

The mission of Youth ALIVE! is to prevent youth violence and generate youth leadership in California communities with high rates of gun violence. We believe that youth violence is preventable and that young people living in violent neighborhoods are the experts on finding solutions to the problems they face. Based in Oakland and Compton, each year Youth ALIVE! trains peer educators and mentors who teach solutions to violence to over 2,000 young people in schools, hospitals, and in their communities, helping them to make their lives safer.



PREVENTING VIOLENCE
AND DEVELOPING
YOUTH LEADERS

Prevention and Intervention: Working together to change lives

If you asked Danny Mora in 2001 where he thought he would be today, he knows what his answer would have been. “I’d be in the penitentiary or I’d be dead,” he says. Back then, he was an active gang member, in and out of Juvenile Hall, and had just spent a year in a group home. He was on probation, headed for CYA. But something happened in 2001 that changed the course of Danny’s life. He crossed paths with Emilio Mena, program coordinator of Caught in the Crossfire. Introduced by Danny’s probation officer, Emilio became Danny’s counselor. And Danny’s life began to change.

“There have been many people in my life who gave me solutions and choices, but Emilio was unique,” says Danny. “He was able to relate to me, because he was from the same neighborhood. He was a former gang member from my block.” Not only did the two share a common background, but Emilio also gave Danny something others had not: long-term, consistent case management. “Emilio picked me up from my home and took me to the DMV to get an ID,” says Danny. “He gave me his cell phone number and told me to call him any time. He took me to job interviews. He stood up for me and advocated for me in court. He interviewed my mom and took care of my house and family. He was like my big brother.”

The two spoke two or three times a week and saw each other weekly for a year, and have continued their relationship ever since. “When I enrolled in college, I still called him,” says Danny. “When I got laid off from my job, he was the one I called.” Five years later, Danny is majoring in ethnic studies at Merritt College, working on a music career, and he has a new part-time job: **Program Assistant at Teens on Target**.

Teens on Target (TNT) and Caught in the Crossfire (CinC) are two of Youth ALIVE!’s core programs. Caught in the Crossfire intervention specialists, who have overcome violence in their own lives, work with young people who are hospitalized due to violent injuries, in order to reduce retaliation, re-injury, and arrest. Without intervention, hospitals discharge these patients to the same violent environment where they were injured, with no “prescription” for how to stay safe, and with great pressures to get revenge. Too often, this results in a “revolving door” of violence: after youth are injured and hospitalized, they and their friends often retaliate, causing even more injuries or death, arrest, and incarceration. To date, CinC has provided services to more than 850 young people.

The Intervention Specialist provides direct case management and mentoring,



“This work is my life. These kids call me anytime, day or night, if they need me. I think about it when I go home. It’s rewarding to me, definitely.” – Danny Mora

Almost all TNT members graduate from high school, in neighborhoods where the graduation rate hovers at just 40%.

and coordinates assistance from other social services providers, probation officers, teachers, hospital social workers, and others. The Intervention Specialist also links the young person and his or her family and friends with resources that meet basic needs and promote healthy, nonviolent lifestyles, such as medical care, educational and job training programs, counseling and life skills training, and legal assistance.

- ▶ **98% of youth** who received intervention services through CinC have avoided violent re-injury, reducing re-entry into hospitals and the criminal justice system.
- ▶ Youth who participate in CinC are **70% less likely** to be arrested after a violent injury than those who do not.

“When Emilio spoke to me from the heart,” Danny says, recalling those early visits, “he made me question myself. I had to dig deep and search my soul, and know what my soul is. Before, I was listening to music that degraded women and being an outlaw. I was influenced by my peers and the media. Growing up in East Oakland, I thought going to jail was normal. Once I met Emilio, I was like, ‘Wow, this is not normal. There is a reason this is happening.’ I realized that if I want to see a change, I have to be a part of it.”

One way that Danny is being part of the change he wants to see in the world is by working with Teens on Target, a peer leadership and violence prevention program that trains young people from neighborhoods with high rates of violence to provide peer education to middle school students. Since Teens on Target began in 1989, the program has trained 800 high school students to be peer educators and youth violence prevention leaders. These peer educators have presented violence prevention workshops to over 38,000 young people.

“I enjoy working with students inside the schools,” Danny says. “I’m able to personally connect with them on a level that a lot of other people don’t, because I went to Oakland Unified School District myself and I know the day-to-day obstacles. I like meeting the parents and working bilingually with them.” Right now Danny’s position is part-time, but he hopes that it will be funded for more hours in the future. His goal is to be able to do one-on-one counseling and set up a group for young men. “I’d like to take them out for field trips outside of the city,” he says, “so they can meet other youth who are doing the same thing.”

Danny still lives in his old neighborhood and runs into his old friends from time to time. “I just ran into a friend and he told me that one of our friends got killed last Friday,” he says. “Some others are dead; some are doing hard time. They write to me and say they admire what I’m doing. They send their little brothers to come work with me.”

“This work is my life,” says Danny. “These kids call me anytime, day or night, if they need me. I think about it when I go home. It’s rewarding to me, definitely.”

Danny Mora is one of hundreds of young people whose lives are supported or turned around every year by Youth ALIVE!’s groundbreaking programs. The staff of these programs cannot continue working in the most violent neighborhoods of Oakland and Compton without the support of individuals like you.

This year, more than ever before, we need your help.

Many federal and state funding sources that Youth ALIVE! has relied on for years have ended or been dramatically reduced under the current administrations. We have always counted on our local donor base to help us provide the services that make such a difference in our community and to our young people, and this year we are asking you to help us even more. Your year-end contribution will enable us to continue to support Danny’s vision to make violence a surprise in his neighborhood.

Please

▶ **use the enclosed envelope**

or

▶ **donate online at www.youthalive.org**

Now, more than ever, we need your help!



What Your 2006 Gift to Youth ALIVE! Can Buy

\$100

Helps provide a young person with food, shelter, bus passes and clothing for interviews through the Caught in the Crossfire Emergency Fund

\$500

Three workshops for middle & high school students on preventing dating, gun and gang violence.

\$750

Curriculum materials to train a classroom of youth to be peer educators

\$1,000

Six sessions on violence prevention taught by TNT Peer Educators to 30 youth

What Violence Costs

\$40,000

Hospitalization for 1 gun injury

\$80,000

One year in CYA

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