



Deliberative Dialogue
What does it take to build peace in the community?
Youth Perspectives
September 10, 2009

Facilitated by Emily Linnemeier and Monya Kian, this dialogue convened eight middle and high school students from Los Angeles County to discuss their perspectives on peacebuilding in the community. According to these panelists, Respect, Tolerance, and Understanding are essential ingredients to building peaceful communities.

Participants unanimously concluded that their respective communities are not peaceful given stark divisions between various social groups. However, the panelists also suggested that community organizations and programs such as Day One, Culture Shock, YMCA, and afterschool programs spread knowledge about coexistence, promote community engagement, and bring diverse peoples together.

Despite the sensitive nature of these topics, students feel that they do play a role in building peace in their communities by either meeting people from diverse cultures, respecting all opinions, practicing patience, controlling their emotions, being positive, and spreading the message of respect. Participants shared their willingness to expand their roles in building peace by bringing private and public schools together for an event at the Rose Bowl and other venues, and encouraging local government and community leaders to be proactive in peacebuilding efforts and supporting youth activities.

Following the dialogue among the youth panelists, the discussion opened to the 50 youth and adults in the audience. Many audience members concurred with the youth's opinion for more parental involvement in youth activities, and the need for cultural education and understanding to address widespread racism. They also shared the students' opinion for the need to break down the barriers between private and public schools.

All in all, this deliberative dialogue among youth was a huge success. Moving forward, the WJCF will convene a dialogue among youth and their parents to discuss these issues, and explore ways that we can bridge this gap between public and private schools.