



Spring 2004

TE Times

A NEWSLETTER FROM TEEN EMPOWERMENT

Separate and Unequal: The Sequel

Twelve years ago, Boston neighborhoods were engulfed by an epidemic of youth gang violence. In response to the repeated tragedies on the streets, the youth of Teen Empowerment organized the first Youth Peace Conference, held May 5, 1993. That conference produced a lasting peace treaty among five gangs and set the stage for a dramatic decline in youth violence.

On May 15, 2004, the 12th annual Youth Peace Conference will be held at John Hancock Hall. The conference will attract more than 800 youth and adults to consider the day's provocative theme, "Separate and Unequal: The Sequel." The conference begins at 10:00 AM with youth-led workshops called "Connection Sections," an Information Fair, and a "Hip Hop Lunch." From



MERRILL SHEA

Teen Empowerment Youth Organizer Marlindsey Manuel says "Yes" to more funding for education and community services during a dance performance at last year's Youth Peace Conference.

TE Youth Organizers are working to make the 12th annual Youth Peace Conference a success. Join them with a donation of time and/or money. Use the enclosed envelope, or contact us at:

Teen Empowerment
48 Rutland Street • Boston, MA 02118
617-536-4266 • info@teenempowerment.org

1:00 to 4:00 PM, TE youth will stage an original theatrical presentation that brings struggles for educational opportunity to life with dramatic portrayals of segregation, busing, bilingual education, and the urban-suburban educational gap.

TE's long-term goal is to mount a sustained public education campaign concerning the educational inequities that persist in Massachusetts and around the country. To this end, TE is bringing together suburban communities in coalition with inner-city residents to speak out for change. TE

youth and adults have run eight highly successful sessions on systemic racism in suburban communities, reaching several hundred youth and adults, and more are planned. The sessions are structured to raise consciousness on the issues and to recruit suburban youth and adults to get involved with the movement. Many participants in these sessions plan to attend the Peace Conference and share in the important social change work to follow.

To join TE's coalition, contact Nick Richardson at nick@teenempowerment.org or 617-536-4266.

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Dear Friends,

As you review this issue of the *TE Times*, you will see that we are taking on new challenges, including expanding our consulting work and establishing a TE site in Rochester, NY, while continuing to implement high quality programming at our four sites in Boston. TE youth and adult staff are working to build a network of caring and committed individuals in support of inner-city youth and their families. Thank you for helping us to achieve this goal. I hope you enjoy reading about our work and will continue to be involved and supportive in whatever way you are able.

Thank you,



Stanley Pollack
Executive Director

TE on the Move: Recent Consulting Projects

Training for New Boston Police Recruits

TE youth and adult staff recently trained 55 Boston Police Department recruits. The first of the three TE sessions explored effective and ineffective authority. In the second session, police identified issues that youth and police face and how these issues overlap and conflict. The third session engaged recruits in role-playing and hot debate about using weapons, establishing positive relationships, and keeping both police and youth safe.

Engaging Juvenile Offenders in Group Sessions

Boston's Juvenile Resource Center runs day treatment programs for juvenile offenders. Teen Empowerment worked with JRC this year to improve the program's group sessions, structuring them to be fun, disarm resistance, and catalyze deep discussion and reflection. Following TE intervention, youth engagement in the sessions rose dramatically.

Assessing Youth Services in Somerville

In response to alarming rates of teen suicide and drug abuse, the City of Somerville hired TE to assess its youth services, recommend ways to increase effectiveness, and establish collaborations between youth programs to address these critical issues. In the coming weeks, TE will map the system, identify gaps in service, and make recommendations for improving the City's ability to reach high-risk youth.

Year Up Starts Up with TE's Help

Year Up is two-year-old program that trains urban youth in computer technology and places them in good jobs. TE has worked closely with Year Up staff to design the project's participant selection process, behavior management system, and group building components. TE training and curricula have played an important role in getting Year Up off to a successful start.

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Boston Sites Update

Since September, TE youth organizers in Boston have reached over 3,000 youth and adults with a variety of youth-led social change initiatives. Here are some highlights of their work:

At Madison Park Technical Vocational High School

Youth and adult staff at Madison are confronting sexual harassment and gender equity through a school-wide survey, classroom sessions, and assemblies. Since TE began this work in November 2003, student consciousness of the problem and reporting of sexual harassment incidents have increased dramatically, setting the stage for real change in this critically important area.

At The English High School

More than 1,000 students participated in the school-opening ceremony organized by TE youth. Since then, Youth Organizers have been working hard to bring respect into a severely overcrowded school building through classroom sessions, “town meetings,” special presentations during lunch periods, and assemblies that help build community and encourage tolerance and understanding.

At the Dorchester Education Complex

DEC Youth Organizers are working to build community in the three new schools now located in the old Dorchester High School building. By organizing classroom sessions, assemblies, and dialogues between students and administrators



Youth Organizer Ada Valdez asks her fellow students to help create a more respectful environment at English High during TE's *Breaking the Silence* Poetry Slam at the school.

designed to improve each of the small schools and by building relationships among students across school boundaries, TE youth are helping this exciting effort to get off to a good start.

At the South End-Lower Roxbury Site

Youth at TE's SELR site are bringing together youth, police, and neighborhood residents. Working with a core group of police and neighbors, Youth Organizers are holding a series of dialogue sessions to help community residents and youth engage in a transitional process that breaks down barriers of mistrust and helps to build a community where everyone can feel that they belong.

TE Facts

- Of the more than 400 youth who have worked as TE Youth Organizers over the past five years, 98% have graduated from high school.
- 100% of 50 teachers surveyed at TE's partner schools said that TE deals with important school issues that might not otherwise be addressed.
- 95% of teachers who participated in TE Training would recommend it to others.
- TE has developed and implemented innovative curricula for English, math, history, English as a Second Language (ESL), and MCAS support classes.
- TE youth conduct over 150 school- and community-change initiatives per year that involve over 3,000 students, teachers, residents, and police officers.
- 97% of more than 400 TE Youth Organizers surveyed reported that their work with TE improved their self-esteem and provided them with valuable skills that helped prepare them for the future.

Bringing Hope to Rochester Youth

ANDREW HAYDU



In front of a packed auditorium, TE youth speak out for more jobs and justice for Rochester teens.

audience speak-out, the conference addressed gang violence, inadequate schools and housing, and the lack of jobs. Here's what two of the TE Youth Organizers who spoke on that powerful and important day had to say:

“Imagine young people working in paid positions to organize neighborhoods, improve schools, and heal the pain between youth and police. Every penny that is spent employing teenagers to do these jobs will be worth the investment because we are the key to fixing the problems, and the truth is, it can't be done without us.”

— Jordan Donaldson, 15

Rochester, NY is experiencing an explosion of youth violence that rivals the destructive proportions Boston experienced in the early 1990's. For the past year, long-time TE employee Doug Ackley has been working to turn back the tide of violence in Rochester with a new TE initiative.

Doug began pilot operations for a Rochester site in November 2003. Since then, he has established important partnerships with community agencies, interviewed over a hundred teens interested in becoming Youth Organizers, and hired ten youth to organize Rochester's first citywide, all youth-run conference.

On March 6, months of hard work by TE's Rochester team paid off when over 400 youth and adults turned out for the conference. Through speeches, skits, a candle-lighting ceremony, and an

“Many of us are forced to attend under-funded schools, live in broken-down housing, get no health care, and work in low paying jobs or have no jobs. This has led a few people to act out their anger through senseless acts of violence, drug dealing and intimidation. This doesn't help anybody and it's time we put a stop to it.”

— Cíeara White, 16

For more information about Teen Empowerment Rochester, contact Doug Ackley at doug@teenempowerment.org or 585-461-2756.

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