

CHOOSING PEACE NOW A Model for What is Possible in Our Schools



CHOOSING PEACE NOW is a powerful pro-active television special about a group of teenagers, together with supportive adults, who have made the commitment to *“live peace now.”*

Inviting us into the city-wide Peace Conference they created and have evolved each year since in their hometown of Glendale, California, CHOOSING PEACE is a vibrant demonstration of how a significant shift is taking place - from *“being acted upon by life”* to *“becoming actively involved in the process of living.”* Just as it is possible for these young people, many of whom grew-up around violence and considered it to be an accepted part of life, it is possible for us all.

CHOOSING PEACE NOW is intended to serve as a catalyst for both a Local and National Campaign to create peaceful solutions in our schools and communities, and a more life-enhancing atmosphere for our youth to prosper.



In the wake of Columbine, Santana and other violent incidents in schools throughout America, it has become glaringly apparent that change is called for. The knee-jerk reaction is to blame the perceived *“other”* and attempt to enforce control. The higher ground and, indeed, the only response that can achieve the desired result, is to recognize that *“we’re in this together”* and become the change we want to see in the world by nurturing and growing peace in our own hearts. This is what CHOOSING PEACE NOW is about.

While many are just beginning to address the challenges, Glendale’s We Care For Youth program - of which these young people are a part - is already nine years into the process. Since their inception, founder/directors Linda Maxwell and José Quintanar have helped turn around the lives of thousands of *“at-risk”* teenagers. Now we have the opportunity to positively impact millions of others - by presenting WCFY’s peace efforts as a model, providing the example along with the practical tools to empower people everywhere to create peaceful solutions in their communities.

In CHOOSING PEACE NOW, the hard realities of violence are brought home when incarcerated youth and youth crippled by gang violence share their stories. In contrast, non-violence is shown to be the more viable alternative - as participants walk the labyrinth as a way to leave behind problems and arrive at peaceful solutions, honestly discuss prejudice, create art that relates their fears and hopes, and We Care For Youth organizers radiate the obvious enthusiasm that comes with being a part of something that is positively impacting how we view our world and act in it.

Accompanying the immersive experiences of the day are close-to-camera interviews with participating youth, ages 14 to 20, and adult advocates that include Glendale’s Superintendent of Schools Jim Brown and Chief of Police Russell Silverling, former Los Angeles DA Gil Garcetti, and We Care For Youth’s pioneering directors Linda and José.



The Art of **LIVING**

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CHOOSING PEACE NOW: A Model for What Is Possible in Our Schools ...Exemplifying The Art of LIVING in Action

CHOOSING PEACE NOW demonstrates well the various levels on which The Art of LIVING is here to serve. Our basic premise is this: We've observed that many people are at square one, trying to figure out what can be done to turn things around in our schools. Whereas, here's a group, We Care For Youth, who are already nearly a decade into the process and have figured some things out really well. They become the ground for our larger *art of living* model, the components of which are described in brief below. This way we move beyond "recreating the wheel," and free the energy to bring exponential value where the change can quite possibly be felt around the world!

Here are the components...

- One-hour television documentary taking the viewer into the Peace Conference, and demonstrating the Shift where it is taking place. The piece was shot by our all-volunteer The Art of LIVING Coalition community which has been the engine behind all our live events and media to date. This is the real Real World and Real People.
- Combined with an In-Studio multi-generational "town meeting," looking at what is happening and what needs to be that isn't yet - ie. adults shifting their attitudes around adolescence, putting additional elements in place that can support everyone in reintegrating what they learn back into their lives, providing after school activities for "latch-key kids," and better funding for school counselling...

This is a call to action, so we'll also be providing information for people to get active in their communities - informing them about organizations that are doing great things with and for our youth and opportunities such as Volunteermatch where they can go directly to the internet to volunteer and Create Hope where they can make direct donations to non-profits they wish to support.

- Choosing Peace Now and our other TV specials become the "behind the scenes" look at what we've learned about Being Artists of LIFE, which role out into The Art of LIVING Television Show. We, the network with whom we partner, together with our corporate sponsors, become the force championing a national and international dialogue and action on behalf of youth and our future.
- Activism through the Internet. This is the content part of our website <http://www.artofliving.com>. Here's where people can go to download all the components necessary to create their own peace conference in their communities, including what We Care For Youth models and the contextualizing "art of living" elements. (Already we have requests from Arkansas to Zimbabwe to provide information that can support individuals in community-building. And that's just through TAOLiving Coalition founder Frankie Lee Slater's individually generated e-mails! People are hungry for the "How" our extended wisdom community has to share.)
- Choosing Peace Now is envisioned to be the first of four youth action specials that we offer quarterly, each highlighting a different *art of living* model that demonstrates *what's being done for, with and by youth*, plus in-studio and internet components similarly included
- Our intention is to establish The Art of LIVING television show and Artist of LIFE specials in the spirit of projects like Live Aid, only on a sustained and consistent basis that is here for people every week of the year! And for those who want to go deeper, we are creating Global Conferences, Trainings, Salons and Festivals.