

## Confronting Concerns: December 3, 2005



### Session #1

To prepare for the first forum held on December 3, 2005, the team reviewed all the interviews and charted what the concerns were. Both the personal concerns expressed and those which the youth thought others were concerned were very similar. The three major concerns were 1) violence in the streets, 2) substance abuse, and 3) the war in Iraq. Other major concerns were the environment, safety, peer pressure and sex. Interestingly, the youth did not name peer pressure and sex as concerns for themselves but felt other youth had these concerns. One of the youth planning members created two pie charts that show the percentage of response indicated by the interviews.

Participants engaged in individual, small group and large group youth-centered exercises that required a great deal of critical thinking and analyses. Activities included role-plays, debates, brainstorming and open discussions based on the information collected from the surveys.

The youth involved were highly engaged and committed to the activities as well as the processing of ideas and concepts. The theme of cycles was continually mentioned throughout the session. Many participants felt that issues like pollution, violence, war and poverty were a result of past behaviors perpetuating future behaviors. They agreed that these varying cycles were exacerbated by the fact that, often, youth do not have a voice in the social or political realm. Rarely is there open and respectful dialogue between individuals and groups of different age groups. Participants suggested that, if intergenerational dialogue was facilitated more often than perhaps these cycles would not continue to plague society.

The adults present made up their own group and participated in some of the activities. Some of the adults also took part in the Barometer Exercise.

Wonderful food was prepared by the elders. We had fruit juice and soda and chips during the session and afterwards we all sat down to eat chicken, rice and peas, potato salad, tuna salad and cookies and cake.

The planning group will continue to meet and prepare for two subsequent forums, one in April and one in June. They will guide the youth participants to engage in some activity to respond in some way to confronting their concerns. Many of the youth have been studying the Rights of the Child and have been in contact with other groups internationally through the forum on the Network website. What they learn and experience on the local level in these three forums will be shared with the rest of the Crossing Boundaries groups worldwide. These three forums held in New York City also will give the youth the opportunity to meet face to face with some members of the Crossing Boundaries Program in their local area. Other interested youth will be welcome to participate as well.

Socially and structurally the youth involved in **Confronting Concerns** are gaining some skills in self-analysis, self-reflection, listening to one another, and working together on some activity to share with the community. In addition the youth who are co-planning this year's engagement will learn some community organizing skills. In engaging in some activity in which they participated in planning will give them some more self-confidence.