

Helping Teens Stop Violence, Build Community and Stand for Justice

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Paul Kivel

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The nation's youth are not only our future but our present, and we will not solve any pressing social problems without their active, creative participation and leadership, say the authors of *Helping Teens Stop Violence, Build Community and Stand for Justice*.

This fully revised edition is a step-by-step program to empower young people to develop into dynamic and effective leaders of their community and of themselves. The title seems to indicate that young people should stop participating in violence, but that isn't the meaning intended. Youth violence has actually seen a significant decline in recent years; Allan Creighton and Paul Kivel believe that youths are often blamed for societal evils that adults perpetuate to a greater extent.

Written for teachers, youth workers, parents, community educators, and activists, the authors ask questions like, "How do we support young people making choices and resolving conflicts using alternatives to violence?" And, "How do we give them the information they need and access to resources without either overprotecting them or controlling them?"

This book contains a list of exercises and agreements within each section to use in teaching middle- and high school-aged kids. Instructors are encouraged to think of themselves as "allies" of their students, working alongside them rather than teaching at them.

Section three offers an overview of the "isms" in effect, including classism, racism, sexism and heterosexism, and adultism. Identifying each, the authors say, "we all have some false beliefs about other groups of people ... and we each have a responsibility to unlearn the misinformation we have accumulated." One way this can be done is by understanding the history of each group of people and accepting their differences. A "People-of-Color Exercise" and a "White People Exercise" are helpful tools to use in mixed race groups to make students aware of the often unconscious stereotypes they hold and to teach how these different factions actually see themselves.

In *Helping Teens Stop Violence, Build Community and Stand for Justice*, the authors have outlined a model to highlight resistance and alliance as the principal tools for the liberation of young people. It posits that youth need practical skills and that the best strategy for young people is solidarity with each other and with adults to achieve dignity, love, and a sense of power with purpose.

The book provides a thorough manual, filled with hope rather than pessimism, to create an educational model for a better world future.

PENNY HASTINGS (July / August 2011)

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