciones humanas y compasivas. “La mayoría de los jóvenes eran los perpetradores en Ruanda. Los jóvenes hicieron el genocidio porque tenían la energía para matar. Pero si ustedes utilizan esa energía para el bien, nada los puede detener,” ella explicó.

En respuesta, uno de los estudiantes levantó la mano y planteó la siguiente pregunta: “Pero si somos jóvenes, ¿cómo podemos hacer el bien? No tenemos mucho poder. Las únicas personas que pueden hacer un cambio en el mundo son ricos y poderosos.” Umunyana alumbró todos los estudiantes diciendo: “Ustedes no necesitan dinero o riqueza para cambiar el mundo. Ustedes no necesitan poder para hacer el bien. Ustedes todavía pueden ser la luz para los demás — todo lo que necesitan es valor.”

Para ver la sesión de Dydine Umunyana, visita la página de YouTube de *WorldLink* en, www.YouTube.com/user/WorldLinkIntern. ■

Identificando y Combatiendo el Tráfico de Sexo

Escrito por Olivia Zaller, Coronado High School.
Traducido por Ana Maria Rubio, Academy of Our Lady of Peace.

“Imagina un mundo donde las niñas no están a la venta,” comentó Charisma De Los Reyes al comenzar la discusión acerca la trata de personas en la décima-octava conferencia anual de jóvenes de *World-Link*. Trabajadora social de San Diego por trece años, De Los Reyes ha dedicado su carrera identificando la trata de personas, en especial la trata de mujeres jóvenes, a nivel local así como internacional.

La explotación comercial sexual se ha convertido en un gran problema en San Diego que ha incrementado dramáticamente en años recientes. Para ponerlo en perspectiva, De Los Reyes explicó que en San Diego solamente, se han hecho \$96.6 millones en un año por la explotación comercial sexual. “Hay que identificar la explotación sexual,” dijo De Los Reyes cuando enseñaba una diapositiva que mostraba una lista incluyendo caminando en la calle, pornografía, sexo de supervivencia, agencias, fiestas privadas, llamadas de video, y prostitución por medio de pandillas, como formas comunes de explotación sexual.

Mientras la presentación progresaba, los delegados quedaban más asombrados, y muchos preguntaron cómo y por qué la explotación sexual pasa en una ciudad como San Diego. De Los Reyes explicó que las víctimas de la trata de personas no son protegidas por la corte de justicia porque cuando actos sexuales son intercambiados por valor, como dinero o comida, el crimen ya no se considera “violación” sino “prostitución.” Ya que la prostitución es ilegal, la conclusión incorrecta es que las víctimas de la trata de personas son culpables por tomar acción en un acto ilegal.

¿Cómo es que pasa la trata de personas? Esta es una pregunta compleja con muchas razones de porque estos actos horribles pasan y nadie los nota. Puede empezar cuando una niña es reclutada para la prostitución, algunas en escuelas de secundaria y preparatoria por medio de niñas mayores que son forzadas a reclutar más niñas por sus proxenetas. Reclutamientos pueden también suceder en las calles, con jóvenes que se han ido o los han sacado de su casa siendo los grupos de más alto riesgo.

De Los Reyes preguntó a los delegados estudiantes, “¿Que creen que un joven vagabundo estaría sintiendo en las primeras veinticuatro horas que esta en la calle?” Las respuestas variaron desde “triste” a “hambriento” a “con frío” a “horrible” antes de que la discusión continuara. Como se había previsto, todas las respuestas fueron y están correctas, y es por esto que los vagabundos suelen responder a cualquier depredador que se acerque a ellos y les ofrezcan comida o “un lugar seguro para dormir.”

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Delegados participando en una actividad de paz.



Foto por S. Thomson



Foto por E. Kuglen-Alvarez



Foto por S. Stotelmeye

Atrevido a ser Justo en Nepal

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criminales.” Desafortunadamente, debido a la decisión de los cargos a Prabh Shah, Kharel fue obligado a renunciar, lo cual demostró los altos niveles de crimen y corrupción continuo en la nación.

De acuerdo a Kharel, la clave para el gran reto de combatir la corrupción es hacer que la gente tome conciencia, se informe y motivarlos a “ser innovadores y líderes de la sociedad.” Particularmente, Kharel se ha enfocado en la comunidad juvenil, teniendo fe en que “la participación de los jóvenes y ciudadanos cumplidores de la ley son

un requisito.”

En el 2012, la policía de Nepal anunció una campaña de concientización nacional de cinco meses de duración. A través de esto, la policía movilizó a los jóvenes, se unió con representantes de organizaciones cívicas y sociales, visitó espacios afectados por drogas, y organizó eventos para educar a los ciudadanos sobre los peligros del cultivo de drogas. Esta iniciativa “alcanzó un excelente resultado” y el tráfico de drogas disminuyó en una escala nacional.

Antes de que Kharel viniera al distrito de Parsa, la policía local hacía caso omiso al comercio ilegal a cambio de dinero. Dentro de un año, el

cultivo de marihuana y opio disminuyó significativamente en el Distrito Parsa después de ser considerado la capital de las drogas en Nepal.

El liderazgo ejemplar y determinación de Kharel ayudó al país a dirigirse a operaciones más legales y libres de corrupción. Un país no puede tener verdadera libertad a menos que se honre y respete por medio de leyes justas. Los esfuerzos de Kharel en defender la ley y motivar a la juventud es inspirador, y no solamente sirve como una guía a una solución pacífica sino también como un llamado a la sociedad para atender divisiones económicas y los derechos humanos. ■

Ustedes no necesitan dinero o riqueza para cambiar el mundo. Ustedes no necesitan poder para hacer el bien. Ustedes todavía pueden ser la luz para los demás — todo lo que necesitan es valor.

— Dydine Umunyana, Aegis Trust y Umbrella Cinema Promoters

Erradicando la Violencia, un Salón y una Corte a la Vez

Escrito por Ivanna Quiceno, Mater Dei Catholic High School. Traducido por Sandra Quiroz, IMAN.

Mientras discutía acerca de grupos de apoyo, o “círculos restaurativos,” y mediación de compañeros, el conferencista Bao Ly compartió, “Es sumamente importante poner en práctica el respeto y la empatía. Muchas veces las emociones interfieren, pero debes mantenerte objetivo. Realmente debes estar atento para que las personas que están compartiendo se sientan cómodas.” Ly es uno de muchos estudiantes en *Crawford High School Academy of Law*, quienes actúan como ejemplo de personas dedicadas a la prevención de la violencia para lograr un cambio positivo.

Crawford High School Academy of Law es una de once escuelas que pertenecen a *California Partnership Academies* en el estado. Este programa expone a los alumnos a actividades rigurosas relacionadas con la ley, tales como corte dirigida por jóvenes, procesos simulados y mediación de compañeros. Los estudiantes de *Crawford Academy of Law*, actualmente, sirven como asesores para el Distrito Escolar Unificado de San Diego (*San Diego Unified School District*), preparando un reporte con recomendaciones para la expansión del uso de justicia restaurativa en el distrito.

Steve Luttbeg, maestro de leyes en el programa, enfatizó, “Los estudiantes nos han ayudado a desarrollar los procesos de justicia para la restauración, mediante los cuales descubrimos nuevas maneras positivas y constructivas de resolver los problemas.

Esto es valioso tanto para los perpetradores como para los mediadores.”

En la décima-octava conferencia anual de jóvenes de *WorldLink*, el alumno Alan Obregon compartió un poco acerca de su experiencia con la corte de adolescentes en *Crawford High School*. Si un adolescente comete un delito menor en la escuela, tal como asalto, vandalismo, robo, o presenta conductas inadecuadas en la escuela, un oficial lo arresta y lo manda a la corte de adolescentes como una alternativa. El estudiante debe admitir y responsabilizarse de sus acciones antes de continuar con el proceso. Es entonces cuando el jurado formado de compañeros puede hacer preguntas para lograr una decisión unánime.

Una sentencia puede incluir escribir una carta de disculpa al afectado, hacer servicio social, escribir un ensayo, participar en talleres para el manejo del enojo o abuso de sustancias, o servir como jurado. Si la sentencia se cumple en un periodo de noventa días, la corte retira los cargos. Se encontró que 98% de los ofensores que son sometidos a la corte adolescente no vuelven a cometer otro crimen. Por otro lado, los adolescentes que tienen un registro de antecedentes penales y han estado en el reclusorio de menores, tienen dificultades para continuar y terminar sus estudios así como para obtener empleo. Obregon compartió, “He sido jurado de adolescentes por tres años, y se siente gratificante apoyar a mis compañeros. Es como si les estuviera dando una segunda oportunidad en sus vidas.”

Con la ayuda de *Social Advocates for Youth* en San Diego, que entrenan a los estudiantes de preparatoria para ser jurados, la corte de adolescentes se lleva a cabo todos los miércoles en la noche en la corte del centro de San Diego y el primer día de cada mes en *Crawford High School*.

La siguiente conferencista, la estudiante Emily Yun, compartió acerca de mediación de

compañeros. Es una forma de negociar en la cual dos personas o grupos llenan una solicitud expresando su punto de vista y posición acerca del problema. A través de un proceso de mediación de seis pasos, un mediador entrenado (un compañero) reúne los diferentes puntos de vista, identifica los intereses que las dos partes tienen en común, y analiza las posibles alternativas. Antes de que la sesión termine, las dos partes deben de llegar a un acuerdo y firmar un contrato el cual asegura que van a cumplir con lo establecido. Si no se llega a un acuerdo, es posible agendar otra sesión. Yun compartió su experiencia personal la cual fue muy gratificante, ella dijo, “Muchas relaciones han sido restauradas, aunque a veces se necesitan varias sesiones para lograrlo.”

Después de Yun, la conferencista Larissa Galeana explicó como funcionan los “círculos restaurativos,” donde los estudiantes se sientan en un círculo a discutir un tema en particular guiados por un facilitador que es neutral. En estos círculos, los estudiantes construyen un ambiente de comunidad. La persona que tiene el *talking piece*, la pieza para hablar, es el único que tiene permiso de hablar, lo cual permite que los demás puedan escuchar y reflexionar lo dicho.

A través de esto, muchos estudiantes se dan cuenta de las cosas que el grupo tiene en común. El facilitador conecta la discusión a conflictos de hoy en día, con el propósito de que los participantes puedan aplicar a su vida diaria lo que han aprendido. Galeana dijo, “Muchas veces, los estudiantes les comentan a sus amigos acerca de los ‘círculos restaurativos’ o la mediación de compañeros. Si consideran que algo violento podría suceder, quieren que sus compañeros se sometan a medidas preventivas.” Como resultado, las escuelas que ponen en práctica estos “círculos restaurativos” han reducido su porcentaje de suspensiones y expulsiones.

Todas estas prácticas requieren confidencialidad y, mas que nada, apoyo para que los miembros de la comunidad se sientan seguros. Justicia restaurativa puede prevenir la violencia y mantener a los adolescentes fuera de situaciones peligrosas. Puede traer paz, aliviar heridas que ha dejado la violencia, y restaurar relaciones que han terminado. A través del liderazgo y fortaleza de estos jóvenes agentes de cambio de *Crawford Academy of Law*, los estudiantes de San Diego y Baja México empezarán a entender el verdadero significado de la justicia restaurativa y su impacto de larga duración. ■



Moderadora Alexis Parkhurst y conferencista Steve M. Luttbeg.
Foto por M. Ramírez Servin

Identificando y Combatiendo el Tráfico de Sexo

Continuación de página 9

Los reclutadores a veces están en lugares populares de los jóvenes vagabundos por las noches con comida, ropa, y la promesa de seguridad para atraer a sus víctimas. De acuerdo a De Los Reyes, estadísticas recientes muestran que hasta uno de cinco jóvenes sin hogar van a experimentar un acercamiento de un reclutador dentro de las primeras cuarenta y ocho horas de estar en la calle. Hay aproximadamente 2500 jóvenes en la calle cada noche en San Diego. Es en los primeros dos días que un niño está más vulnerable, haciéndolo un blanco fácil.

Algunas formas de reclutamiento pueden incluir haciéndose amigas de las víctimas, persuasión, darles lujos, o por la fuerza. En un estado mental tan negativo y sin nadie a quien tenerle confianza, no es sorprendente que la seducción es la táctica número uno de reclutamiento de niñas. Este concepto de “seducción” continúa por toda la carrera de la víctima, que normalmente es de cuatro a siete años antes de que se consideren “viejas.” Reclutadas a una edad temprana, muchas víctimas nunca se han sentido amadas, así que ellas ven la falsa seducción como amor, escogiendo quedarse con sus proxenetas aun cuando son prostitutas.

Ademas, las víctimas casi siempre ven a sus abusadores como benévolo cuando escogen no maltratarlas.

Pensamientos distorsionados como estos causan que niñas se queden en el ciclo abusivo. Sin embargo, muchas que se han dado cuenta que están en una situación extremadamente peligrosa quieren escapar pero no saben como. “Ya que ellas estan en el sistema por unos años, es imposible escapar. Los proxenetas las ven como dinero a este punto, no como personas, y ellos harán lo que esté en su poder para evitar perderlas,” enfatizó De Los Reyes al hablar de las realidades abusivas de la trata de personas.

Para evitar que las víctimas se vayan del sistema, los proxenetas las amenazan con lastimar a sus hermanos o hasta sus bebés. Por esta razón, estas niñas no tienen escape, que contesta la pregunta, “¿Por que no se van?” que muchos de los delegados estudiantes propusieron. De Los Reyes cerró la sesión con un video hecho por una sobreviviente de la trata de personas, quien enfatizó que ella nada mas quería amor, una figura paternal, y una familia. Siguiendo el video, De Los Reyes les recordó a los delegados, “Las leyes solo son buenas si las ejecutamos. Ahora, depende de ustedes.”

Sorprendida después de

comprender el nivel tan alto de crimen entrelazado en ciudades como San Diego, Rory Fallmer de *The Grauer School* declaró, “Lo más sorprendente de esta presentación fueron los números. Yo no tenía idea de que tantas niñas de mi edad estaban involucradas en la trata de personas. Me inspiro a hacer algo.” Después de tres influyentes sesiones, De Los Reyes tuvo esperanza de que los delegados estudiantes se unieran a la lucha contra la trata de personas en San Diego, y no parar ahí pero continuar la ayuda a combatir la trata de personas globalmente.

Para ver la sesión de Charisma De Los Reyes, visita la página de YouTube de *WorldLink* en, www.YouTube.com/user/WorldLinkIntern. ■



Charisma De Los Reyes aplaude el entusiasmo de los delegados de hacer cambio.
Foto por E. Alvarez

Yo no tenía idea de que tantas niñas de mi edad estaban involucradas en la trata de personas. Me inspiro a hacer algo.

— Rory Fallmer, The Grauer School

Examining Violence in Its Many Manifestations *Continued from page 7*

set out on ever since he became a police officer twenty-five years ago.

Today, as the senior superintendent of police and commandant at the Nepal Police Junior Training College, he believes that youth can play a large role in helping eradicate unjust behavior and criminality. He asserted that youth around the world can have this level of influence. “Be creative, be constructive, be imaginative. Imagination nurtures the limitless energy of the youth years and the contagious passion to make a difference. In the absence of imagination, violence succeeds and terror breeds,” explained Kharel.

WorldLink’s Opening Plenary concluded with an extensive question and answer session, providing student delegates and the panel experts a platform to exchange their beliefs on the complexities of violence. One conference delegate asked, “How can you really address infinite, seemingly insurmountable problems, especially as youth. [...] How do you start?” In response, the panelists echoed the statements made by WorldLink interns Harkness and Jacobs, explaining that we each have our own calling and by contributing our individual skills and passion, we will each leave our own imprint on this journey of peacebuilding.

Umunyana closed the opening session by saying, “We don’t want [to live life] in the darkness. It’s up to us to choose light.” The panel enlightened more than 700 youth leaders to live positively and spread their inner light throughout the world, and leave with a sense of hope and purpose to restore the world.

To watch the Opening Plenary, visit WorldLink’s YouTube page at www.YouTube.com/user/WorldLinkIntern. ■



WorldLink reporter Karla Martínez Juárez interviewing Ted Miles. Photo by A. Galindo Villezcas

Called to Act: What Can We Do?

Written by Karla Martínez Juárez, CETYS Tijuana

“We have the responsibility to be the voice for those who have no voice,” said Ted Miles. As lead coordinator for Called to Witness, an international program at Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Miles provides youth with global first-hand experiences to work for solidarity, peace and justice on various issues including youth violence prevention. Dedicating his life to preventing and healing the wounds of violence, Miles highlighted a few fundamental aspects of peacebuilding to student delegates at WorldLink’s 18th Annual Youth Town Meeting.

According to Miles, there are three steps that are necessary before attempting to solve a problem involving violence. We must examine the conflict at hand, understand the root causes, and identify who will be affected by the conflict. These three steps are essential in order for effective change to occur.

During his briefing session, “Called to Witness, Called to Act,” Miles articulated that peacebuilding work may feel daunting and uncomfortable at times. When working in the field of violence prevention and healing, one sees the struggles of numerous individuals around the world. The path to recovery may seem hopeless. However, Miles urgently avowed that we cannot give up. Instead, hopelessness should motivate us to tackle problems in a way that reflects our sincere and deep commitment.

To further explain the nature of peacebuilding, Miles asked for four student volunteers to participate in a “human sculpture” activity. In this illustration of society, Miles asked the first student to situate herself on the ground, while another student stood tall above her. Close behind the second student, a third student stood on a chair, while the fourth student held the chair to keep it in place.

Miles asked, “What could this sculpture symbolize?” Delegates suggested that it could represent social classes. Perhaps the student volunteer on the ground represented the general population, or more specifically poverty stricken populations, followed by the overseeing governments, and lastly the media standing tall behind them. Conference delegates interpreted that without having someone hold the chair, the structure was in danger of falling.

While there was no single correct answer, since the “human sculpture” is based on one’s own interpretation, the activity does emphasize the dynamics of power. Miles explained that for a community that wants to progress, power must be used *with* others and not *over* others. Moreover, to change the world, we need to accept that power is an essential part of our reality. He stated, “Power doesn’t have to be used to put people down, but instead to lift them up.”

Miles further explained this idea by introducing Integral Human Development (IHD), a concept that affirms that “personal well-being can only be achieved in the context of just and peaceful relationships and a thriving environment.” IHD, which is central to CRS’ work, involves a “willingness to be able to use our power to help people [for] development of a whole society.”

Young global citizens must view this principle as a future pillar of our society. Healing and preventing the wounds of violence must work in tandem to ensure a brighter tomorrow. A change for good requires our full involvement, commitment, and careful use of power. Even if we feel overwhelmed by some truths of this world or believe that we don’t have the power to make a big impact, we must remember that small, sincere actions can sometimes be more meaningful. Each individual voice has power, and those who have it also have the obligation to help those who do not. ■

Providing Alternatives to Gang Life

Written by Morgan Chen, Outside the Lens (The Bishop’s School)

Alex Sanchez serves as an example of the change that can come from healing the wounds of violence. Sanchez is executive director of Homies Unidos, a Los Angeles-based organization that works to prevent gang violence and provide positive alternatives. Bridging the lessons learned from his own life as a gang leader to his newfound hope to uplift and educate young people, Sanchez uses his experiences to lead local and international communities in the efforts of violence prevention and intervention.

He arrived in the United States in 1979, just before the Salvadoran Civil War began. “I hated everything about the U.S.,” said Sanchez, who experienced racism and struggled to adapt to life in a different country as a young boy. He recounted, “I hated school. Back then we didn’t have ESL.” Sanchez also faced the struggle of being Salvadoran, something that language could not hide. “People who looked like me, Mexicans, didn’t understand where I was from. My slang was different from their slang. There was constant harassment.”

Due to this emotional turmoil, Sanchez joined the Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS-13), a gang formed in Los Angeles by immigrant Salvadorans, many who had fought in the civil war themselves. For the first time, Sanchez felt welcomed.

He explained, “Gangs are a tool used by youth, when youth need to heal from trauma. We want an excuse to hurt someone. It provides you with the vehicle — the violence and the drugs — to deal with your problems.” He also described the violent na-

ture of gang rivalry as “a silent agreement” that exists so a gang member can take their anger out on a rival gang member. “You cover up your feelings with anger.”

Arrested during his time as a leader in MS-13, Sanchez explained, “In the ‘90s, there were zero-tolerance initiatives, cleaning certain areas of undesirables. They picked up people that were homeless even before they committed a crime.” In addition, he said that the attempts to reform youth were often fruitless. “You’re institutionalized, but you don’t un-



Alex Sanchez on the importance of violence prevention and intervention. Photo by J. Chen

derstand what you did wrong. Juvenile halls did not change me, but made me worse.”

After going to prison two more times, Sanchez was deported back to El Salvador, a country he no longer recognized. The situation in his home country was dire. In El Salvador, the government funded death squads in order to “clean up” the country’s image. As a result, gang life provided a feeling of power and confidence and a sense of belonging for impoverished and even neglected kids. “For these children [in Salvadoran gangs], it was better to die by death

squads than to change.”

However, for Sanchez, his mentality changed after he was deported to El Salvador and met the founder of Homies Unidos, Magdaleno Rose Avila, as well as others that were working towards making a positive difference. Sanchez soon realized that engaging in violent acts and using drugs were ways to deal with problems, and that gang violence served as an outlet for unexpressed emotions. Thus, he began to work towards providing alternatives to gang life through Homies Unidos.

As stated by the Homies Unidos organization, “A group of youth from different neighborhoods came together in San Salvador, El Salvador to discuss methods and means of diminishing the violence that plagues too many of our lives and communities.” To-

day, the organization provides services in deportee assistance, job training, community outreach, and education, including The Epiphany Project — a 12-week program open to former gang members.

“You have to know what you’re fighting against,” remarked Sanchez. Today, he uses his past experiences to better understand individuals who are involved in gang activity in order to effectively provide programs and services that serve as alternatives to gang life. ■

Be creative, be constructive, be imaginative. Imagination nurtures the limitless energy of the youth years and the contagious passion to make a difference. In the absence of imagination, violence succeeds and terror breeds.

— Ramesh Kharel, Nepal Police

Circles: Resolving Conflicts through Restorative Justice

Written by Priscilla Hardianto, The Bishop’s School

After two dozen delegates took their seats in the formation of a circle, Anthony Ceja, an expert on gang violence prevention, and Justine Darling, who has led hundreds of community-building restorative circles, began to illustrate the experience of restorative justice. Designed to create open discussion and understanding between victims and offenders of harmful actions, restorative justice is a unique approach towards justice that concerns the needs of the victims, offenders, and their communities.

Instead of satisfying a strict interpretation of the law or focusing on punishing an offender, restorative justice emphasizes fairness and responsibility for one’s actions. Often the main technique used is facilitated conversation in a circle, a shape that symbolizes wholeness and unity, which can be held in classrooms, community centers, or even prisons.

Ceja and Darling divided the group into two separate circles, and each led their respective groups through a restorative circle experience. Before beginning, they introduced a specific set of rules: (1) Respect the talking piece which participants will pass around the circle to prompt conversation; (2) Speak and listen from your heart; (3) Speak and listen

with respect, not criticism; (4) Respect others’ privacy, as personal stories will be shared; and (5) Be present in the conversation. For this reason, all students’ names have been omitted in order to follow the guidelines of this particular presentation, as well as to protect the identity of the participants.

While initially stilted, the discussion grew more open during the short period. In just a few minutes, the same teens who were previously giggling with friends over breakfast found themselves discussing their life goals and daily struggles. At moments, Ceja and Darling would pose certain questions, but students took the lead in sharing their thoughts and reactions while listening with respect and understanding.

One young woman described in detail her struggles with a bully, and explained how she finally found the courage to stand up for herself and help others in similar situations. A young man shared his internal conflict with his identity as Latino, and the preconceived notions that come with his ethnicity and culture. Another student recounted her family’s financial problems and expressed her own anxiety of future difficulties with the expenses of attending college.

While the conversations became

more thoughtful and emotional, Ceja and Darling continued to encourage participation but explained that students had the option to skip their turn to speak for any reason, creating a more comfortable environment. Moreover, because conference delegates sat in a circle, they could make eye contact and see each other as fellow human beings with relatable problems and diverse goals in life.

These conversations demonstrate the power of restorative justice, a different method of problem solving and peacebuilding that goes beyond simply enforcing order. It encourages participants, who in many cases are victims and offenders, to view one another as equals with common interests of peace and justice instead of fearing one another. Although restorative justice may not work in all situations, it helps victims begin to understand the motives behind seemingly senseless, violent crimes and perpetrators begin to take responsibility and understand the consequences of their actions.

Restorative justice holds great potential in the prevention of conflict and



Ceja holding a talking piece. Photo by F. Celis

healing in the aftermath of violence through dialogue and understanding. Open conversation may not be a cure-all, but it constitutes a necessary hallmark of the peace process. ■

Dissolving Borders through Dialogue

Written by Andrés Hernández, CETYS Tijuana

“Violence can only be eradicated one person at a time, through touch and personal experience,” explained Scott Silk, director of Hands of Peace California. Based on this philosophy, the organization Hands of Peace brings together Israeli, Palestinian, and American teenagers to engage in intensive dialogue dynamics, allowing them to discuss topics that range from coexistence to interpersonal relationships. They are invited to explore the question, “How can I contribute to solve this conflict?” Youth who participate in the program build a genuine appreciation and respect for each culture involved.

WorldLink conference delegates watched intently as the film *Enlighten* played. “We stand united, until violence retires,” a powerful statement

said in unison by seven Hands of Peace students, as they lit their candles. Produced by the teenage participants of Hands of Peace, *Enlighten* was released during the summer of 2014 as violence escalated to an all time high in the Gaza Strip.

Conference speaker Khalid Abudawas, a Palestinian-American student and a youth leader of Hands of Peace California, shared, “Here we were, trying to build peace while war waged around the world. People were being marginalized from their own communities just because they were different.”

In response to the escalated violence, Hands of Peace gathered students at the Pacific Ridge School auditorium to explain the heightened conflict. A moment of silence was taken as a sign of solidarity for those whose lives were now at imminent risk. Young students averted their gaze as they tried to fight tears. Then, eyes turned to look as a female Israeli student stood up, holding the peace sign high above her head. The rest of the students followed her initiative, turning their terrified expressions into looks that inspired hope.

The restorative justice techniques of Hands of Peace seek to employ dialogue as a powerful tool to

disregard cultural misconceptions. It brings young people together in a safe space to discuss the negative effects regarding divisions across the world. Perceiving another group as “the enemy” superimposes a label on individuals and separates them from their true identity. By bringing this conflict into dialogue, students explore their thoughts and feelings and have the opportunity to truly listen to their peers. Although they may come from different backgrounds, they have shared histories and fundamental commonalities.

In many parts of the world, children grow up in environments where violence can be severe and have physical and psychological effects. The fostering of stereotypes that promote violent extremism can gravely damage the interaction between communities. From the Green Line to the Berlin Wall, to the U.S. and Mexico border, the world has been and continues to be dominated by walls that prevent humanity from developing into a peaceful community. Invisible walls, such as prejudice and discrimination, harm the communicative process between human beings and have the potential to become visible walls, such as armed conflict.

Towards the end of this briefing session, Ashley Strickland, a student delegate from Sunset High School, noted the importance of Israeli and Palestinian program participants to use their newfound leadership skills, in order to be able to share the power of dialogue once they returned home. “Maybe that way people will be

able to obtain further understanding of others and bring communities together,” Strickland stated. “You don’t have to be part of a minority. You just have to own a willingness to fight for change.”

By connecting the Palestinian, Israeli, American, and Mexican youth at the WorldLink Youth Town Meeting, Hands of Peace has laid the first stepping stone towards a path of long-lasting honesty and peace. Only through dialogue and an acceptance of diverse perspectives can we, as young global citizens, truly make a difference.

Let us not forget that the supposed “enemy” is also human. The color of their skin, their beliefs, or the place from which they come from should not make them an “enemy.” We are all vulnerable to the threats of bigotry and exclusion. It is time to put aside hate for what is considered different, and start living for peace. ■



Student Fernanda Ávila from Federal Lazaro Cardenas attends Hands of Peace session. Photo by V. García



Khalid Abudawas with conference delegate. Photo by A. Tsuchiya Ramírez

We stand united, until violence retires.

—Youth Leaders, Hands of Peace

Unlocking the Tools to Healing and Preventing Domestic Violence

Written by Isabel Harmet, Cathedral Catholic High School

Zuzana Vasiliauskaite, an international intern at the Institute on Violence, Abuse & Trauma (IVAT) at Alliant International University, has used her passion and knowledge to help and inspire countless survivors of domestic violence. Originally from Lithuania, Vasiliauskaite currently lives in San Diego and works as an assistant editor for five international journals on issues including family violence and child and adolescent abuse and trauma.

In her conference briefing session, “Caring for Victims Overcoming Trauma,” she explained that domestic violence is extremely common around the world and each community must take action in order to stop and prevent these ongoing forms of violence. According to Vasiliauskaite, “Information is the greatest tool.” Domestic violence is a form of interpersonal

violence, meaning it occurs within relationships. These abusive relationships can exist between an individual and their parent, child, or partner, to name a few. We must realize that domestic violence can happen to anyone, so we have to educate ourselves on the different ways it takes forms, including physical, psychological, sexual, emotional, and economic.

In all cases, encouraging communication is the most important step towards the healing and prevention of domestic violence. If you know someone suffering from domestic abuse, reach out to them, ask how you can become part of the solution, and encourage them to seek help, whether it be medical, legal, or psychological support. For a list of San Diego services and national online resources, please refer to the information below, provided by Vasiliauskaite. As Martin Lu-

ther King, Jr. said, “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends.”

Despite preventative efforts, millions of people around the world have or will experience domestic violence in their lives, but as Vasiliauskaite said, communication is key. Whether you are aware of someone else experiencing violence or are experiencing violence yourself, your voice will serve as the most powerful tool. Seeking out help from others or offering support to others in need are key in healing the wounds of violence. “Sometimes there isn’t a lot we can do, but there is *always* something,” said Vasiliauskaite. If we work together and use both our ears and our voices, together as youth, we may be able to put an end to domestic violence. ■

San Diego Services:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters - (858) 536-4900
- Center LGBT Youth Services - (619) 497-2920 ext. 101
- County of San Diego Mental Health Crisis - (619) 236-3339
- San Diego Center for Children - (858) 277-9550
- San Diego County Domestic Violence - (888) 385-4657 (24-hour hotline)
- San Diego Youth-Community Services - (866) 752-2327
- Suicide Crisis Hotline - (888) 724-7240
- Suicide Prevention - (619) 557-0500
- Teen Recovery Center - (888) 286-5027

Online Resources:

- www.acadv.org • www.atg.wa.gov/teen-dating-violence
- www.breakthecycle.org • www.ccssd.org • www.cdc.gov/CDCTV/
- BreakTheSilence • www.futureswithoutviolence.org
- www.giverespect.org • www.ikeepsafe.org • www.joetorre.org
- www.kbep.org • www.kidpower.org • www.loveisrespect.org
- www.netsmartz.org • www.rainn.org • www.respectlove.opdv.ny.gov
- www.sddvc.org • www.sdsheriff.net/dv/teen-dating.html
- www.stopbullying.gov • www.teensagainstabuse.org
- www.thatnotcool.com • www.thehotline.org

A Filter-Free Humanity: Peacebuilding through the Arts

Written by Sandra Quiroz, IMAN, and Olivia Zaller, Coronado High School

Wendy Sternberg’s passion for healing through the arts immediately became evident during her briefing session at WorldLink’s 18th Annual Youth Town Meeting. After student delegates arranged themselves in a circle, Sternberg explained that her organization, Genesis at the Crossroads, brings together artists from Iran, Afghanistan, Cuba, Morocco, India, Israel and the United States for multicultural collaborations of performances, music education and humanitarian work. Together, they fight to mend wounds from physical and emotional abuse and violence in an attempt to embody cross-cultural healing through the arts.

Sternberg shared an experience from a 1999 seminar that she attended on leadership and self-expression, at which each attendee was asked to turn to the person next to them and share what they had learned from the discussions. As a Jewish woman, Sternberg found herself sitting next to an Arab man. In uncharted territory, both of them quickly realized that they each had preconceived notions often associated with one another’s faith.

Nonetheless, they completely put aside their evident differences, listened, and were empathetic to what the other had to say. The more they spoke, the more they realized that their apparent differences were not important and had little influence on their conversation or ability to listen with an open mind. Sternberg realized that she had viewed

this man through a “filter,” one that she realized was vacuous.

She explained to the student delegates that prior to attending the seminar, she had lived a “filtered” life. She emphasized the need to diminish barriers and collaborate for more authentic and productive discussions. Each individual possesses certain filters, whether he or she notices them or not, because modern society shapes us to view our surroundings through certain lenses, which influences our beliefs and behavior. According to Sternberg, our duty as citizens of the world is to try to remove these habitual filters, engage in exponential thought, and form our own opinions instead of taking those of society.

After undergoing such a powerful epiphany, Sternberg found herself fascinated by the way cultures interact. She took it upon herself to develop a way for a vast variety of cultures to work together in order to help those in need. It was then that she realized that the arts, being “neutral and creative,” would be the perfect platform to begin such a process. She explained, “That was the premise of Genesis at the Crossroads, to use cross-cultural collaborative arts in a very innovative way and to combine it with education. And eventually combine it with humanitarian work to impact the world.”

Genesis at the Crossroads began as a half-day program focused on connecting artists from the Middle East and North Africa through music and dance. What once began as a thought in Stern-



Wendy Sternberg from Genesis at the Crossroads. Photo by C. Valera Gómez

berg’s mind had expanded into several programs that allowed artists, who were originally strangers, to use different forms of art as vehicles for peacebuilding. Due to the organization’s “unique brand of arts diplomacy,” one of its performances was recognized at the United Nation’s 60th Anniversary.

Genesis at the Crossroads’ programs have continued to grow and take form as innovative performance, educational, and humanitarian collaborations. Its programs have placed instruments in the hands of those who never imagined having the opportunity, such as children living in conflict zones. Sternberg discovered that “cross-cultural artistic expression and collaboration serve as a catalyst for inter-ethnic dialogue and innovation, global understanding and world peace,” which brings us closer to a filter-free humanity.

To learn more about Genesis at the Crossroads, please visit www.gatc.org. ■

ARTS: Healing the Scars

Written by Nanitzia Comparán Cuadras, CETYS Tijuana

I only had one thought on my mind as I arrived at the briefing session “Creativity: A Transformative Power.” How could art heal the wounds of violence? Violence has the ability to create physical, emotional, and psychological scars, each taking a long time to heal. But how do we expect to do this through art?

The session featured Hulya D’Arrigo, Caitlin Murphy, and Jessica Petrikowski, from A Reason to Survive (ARTS), a nationally recognized organization founded in 2001 by Matt D’Arrigo, whose mother and sister were both diagnosed with cancer. In response, he turned to painting and music, which was very healing for him. It was at that point that he developed the idea “to create a place, as well as an opportunity, for children to express themselves through the arts,” said Hulya D’Arrigo, a licensed clinical social worker for ARTS.

ARTS provides opportunities for children and teenagers dealing with trauma to feel valued and safe. Jessica Petrikowski, a youth participant of the program, is a survivor of an “abusive and violent relationship,” as well as “drug abuse and self-harm.” She explained, “ARTS gave me a reason to survive. It made me emotionally stronger.” One of her dreams is “to show people that they can share their stories in all different types of mediums.”

Moments later, Caitlin Murphy, a Marriage Family Therapy Heal Program Intern, explained that ARTS provides several programs. One of these programs is the Heal, Inspire and Empower program, which according to Murphy is “much more about the process of making the art rather than the product.” The process of producing art helps survivors release their repressed feelings by providing a deeper level of communication and expression.

Photographers, makeup artists, fashion designers and architects are all artists. According to Hulya D’Arrigo, “Art is one of the most powerful forces to create a positive change and transformation.” In that moment, I understood that the arts have the power to make a huge impact on each of our lives and help guide us through the process of healing any scars that we may have. ■



Murphy, D’Arrigo and moderator Pablo Bejarano. Photo by S. Thomson

Art is one of the most powerful forces to create a positive change and transformation.
— Hulya D’Arrigo, A Reason to Survive (ARTS)

The Impacts of Transitional Justice in El Salvador and Sierra Leone

Written by Javier Correa Gómez, Colegio Ibero Tijuana

While a student in college, Steve Vigil began working with the National Coalition for Barrios Unidos, a Santa Cruz-based organization focused on youth violence prevention that works towards providing various opportunities to underserved young people and former prisoners. “I want to help people see that they can have a future,” said Vigil. His commitment to violence prevention and capacity building has taken him all the way to the United Nations, through which he has provided support in peacekeeping missions in East Timor, Liberia, Sudan, South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Sierra Leone. He has also worked to support peacebuilding activities in El Salvador as part of Barrios Unidos.

Vigil, now a conflict mitigation and development specialist, described his experiences working in conflict areas around the world supporting different forms of transitional justice, such as truth commissions. To further explain the different impacts transitional justice can have on countries, he discussed his experiences working on advocacy efforts supporting a gang truce in El Salvador and the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone. Both of these countries had come out of tumultuous civil wars.

In El Salvador, the civil war emerged between two groups: the military-led national government and *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN), which was made up of left-wing guerrilla groups. The tensions erupted into a vicious civil war with systematic human rights violations sponsored by the state. After twelve years, the war ended in 1992 through the Chapultepec Peace Accords that established the United Nations Truth Commission for El Salvador. However, following the civil war and failed attempts to hold those responsible for massive human rights violations, the rise of gang violence and corruption served as further obstacles and hindered peace from finally being achieved throughout the country.

Sierra Leone shares a similar history, but with a different aftermath. After attaining independence, Sierra Leone’s local governments used the country’s natural resources to reap wealth without providing for the citizens, sparking anger and discontent due to the large wealth gap. The civil war in Sierra Leone started in 1991 and continued until 2002 between the national government and the rebel army, the Revolutionary United Front. Throughout the eleven-year conflict, acts of rape, mutilation, and the use of child soldiers were committed, among other human rights violations. However, despite the high levels of violence that took place, Sierra Leone battled with fewer long-term repercussions following the Lome Peace Accord, in comparison to El Salvador.

According to Vigil, the peacekeeping operation in Sierra Leone supported the citizens through different forms of transitional justice and reduced the levels of violence, disarming more than 75,000 former combatants over the course of six years. This made it possible for Sierra Leone’s citizens to feel the benefits of peace. In El Salvador, although the peacekeeping mission attempted to guide a truth and reconciliation process, former combatants from both sides of the conflict blocked these efforts. This allowed for the continuation of economic inequality and corruption. The country experienced growing levels of gang violence in the post-war years.

By comparing and contrasting these two countries as well as their histories, we can begin to see that what may work well in one country may not work well in another. We need to mold our minds towards this form of thinking. Like Vigil, we need to analyze each individual country in order to fully understand the impact transitional justice will have on that particular population. We are youth and this is our world. It is our responsibility to take this approach in order to successfully identify the most effective steps towards healing the wounds of civil wars. ■

Building Relationships: A Key to Understanding and Healing Trauma

Written by Zyanya Mejía Huidobro, CETYS Tijuana

Dan Stacy began by saying, “You aren’t going to need to write or take notes, just put it all away. This is a talking, experiential workshop.” During WorldLink’s 18th Annual Youth Town Meeting, Stacy opened his briefing session with this powerful and unique dynamic used by Circles 4 Change, the nonprofit organization he founded that “recognizes and addresses children’s issues and provides the personal awareness and relationship-building skills necessary for change.”

Since its inception in 2005, Circles 4 Change has expanded its reach from exclusively working with at-risk youth to helping all youth develop the necessary skills to cope with intense emotions and improve their relationships with those around them.

In his session, Stacy asked all conference delegates to form their chairs into a circle. Without further explanation, he began to ask everyone what trauma meant to them. Definitions varied, with words like “powerful,” “scarring,” and “life-changing.” Stacy explained that according to his philosophy, trauma does not have to involve a dramatic, public catastrophe. Rather, trauma is deeply personal. The perceptions of the affected person determine whether or not something is traumatic. To illustrate this point, students were asked to share a

moment of trauma, big or small.

Through this perception-based definition of trauma, it can be easier to be empathetic, understand another person’s emotional wounds, and find potential solutions for them. The Circles 4 Change team helps young people overcome traumatic events by using techniques that foster understanding and relationship-building. This form of trauma-informed care has the power of “building relationships by changing perceptions.”

Stacy acknowledges that building relationships comes over time and is not an easy feat. He explained that perceptions are the biggest obstacle for relationship-building, simply because perceptions are the way we see and interpret the world around us. However,

since perceptions are built around life experiences, programs like Circles 4 Change can help us challenge our existing perceptions and build new ones. This is the first step to embarking on new and mutually beneficial relationships.

He remarked, “To let people in is courage. To share is courage. [...] We get our strength and courage from our relationships.” This is the most complicated and beautiful aspect of his philosophy — to open our hearts to others, we must first gather strength from those around us. As a circle itself, healing is not one-sided but rather a continuous process of changing perceptions in order to understand and heal trauma in others and in ourselves. ■



Delegate Karla Vázquez and teacher Marie-Line Allen attend Circles 4 Change session, “Ending Violence by Changing Perceptions.” Photo by V. García

REBBL with a Cause

Written by Eliza Lafferty, Outside the Lens (The Bishop’s School)

Today, slavery continues to hold close to 35 million people victim and profits \$150 billion per year. Human trafficking and modern-day slavery violate individuals’ natural rights through the objectification of men, women and children worldwide.

After reading an article regarding the presence of human trafficking in Berkeley in 1999, entrepreneur Mark Wexler became determined to help stop human trafficking and modern-day slavery around the world. Along with David Batstone, Wexler co-founded the organization Not For Sale.

With support from the new Not For Sale team, he sought to bring change to the lives of children who are forced to work as beggars, manufacturers, and prostitutes in Lima, Peru. Not For Sale took these children in and gave them a home, education, and job training. However, Wexler and the Not For Sale team realized that, despite their efforts, human trafficking in Lima grew worse.

Needing to find out why, Wexler’s team traced the trafficking patterns of Lima which led them to Madre de Dios, a region in Peru where the habitat was destroyed due to illegal mining making the people vulnerable to trafficking. Not For Sale now faced a seemingly impossible challenge of helping reconstruct a community. In order to combat the \$150 bil-

lion slavery industry, they needed to reinvent their business model. Wexler understood the importance of using one’s available resources and skills, and in this case, the available resources from both the Peruvian Amazon and Not For Sale to help the local people out of slavery.

Wexler explained, “We brought together some of the top leaders in our network,” which included business leaders, entrepreneurs, university professors, faith leaders, and even a professional baseball player, with the goal of exploring possible solutions for the people of Madre de Dios. Thus came REBBL, which stands for roots, extracts, berries, bark, and leaves — an herbal tonic now sold at Whole Foods.

REBBL uses the natural resources found in the Peruvian Amazon, creating job opportunities in the manufacturing of the product and taking people out of slavery and human trafficking into a cycle of self-sufficiency.

“It’s important to celebrate the little steps forward,” Wexler stated as he reflected on his determination towards supporting human equality and the abolition of slavery in the 21st century. Every movement in the right direction counts. It takes patience to take the lead, and it takes resilience to make a change.

To watch Mark Wexler’s briefing session, visit WorldLink’s YouTube page at www.YouTube.com/user/WorldLinkIntern. ■



Steve Vigil, conflict mitigation and development specialist. Photo by P. Nordland

To let people in is courage. To share is courage. [...] We get our strength and courage from our relationships.

— Dan Stacy, Circles 4 Change

Linguistic Genocide

Written by Chase Garcia and An Nguyen,
Scripps Ranch High School

WorldLink intern Chase Garcia and classmate An Nguyen founded the Student Advocates for Language Preservation (SALP), an organization “seeking to address the unfortunate language loss process — in immigrant and minority communities, and languages with rapidly declining number of speakers.” The first of its kind in the region, SALP enables middle school, high school and college students to become administrators, members and guest writers. SALP’s website is www.studentlanguagepreservation.org.

Linguistic genocide, as described by linguist Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, is a form of violence that deprives individuals of their heritage through cultural assimilating policies. The World Health Organization defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.” Linguistic genocide singles out languages spoken mostly by minority communities and forces these communities to give up a language, which constitutes as “deprivation” and results in the “maldevelopment” of their culture.

Russification, a political ideology that sought to promote unity in Russia, emerged as a major contributor to the decline of many indigenous languages in the country. Russification forced speakers of current languages like Chuvash and Komi to abandon their native tongue, depriving them of their cultural heritage. According to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), there are approximately 130 endangered languages in Russia, with more languages extinct due to these oppressive linguistic policies.

Moreover, the Bengali language underwent intense oppression in the 1950s, as described by *The Platform*, when an Urdu-only policy was established that lead to the deaths of many dissenting advocates for the Bengali languages. Despite efforts to silence their voices, the Bengali language became the official language of Bangladesh, a victory for the linguistically-

suppressed.

According to *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, there are 7,102 languages in the world currently spoken. However, these numbers are not permanent. Linguist Salikoko Mufwene states, “[It is] estimated that within a century or so, there will be just about 3,000 languages still spoken. And within two centuries or so, there will be even fewer languages. The number might just drop to a couple of hundred.”

Language is a necessity of everyday life and many take it for granted. At its most basic form, language is a tool for communication and a mode for the expression of ideas and emotions. Language provides a sense of identity. In a Universiti Sains Malaysia study, experts explained, “Language is the symbolic presentation of a culture.”

The death of a language comes with the tragic loss of a people’s identity, a symbolic defeat for colonialism and the power of the majority. The people of a discriminated language become victimized and alienated in mainstream society. Discriminatory language policies cause many people to feel pressure to culturally assimilate into society, thus making it easier for a government to completely destroy a people’s language through linguistic genocide.

Much of a people’s cultural and intellectual life can only be experienced through their unique language. Everyday conversations, humor, emotions, rituals, myths, and greetings are closely associated with one’s specific language. The loss of a language means — in its most extreme forms — a loss of all previous history and

cultural tradition.

Language loss also has significant consequences for linguistics as a science and the intellectual vitalism of the world. Many linguists are concerned that the rapid destruction of language will limit or make it virtually impossible to accomplish the fundamental goals of language documentation, or the reconstruction of linguistic prehistory — a key component in comprehending the world’s history. According to *Languages of the World*, Ubykh is a language that went extinct in 1992, with a phonological inventory that includes eighty-four consonants and only two vowels, the current highest ratio of consonants to vowels. Loss of any one language can mean losing a distinct way of thinking or perspective forever.

However, there is hope. Linguists are working to preserve many at-risk languages through documentation projects, detailed grammatical descriptions and recordings of speakers’ speech. Linguists also collaborate with speakers to develop language instruction materials for posterity. Yet, this hope requires a large amount of resources to continue language documentation and support for language speakers.

Youth can also take a stand and raise awareness for this often forgotten issue and combat it by connecting to their own cultural identities and by learning heritage languages. To learn more about what you can do to help preserve linguistic diversity and bring an end to linguistic genocide, please visit www.studentlanguagepreservation.org. ■

#WorldLink #HealingViolence at #YTM2015

Written by Steven Franca, St. Augustine High School, and Janine Goetzen, Kearny High School

Social media is a powerful platform that helps people share valuable information and maintain new connections that transcend borders. Throughout WorldLink’s 18th Annual Youth Town Meeting, delegates, moderators, photojournalists, teachers and even a few speakers tweeted, posted and instagrammed about their experiences throughout the transformative day, highlighting the importance of young people coming together to address pressing global concerns.

Who is Your Favorite Peacebuilder?



@WorldLinkIPJ Hearing Charisma speak was really interesting because I had no idea just how much was going on until her sex trafficking workshop.
— Phoevy Ricardo, Kearny High School



@WorldLinkIPJ I really liked Anthony Ceja and how he connects to the youth like he’s an equal.
— Rodrigo Neri, IMAN



@WorldLinkIPJ My favorite peacemaker was Arno. I admire the way he changed so drastically.
— Renata Dey, CETYS Tijuana

SAVE THE DATE!

WorldLink’s 19th Annual Youth Town Meeting

will focus on the student-selected theme...

“Youth’s Influence on the World: For Better or Worse”

Wednesday, January 20, 2016

Check out a few other posts!

Ready for my third year attending WorldLink! First year as a photographer, so exciting! #YTM2015 #WorldLink #HealingViolence #USD — @valeriegarciac

Ian Harkness speaking fire as the opening speaker at #WorldLink #YTM2015 — @CoachOsberg

Dydine Umunyana, an amazing role model. Great experience. #YTM2015 #WorldLink #HealingViolence — @alexa_orly

Whirlwind day! 700 strong new modern freedom fighters at the University of San Diego. Talking @NFS. — @Mark_Wexler

#YTM2015 This is what I live for. — @javier14gomez

Fue un orgullo e un placer ver el entusiasmo y la creatividad de la juventud Mexicana en #WorldLink #YTM2015 #HealingViolence — @SirlvanLopez

Had a great time talking with Heather Myers on CW 6 San Diego News about the journey from hate to love and speaking to 700 students from Mexico and the U.S. about the practice of peace at the 2015 WorldLink Youth Town Meeting! — @mylifeafterhate

Hearing Charisma speak was really interesting because I had no idea just how much was going on until her sex trafficking workshop.
— Phoevy Ricardo, Kearny High School



Photo by P. Nordland



Photo by E. Kuglen-Alvarez



Photo by S. Stotemyre



Photo by E. Alvarez



Photo by E. Alvarez



Photo by M. Ramírez Servín



Photo by Outside the Lens

“This meeting made me see how I can participate in changing the world by doing small things. I want to make the world a better place, not just for me but also for all citizens.”

— Sophia Nambo, Sweetwater High School

“Just being part of this event is changing something, not only in me but also in every single one of the [attendees]. We were all a part of something greater than ourselves, and in the future we will be able to comprehend and visualize its effects.”

— Jovanka Palacios Rodriguez, Federal Lázaro Cárdenas

“With the information provided to us, I am sure we are more ready and prepared than yesterday to help in making tomorrow’s world even better, with more justice, less violence, more peace. Hearing people’s personal experiences relating to the issues facing our society and how they overcame these issues [...] helped me reflect on what I would like to do to help.”

— Florisel Delfin, Escondido High School

“I realized that when a person is peaceful, they can make other people peaceful. It is in us to make the world in which we want to live.”

— Alejandra Gallardo, Colegio Baja California de Rosarito

“The Youth Town Meeting surpassed all my expectations. I learned really unexpective and interesting points of view and stories.”

— Chris Ackerman, The Bishop’s School

“I like how events such as WorldLink create a bond between students from all different places. We are all looking at the same goal: making a change.”

— Valerie García, CETYS Tijuana

“This year’s theme was very inspiring and encouraging for each student that chose to attend and be a part of the difference we are making in this world. WorldLink has been a part of my high school experience for the past three years and I am sure I will remembr everything I learned as I enter new challenges in the next years.”

— Sandy Quiroz Elizondo, IMAN

“[The Youth Town Meeting] is awesome. I love it. I think they did a good job picking a variety of different speakers.”

— Anna Williamson, Academy of Our Lady of Peace

“After listening to these amazing speakers and their stories, I think I learned a great lesson, which is to love and forgive, and to not hide. My generation is the future of the world, and if we don’t take ourselves seriously, then who will? Ideas can reach millions, like a ripple effect. Actions can change lives. From failure can come the biggest successes. An act of kindness can leave a seed in someone’s life and help them turn their life around.”

— Marissa Valenzuela Ojeda, Federal Lázaro Cárdenas



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Photo by A. Calderon Díaz



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Photo by H. Saldaña Toledano