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 relations manager for youth and religious education, took the podium first to engage students in an activity designed to demonstrate the nature of peacebuilding. To begin, he asked the 700 delegates on the floor to think about how they can promote peace and justice in their own lives, and to reflect on their individual commitments to this goal.

Miles then demonstrated the nature of peacebuilding through the placement of their arms. First, he asked everyone 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.

“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, every day you 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.

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WorldLink Program

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. WorldLink encourages critical thinking and understanding of the dynamics shaping international policies and global economies, as well as local cultures and concerns.

A staff of guest student writers from different high schools in San Diego and Baja Mexico contributed to this edition of the WorldLink Newspaper, which details the 18th Annual Youth Town Meeting (YTM) held on January 21, 2015. WorldLink’s annual YTM allows for discussions with experts, activists and fellow youth leaders from around the world. It calls upon youth to engage in global affairs and add their voices to a civil and responsible atmosphere in which we can build our diverse yet increasingly intertwined communities, with a vision of justice and peace.

Letter from the Editor

Hello,

My name is Lark Wang, and I am the 2015 WorldLink spring intern and editor-in-chief of the eighteenth edition of the WorldLink Newspaper.

On January 21st, distinguished speakers and over 700 high school students came together at WorldLink’s 18th Annual Youth Town Meeting to discuss this year’s student-selected theme, “Healing the Wounds of Violence.” Student delegates entered through the gates of the University of San Diego with anticipation and left with a new drive to understand violence, change create, and aid our fellow human beings.

Mirroring the global society we live in today, speakers hailed from Rwanda, Nepal, El Salvador, Lithuania and throughout the United States, while student delegates traveled to the conference from both sides of the U.S. and Mexico border. These global citizens represented a vast breadth of cultures, languages, and fields of work. Yet, they all understood and engaged in the immediate necessity to prevent and recover from wounds of violence.

As was posed throughout the day — Why you? Why now? Human trafficking is a $150 billion industry. Conflicts is a $150 billion industry. Conflicts

Everyone will experience the tragedy of violence and healing from its wounds, both literal and figurative, at one point in their lives. The interweaving of violence and strife into the fabric of life can seem depressing. However, every seat filled, every voice heard, and every mind inspired during this conference reflected a profound statement towards our unrelenting spirit to combat the presence and consequences of violence. Youth can help prevent and heal the wounds of youth. Youth can change the world.

Sincerely,

Lark Wang

The Bishop’s School

2015 WorldLink editor-in-chief

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2015 WorldLink Press

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T he 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**
Presenter: Scott Silk, director, Hands of Peace California
Khalid Abudawas and Roxanne Corbell, 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 Vasiliauskaitie, international intern, Institute on Violence, Abuse and Trauma
Moderators: Alan Hira!. Ahuaztín (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 Marasia (John Muir High School) & Dakota Barksdale (San Diego High School)

**Identifying and Combating Sex Trafficking in San Diego**
Presenter: Charmita 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 Lustbego, law teacher, Crawford HS Academy of Law
Youth Leaders, Crawford HS Academy of Law
Moderator: Alexis Parkhurst (La Jolla Country Day School)

**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

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Spring 2015
Anthony Coja, 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, Coja 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. Coja co-chairs the North County Gang Prevention Intervention Committee and helped to develop the North County Coordinator Gang Initiative and Project CLAIM, a networking and training opportunity for former gang members and those who support them.

Huliy 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 touch, 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 programs, 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 plotting a restorative justice curriculum. Darling provides practices coordinated by the San Diego Unified School District. Darling has led over 60 community-building circles and over 70 restorative conferencing addresses homestay and holds offenders accountable for their actions. She has presented on restorative justice at the School for International Training Symposium in Kigali, Rwanda, and the International 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 statewide policies and procedures across sectors to provide gender-responsive care. In her current role, she is the project coordinator of the Human Trafficking/Commercial Sexual exploitation of children initiative 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 Galcana, Mei Ling Lazo, Bac Ly, Chelsea Marcus, Alan Obregon, Phuong Pham, Kynthia Posey, Emily Yun Bao Ly, Chelsea Marcus, Alan Obregon, Phuong Pham, Steven M. Luttbeg

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 peacebuilders 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 racist church, and a member of the Klu Klux Klan. After being found guilty of criminal mischief in a conflict with police, and serving time in state prison, he was deported in 1994 to El Salvador. His family migrated to Los Angeles during the height of political repression in El Salvador. After being involved in gangs and earning time in prison, he was deported in 1994 to El Salvador where he met the founder of Homies Unidos, a Los Angeles-based organization that develops and implements violence prevention and intervention programs. Michaelis’ 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 street squads. His family migrated to Los Angeles during the height of military repression in El Salvador. After being involved in gangs and earning time in prison, he was deported in 1994 to El Salvador where he met the founder of Homies Unidos, Magdaleno Ross-Avilá, 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 Silik, Khalid Abdulwahab, and Roxanne Corbell work with the awareness-based, leadership development organization, Founded in Chicago that develops preventative and leadership skills for Israeli, Palestinian and American teenagers through the power of dialogue and personal relationships. Silik, an educator, mediator, and lawyer by trade, and Abdulwahab and Corbell, 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.

Dydine Umunyana

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 home was in Kigali, Rwanda, and 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 peacemaking education program at the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre in Kigali, she became committed to dialogue between people for understanding shared histories.

Zuzana Vlastialskalova, MA is an international intern at the International Violence Abuse & Trauma Studies Program at San Francisco State University. Vlastialskalova has a master’s degree in legal psychology, with a focus in trauma psychology. Since 2005 she has volunteered in the Vienna Women’s House in Lithuania, and from 2012 to 2014 she worked as an executive director and social affairs manager at UNICEF HelpCare 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 social change 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 UN in the countries of Morocco, the U.S. and Chad. He has participated in the 2006 Afghan presidential election, and provided in-depth services to over 6,000 survivors of trafficking and at-risk youth globally.

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 Sue Jacobs, WorldLink interns
Identifying and Combating Sex Trafficking
Written by Olivia Zaller, Coronado High School

“I can’t 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, $16.6 million can be made in 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 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 pimps. Recruiters 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 very 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. “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 even loved before, so they see the faux seduction as a form of love, choosing to stay with their predator as prostitution.

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 part of the system and 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 rapine of CS.

To keep victims from leaving the system, pimps threaten to hurt their young siblings or even their baby. 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.

Healing Yourself and Others
Written by Lily Bollinger, Outside the Lens (High Tech High International)

D yline Umunyana 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 Dyline Umunyana, a youth peace ambassador for Aegis Trust, devote her life to genocide 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, Umunyana 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, Umunyana said, “Writing helps me turn my hurt into something positive and fun. 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.

Umunyana emphasizes the need to learn to other Tutsis how to understand, to stop the cycles of hatred, to unite and not divide, and to ultimately heal wounds. During the session, Umunyana 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, Umunyana 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 Kaze main, student from The Bishop’s School, continued from page 1

News
Page 5

Continued on page 7

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 places and problems. 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.
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 often includes 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 at 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 negotiation, two parties fill out an application stating their point of view and stand on the problem. Through a six-step plan of mediation, a trained mediator (a peer) gathers the different points of view identifying 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 another 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 La- rissa Galeana explained Crawford’s re- storative 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 will go through these circles or peer mediation. All 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.”

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 others who strive to create nonviolent environments in their schools and surrounding communities. According to Michaelis, the fundamental ideology of white supremacy was “exhausting to be a part of, because the world isn’t a safe or nonviolent 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: YouTube.com/user/WorldLinkIntern.

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
Examining Violence in Its Many Manifestations
Written by Terra Giddens, University City High School

WorldLink high school students− Christian 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.” Globally aware citizens are encouraged 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 voices out there, but so many adults who let apathy take hold. We’re in this theatre today because we need to develop relationships that are based on respect and trust.”

As the plenary proceeded, four amazing experts spoke about their own experiences in facing adversity, and expanded on the need to develop relationships and successes in addressing violence in its many manifestations. Through their stories, 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 had 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 emphasized the importance of participatory practices, which bring 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.” The audience is an example of this, and Ceja’s school is one of the cases Ceja highlighted in his speech.

FOLLOWING PAGE

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 agast at his predecessor’s words. “He didn’t brief me about law abiding citizens and law breakers of the society.”

While addressing this, Kharel labeled the corruption “an arrow.” He said, “We are so small in the world, so many lives are lost, but our voice is still very strong.” But to reach a voice, Kharel said, “It takes a lot of courage.”

According to Kharel, the key to the ongoing 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 law. With Kharel’s efforts in standing up for the law and mobilizing youths are inspiring, and serve not only as an example for children, but also as a call to action in addressing socioeconomic divisions and human rights.

Continued on page 11

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.

— Dyidine Umunyana, Aegis Trust and Umbrella Cinema Promoters

Christian Figueroa and Nicole−Ann Lobo open the conference. Photo by H. Saldaña Toledano
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 un ambiente civil y responsable en la cual, a través de una visión de justicia y paz, se logren construir comunidades diversas cada vez más entrelazadas.

¿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 audiencia. La conferencia anual de jóvenes WorldLink (Youth Town Meeting) se oía el entusiasmo de miles de delegados que cruzaron sus brazos. Sin pensarlo, algunos estudiantes se obligaron a experimentar el mundo y a “vivirlo cara a cara” con la realidad de la cual poco a poco se irían acercando.

Después de Miles, Wendy Sternberg, la fundadora de Genes at the Crossroad, compartió su historia. Dedicada a usar arte para la creación de paz y la expresión, explicó su pasión y logros a través de increíbles divisiones, lingüísticos o culturales. Sternberg alentó a los delegados a experimentar el mundo a través de increíbles divisiones, y cómo se debe superar para poder cambiar el camino.

“En un mundo dividido, queremos un mundo constructivo.” 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 pensaran cuidadosamente y fueran claros sobre quienes somos, ser integrados con nuestras ideas, salir de nuestras zonas de confort, y en experimentar con la causa de la justicia. Sternberg les dijo a los delegados que no le había dado suficiente atención a esos dos temas, pero que ésta floreciera. Fue entonces cuando uno de los delegados se ofreció a experimentar el arte y la justicia.[...].

“En un mundo dividido, queremos un mundo constructivo.” Sternberg alentó a los delegados a experimentar el mundo a través de increíbles divisiones, y cómo se debe superar para poder cambiar el camino.

“En un mundo dividido, queremos un mundo constructivo.” Sternberg alentó a los delegados a experimentar el mundo a través de increíbles divisiones, y cómo se debe superar para poder cambiar el camino.

La conferencia anual de jóvenes de WorldLink llegó a su fin con un comunicado de los internos Chase Martindale 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 Garcia y Martindale explicaron, “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/WorldLinkInternational

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

La Misión de WorldLink

El programa de WorldLink tiene como misión conectar a jóvenes con asuntos globales a través de la creación de un ambiente civil y responsable en el 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 políticas internacionales y económicas globales, así como de la diversidad cultural y las preocupaciones locales.

¿Puedes hacerlo? El Arzobispo Pedro Barroso, papa, ha dicho que es necesario que los jóvenes descubran cómo construyen el mundo. En un mundo dividido, ¿pueden hacerlo? ¿Pueden construir de paz en la sociedad? ¿Pueden construir un futuro brillante y sin violencia? ¿Pueden construir una visión de justicia y paz, y logren construir comunidades diversas cada vez más entrelazadas.

Atrevido a ser Justo en Nepal

Ramesh Prasad Karel

Ramesh Prasad Karel era un abogado de un país donde el crimen y corrupción es algo muy común. Karel era conocido como un individuo dispuesto a ir en contra de su carrera, para el bienestar de su nación. Con veinticinco años de experiencia en la fuerza policial de Nepal, Karel fue un defensor contra la corrupción, al igual que la trata de personas y cultivo de drogas.

Karel 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 policial en el Distrito Silahi, una región en el sureste de Nepal, Karel se sorprendió de las palabras de su predecesor: “El no me explico 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 explica de cuanto dinero acostumbraba reunir.”


Para Karel, la seguridad de los ciudadanos constituye la ley suprema y necesitaba honrar esa creencia. “Desde el primer día, nosotros como equipo empezamos a combatir crímenes en el distrito de S 사라.” Karel, “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 Karel “perdió 1 millón de dólares en un periodo de 10 meses.”

Aun así, el continuó combatiendo crímenes por el bien de su país y sus valores morales. Por ejemplo, hubo una ocasión donde levantó un cargo de homicidio a Prabhu Shati, ministro de Transporte de Nepal. El argumento del equipo de Karel fue que el político, S Shankar Ram Kharel, “no nos rendimos, nosotras procesamos” aun y cuando “era muy difícil diferenciar los políticos de los criminales.”

Continúa en página 9
Aliviando Heridas Personales y de Otros

Escrito por Lily Bollinger, Outside the Lens (High Tech High International).

Traducido por Erika Zepeda, CETYS Tijuana.

Dy dine Umunyana es una joven y elegante mujer de voz suave. Su nacionalidad es Tutsí y nació en Ruanda justo antes del genocidio. En 1994, el odio y la discriminación contra los Tutsí, un grupo étnico minoritario en Ruanda, se volvieron en un genocidio en donde los Hutes mataron a más de 900,000 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.

Crecediendo 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 sobrevivi, 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 juntar para 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 preguntó 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 hacer hechos coña 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 estudiantes que formaran parejas y que se tomaran de la mano. Luego pidió que cada persona cerrara sus ojos. Al principio, miradas nerviosas y un lenguaje corporal vacío demostró la oposición de los estudiantes, pero poco a poco risas 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 te 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 sigieron palabras solemn y expresiones pensativas. Ryan Kazemani, estudiante de The Bishop’s School comentó: “Ellas me enseñaron el poder de entender y de abrirme a los demás. Estamos más fuertes juntos que solos.” Umunyana terminó la sesión recordando 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.”

En respuesta, uno de los estudiantes levantó la mano y planteó la siguiente pregunta: “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 alabó 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 poder para hacer el bien.”


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.

Imagino un mundo donde las niñas no están a la venta.” comentó Charisma De Los Reyes al comenzar la discusión acerca de la trata de personas en la décima anual conferencia anual de jóvenes de WorldLink Trabajadora social de San Diego por tres 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 $996.000 millones en un año por la explotación comercial sexual. “Hay que identificar y combatirla 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 estos sexales son intercambiados por valor; dinero o comida, el crimen ya no se considera una “infracción” y la “infracción” de la “infracción” de la “infracción” no se considera una “infracción” y la “infracción” de la “infracción”. “¿Cuál es la solución?” preguntó De Los Reyes cuando enseñaba una diapositiva que mostraba una lista de víctimas de la explotación sexual, “La mayoría de los jóvenes eran las víctimas de la trata de personas que eran 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 por qué estos actos hacen posible y no todos los no. La madre de un joven que fue tomado se sentó en el gran escenario y explicó lo que pasó. Puede empezar cuando una niña es reclutada para la prostitución, algunas en escuelas de secundaria y se convierte a nivel local así como internacional.

De Los Reyes preguntó a los delegados estudiantes, “¿Creo que un joven vagabundo estaría sintiendo en las veinte primericias horas que estás en la calle? Las respuestas variaban desde “triste” a “hambriento” a “con frío” y “horrible” antes de que la discusión continuara. Como se había previsto, todas las respuestas fueron impactantes, y es por esto que los vagabundos suelen responder a cualquier suposición que se acerque a ellas por su comida o un lugar seguro para dormir.”

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
Mientras discuta 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 interferen, pero debe mantenerse objetivo. Realmente debes estar atento para que las personas están compartiendo con sientas 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 figurativas 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 Uniificado 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 el decimocuarta 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 vez sea lo que lo lleva 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.

La siguiente conferencia, la estudiante Emily Yun, compartió acerca de mediación de compañeros. Es como si les estuviera dando a segunda oportunidad en sus vidas.”

Con la ayuda de Social Advocates for Youth en San Diego, que en- trenan a los estudiantes de preparatoria para ser jurados, la corte de adolescen- tes 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.

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 adoles- centes fuera de situaciones peligrosas. Puede traer paz, aliviar heridas que ha dejado la violencia, y restituir relaciones que han terminado. A través del liderazgo y fortaleza de estos jóvenes agentes de cambio, 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 largo duración.
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 provides 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. “I hated the voice for those who have no voice.”

“The darkest day,” Sanchez reminisced, “was when I was 12 and I was sentenced to 10 years in juvenile hall.” Sanchez’ life was further defined by the death of his brother in a gang-related homicide. “It is a law of nature to shed blood, to make a difference. In the absence of imagination, violence succeeds and terror breeds.”

He also described the violent nature of gang rivalry as “a silent agreement” that ex- ploited young people to protect their gang histories. “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 unde-sirable places. They picked up people that were homeless even before they committed a crime.” In addition, he said that the temptations to deal drugs were often fruitless. “You’re institutionalized, but you don’t understand 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, 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 Ros Avila, as well as others that were working towards making a positive difference. Sanchez soon realized that engagement in violent acts and selling 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 young from different neighborhoods came together in San Salvador. El Salvador to discuss methods and means of diminishing the violence plaguing too many of our lives and communities.”

A be creative, 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 in restorative justice programs, 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; 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 settled, 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. As 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 insecurities 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 opportunity 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 peace building that goes beyond simple 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 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?” Youths who participate in the program build a genuine appreciation and respect for each culture involved.

WorldLink conference delegates watched intently as the film Enlightened played. “We stand united, until violence reiter,” a powerful statement said in union by seven Hands of Peace students, as they lit their candles. Produced by the teenage participants of Hands of Peace, Enlightened was released during the summer of 2014 as violence escalated to an all time high in the Gaza Strip.

Conference speaker Khalid Abu Dawson, 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 tearful expressions into looks that inspired hope.

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

We stand united, until violence reiter.

—Youth Leaders, Hands of Peace
Unlocking the Tools to Healing and Preventing Domestic Violence

Written by Isabel Hartem, Cathedral Catholic High School

Sternberg realized that she had viewed little influence on their conversation more they realized that their apparent had to say. The more they spoke, the were empathetic to what the other received notions often associated with uncharted territory, both of them quick learned from the discussions.

It was then that she realized that the was the greatest tool.” Domestic violence is extremely common around the world. 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 they 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.

Online Resources:
- www.acdf.org
- www.awg.org
- www.breachcycle.org
- www.ccd.org
- www.dct.org
- www.gvp.org
- www.kbpp.org
- www.kidspower.org
- www.lisias.org
- www.rain.org
- www.respectlove.opdv.ny.gov
- www.sancar.org
- www.san-diego.gov
- www.stopbullying.gov
- www.teensagainstuberculosis.org
- www.thatsonetool.com
- www.thefilterfree.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 inspired 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, in 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 they had each previously conceived notions often associated with one another.

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 filters, 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 Sternberg’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.

“Art is one of the most powerful forces to create a positive change and transformation.” In that moment, I understood that art is 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.
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 Sierra Leone, the civil war was fought 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 of war, 1992 ended with the Chapultepec Peace Accords that established the United Nations Truth Commission and allowed for the formation of the Interim Government of Sierra Leone. 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, the country was unable to overcome the obstacles and the cultural trauma caused by years of conflict. 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, Vigil stressed that 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 need to ask ourselves, are we helping the citizens, or are we just providing short-term fixes to the underlying problems in the society? As a result, we need to look at the underlying factors that may be preventing the people from healing and moving forward with a new beginning.

Building Relationships: A Key to Understanding and Healing Trauma
Written by Zunya Mejia Huidobro, CETYS Tijuana

D an 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 1’s 5th Annual Youth Town Meeting, Stacy opened his briefing session with this powerful and unique dynamic used by Circles 4 Change, a nonprofit organization that 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 student-driven definition of trauma, it can be easier to be empathetic, understand another person’s emotional wounds, and find potential solutions for them.

This form of trauma-informed care has the power of “building relationships by changing perceptions.” Stacy acknowledged 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 courageous. 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 traumas in others and in ourselves.

REBBL with a Cause
Written by Eliza Lafferty, Outside the Lens (The Bishop’s School)

Today, slavery continues to hold between 25 and 35 million people in slavery, with 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 dedicated to help stop human trafficking and modern-day slavery around the world. Along with David Bastonne, 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.

Needling to find why, Wexler’s team traced the trafficking patterns of Lima, which lead 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 billion slavery industry, they needed to re-educate 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 basketball 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 WholeFoods. 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 to help support human equality and the abolition of slavery in the 21st century. Every movement makes the right direction counts. It takes patience to take the lead, and it takes resilience to make a change.

To learn more about Mark Wexler’s briefing session, visit WorldLink’s YouTube page at www.YouTube.com/user/WorldLinkIntern.
Linguistic Genocide

WorldLink intern Chase Garcia and classmate An Nguyen founded the Student Advocates for Language Preservation (SALP), an organization working to address the unfortunate fate of a 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 Skoan-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 “deprivation” and results in “maldevelopment” of their culture.

Russification, a political ideology that sought to promote unity in Russia, emerged as a major contributor to linguistic genocide in the country. Russification, a political ideology that sought to promote unity in Russia, emerged as a major contributor to linguistic genocide in the country. 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, an Urdu-only policy was established that led to the deaths of many dissenting advocates for the Bengali language. 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 Salkiko Muwene states, “[I]t 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 vitality 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 of comprehending the world’s history. According to Languages of the World, “Uyghur 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 and maintaining 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 instgrammed 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?

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WorldLink’s 19th Annual Youth Town Meeting

will focus on the student-selected theme...

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

Wednesday, January 20, 2016

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Dyrdne Urmuyana, an amazing role model. Great experience. #YTM2015 #WorldLink #HealingViolence — @alexa_only

Whirlwind day! 700 strong new modern freedom fighters at the University of San Diego. Talking @NFS. #YTM2015 This is what I live for. — @Mark_Wexler

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Had a great time walking 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! — @myfeatherhate

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“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 unexpectable 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 Garcia, 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 remember 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

“Afiter 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