



# The Peace Alliance Educational Institute

## *Youth Violence Prevention/Intervention Advocate “Cookbook”*

*A practical handbook on how to be an effective grassroots organizer*

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## **Introduction**

Greetings and Thank You!!

If you are reading this, it is probably because you wish to hone your abilities to promote the best-available practices for reducing youth violence and incarceration. That is a goal that we share, and we are grateful for your company in this work!

We intend for this to be used freely by any individual or group working towards youth violence prevention. Use it whole or in-parts, to suit your needs. All we ask regarding reproductions is that you acknowledge The Peace Alliance Educational Institute as the creator of any material used.

This “cookbook” is intended as a ready reference. You can use specifically chosen combinations of the “recipes” as you wish - all of them are aimed at reducing and preventing youth violence and incarceration.

The “courses” of these “meals” are crafted so as to fit together in powerful, delicious combinations - including ingredients such as enhancing community activism, shaping local and national government policy, and strengthening networks for a more peace-able world.

First, a few words about the group of dedicated “chefs” who helped bring this into being...

## **Section 1: The Peace Alliance Educational Institute**

### ***Who We Are and What We Do***

**The Peace Alliance Educational Institute** (TPAEI) promotes a national and global culture of nonviolence, conflict resolution and applied peacebuilding. We research, educate, train, and advocate in support of domestic and international peacebuilding strategies. Peacebuilding addresses issues of disharmony, violence, crime and war by identifying their underlying causes and implementing nonviolent solutions that build an infrastructure for sustainable peace.

*Over the past several years, TP AEI has been particularly active in researching and promoting proven strategies for the reduction and prevention of youth violence and incarceration.*

## **Our primary activities:**

**Public Education:** We engage the general public through experiential and educational programs that share evidence-based research on the impact and potential benefits of peacebuilding.

**Alliance and Coalition Building:** We work to forge new and stronger coalitions with leaders and advocates in the fields of peacebuilding, social-services-oriented organizations, citizens and politicians, in order to better promote practices that work.

**Advocacy & Organizer Training:** We provide support, resources and training to a wide spectrum of peacebuilding practitioners, aligned organizations and our grassroots network to enhance their skill set, knowledge and effectiveness in their advocacy and organizing. We focus our trainings on coalition building, generating media, strategic planning, fundraising, public advocacy and educating communities and elected officials on the field of peacebuilding. Meanwhile we endeavor to model the peacebuilding principles we are promoting!

**Personal Peace Practice:** We train and educate grassroots organizers and the greater public with skills to engage in effective communication and coping methods while dealing with conflict and stress. We draw from best practices in the field of peacebuilding and social psychology in an effort to empower our staff, board members, constituents and colleagues to align with the values and principles of peacebuilding.

**Direct Funding:** We occasionally fund qualified and aligned educational projects, programs and organizations doing peacebuilding work and advocacy. We fund this area by soliciting grassroots supporters, larger donors and through grants.

**On-the-ground programs:** We sometimes help organize direct peacebuilding programs that work to reduce violence in its many forms at a regional and local community level.

**Contact info:** TP AEI can be reached via [www.peaceallianceinstitute.org](http://www.peaceallianceinstitute.org)

## **Section 2: Articulating the Issues – the “Why”**

What follows in this section are “talking points,” including statistics, regarding youth crime and violence. This information should prove useful in your organizing and advocacy. To extend the cookbook analogy, you might think of these as the “spices” which may - in some combination - flavor your entire campaign around these issues. Note: a more extensive “spice rack” is included in Section 8 below.

### **Violence Statistic “Spices”**

- The International Centre for Prison Studies found that the U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world – higher than Iran, Iraq and China combined.
- U.S. youth homicide rates are more than 10 times that of other leading industrial nations– despite the U.S.'s significantly higher GDP and material resources, and more punitive crime laws. [World Report on Violence and Health, World Health Organization, 2002]
- Persons under the age of 25 accounted for 50 percent of those arrested for murder and 65 percent of those arrested for robbery in 2006. [Youth Violence Facts at a Glance, Summer 2008, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)]
- In the United States, homicide is the second leading cause of death for children age 10-24. Of that age group, homicide is the leading cause of death for African-Americans. 52% of those arrested for murder in the U.S. are 25 years old or younger. (CDC)
- African-American youth represent 16% percent of the U.S. juvenile population, but account for 52% of arrests for violent crime, and 40% of youth held in long-term detention.
- Of children in sixth through tenth grade, more than 3.2 million--nearly one in six--are victims of bullying each year, while 3.7 million bully other children. [“Bullying Prevention is Crime Prevention,” Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2003]
- Psychologists report that children exposed to street violence show the same kind of post-traumatic stress disorder we see in veterans who've returned from combat. Yet there is nothing “post” about this trauma. They still have to navigate the perilous landscape of their neighborhood.

### **Ethical “Spices”**

- Communities should be safe and secure places for all members. Without a safe environment, youth cannot reach an optimal development. Every child has the right to live and grow in a community free of violence.
- Too many children’s lives are cut short by senseless violence. It has become all too common in our society, in our communities, for mothers

- and fathers to bury their children because of violence.
- When a life is taken so young and so suddenly and so violently, the loss and pain reverberates throughout families, communities, throughout cities, states and even nations. This type of violent loss is so unnecessary because WE CAN PREVENT IT
  - Violence does not discriminate so we all must work together so that ALL children can live a life away from the harm that violence inflicts.
  - There are no “throwaway” kids; our children are worth our love. All children are valuable, and we need to do everything within our power to make sure that all children grow and thrive in our communities.
  - Violence is preventable...Supporting prevention and intervention is inspirational because this approach will save LIVES.

### **Economical “Spices”**

- Incarceration has been shown to expose troubled youth to harmful influences, increase school dropout rates and repeat offenses, make it harder to get a job and cost significantly more than proactive, community-based prevention and intervention practices such as mentoring, job training and afterschool programs.
- In 2006, 93,000 juveniles were incarcerated or held in residential detention centers. States spend roughly \$5.7 billion each year imprisoning youth, at an average cost of \$240/day per youth (\$87,600/year).
- The numbers show an urgent need to revisit and revise our current policies to invest in what works: addressing the root causes to prevent crime and violence in the first place. Research has documented that long-term investments, such as the Youth PROMISE Act, yield tremendous savings through the resulting reductions in youth violence, delinquency, crime, welfare, prison, and health recuperation costs.
- Investment in prevention and intervention programs for children and youth, including quality early childhood programs; comprehensive evidence-based school, after school, and summer school programs; mentoring programs; mental health and treatment programs; evidence-based job training programs; and alternative intervention programs, has been shown to lead to decreased youth arrests, decreased delinquency, lower recidivism, and greater financial savings from an educational, economic, social, and criminal justice perspective.
- Savings achieved through early intervention and prevention are even more significant when non-criminal-justice social, educational, mental health, and economic outcomes are considered.
- A major study by the non-partisan Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that for every dollar spent on county juvenile detention systems, \$1.98 of “benefits” was achieved in terms of reduced crime and costs of crime to taxpayers. By contrast, diversion and mentoring programs produced **\$3.36 of benefits** for every dollar spent, aggression replacement training produced **\$10 of benefits** for every dollar spent, and multi-systemic therapy produced **\$13 of benefits** for every dollar spent.

### **Paradigm Shift “Spices”**

- “Tough on Crime” Laws Are Not Reducing Crime. Despite stiffer penalties, longer prison sentences, and the building of more jails, the result has been higher incarceration rates within the United States without a substantial reduction in youth violence. The United States continues to have youth violence rates that are significantly higher than any other developed country.
- All the credible research and evidence shows that a continuum of evidenced-based prevention and intervention programs for at-risk youth will greatly reduce crime and save much more than they cost.
- According to the National Crime Prevention Council, the crime rate can decrease by as much as 30 percent when a violence prevention initiative is a community-wide effort.
- There are various examples of individuals, programs, initiatives, communities, movements, etc., that have been successful in decreasing the harm that violence inflicts in our world. We must highlight and support their work.
- After-school programs that connect children to caring adults and that provide constructive activities during the peak hours of juvenile delinquency and criminal street gang activity, between 3:00 and 6:00 in the afternoon, have been shown to reduce delinquency and the attendant costs imposed on the juvenile and criminal justice systems.
- Therapeutic programs that engage and motivate high-risk youth and their families to change behaviors that often result in criminal activity have been shown to significantly reduce recidivism among juvenile offenders, and significantly reduce the attendant costs of crime and delinquency imposed upon the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

[Note: there is a more extensive selection of such “spices” in Section 8 below]

## **Section 3: Working Locally - Building and Nourishing Your Core Supporting Team**

As in all your work, we suggest in your local organizing you remember to “Be the Change,” emphasizing Autonomy, Cooperation, and Fun -- Go Team!!

In this section you will find tips on organizing a local meeting, and for potential roles and activities in your local group. These suggestions may be especially helpful when you are starting a new group or working to revitalize one. Regular monthly meetings with your team may help you support and coordinate your efforts.

There are many ways to build a team - including starting off tabling by yourself at local events, and developing a list of people who show interest (see subsection

on tabling below). Many people often overlook the fact that one of the best “recruitment” strategies is to just simply talk to your friends about what you’ve been thinking about, and why you decided to get involved. If you are fairly grounded in your decision - and it seems fun and worthwhile to you, it will be CONTAGIOUS! If you already know some friends, family, colleagues, or other local peace activists who seem passionate about this issue, you might consider hosting a house party to build interest with them in cooperating. You can find a House Party Handbook on our website with tips on getting support.

## **A. What to Bring to a Meeting**

Note - the following (like everything in this "cookbook") are SUGGESTIONS. Some meetings will have specific purposes, such as planning an event, or networking with specific allies, so you can tailor the below recommendations to meet YOUR particular purposes.

**Congressional Contact Information:** Being engaged with elected officials, federal state and local, is important to help make shifts in our social and economic investment priorities. Bring all your Congress members’ contact information to each meeting; this includes phone numbers and addresses. If you have more than one Congressional district in your area, please bring information for all. This includes your two U.S. senators and any appropriate members of the House of Representatives. You can bring printable maps of the Congressional districts for those who may not know. They can be found at: <http://nationalatlas.gov/printable/Congress.html> Or if you have access to the internet at your meeting, group members can look up their district on [www.Congress.org](http://www.Congress.org). Any pertinent state or local officials can be useful as well.

**Action items:** Bring postcards to fill out, or writing paper and envelopes, so that every one can take at least one small action at the end of the meeting. Many local area organizers find it helpful to bring address labels for nearby elected officials for use on the postcards available on the website. Be sure to remind people that their name and address must appear on the correspondence in order to be considered a valid communication by their representative.

**Announcements:** Be sure and bring any announcements about related upcoming events locally and nationally, including conference calls, trainings, fundraisers, conferences, etc. Local area organizers can serve as liaisons with powerful state, national and international efforts to reduce violence and incarceration.

## **B. At a Local Group Meeting**

Remember - your local group is the core of your campaign, the core of any grassroots-based movement. Whoever shows up to a particular meeting - whether two people or two hundred - are the perfect people for that moment. You never know the potential impact in the world of one open-hearted conversation or planning session.

### **Some important things you can do at your meetings are:**

- Kindle inspiration, connection, and understanding
- Share your passions about the issues and information about any pertinent legislation
- Plan for next action steps (whom you plan to contact and with what request, etc.)
- Track the group's progress of activities. Note: it need not be the same person who organizes and facilitates every meeting; those responsibilities can be shared, and this sharing may lead to a stronger group ownership of the goals and mission of the group.

### **The Organizer and/or Facilitator of the meeting Will Probably:**

- Plan out the agenda for every meeting in advance
- Create an outline and suggestions for actions
- Review the agenda with the group before the meeting starts for additions and comments
- Debrief: ask people for feedback so your meetings get more useful and exciting
- To start off the meeting, we suggest you begin with some kind of inspirational reading, quote or sharing. Come prepared with a question or two for people to speak about.

### **Inspiration and Connection:**

- At initial meetings, you might ask each person to share briefly what is motivating them to be there and to participate in this work. This allows everyone to have a voice in the meeting. One or two minutes for each person should suffice. These questions can be asked at later meetings too, as new people may come and people's motivations often change.

- As you explore with your group the main areas of action, give some time for open, creative ideas from members. You might bring a flip chart or a note pad to read back to the group so that everyone gets a chance to be heard and contribute to the group's efforts.

### **Learn the Issues**

Your initial meetings might focus largely on some fundamentals of the issue you are addressing. Your group might choose to spend the first half hour reading aloud from source materials or sections of legislation, and discussing it with each other. Being well versed in the content of what you are talking about will be critical as you do outreach in your community, with potential allies, and with governmental offices. You may find additional talking points regarding reducing youth violence and incarceration on TPAEI's website.

After some informational discussion, 15 minutes of a meeting might be spent in a role-playing exercise. One person can act as an interviewer, the other as a speaker. For several minutes, practice speaking about the issue or legislation you are working on and when finished, ask for feedback from other group members -- or have everyone pair up and practice radio interviews. You might encourage "difficult" questions as well as "easy" ones - and remember **there are no right or wrong answers** - the act of connecting, relating, sharing authentic thoughts and feelings about the subject is of primary importance. Whether talking with groups or individuals, different people will connect with different elements or angles of an issue. Some conversations may center around mainly the fiscal elements of the topic you are addressing, i.e. the financial impact of violence on our society and how much money can be saved by preventative measures - while some may seek to resolve moral or ethical considerations. Flexibility, groundedness, and well-roundedness are probably a worthy trio of goals for any advocate or group.

### **C. Action Areas/Roles**

We suggest the following Key Areas for the group's activities - and you may have a specific person volunteer to "bottom-line" each of these areas:

**Governmental Relations:** A governmental liaison in your group can coordinate interaction on behalf of the group with the office of your member of Congress, state governor, city council, etc. Please see Section 7 on Shifting Policy for details about working with Members of Congress and other public officials.

**Outreach:** It's all about relationships!! It may be fundamental for your group to set up speaking engagements and/or conversations with key figures at organizations that will be positively affected by a change in the issue you are working on (i.e., churches, service clubs, schools K through 12, universities, conflict resolution programs, etc.). These speaking engagements and meetings will create opportunities to connect with others that may want to join your local team or coalition. The Outreach Coordinator can also coordinate tables at local events that will help get out the word and build interest in your local network. (For more on strengthening these organizational connections, see the section below on Forging Alliances)

**Media:** Your group will want to contact media outlets in your community regarding particular issues and/or events. Possibilities include newspaper articles, radio show appearances, television appearances, hosting annual press conferences, and submitting op-ed pieces and letters to the editor. Letter-to-the-editor-writing can be a fun group activity.

**Fundraising:** This can be part of many other group activities, and also be an independent area of pursuit: You might create fundraising events and projects to cover the cost of local activities, including the copying of materials, postage, gas, etc. and also recruit monthly donors for the national effort. More detailed tips on fundraising, including a house party kit, are available on our website.

[Note: some groups create a fifth area focused on "Event Planning and Coordination," while in other groups a temporary committee is formed for such purposes as each major event approaches]

If you create a team for each of the above areas, you might ask each team to report at each meeting. Goals may be set for each area, and then activities organized into an annual calendar so you have a plan for the year. A year-long calendar may help to keep the larger picture in mind as you are planning, and greatly increase your group's impact. The calendar can be revised as the year progresses.

Having one or two specific members of the group take on a leadership role in each of these four areas may help assure that work is moving forward according to plans. Group members may work in several areas, but many groups have found it worthwhile to have one or two people coordinating each area and checking on follow-through with commitments made. You may ask people to take away specific action steps from each meeting. Take note of everyone's agreements. Before the end of each meeting, it may be useful for each person to agree to take one small action, in addition to the larger actions the group is planning for, such as: filling out and sending in supportive postcards or letters to Congress members, media, City Councils, County Board of Supervisors, etc.

## D. Additional Notes

- **Check-in:** Take time every meeting to review previous action items regarding people's progress, and also to see how people are feeling - what's up in their lives.
- **More Being the Change:** When people have not completed a task, they might feel guilt or regret. It is important to help them release whatever is present there so that they can move on. Please be careful not to judge, rather remain positive to help re-inspire members to participate. You might ask them if they would like an extra support call this week or month.
- **Donations:** You may want to pass the hat to cover any meeting expenses like copies, stamps, materials, etc.
- **Debrief:** One useful way you can grow and improve as a team is to discuss what would improve things. Review the meeting and/or recent events and check in with everyone about how well things have been working for them. Ask for suggestions.
- We suggest that every six months to one year your group selects a new leader.

## OTHER TIPS:

- Keep a list of each meeting's attendees and contact information.
- Start a local google or yahoo email list-serve so that members of the groups can more effectively communicate between meetings.  
[www.groups.yahoo.com](http://www.groups.yahoo.com).
- Consider a conference call in the middle of the month to support your action steps between meetings, and to connect with folks who may have missed the last meeting. Visit <http://www.freeconference.com> to set up free conference calls.
- A facebook group page may also be useful.

## Section 4 - Tabling 101

"Tabling" is when a group sets up an information table in any specific location with the purposes of educating people, engaging in conversation, and gathering support around an issue. It is a connection strategy that is best used in an environment where a large number of people pass by or congregate. It is often simple, easy, and Fun!!

It can be used to recruit allies, increase awareness about the issue, raise funds, and promote a more peaceful planetary culture through **your** social interaction!

### A. Tips for Tabling

- Be friendly and make eye contact.
- Read the person - Where are they coming from? Listen!
- Be assertive (present, honest), and not aggressive.
- Have energy!!! Get psyched and you might motivate people to get involved!
- FREE stuff attracts people (like ice cream, when feasible).
- Always have a sign and flyers advertising your next meeting and upcoming events.
- Get contact information and follow up with people!

### B. Be the Change (oh, and also, Be the Change)

**Demonstrate a "Culture of Peace."** You can forget every other item as long as you remember this! Even if no one signs up at your table, you help bring forth a culture of peace by simply being the change and modeling the new possibility. Conduct yourself in a way that people catch the vision of a world where peace is the organizing principle. They may not see peace in most of the world, but they'll see it in you and start believing it's possible!

**Prepare yourself** by remembering your values and why you're

passionate about peacebuilding and violence prevention work. Visualize conversations full of agreement, and also ones full of apparent “opposition,” and see yourself peaceful, compassionate, nonviolent and respectful. You can truly find a basis for conversation, and human connection, with anyone. And start by being compassionate with yourself and your co-tablers!

### **C. Be Enrolling**

**The key to tabling is *connecting*.** Feel free to stand in front of or beside the table. In any given moment you may have just as much potential to advance your agenda by chatting with someone about their children as you do by handing out a flyer. Remember, there is a human being before you who has value. You are planting seeds of peace; there’s no telling where, when or how they’ll take root.

**Dress neutrally**, avoiding anything that might create resistance in others. Make sure you’re not wearing anything that makes a negative statement toward any candidate, elected official, administration or policy. You are pro-peace, more than “anti” anything.

### **D. Be United**

**Tabling is often more fun with a group.** Consider enlisting two to three others to join you, if there are folks available.

**Support each other in staying grounded.** It’s not unusual for people’s anger to get triggered—either anger at current events and leadership, or anger at you for standing for a new possibility. Don’t get pulled into conflict-enhancing either/or, right/wrong angles of conversations.

#### ***Tips for Dealing with Others’ Anger***

- Remember anger comes from deep caring
- Breathe
- You have the option to stay neutral at times, reflecting their position while neither supporting nor objecting to it (e.g. so you’re saying that you’d like to see stronger protections for victims of crime...)
- Empathetically reframe it (e.g., “I can see you’re very passionate about that.”)
- Respectfully agree to disagree (e.g., “I can see we have really different points of view on this. Thanks for sharing yours with me and listening to mine.”)

**Before tabling, make an agreement with your team** about how you will support one another in staying grounded or alerting a teammate who may be starting to lose balance. Consider creating a signal — maybe a hand sign, a word, a touch, a wink or a smile—that can remind you and others to stay peaceful.

### **E. Be Informed**

- **Read up on the *issues*.** Find one or two items that speak deeply to you and practice briefly explaining them.
- **Read the materials** you're bringing and know what you're handing out!
- **Scan current events** to be aware of anything that may have bearing on conversations .
- **If you are advocating legislation, know the representatives and senators for your area** and where they stand on the bill.

### **F. Be Prepared**

Bring materials to hand out and enroll others, such as:

- Peace Alliance Educational Institute literature (If Applicable)
- Contact Your congressperson “script”
- Mail-in postcards encouraging co-sponsorship of any policy or bill you are supporting
- Printed labels with local reps’ and senators’ addresses (when someone completes a postcard, you stick one on it! Mail it for them if you’re willing to pay the postage!)
- Sign-up sheet (before they leave the table, make sure you can read their writing!)
- Flyer with your group’s local activities and contact information
- Local rep and senator contact information and districts, with zip codes (to help someone determine their rep).
- Local district maps
- Contact information for local programs that effectively reduce youth violence and incarceration (e.g., gang intervention programs, restorative justice programs, etc. In general you might avoid including groups that take an “anti” stance).
- A copy of any bill you’re supporting
- Donation “bucket” or other container to collect cash donations
- T-shirts, buttons, bumper stickers to exchange for suggested donation amounts (remember—you’re not SELLING anything!)
- Cash box with small bills for change
- Chairs

- Clipboard(s) with pen(s) attached for sign-up sheets
- Toolkit—anything you think you might need: tape, pens, stapler, flashlight, etc.

## **G. Be Complete**

Plan follow-up *before* you table. Know who will add names/addresses to databases, send welcoming emails and make calls. Be sure also to input new contact information on the website or send a copy of your sign-up sheet to National so the people you met will also get the national emails.

*Remember: Your purpose in tabling is to **EXPERIENCE** and **SPREAD JOY!** Enjoy it!*

## **Section 5: Developing and Delivering a Message -**

### ***Suggestions for becoming a more Effective Spokesperson***

In both Section 2 above and more extensively in Section 8 below are a lot of potential ingredients for a strong message. And you will likely bring to the table other ingredients of your own, perhaps from other sources or from your own experience. In this section we share suggestions for effective structure and presentation for such a message. You will naturally want to modify this process depending whether you're addressing a member of Congress, a crowd of thousands, a colleague in an elevator, or a 5-year-old child – we trust you to adapt these tools perfectly to meet your various needs for expression, connection, understanding, et cetera.

#### **A. Putting together some Ingredients**

##### Structure

This subsection contains several categories of “ingredients.” Any combination of these “ingredients” can be combined into a compelling “dish,” or series of “dishes.” The basic structure we recommend for creating your own “dishes” is the following:

1. A Call to Action - This is the “Moral” or point of the story - What-all is so important about what I’m about to tell you.
2. A Personal Note - why this particular story matters to you, the teller. This is an opportunity for deeper connection with the listener.

3. The Nuggets of the story - one or more statistical and/or narrative pieces of information that educate and inform the listeners. These may relate to the troubling issue you are addressing, and/or the promising solutions you are promoting. This could be the bulk of your story.

4. The “Message” -- may be very similar to #1 - but enhanced because the audience now has more information. What do you want this audience to really take away from this story? Is there an action you are requesting? Recommending? A social direction you are ultimately advocating?

Another way to describe this:

- First tell ‘em about what you’re going to tell ‘em
- Then tell ‘em
- Then tell ‘em what you told ‘em.

Example:

**Call to Action:**

Please (or “I’m calling to ask the Congressman to...” )support legislation that will reduce youth violence using proven preventative methods!

**Personal Note:**

This issue is very important to me because as a teacher I’ve watched dozens of my students badly injured, and dozens more incarcerated, because of violence that could have been prevented by known effective practices.

**Nugget #1 (statistical):**

U.S. youth homicide rates are more than 10 times that of other leading industrial nations— despite the U.S.’s significantly higher GDP, material resources, and crime laws. [World Report on Violence and Health, World Health Organization, 2002]

**Nugget #2 (statistical):**

In the United States, homicide is the second leading cause of death for ALL children age 10-24. Of that age group, homicide is the leading cause of death for African-Americans. 52% of those arrested for murder in the U.S. are 25 years old or younger.

**Nugget #3 (Narrative):**

All the research and evidence I’ve seen shows that a continuum of ***evidence-based prevention and intervention programs*** for at-risk youth will greatly reduce crime and save much more than they cost. There are many, varied examples of initiatives and programs that have been hugely successful in decreasing harmful violence among youth.

**Message/Call-to-Action:**

We must highlight and support this important work.

We, as adults, need to do everything within our power to make sure that ***all children*** grow and thrive in our communities.

Prevention Pays!! Please Support Smart Investments (like the \_\_\_\_\_ Act, Bill

#\_\_\_\_) that Will Save Lives!!! Because Our Children Deserve It!!!!

### **More on “The Personal Note”:**

This ingredient is important because it brings the issue into the realm of the heart. For the listener to recognize the speaker’s personal connection to the issue, they are almost compelled to connect with the issue on the level of feelings. This connection may open essential doors in the policy movement you are advocating.

#### **Example 1:**

“Reducing youth violence in schools is particularly important to me because I’ve seen classmates both in junior high school and in high school who were afraid to go to school, afraid to express themselves, afraid to not belong to a strong-enough clique. And I believe that’s no healthy way for children to try to grow into adults.”

#### **Example 2:**

“Preventative programs that teach communication skills are so important to me because I have a brother who grew up thinking he had to fight to be respected. He learned to build relationships based on who was stronger, who could physically dominate. Now he’s in prison, and I only saw him once this year.”

## **B. Serving it up Strongly -- Focusing your purpose, your goals, and your means of expression.**

### **Think, Feel, and Project Confidence:**

- Knowing or thinking to yourself that “you/your community’s story” deserves to be heard gives you the fuel to have confidence. Many youth affected by youth violence depend on your advocacy/activism, so **believe in yourself** and the power of your message. If you do not believe in yourself, no one else will either! Know that you are the right messenger for the job.
- People who feel confidence when engaging in public speaking automatically do a better job at it and have more fun.
- When a person projects confidence it also makes the audience have trust and confidence in the message that the public speaker is delivering, so even if you do not think or feel confident, “fake it until you make it!”
- Try standing tall while you speak, speaking firmly, and speak with authority.

### **Become an expert at your topic or at least try to increase your depth and breadth of understanding**

- Do some research prior to the speaking engagement
- Use all means possible, like YouTube, the internet, newspapers, individual case studies, academic studies, etc. to gain knowledge

on the topic of youth violence/youth violence prevention.

- Write an outline of topics which learned from your research that you are passionate about sharing. The more you know the more effective you become as an advocate/activist for youth violence prevention.

### **Speak your truth**

- Share your story, and how the theme you are speaking on has affected your life, your family, your community, and the youth you are representing.
- Keep it brief, and powerful, and connect your story to the importance of advocacy in order to make change/progress in decreasing the harm youth violence inflicts on our youth and communities.

### **Keep it real**

- Speak your truth and speak on what you know (increasing your knowledge takes work, so do your research prior to your speaking engagement).
- Do not speak on topics or themes in which you have no expertise or knowledge.

### **Clarity matters**

- Take it slow, this is not a race, so make every word count. Speak clearly.

### **Less is more**

- Brevity, focus, and power is very effective in public speaking, so keep the quantity of words low and the quality and strength of the message focused and powerful.
- This helps you stay focused on the core message and your goals.

### **Practice makes perfect**

- Practice, practice, practice.
- Allow friends or colleagues to hear your speech and allow them to give you constructive criticism. Be open to their reflection of your performance as this is an opportunity for improvement.

### **Be strong, powerful, and PASSIONATE**

- Speak with conviction.
- Speaking with KNOWLEDGE and PASSION. These are powerful vehicles. Learn to use both!
- You have the power to direct the course of the interview, speech, or press conference.

### **Have Fun!**

Remember to be creative, to be an artist with messaging, experiment with

different techniques and enjoy the experience.

## **Section 6: Forging Alliances, Nurturing Coalitions, Healing the Community**

### ***Shared Events - Shared Media - Shared Fundraising – Shared people-power***

Probably nothing is a more important ingredient for success than **Teamwork**, especially in the peace-and-harmony business. This holds true within your local group in the mutual respect and empowerment you can exemplify, and also in the powerful relationships you can cultivate with other groups in your community – be they advocacy groups, peace-building practitioners, or members of an affected population. Note: Partnerships can be complex and should be handled with care. Be conscious that both organizations are gaining something from working closely with one another.

**A. Identifying Potential Allies** - discover who is working in your community to reduce and prevent youth violence and/or incarceration. This may include:

- **Peacebuilding practitioners** - Groups, networks, and individuals already working in effective ways to reduce youth violence and incarceration
- **Professionals in related fields** - Education, law enforcement, corrections, mental health, medicine/healing, various civic agencies, et al.
- **Members of the directly affected population** - Parents, “at-risk” youth (at higher risk of arrest or involvement in violence due to demographics and lack of available alternatives, or other factors), folks formerly incarcerated or involved in juvenile justice proceedings, or those who have experienced benefits of an effective program/practice.
- **Other advocacy groups** - Groups with similar or substantially overlapping goals/missions to The Peace Alliance Educational Institute, particularly in the realm of preventing and reducing youth violence and incarceration. This might include civic groups, parent/teacher organizations, mental health advocacy associations, etc. ad infinitum.

## **B. A 1-2-3 Process for Alliance-Building**

### **1. Making contact and beginning to cooperate**

- Do they have meetings? Can one or more of your local group attend? Could you get on the agenda to introduce yourself, and seek common ground for cooperation?
- Do they have literature? Online? It might help to learn more about the history and focus of their group, and the kind of activities they engage in. Will someone from their organization be speaking somewhere that you and/or your group members might attend?
- Are they sponsoring an event you or your group members might attend, to learn more and make contact?

### **2. Building common strength**

- As soon as contact is made, you may already be in the process of enhancing each other's strength – through communication, respect, and potential solidarity.
- Attend each other's meetings – sharing information relevant to each other, and growing the family-of-interest for each group.
- Table at each other's events – and/or create shared events; for public outreach, fundraising, mobilization, etc.
- Keep each other apprised – of key opportunities for policy advocacy or social advancement of your mutual goals.

### **3. Working Together, longer term, to:**

#### **A) Nurture a Peacebuilding Community**

This may vary widely, depending on the nature of the ally and the relationship, but the opportunities may arise, or be created, to make substantial strides toward reducing youth violence and incarceration in your community – using the power of these alliances you are building. Getting together and talking about your interests, activities, visions, and opportunities for change may be a good first step.

Remember - we don't need to wait for the federal government to create a more peaceful culture. We can take an active role in crafting our communities; in-part through building these relationships, sharing resources and information, and providing tools to the general public.

## **A) Achieve Shifts in local and national Policy around Preventing Youth Violence and Incarceration**

The diverse and aligned partnership/network you help to build could be a powerful force in guiding City Commissions, County Commissions, School Boards, and State and Federal legislatures toward more healthy and hearty policies for preventing youth violence and incarceration. This is the power of relationship. See more in the next section “Shifting Policy.”

## **Section 7: Shifting Policy - Recipes for Influencing Governmental Decisions**

This topic, like many others in this “cookbook,” could fill an entire book of its own. Changing public policy through the channels of government is a major tool in your kitchen, as well as a goal in and of itself. We will talk, in this section, primarily about methods to approach and influence the United States Congress - but similar tools would apply at the state and local level when a legal or political shift is what you’re after.

### **Introduction:**

Reducing and preventing violence and incarceration among youth is a goal that could be an “easy sell” to your local member of the US Congress - or to your mayor and city commission. The resources we advocate save lives and money, and thus are beneficial for many invested parties. Your job as an organizer or advocate might be largely to educate your member of Congress about how a particular bill will effectively advance this goal, and offer him or her enough “political cover” and useful information to make it easy for her or him to champion the bill that you support.

If you arrange to flood your Congress person’s offices with postcards, letters, and phone calls, bring motivated parents, students, educators, police and corrections officers to meet with her or him, supply your member of Congress with compelling statistics regarding proven solutions to serious problems, and generate supportive letters to the editors of local papers, you may create a powerful and ready ally for changing Federal policy.

This is a huge prize that may be there for the baking!

If you feel pretty well-versed in the nuts-and-bolts of how the federal government functions and the role that you can play as a citizen, you may

choose to skip the “Citizenship Primer” below and head straight for “Tips on Getting a Meeting With Your Member of Congress.” But if you’re up for a bit of basic education and possibly some fundamental inspiration, then please read right through!

## **A. Citizenship Primer**

*"I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions, but laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors."*

~ Thomas Jefferson

As activists, our job is to facilitate social change to create a more peaceful culture. While not all progress can be achieved through political means, it is still crucial to understand how to best utilize the political system as a tool to create this change. For our purposes, it is essential to understand the basics of how U.S. law is passed and the role that the citizen plays in this process.

### **The Role of the Government**

There are three equal branches of the U.S. Government: Legislative (the U.S. Congress), Executive (the President), and Judicial (the Supreme Court). Our Founders deliberately established the co-equality of all three branches as a system of checks and balances.

Congress consists of two branches, the Senate and the House of Representatives, and serves to create law. The President can veto a law if she or he has the Congressional support to do so. Otherwise, her or his job is to propose new laws and execute laws that are already established. The role of the Judiciary is to assure that all laws are both made and executed in accordance with the U.S. Constitution.

Every American living in one of the 50 states is represented by one House member and two Senators. The make-up of the House of Representatives is determined by population, while each state regardless of its size is represented by two Senators. There are 441 members (435 voting) of the U.S. House of Representatives and 100 members of the U.S. Senate.

In order for a bill to become law, it must ultimately be passed by both the House and the Senate and then signed into law by the President. Bills are

initially introduced by a member of Congress from either the House or the Senate. If enough votes are present in both houses, the House and Senate versions of the bill are then put into Conference Committee. In committee, the two versions of the bill are revised and blended, then put before the entire Congress for a vote.

## **The Role of the People**

Your Congressperson and Senators are well aware that they are elected by their constituents. If we don't express our opinions to them through citizen activism such as constituent meetings, phone calls, letters, and membership in citizen lobbying groups, then we can't complain when our opinions aren't reflected in Congressional policy making. Our role is to tell our Representatives how we think and what we feel. Our right to do so is the Constitutional guarantee that sets a democracy apart from every other form of government.

Yet our political freedom is like a muscle that must be exercised or else it atrophies. There are currently several paid corporate lobbyists for every Congressional Representative. If a corporate lobbyist is speaking to your representative practically every day, it is hardly enough for you to speak to them through the voting booth only every two or four years.

In the words of Congressman John Conyers (D-MI.), "Congress is a reactive body." The current crisis in our democracy may have less to do with Congressional failure to express the will of the people and more to do with the failure of the people to express their will in a meaningful way. In order to push for legislative action, we must present a compelling case both to our fellow citizens and our elected officials. A collective desire then becomes a political constituency with both the will and the power to affect the laws of the United States.

## **The Power of Citizenship**

In the U.S. Constitution, our Founders established a profound yet delicate relationship not only among the branches of government, but also between the government and the people. Through our electoral system, we ourselves are the ultimate check and balance on unfettered government power. Yet as patriots from Benjamin Franklin to Abraham Lincoln have pointed out, citizens must be vigilant. Vital citizenship is a demanding and active role in which we are called to take individual responsibility for our function as ultimate keepers of the democratic flame. When Lincoln said that government "of the people, by the people, and for the people" would not perish from the earth, he was well aware that it is up to each of us to ensure that. No generation can guarantee freedom for generations to come.

Laws do not change overnight, nor should they. However, it is equally true, as written by Thomas Jefferson, that, “as (the human mind) becomes more developed (and)... enlightened, institutions must advance to keep pace with the times.” Congressional Representatives have thousands of bills put before them for consideration during any Congressional session. It is to be expected that it takes considerable effort to get their serious attention, and perhaps even moreso to get their support for a particular bill. Yet surely the effort is worthwhile. For pro-peacebuilding legislation does reflect what Jefferson referred to as “progress of the human mind” by presenting a new model for the amelioration of violence and the waging of peace. As such, it represents both a philosophical as well as a political advance for U.S. society.

Citizen activism rarely reaps a quick fix. The U.S. anti-slavery society was established in 1833 and the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1863. The women’s suffrage movement officially began in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. Women were granted the right to vote through the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Every serious political advance in America has taken years to achieve, as may this one. However, this process may be expedited by the advances in technology and communication that today provide extraordinary opportunities for the organization of a grassroots movement. Today, it is time for our own generation to respond to a great historical challenge: to interrupt and transform the patterns of violence that threaten to destroy not only our own, but all of human civilization.

Many of the changes that we are passionate about are not new. Many have been proposed in various forms throughout history. Many are efforts with personal, political, spiritual, and social dimensions. When we advocate for legislation we address the political aspect of an issue. Affirming peacebuilding through politics helps influence the other dimensions as well.

As peace activists, it is our responsibility to bring our voices to the table of U.S. power. If we can make ourselves heard, our voices of peace can be our generation’s gift, should we choose to give it, to our nation, to our children, and to the progress of humanity.

## **B. Tips on Getting a Meeting with your Member of Congress**

You can meet with a Representative or an office aide either in Washington D.C. or in a local office. These tips could be helpful.

1.) **Make a list of what you want to say to the receptionist or Scheduler** and have it with you when you make the call. It may sound

silly, and you may never even look at the list, but having it at hand will definitely boost your confidence. They will likely ask for the desired date and time, what you would like to speak to the Representative about, and possibly who will be attending the meeting.

2.) **Call your local office or the U.S. Capitol Switchboard** at (202) 224-3121 and ask to be connected to your member of Congress's office. Feel free to dial the number directly if you have it. If you don't know who your representative is or to make an appointment at a local office, visit [www.Congress.org](http://www.Congress.org) to find all pertinent information. All you need is your zip code. When calling a D.C. office, you might ask to speak to the Scheduler. If he or she is unavailable, leave a message with your name and phone number requesting a meeting. He or she will likely return your phone call. However, if you do not hear back from the Scheduler by the next day, call again.

Remember that these people are very busy, but they ultimately work for you and it is fully within your rights to ask to see and speak to your member of Congress (or at least an appropriate staff member). Keep making follow-up calls until you speak to the Scheduler directly. This could take eight or ten calls, so don't get discouraged. If you end up with a no, ask to meet with an aide that would be working on such an issue. Each office has its own assignments, so this could be anyone. Also ask for a meeting in the district when you will be home and when the member of Congress will be as well. This will require equal persistence. Ask the D.C. scheduler whom to talk to in the local office. He or she will also have the number if you don't. **Note: Speaking with the appropriate aide could be at least as effective as speaking with the member of Congress. An aide who becomes sympathetic and enthusiastic about your cause is a tremendous asset!**

3.) **Be ready to tell the Scheduler what the meeting will pertain to.** He or she may ask you to fax a request for the meeting with all of the pertinent required information. You may want to ask if he or she would like it emailed as well.

Congratulations! The hard part is over and you have the meeting secured. Last, but certainly not least, make a note in your planner to reconfirm your meeting the Friday before your appointment is scheduled. It is always better to be safe than sorry. You certainly don't want to bring a group of allies to your Congressperson's office, either locally or in D.C., to find that your meeting has been bumped.

Good luck and have a great time!

*"I still believe that one day mankind will ... be crowned triumphant over war and bloodshed, and nonviolent redemptive goodwill will proclaim the rule of the land. Most of these people will never make the headlines and their*

*names will not appear in Who's Who. Yet when years have rolled past and when the blazing light of truth is focused on this marvelous age in which we live--men and women will know and children will be taught that we have a finer land, a better people, a more noble civilization--because these humble children of God were willing to suffer for righteousness' sake."*

~Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech - Dec. 1964

While you probably won't be getting sprayed with fire hoses or have police dogs set on you, as were the folks Dr. King refers to in the quotation above, your patient labors in this effort are working in solidarity with theirs toward a common marvelous goal – a more loving, peaceful community.

### **C. In the Congressional Meeting - Some Key Ideas and a Sample Agenda**

Your goal is to engage your Congressional representative or staff in a dialogue regarding our common goal of a less violent, more peaceful and productive life, particularly for younger people in this country. This means that regardless of your Congressperson's position on many other topics, international and domestic, your issue is relevant to him or her. It is important to read his or her website and find common goals and values so that the two of you can connect. Each of us dreams of peace incessantly. Clarify with your team that no matter what your member of Congress or her or his staff says, you can seek to empathize with their perspectives, and ultimately regard them as your allies and partners. Aim to engage with them through a common inquiry: "How can we reduce youth violence and incarceration?" Community leaders, including church leaders, heads of organizations, police department chiefs, and professionals working with proven methods that reduce youth violence and incarceration, are particularly strong allies to bring to these meetings, as well as parents and children. However, every person is important.

**Before your meeting**, members of your team might establish goals, speaking parts, and a timeline. Each person might rehearse with another person or two to receive coaching on his or her presentation. You may decide that a particular person should serve as the "host" of the meeting (perhaps the person who called to arrange the meeting). He or she could be the first to greet the member of Congress, or staff, and aim to facilitate an overall effective conversation.

You might begin your meeting by thanking the member (or their staff member) for agreeing to meet with you and for having taken some position or stand that you support. This will set a positive tone. Introduce yourselves very briefly. Include name, city of residence, and occupation and be personable and open. For example, it is appropriate to say, "I am a

teacher and the mother of a ten-month-old baby” or, “I’m a truck driver and a grandpa.” State that you have prepared a short presentation. Make your entire case in a maximum of about twenty minutes. You may receive more time, so be prepared with additional material. However, it is best to be concise and passionate. Each speaker might focus on one particular area of the bill as it relates to his or her particular interests and passions. Each person should initially speak for no more than two minutes, as this will allow everyone to participate.

At the end of the meeting, ask for your member of Congress to support the bill. Review the “request” ideas listed below, and ask for his or her own ideas as well. Ask your Congressperson what he or she would be willing to do to help you. Be specific. For example, you could ask a staffer, “Would you review this with the Congress(wo)man, and ask him or her if he or she would speak at a public event in [Hometown USA]? When should I check back with you on this?” Feel free to use “Talking Points” and “Frequently Asked Questions” documents that may be available for specific bills at [www.thepeacealliance.org](http://www.thepeacealliance.org), along with the bill itself. These may provide you with valuable materials to share with your member of Congress.

### **Meeting Outline:**

- 1.) Thank you/ Introductions - 5-6 minutes**
  - a. Thank your member of Congress for the meeting. If applicable, thank your member for an action that he or she has done that you appreciate.
  - b. Ask a question that will allow the member and aide to introduce themselves more fully. This helps establish a real connection. For example, you can ask, “What brought you to Congress? What was your vision for entering politics?”
- 2.) Introduction to the Legislation - 2-3 minutes**
  - a. Basic background/ overview of the purpose and effect of the bill.
- 3.) Share your individual experiences and emphases.**
  - a. Why are the bill’s purpose and specific provisions compelling to each of you?
- 4.) Welcome feedback, questions, or comments from member of Congress and staff regarding the bill or issue.**
- 5.) Requests**
  - a. Become a co-sponsor of the bill?
  - b. Attend the briefing on the bill scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_?
  - c. Write a letter to your colleagues? To the committee chairs that

- the bill has been referred to?
- d. Speak at a public event within the district?
  - e. Write an op-ed for a local newspaper? (You might offer to draft something for them)
  - f. What else do you or your staff think you could do to help us get this legislation enacted?

**6.) Close**

- a. Set up necessary follow-up with contact information and expected response times.
- b. Thank them for their time and attention.

**Follow up is KEY to success.**

You must follow up promptly and cheerfully. Be persistent at each task and thank your member of Congress for every effort he or she invests in helping you, even if it is just reading the bill.

**Also:** Attend local Town Hall meetings that your representative holds throughout the year to raise the subject of reducing violence and incarceration through programs that are proven to be effective, particularly among youth. Please attend as many of the local meetings as possible and bring friends.

**If Your Representative is already a co-sponsor**

It is still critical that you work with co-sponsors of any bill that you are advocating for. Here are a few things you can work with co-sponsors on:

Ask your member of Congress if he or she would be willing to speak with other colleagues in the House or Senate to co-sponsor a bill with him or her.

Ask your member to contact the key committee chairs from the committee that a bill is in for the current cycle. Ask him or her to write letters to the Chairmen and women of the committees to which the bill has been referred and request that the committee either pass the bill to the floor for a vote or host a hearing on the bill. Offer to bring speakers to the hearing.

Ask your member to speak at a public event or appear on a radio show about the bill with one of your local team members.

Ask your member to take a bill to any caucuses where he or she is a member to ask for support from fellow members.

Send a letter to the Editor of your local newspaper thanking your Representative for co-sponsoring the bill. members of Congress appreciate public praise for their efforts, but rarely receive it.

## **Section 8: A further “Spice Rack” on Youth Violence and Incarceration**

### **General Statistics, Anecdotes, and other Fuel for your Cooking Fire**

Current statistics on youth violence in the United States reveal a need to increase our capacity to reduce and prevent youth violence. Public and private research institutions have shed light on this problem and have helped to inform our civic activism, showing us that it is time we take our focus on this issue to the next level. As a nation we spend billions of dollars on suppression-based methods such as arrest, prosecution and incarceration that have been found to be ineffective in reducing the harm that youth violence inflicts on our youth and communities.

The focus on costly, ineffective and punitive enforcement strategies such as incarceration has been shown to expose troubled youth to harmful influences, increase school dropout rates and recidivism, make it harder to get a job and cost significantly more than under-funded, proactive, community-based prevention and intervention practices and alternatives to detention, such as mentoring, job training and afterschool programs. The numbers show an urgent need to revisit and revise our current strategies and to invest in what works. Youth violence prevention and intervention strategies address the root causes, to prevent crime and violence in the first place. We encourage you to use the statistics most compelling to you when speaking to others about the great need we face. The lives of the next generation may depend on our efforts.

### **General Statistics**

- A World Health Organization Report found that U.S. youth homicide rates are ten times higher than other leading industrial countries – despite the U.S.'s significantly higher GDP, material resources, and crime laws. The Centers for Disease Control found in 2006, 52% of those arrested for murder were under the age of twenty-five. 64.8% of those arrested for robbery were under the age of twenty-five.
- In the United States, homicide is the second leading cause of death for children age 10-24. Of that age group, homicide is the leading cause of death for African-Americans. Of the children murdered, 84% were boys. 52% of those arrested for murder in the U.S. are 25 years old or younger. (CDC)
- According to the 2008 National Gang Threat Assessment, there are over 20,000 gangs operating within the United States, and gang violence and drug trafficking remain serious problems throughout the country, causing injury and death to innocent victims, often children.
- Youth violence, perpetrated both by and against young people, results in enormous physical, emotional, social, and economic consequences.
- The National Institutes of Health has found that inner-city children experience the greatest exposure to violence, and youngsters who have

been exposed to community violence are more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior or depression within the following year.

- Persons under the age of 25 accounted for 50 percent of those arrested for murder and 65 percent of those arrested for robbery in 2006. [Youth Violence Facts at a Glance, Summer 2008, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)]
- Homicide is the second leading cause of death for young people ages 10–24. For African-American youth, homicide is the leading cause of death.
- Nearly 50% of children surveyed in a comprehensive 2008 study said they were assaulted at least once in the past year.
- In 2008, youth ages 12–19 were victims of more than 1.3 million reported incidents of violence.
- In 2005, 5,686 young people ages 10 to 24 were murdered--an average of 16 each day. [Youth Violence Facts at a Glance, Summer 2008, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)]
- As many as 324,000 women each year experience intimate partner violence during their pregnancy. (Gazmararian JA, Petersen R, Spitz AM, Goodwin MM, Saltzman LE, Marks JS. "Violence and reproductive health; current knowledge and future research directions." *Maternal and Child Health Journal* 2000;4(2):79-84.)
- In 2001, there were approximately 21,000 homicides and 31,000 suicides; and nearly 1.8 million people were assaulted, while about 323,000 harmed themselves and were treated in hospital emergency departments. (Surveillance for Fatal and Nonfatal Injuries – 2001, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Vital Statistics System)
- Worldwide, an estimated 1.6 million people lost their lives to violence in 2000. About half were suicides, one-third were homicides, and one-fifth were casualties of armed conflict. (World Report on Violence and Health, World Health Organization, 2002)
- According to the World Health Organization violence is a leading worldwide public health problem. [World Report on Violence and Health, World Health Organization 2002]
- U.S. Deaths Due to War: Revolutionary War: 4,435, Civil War (both sides): 498,332, World War I: 116,708, World War II: 407,316, Korean Conflict: 33,651, Vietnam Conflict: 58,195, TOTAL = 1,118,637, from [Louisiana State University]. THIS IS LESS THAN ALL THE CASUALTIES OF VIOLENCE THAT ARE NOT WAR-RELATED

### **Pervasive School Violence**

- 36 percent of high school students said they had been in a fight during the past 12 months, and 8 percent said they had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property (National Center for Education Statistics)
- 32 percent of students ages 12–18 reported having been bullied, and 23 percent reported gangs at their schools (National Center for Education Statistics)

- Seventeen percent of high school girls have been abused physically; twelve percent of high school girls have been abused sexually. (The Formative Years: Pathways to Substance Abuse Among Girls and Young Women Ages 8-22, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2003)
- About 1 in 3 high school students say they have been in a physical fight in the past year, and about 1 in 8 of those students required medical attention for their injuries. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth risk behavior surveillance – United States, 2001. In: CDC Surveillance Summaries, June 28, 2002. MMWR, 51(SS-4), p. 5.)
- Nearly 60 percent of boys who researchers classified as bullies in grades six through nine were convicted of at least one crime by the age of 24. Even more dramatic, 40 percent of them had three or more convictions by age 24. (“Bullying Prevention is Crime Prevention,” Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2003)
- Of children in sixth through tenth grade, more than 3.2 million--nearly one in six--are victims of bullying each year, while 3.7 million bully other children. (“Bullying Prevention is Crime Prevention,” Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2003)

### **Mass Arrests & Incarceration**

- In 2008, there were 2.1 million arrests of youth under the age of 18, including 96,000 for serious violent crimes and 230,000 for other assaults.
- African-American youth represent 16% percent of the U.S. juvenile population, but account for 52% of arrests for violent crime, and 40% of youth held in long-term detention.
- In 2006, 93,000 juveniles were incarcerated or held in residential detention centers – the vast majority for nonviolent offenses
- Children in adult jails commit suicide eight times as often as their counterparts in juvenile facilities. In addition, children in adult facilities are five times more likely to be sexually assaulted, and twice as likely to be beaten by jail staff. [Children’s Defense Fund, 1998]

### **Unsustainable Cost of Suppression Initiatives**

- A World Health Organization report estimates the **cost of interpersonal violence** in the U.S. at more than \$300 billion per year. The cost to victims was estimated at more than \$500 billion per year. Combined, this is the equivalent to nearly 10% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) [The Economic Dimensions of Interpersonal Violence, World Health Organization, 2004]
- States spend roughly \$5.7 billion each year imprisoning youth, at an average cost of \$240/day per youth (\$87,600/year).
- A growing number of studies show that incarcerating young people has significant immediate and long-term negative employment and economic outcomes for individuals and their communities.

- Direct expenditures for corrections (e.g., prisons and jails) by local, state and federal governments between 1982 and 2005 increased 619 percent to \$65 billion per year. [Direct Expenditures by Criminal Justice Function, 1982-2005, Bureau of Justice Statistics]
- The International Centre for Prison Studies found that the U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world – higher than Iran, Iraq and China combined.

### **Need for Youth Violence Prevention and Intervention**

- Federal family violence prevention services program were under-funded by \$48,000,000 in 2005. [Campaign for funding to end violence against women. FY Budget Briefing Book.]
- Many cities lack the resources to provide the appropriate youth counseling and therapy services to minimize the long-term emotional harm of community violence.
- Any event that can cause a person to feel fear, helplessness, horror, and a sense that life or safety is in danger puts a person, especially children, at risk for posttraumatic stress.
- The mental health of young people is essential to their overall well-being. Mental health affects how young people think, feel, and act; their ability to learn and engage in relationships; their self-esteem; their ability to evaluate situations and make choices; and their ability to handle stress, relate to other people, and acquire the skills and training needed for adulthood.
- Each year many children and adolescents sustain injuries from violence, lose friends or family members because of violence, or are adversely affected by witnessing violence.
- On November 13, 2005, a gang-related dispute broke out in San Bernardino, California, and gunfire sprayed an apartment building, killing 11-year old Mynisha Crenshaw and seriously wounding her 14-year old sister as they ate Sunday dinner with their family.
- This tragic shooting symbolizes the struggle that so many communities across the United States, like San Bernardino, face in combating gang violence, and serves as a reminder of the nationwide problem of protecting children from senseless violence.
- The Federal Government has made an increased commitment to the suppression of youth violence through enhanced law enforcement and criminal penalties, although these strategies have been found to be ineffective
- More Federal, state, and local resources and coordination are needed to reduce youth violence through proven and/or promising proactive prevention and intervention programs that focus on keeping at-risk youth in school; connected to positive mentors, role models and caring communities; and out of the criminal justice system.

## **Section 9: And in Conclusion**

Again we thank you!! We thank you for consciously caring, and for being willing to strengthen your potential towards creating a more peaceful world. We are glad to be in solidarity with you, and would be pleased to respond directly to any questions or concerns you might share with us about this cookbook or about any aspect of this important work. You can contact us via [www.peaceallianceinstitute.org](http://www.peaceallianceinstitute.org).

Now please go forth and stir the pot!!!