

PRESS RELEASE

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One Hundred Youth Expected at May Dialogue Conference

In the Mott Hall High School library in Harlem, a group of young people are talking about why dialogue is important to them. “I can use it to get my thoughts and opinions across in a positive way,” reflects one young woman. Her classmate agrees, describing how dialogue is needed to address issues like sex, peer pressure, and violence. “When a problem comes your way, you can use dialogue to help you out—by talking instead of fighting.”

These students are taking part in a workshop through the 2010 Network for Peace youth dialogue program, “Youth Talking About Peace and Change”. As peer leaders through Mott Hall’s College for Every Student program, they use dialogue to address cultural diversity in their school and confront prejudice and discrimination. Like other young people throughout NYC, they feel strongly that youth need to express themselves and learn from one other about what they can do to create positive change.

A Space for Youth Voices

On Saturday, May 15th, the Mott Hall students will join up to 100 other young leaders at the Network for Peace Youth Dialogue Conference at Marymount Manhattan College. The conference addresses the critical need for spaces in which youth voices can be heard. It is a forum in which young activists, organizers, mediators, and educators will meet one another to share their work for change and build their skills in dialogue.

At the conference will be other young people who have taken part in this year’s youth dialogue program. The Network for Peace has partnered with youth and adults from organizations including the Osborne Association and Global Kids in Brooklyn, and Effective Alternative in Reconciliation Services (EARS) in the Bronx. Young people from these groups will lead workshops on issues that impact today’s youth, such as conflict and violence, racial profiling and police misconduct. They will be joined by Network for Peace Young Leaders Brittani Anderson and Jahmala Cornelius, who have been involved in facilitating this year’s program and will now be presenting their work on intergenerational dialogue at the conference.

A Day of Connection

The conference will be a day of connection, collaboration, performances, and peacemaking. Young people will continue the work of the Network for Peace’s Confronting Concerns program, which is ending this year after six years. Moreover, they will teach one another skills in dialogue that they can go on to use in their groups, as well as in their schools, families, and communities. As one Mott Hall student wrote in his evaluation of the workshop, “I want to keep an open mind and further educate others.”