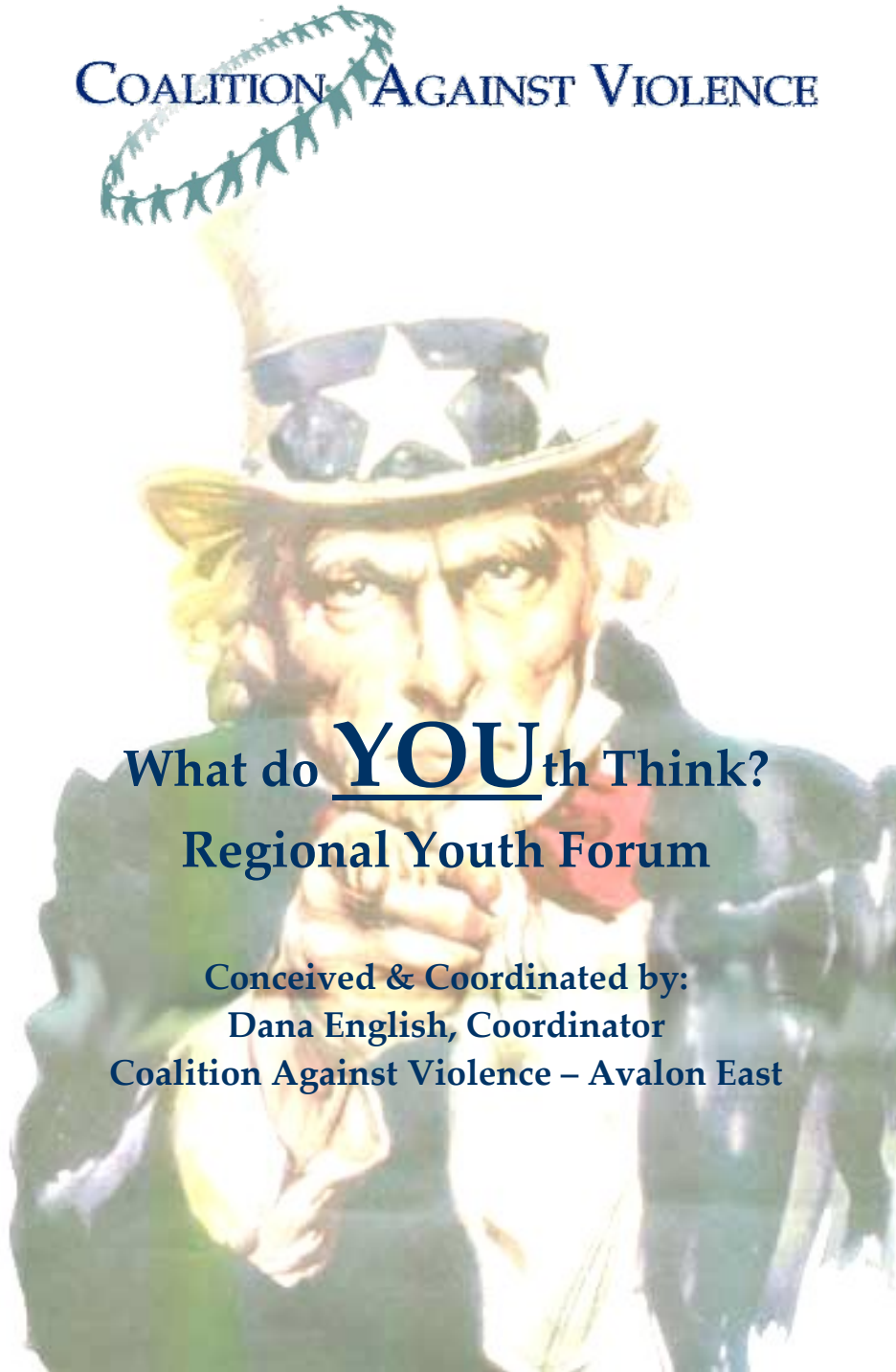


COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE

What do YOU<sup>th</sup> Think?  
Regional Youth Forum

Conceived & Coordinated by:  
Dana English, Coordinator  
Coalition Against Violence – Avalon East



## Introduction

In partnership with the Eastern School District, the Coalition Against Violence – Avalon East arranged a regional youth forum to address issues relevant to today's youth. Kids today are growing up in a culture of violence; with violence saturating the news and other media, it is no wonder that bullying is reaching tragic proportions as it did in the Columbine shooting. Bombarded by violent media messaging, from *Grand Theft Auto* to the war in Iraq, the challenge is to consider ways to counteract this bombardment through education.

According to the Violence Prevention Initiative's Action Plan *Taking Action Against Violence 2006-2012*, by 2009, 'The Department of Education will integrate healthy relationships, anti-violence, and diversity training into curriculum (p.22).'<sup>1</sup> It is thus timely to gather youth, teachers and guidance counselors from schools in our region to discuss issues facing youth, and to consider what a curriculum incorporating anti-violence education might look like. Given the prevalence of violence in the media, it would follow that incorporating media literacy into an anti-violence curriculum could help equip our youth to better understand media messaging and its impact.



### Setting the Context for Today's Youth – Growing up in a Global Village

In envisioning an anti-violence curriculum that will resonate with today's youth, it is important to situate youth within 21<sup>st</sup> century life, within living in a global village.

The term 'global village' was coined by Canadian Professor Marshall McLuhan back in the 60s to describe a world "shrunk" by modern advances in communications. McLuhan compared the vast network of communications systems to one extended central nervous system, ultimately linking everyone in the world.



Marshall McLuhan



This vast network of communications is, of course, media.

TV is one medium that has been, and continues to be, a huge part of our lives. It has been a shared historical experience as we have together witnessed things like the first landing on the moon, the finale of *Seinfeld*, September 11<sup>th</sup>, and most recently, the funeral of Anna Nicole Smith. Television has brought to us a wealth of information from around the world, admittedly, though, through an American lens, as most of the TV we watch is from the US with networks like NBC, CBS, CNN, FOX, ABC, etc.

TV, though, has been a one-way street in terms of information traveling. Those who own the network decide what to broadcast, and the viewer receives that message in their living room.

<sup>1</sup> Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Violence Prevention Initiative, *Taking Action Against Violence 2006-2012*, Office of the Queen's Printer, 2006, p 22.

The decision of what to broadcast is therefore determined by those who own the network as well as those who are paying to advertise throughout episodes. TV doesn't really allow for a dialogue or conversation to happen. It is thus a one-way medium.

The impact that TV, and other media like magazines, have on our own belief systems, our own self perception is huge. Let us consider the messaging of the fashion and cosmetics industry as an example. Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty illustrates this well and can be viewed here: <http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/flat4.asp?id=6909> .

Body image for girls, and increasingly for boys these days is a major issue. Anorexia is the deadliest psychological disorder, a fact that should illustrate how powerful media messaging can be on our belief systems – not only about the world around us, but about our very selves.

Of course the fashion and cosmetics industry and their impacts on self image are only one example of considering what a message is, who designed the message and why. Who is benefiting from this messaging? Who is suffering?

These are the questions that will lead us to media literacy, to the ability to critically look at messaging and ask ourselves why?

#### 5 Core Concepts of Media Literacy

- 1) All media messages are constructed.
- 2) Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
- 3) Different people experience the same media message differently.
- 4) Media have embedded values and points of view.
- 5) Media messages are constructed to gain profit/power.

#### 5 Key Questions

- 1) Who created the message?
- 2) What techniques are used to attract my attention?
- 3) How might different people understand this message differently from me?
- 4) What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented or omitted from this message?
- 5) Why was this message sent?

Where TV is a one-way street in terms of messaging, the internet represents a two-way street – a conversation – You give information and you get. Youth today are the first generation to grow up with computers in many homes, with instant messaging, blogs, my space, youtube an everyday presence in life.

Every year, TIME magazine celebrates one person who has had a significant impact on the world. In 2004, it was George W. Bush. In 2005, it was 'the good samaritans' namely, Bono for his work on poverty and AIDS in Africa, and Bill and Melinda Gates for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which works to improve the lives of people around the world who are dealing with poverty, disease, etc.



In 2006, TIME's Person of the Year was YOU. Their cover featured a computer whose screen was a mirror and their tagline asserts 'Yes you. You control the information age. Welcome to your world.' What's so special about 'you'? Well, it is 'your' contribution to the information age through blogs, wikipedia, myspace, youtube, facebook, etc. that has helped create a global forum. Suddenly, 'you' don't need to own a TV network to get your experiences and ideas to millions. It's you, so to speak, who taped Michael Richard's (Kramer) racist rant at a comedy club. It's you, so to speak, who taped Saddam Hussein's hanging.

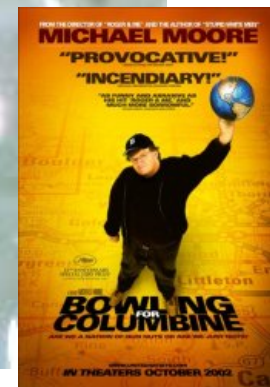
Youth hold tremendous potential to effect change as they know firsthand the realities of their generation's issues, and they hold hope, a resource indeed. This generation of youth hold exceptional potential as a generation with the ability to not only access information globally, but to contribute to the information flow in a meaningful way.

There is, after all, great responsibility in being a citizen in a global village – it means getting informed about what's happening in the world – why is there so much poverty in Africa? Why are so many people dying of AIDS? To be a global citizen, one needs to be conscious and informed about issues in other regions, and how one might help.

### Format of the Forum

That young people today communicate in a multimedia fashion through telephone, email, blogs, instant messaging, etc.; it made sense to make a forum on youth issues multimedia in design.

We chose the documentary *Bowling for Columbine* as a focal point for the forum because it has raised a lot of crucial questions about violence on a local and global scale in relation to the Columbine shooting. Because it shows how an average person like Michael Moore, the film maker, can make a real difference in people's levels of awareness by asking the right questions in front of a camera.



Following a call to schools by Safe and Caring Schools Coordinator Bernie Ottenheimer, 12 schools from the region expressed interest in participating. DVD s of the film were mailed out, along with the official *Bowling for Columbine Teacher's Guide*, which outlines many of the issues explored in the documentary, and provides activities and lesson ideas to further explore these complex issues. The guide can be accessed by visiting

[www.bowlingforcolumbine.com](http://www.bowlingforcolumbine.com). It was decided that sending the film out in advance would make more sense time-wise for the forum itself, as well as from a cognitive point of view in that the time between viewing the film and attending the forum should allow for the percolation of some very complex issues and ideas.

11 schools (60 students, 15 guidance counselors) from the Eastern School District participated, bringing with them a range of experiences in youth activism – from peer mediation to alternative schooling. The 12<sup>th</sup> school, Stella Maris, opted out at the last minute due to travel issues.

### Participating Schools

St. John's

- Bishop's College
- Prince of Wales Collegiate
- Holy Heart of Mary
- The Murphy Centre

Goulds

- St. Kevin's

Mt. Pearl

- Mt. Pearl Senior High
- O'Donel

Torbay

- Holy Trinity

C.B.S.

- Holy Spirit

Bell Island

- St. Michael's Regional High

Mobile

- Mobile Central High

### Agenda (attached)

Each participant received a kit of relevant information. Each kit contained:

Name tag

Agenda

Pen and Notepaper

Discussion sheets for the morning session

Takeaway literature on the following subjects:

- Terrorism and nonviolence
- The world after 9/11
- Media literacy and Violence in the Media
- A Culture of Fear
- Oil – How much does the world rely on it? Can we live without it?
- Columbine: Whose Fault is It? A commentary by Marilyn Manson
- TIME's Person of the Year: YOU

Coalition Against Violence pamphlet

Coalition Against Violence coaster

A copy of Teen Circuit – a new newspaper covering teen issues

A pack of gum



## What do YOUth Think?

Youth Forum Agenda  
Tuesday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
9:00 am – 2:30 pm

9:00 Arrival of Schools

9:15 Welcome & Introductions – Rob & Kelly

9:35 Dana English – Coordinator, Coalition Against Violence  
Background on the Coalition Against Violence,  
What do YOUth Think? Youth Forum and an Introduction to Media Literacy

9:45 – 12:00 - Scenes & Discussion

*A selection of scenes from 'Bowling for Columbine' will be screened.  
Groups will then discuss the themes from each scene at their respective tables.  
Each scene discussion will then be brought to the entire group  
for further discussion.*

(Please note that there will be a 15 minute break around 10:15)

12:00 – Lunch

1:00 – Panel – Personal Experiences of Youth Activism  
*Local youth will speak to their own experiences as activists  
within the high school setting and beyond.*

1:30 – Group Discussion

*Groups will discuss youth activism in their own schools and communities,  
considering the following 2 questions:*

*How is my school working to be a safe and caring school?  
What have we learned today that we can bring back to our schools?  
The discussion will then be brought to the entire group.*

2:30 – Schools make their way home

## Getting started

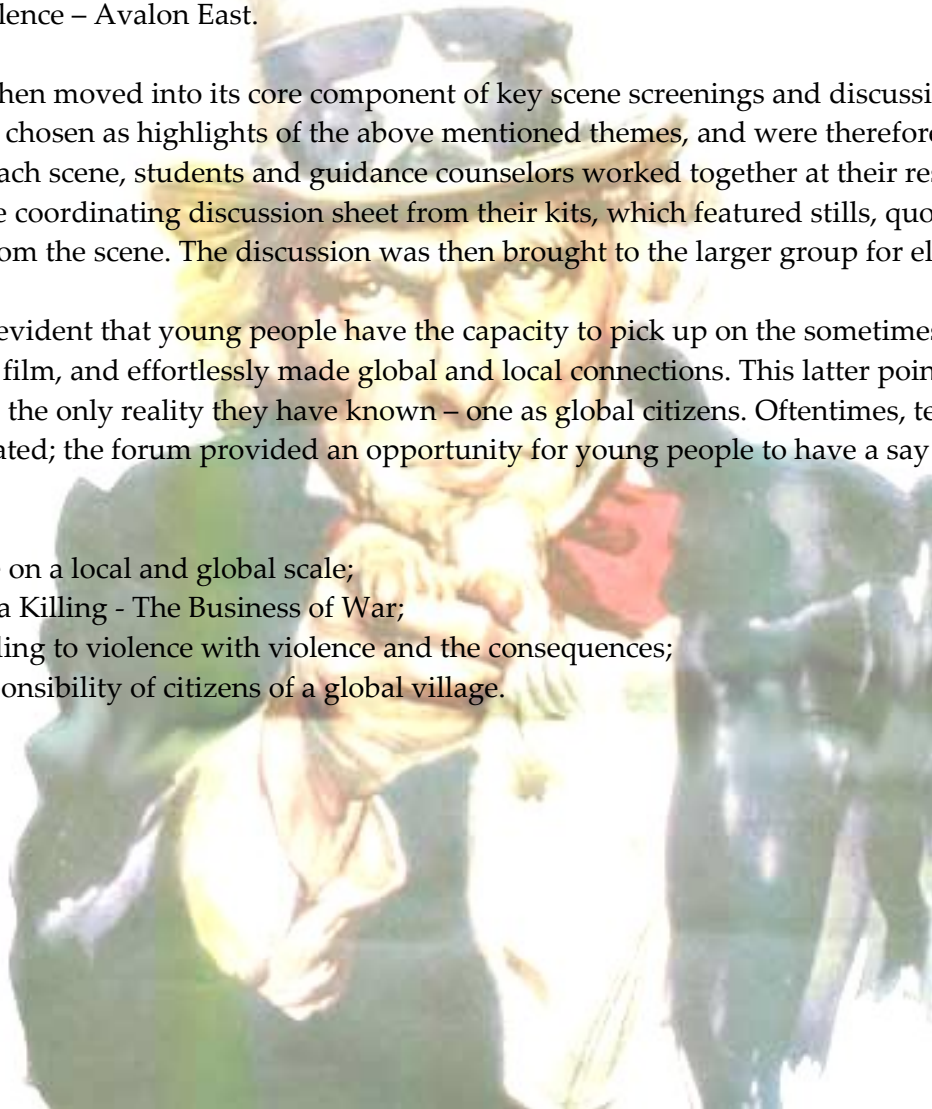
Having received their kits and settled down, an icebreaker loosened up the room and students were rearranged so that they would sit with reps from a number of different schools. The reasoning behind this was to help facilitate networking between schools so that students and guidance counselors could learn more about what is happening in other schools.

The day was co-facilitated by two local adolescent mental health counselors (Rob Fildes and Kelly Yetman) who were recommended for their work with young people. Once they facilitated the icebreaker, Coalition Coordinator Dana English provided an introduction to the rationale behind the forum, the concept of media literacy, and some background on the Coalition Against Violence – Avalon East.

The forum then moved into its core component of key scene screenings and discussions. Three scenes were chosen as highlights of the above mentioned themes, and were therefore screened. Following each scene, students and guidance counselors worked together at their respective tables on the coordinating discussion sheet from their kits, which featured stills, quotes and questions from the scene. The discussion was then brought to the larger group for elaboration.

It was very evident that young people have the capacity to pick up on the sometimes subtle satire of the film, and effortlessly made global and local connections. This latter point really emphasized the only reality they have known – one as global citizens. Oftentimes, teens are underestimated; the forum provided an opportunity for young people to have a say on key issues like:

- Violence on a local and global scale;
- Making a Killing - The Business of War;
- Responding to violence with violence and the consequences;
- The responsibility of citizens of a global village.



## Scene 1 – Littleton, Colorado

- Location of Columbine High School
- Corporate office of Lockheed Martin – largest weapons maker in the world
- 3 major facilities, 5000 employees in the region

### Consider the following quotes:

*'I suppose, in one way, what happened in Columbine high school is a microcosm of what happens throughout the world.'* (Evan McCollum)



*'Societies and countries and governments do things to annoy one another. But we have to learn to deal with that annoyance or that anger or that frustration in appropriate ways...we don't get irritated with someone and just 'cause we're mad at them, we drop a bomb or shoot at them or fire a missile at them.'* (Evan McCollum)

How do the two statements above contradict one another?

*'We hope to help both teachers and students learn alternative ways to deal with anger.'*

Why is it interesting that Lockheed Martin donated \$100 000 towards anger management classes? Is this statement, coming from an Executive of Lockheed Martin hypocritical? Why or Why not?

*'Dad goes off to the factory every day and builds missiles. These are weapons of mass destruction. What's the difference between that mass destruction and the mass destruction over at Columbine High School?'* (Michael Moore)

What do you think?

Why do you think the boys at Columbine resorted to violence?



What was the community response to the Columbine shooting?

How was this response similar to the response to September 11<sup>th</sup>?

## Scene 1 – Littleton, Colorado - Responses

*The following is a compilation of groups' flipcharted responses.*

- Columbine is a small example of the violence that is occurring all over the world.
- Hiroshima – Two wrongs don't make a right.
- They spoke of how students need alternate ways to deal with anger, but Americans routinely bomb and attack other countries.
- Donated money out of fear, guilt as an attempt to cover the promotion of violence
- Even though they donated \$100,000, they are still building weapons and creating a violent image.
- \$100,000 is a publicity/PR move.
- The States is building weapons of mass destruction, yet they invaded Iraq to destroy their weapons of mass destruction and to forbid them from constructing them.
- Lockheed Martin is enabling violence.
- Evan McCollum's quote supports Michael Moore's comparison of the violence at Columbine with violence on a global scale.
- People reacted with fear and more guns, higher security, metal detectors installed in schools.
- Promotes fear – The community's response was fear, fear and more fear.
- Violence was a last resort [of boys at Columbine] to get attention.
- Personal history has great influence on the person you become and what you are capable of
- Same thing – what the boys did in the school and the world
- Put \$100,000 [into training] to calm the waters
- He is being hypocritical; they make weapons, that's how countries deal with each other but he says [kids] need to find other ways.
- How can we expect our kids to learn peaceful alternative ways if their parents are making weapons of mass destruction? Why should we handle things different?
- Why the boy's resorted to violence:
  - The way they were treated by peers
  - Because they could
  - Haven't been taught [alternative ways to deal with anger]
  - That is the society they grew up in.
- They resorted to violence because they are surrounded by it.
- We try to find the reasons why these 2 young boys resorted to violence instead of simply saying that they're evil, but we never try to find the reasons behind Osama's actions.
- Community response – looking for someone to blame
- Brought community together – protest against National Rifle Association
- RE: September 11<sup>th</sup> – US got bullied – fought back with weapons – US didn't take any responsibility

## Scene 2 – The Columbine Shooting

- o April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1999 – largest one day bombing in Kosovo – 1 of 100 consecutive days of bombing in response to Serbs’ refusal to sign a peace plan for Kosovo
- o One hour later...

Consider President Clinton’s response regarding the bombing in Kosovo:

*‘We’re striking hard at Serbia’s machine of repression, while making an effort to minimize harm to innocent people.’*

Consider how the bombing appeared in Serbian news media:

*‘On the hit list were [a] local hospital and primary school.’*

What does the contradiction revealed in the above two statements say about national news media around the world?

Consider President Clinton’s response to the Columbine shooting one hour later:

*‘We all know there’s been a terrible shooting....I hope the American people will be praying for the students, parents and teachers.’*



Why does what happened at Columbine seem more tragic than what happened in Kosovo on the very same day? Is it more tragic? Are American lives worth more?



Does real violence (as seen in the Columbine video footage) have a different impact on viewers than violence seen in movies and on television dramas?

What sort of vicarious trauma might Canadians experience with our saturation of American media?

Consider the media attention given to the ‘Trenchcoat Mafia’ after the shooting – cover of TIME and Newsweek, reading of diaries on television. What message might this send to other kids feeling the same pressures as Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold?

## Scene 2 – The Columbine Shooting – Responses

*The following is a compilation of groups' flipcharted responses.*

- US media is watered down to only make the US look good – tells people what they want to think
- It happened in the US – it's closer. Since their citizens are okay, then everything is ok.
- National News media will put much more value on American lives and will ultimately portray the American people as more important.
- Tragedies are equal but different – value of people's lives are incomparable.
- Here, you're getting two views of the situation – Clinton stated they were making an effort to minimize harming innocent people, yet the two places on the hit list were a local hospital and primary school.
- It seems more tragic because it's personal and we think it can happen here more than bombing would.
- It's real and we know it is happening.
- Constant fear – America lives in constant fear. America creates constant fear.
- Copycat effect – someone else might want to be remembered forever 'monkey see, monkey do'.
- Feeling uneasy going into the US
- People who put the pressure on the shooters are the real monsters
- It shows how when you make the news, you are the media – you choose how everything plays out.
- [News media] has a much more severe effect – we know that movies are just that
- All of the media we get is American – we see what they're going through, but we only see their perspective – we don't get to form our own perspectives or opinions.
- Possibility of people wanting to be 'heroes'
- Created major fear – The boy next door could very likely come and shoot up your school.
- Censorship – always show America in good light
- Intrigues us – everyone wants to know about violence.
- Real violence shows so much fear but video/TV violence is scripted and we don't really see people's emotions.
- 9/11 is the day the world stopped turning – but this doesn't reach the level of violence that occurs everyday in other parts of the world – ex: Kosovo
- American media prioritize even a few American lives over hundreds of thousands of foreign lives
- Columbine was all over American and Canadian news for weeks. The Montreal shooting this year was hardly portrayed on the American news.
- Opinions in media are too mixed to know the truth.
- Media chooses what we see (focus on negative images).

## A Culture of Fear & Violence

Please read the 'Did You Know...' Fact Sheet before considering these questions:

**culture** *'kʌltʃər* [kuhl-cher] *noun, verb, -tured, -turing.*

*-noun* : behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group: *the youth culture; the drug culture*; the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another <sup>2</sup>

Consider these 2 quotes:

*'How are we afraid of all these things? It's because a lot of people are making a lot of money off of it, and a lot of careers off of it. And so, there's vested interests, a lot of activity to keep us afraid.'*  
(Barry Glassner, *The Culture of Fear*)

*'That's not the way the media wants to take it and spin it and turn it into fear... you're watching the news and you're being pumped full of fear. There's floods there's AIDS, there's murder, cut to commercial, buy the Acura, buy the Colgate. If you got bad breath, they're not going to talk to you...and it's just a campaign of fear and consumption...keep everyone afraid and they'll consume.'* (Marilyn Manson)



What is a culture of fear?

What are the links between fear and consumption?

How is TV news like any other TV show?

What responsibility lies with news media in a democratic society?



*'One way to express our unity is for Congress to set the military budget, the defence of the United States, as the number-one priority and fully fund my request!'* (President Bush)

Who benefits from a culture of fear? Who suffers?

Do you think the U.S. response to 9/11 appropriate? What might have been a better way?

<sup>2</sup> Dictionary.Com - <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/culture>

# Did you know...

## Making a Killing – the Business of War

...The biggest consumer of oil is the United States – 5% of the world's population consumes over 25% of the world's daily oil requirement. The U.S. relies on imports for over 50% its oil needs. Guaranteeing the supply of oil is therefore seen as a 'security' issue. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter declared that, "Any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the U.S., and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." The 'Carter Doctrine' was applied in the first Gulf War in 1991, following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.<sup>3</sup>

...Before becoming U.S. Vice President, Dick Cheney was the President of Halliburton, the largest oil-and-gas services company in the world. This Texas based corporation is now the biggest private contractor for American forces in Iraq; it has received contracts worth some eleven billion dollars to help rebuild there. Cheney continues to collect deferred compensation worth approximately \$150,000 dollars a year, and he retains stock options worth more than \$18 million.<sup>4</sup>



Dick Cheney

...It is estimated that once fully explored, Iraq's oil reserve will represent 27% of the world's oil reserves.<sup>5</sup>

...2997 people were killed in September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon.

...Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, there have been:

- 3185 U.S. military deaths
- 57 805 Iraqi civilian deaths<sup>6</sup>
- 655,000 'Excess' Iraqi deaths – (601,000 resulted from violence and the rest from disease and other causes, according to the study. This is about 500 unexpected violent deaths per day throughout the country.)<sup>7</sup>

...The U.S. Military budget for 2006 was \$571.6 billion.

...In 2006

- 41% of taxes paid by U.S. citizens went to war costs.
- 2% went to science, energy and the environment (i.e. research into energy alternatives like solar, wind, etc. to end dependence on foreign oil imports.)<sup>8</sup>

...In September 2002, Paul Cellucci stated that the "only specific instruction" he was given when he was appointed U.S. Ambassador to Canada was to "talk to the Canadians about increasing their military spending."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> BBC - The Big Question - How much does the world rely on oil? <http://www.open2.net/bigquestion/oil131104.html>

<sup>4</sup> The New Yorker - [http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/040216fa\\_fact](http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/040216fa_fact)

<sup>5</sup> The Brookings Institution: <http://www.brookings.edu/views/op-ed/fellows/luft20030512.htm>

<sup>6</sup> www.michaelmoore.com

<sup>7</sup> The Washington Post - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/10/AR2006101001442.html>

<sup>8</sup> Friends Committee on National Legislation: [http://www.fcnl.org/issues/item.php?item\\_id=2336&issue\\_id=19](http://www.fcnl.org/issues/item.php?item_id=2336&issue_id=19)

<sup>9</sup> Bruce Cheadle, "Friendly advice: U.S. ambassador urges more military spending," *The Gazette (Montreal)*, 4 September 2002, p. A12

# Did you know...

## Knowledge is Power – Vested Interests in Media

... Just before the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Bush Administration banned news coverage and photography of dead soldiers' homecomings on all military bases.<sup>10</sup>

...In 2006, the federal government, under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, banned media from covering the return of bodies of soldiers killed in the line of duty.<sup>11</sup>

...General Electric owns NBC. GE not only make light bulbs, but parts for the Patriot missile, as well as for dozens of other weapons used in war.<sup>12</sup>

...In the real world, homicides declined by 13% between 1990 and 1995, while network news coverage of murders for the same period increased by 336%.<sup>13</sup>

...Over 70% of U.S. lead stories in local newscasts focused on crime, twice the rate of leads on Canadian Television News.<sup>14</sup>

... Only 18% of CBC and 11% of CTV news stories on Canadian murders focused on those committed by someone known to the victim – despite the fact that 83% of the murders in Canada are committed by a spouse or acquaintance of the victim.<sup>15</sup>

... In 2005, 47 journalists were killed worldwide; ¾ of whom were murdered to silence their criticism or punish them for their work.<sup>16</sup>

... In 2005, 125 journalists were imprisoned worldwide.<sup>17</sup>



<sup>10</sup> The Washington Post - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&contentId=A55816-2003Oct20&notFound=true>

<sup>11</sup> CBC News - <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2006/04/25/soldiers-return-media060425.html>

<sup>12</sup> The Multinational Monitor <http://multinationalmonitor.org/mm2001/01july-august/julyaug01interviewcohen.html>

<sup>13</sup> *Media Monitor*, Vol XI Number 3: July/August 1997

<sup>14</sup> *On Balance*, Volume 10, Number 8

<sup>15</sup> *On Balance*, Volume 9, Number 8

<sup>16</sup> The Committee to Protect Journalists - <http://www.cpj.org/attacks05/pages05/aop05index.html>

<sup>17</sup> The Committee to Protect Journalists - [http://www.cpj.org/attacks05/pages05/imprison\\_05.html](http://www.cpj.org/attacks05/pages05/imprison_05.html)

## Did You Know?/A Culture of Fear & Violence – Responses

*The following is a compilation of groups' flipcharted responses.*

- We are afraid because the media makes us afraid.
- Media blows things out of proportion – ex: killer bees.
- Post 9/11 - Gun purchases up 70%, ammo up 140%, burglar systems up 30% - Stores are loving it because they make money from people's fears.
- TV News – you watch for facts and real stories and to hear what's going to happen next
- TV shows – you watch to see what's going to happen next
- Ratings are important for news media too.
- Nuclear energy – power source or weaponry?
- FEAR=CONSUMPTION – When fear rises, so does consumption. Everyone reacts to fear, the media makes you react the way they want you to.
- Fear is a great motivator.
- Only emotion left to market/play on – FEAR
- Canadian news media seems more positive.
- Response to 9/11 was too rash – diplomacy would have worked better.
- Religion becomes cult-like – ex: Jonestown massacre.
- Using paranoia, religion for warmongering
- Some stats that stand out:
  - 41% of taxes paid by US citizens go to war costs.
  - Only 2% goes to science
  - Priorities – 41% goes to military spending, yet no public health care system
  - The budget for 2006's military spending - \$571.6 billion
  - Global warming research is suffering because of defense spending.
  - General Electric owns NBC.
- It takes a huge tragedy for somebody to take action, to realize how serious the situation is.
- FEAR SELLS!
- Military funding has become an 'answer' to fear
- Consumers and viewers suffer.
- The poor suffer the most.
- Poor get poorer, rich get richer

## Panel – Personal Experiences of Youth Activism

In the afternoon, a panel of local youth spoke to their personal experiences in youth activism.

### Stephen Dunn

Stephen Dunn is a Level III at Holy Heart of Mary High School. An executive member of the Holy Heart Film Club, a student of novel cinema and the Screen Arts at Heart program, Stephen is keen on film, having gone on to not only make short films, but to win the Screen Arts Film Fest last year! Stephen is presently a candidate in the Racism Stop It! campaign of the National Film Board. Aside from his love for film, Stephen is active at Heart as a member of student council and as a peer counselor.

Stephen thus spoke to film and activism, after which, his submission to the NFB contest was screened as an illustration of how film and activism can work together, and how youth are contributing to the information flow. Stephen emphasized the supportive nature of the local film community, encouraging any students curious about film to get involved.

### Deanna Power

Deanna has always been an active volunteer in her community. In 2004, she founded a Red Cross-4H Youth group in the Placentia area, the first of its kind in Canada. As the group's president, she helped organize a tsunami relief concert, afternoon teas for seniors, water safety presentations for children and a fundraiser for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. She is also an Injury Prevention Presenter, and heavily involved with the RespectED Violence and Abuse Prevention Program. In 2007, she was selected to be the Atlantic Canada Representative on the Red Cross Youth Task Force. During high school, Deanna has served on her student council, yearbook committee, the RCMP Youth Advisory Committee and has performed in musicals at her school. She is also an active member in her church community, a member of the Provincial Karate Team, a member of the CLB Regimental Band, and the youth representative on the Community Health Promotion Network Atlantic Anti-Drug Awareness Campaign. Deanna plans to pursue a career in music.

### Dayna Lynch

Dayna is a Level III French Immersion student at St. Kevin's High School. She has been actively involved in St. Kevin's Peer Counselling Program since Level I and joined their Making Waves school team in Level II.

Dayna spoke about the Making Waves Program and how it works to reduce not only dating violence, but violence in all relationships. By citing the prevalence of abuse within all relationships, not just dating relationships, Dayna helped reiterate another theme that emerged throughout the day: the role of power in violence and the presence of power (balanced or unbalanced) in every relationship, whether at the micro or macro level.

## **Nick Hounsell**

Nick Hounsell is a first year university student who has been involved in the area of youth activism for several years.

Completing the City of St. John's Leadership courses, Nick has gone on to sit on the Mayor's Advisory Committee for Youth (MACY) for the last 3 years. In this capacity, Nick brings forth important issues affecting youth in the City.

During his years at Holy Heart, Nick was extremely active with the Peer Counseling program which required the development and delivery of numerous presentations to both high school and junior high students. Nick was also part of a youth forum on "Out of the Fog" where he discussed critical issues facing youth today.

Nick has also sat on the "Making Waves" committee planning a provincial conference, where he has also presented and facilitated sessions dealing with dating violence, abuse and healthy relationships.

In addition, Nick has spoken with the RNC's Drug Abuse Resistance Education Program (DARE) which discusses drug prevention and is aimed at elementary students.

Currently, Nick volunteers with the Memorial University Counseling Centre, St. John Ambulance, and hosts his own radio show with CHMR FM.

## **Post Panel Discussion – What's happening in your school?**

The panel then kick-started a discussion at respective tables about what is happening in schools in our region in relation to youth activism.

The following is just a sampling of what is happening outside the curriculum:

Peer counseling programs  
Making Waves teams  
Film clubs  
Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD)

What was evident is that youth are making significant strides in their respective schools and communities. And while media in its various forms are selling detrimental messages to the public at large, youth are strategizing in various ways to get their voices out there.

Over half the students who participated left contact information for follow-up. The Coalition Against Violence is now considering how to further engage these young people. The work plan for 2007/2008 should address this.

## Participant Feedback Form – RESULTS

- 69 evaluation forms completed
- TOTAL RATING OVERALL – 9.035/10 (A rating of 10 is the highest rating, and 1 is the lowest.)

### 1. How would you rate the youth forum overall? 8.94

#### Comments:

- Columbine helped get the ideas and conversations more energetic and interesting.
- Using the movie was a great idea to help get the message across.
- Great and very informative
- Would've liked more time to discuss
- I would like to discuss possible activities that we could bring back to our schools to help reduce violence.
- Vital topic of discussion
- Great opportunity for youth to share and interact
- A lot of helpful information
- Amazing
- Really enjoyable
- Overall, positive experience, though technical difficulties are the worst
- I learned more about how different schools from here are than in the States.
- Very effective presentations
- Mic needs some work; people had lots of good comments
- Alright learning experience
- I think this sort of thing should be done more often.
- Good time, nice to meet some new people, helped me sit down and think/analyze a lot of stuff
- Great way to get students involved
- Good to get ideas out there and good to be able to get things started in our schools
- Really thought provoking and shed some light on global issues
- Super duper forum

### 2. Did the facilitators stimulate interest in the subject matter? 9.01

#### Comments:

- They all seemed very into it and interested in our discussions.
- Something to consider – letting school stay seated with each other – if students are comfortable, they might have more productive conversations.
- Facilitators were superb and the led the discussions well
- Excellent – loved them!
- Some of the topics made you realize how lucky you are to live in NL; they also made you think.
- Very motivational

- Good job putting out ideas for discussion, really good points brought up
- Facilitators were upbeat and enthusiastic; panel seemed more rehearsed
- Could have been improved if we were allowed to argue/disagree with each other

3. Were the video clips/handouts helpful to the discussion? 9.44

Comments:

- Great starting point
- Fact sheet was informative, also the thing from Marilyn Manson was interesting
- 'Did you Know' Fact Sheet was a great discussion starter.
- Lots of good points I never thought about
- An exceptional guide for the program
- Questions needed some work – kind of bland – could have been more interesting
- Visuals are always helpful.
- Totally awesome!
- Provocative
- Very helpful in stimulating conversations
- Really made your eyes open
- Videos great focal points
- Great food for thought
- Handouts little too detailed
- Bowling for Columbine is an amazing movie that lets you discuss so many topics on different levels.

4. Were the small group discussions interesting/thought provoking? 9.04

Comments:

- Although not all the members of my group seemed interested, we maintained a constant and interesting conversation.
- Lots of people didn't want to speak up and we ran out of time. I felt like we could only talk about a certain topic – would've like to hear some personal situations at their own school
- Helped look at different points of view
- Handouts gave too many hints
- Reflective and thought provoking
- Students shared so much with us all
- Interesting to hear what people from other schools think
- Weird being around people you don't know but it allows for people's opinions
- Lots of different views were opened up
- A lot of young people are in tune with society – really good to see
- Met new people
- Especially media manipulation

- Small groups excellent for discussion
- Always a good way to keep people engaged
- Especially since a girl from my group was from the US
- Gave a good forum to express opinions
- I learned a lot in these groups.
- Should've been able to switch groups for each scene

5. Were the panelists personal experiences with youth activism helpful/interesting? 8.35

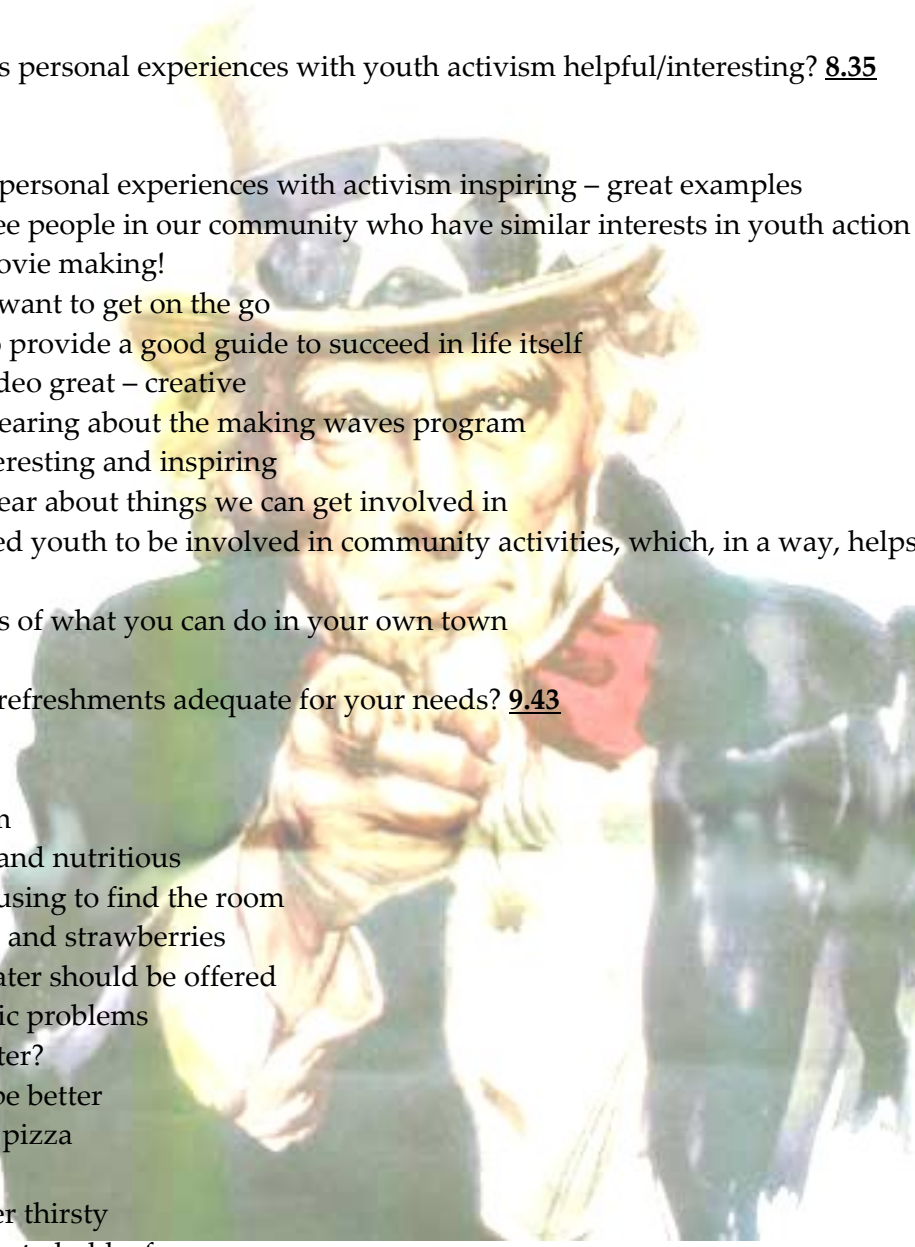
Comments:

- Panelists' personal experiences with activism inspiring – great examples
- Good to see people in our community who have similar interests in youth action
- Yay for movie making!
- Made me want to get on the go
- Seemed to provide a good guide to succeed in life itself
- Racism video great – creative
- Enjoyed hearing about the making waves program
- Really interesting and inspiring
- Good to hear about things we can get involved in
- Encouraged youth to be involved in community activities, which, in a way, helps prevent violence
- Gave ideas of what you can do in your own town

6. Was the location/refreshments adequate for your needs? 9.43

Comments:

- Pizza=yum
- Delicious and nutritious
- A bit confusing to find the room
- Free pizza and strawberries
- Bottled water should be offered
- Besides mic problems
- Boiled water?
- Couldn't be better
- Don't like pizza
- Excellent
- I was never thirsty
- Good place to hold a forum



7. What activities did you find most interesting/helpful?

Comments:

- Ice breaker!
- Group discussions
- The conversations
- Watching clips and then discussing them
- Arts related items
- Group together with your own school should be longer
- Panelists were great
- Dove commercial
- Having other students come and share their experiences
- Reading quotes and questions and then discussing them
- All of them
- Great material to leave with and review
- Mingling between schools
- Discussing issues
- Small groups great opportunity to network
- Eat food
- The video guy
- Personal experiences
- Watching Bowling for Columbine
- Group discussions after scene 2
- Everything was really interesting

8. What activities were least interesting/helpful?

Comments:

- Big group discussions
- Listening in groups
- They were all helpful!
- The panel was good, but interaction is always the best.
- breathing exercise
- They were all A+.
- Didn't like how it was just one group you had to stick with
- The smaller group discussions- a lot of people couldn't get their ideas out

9. Additional comments?

- Great job guys!
- I would've liked to talk about other students and violence at their schools.
- Great idea
- Interesting and fun day

- Discussion and contribution periods were short
- Good job in planning – more time needed to discuss problems and solutions in our own schools
- Thank you for letting me come
- Overall I found this forum extremely helpful.
- Good time – good to hear other peoples’ thoughts and stuff
- I think this should be done more.
- Keep up the good work!
- Nicely organized and planned out
- I liked the string activity.
- The pens we were given didn’t work.
- This was an amazing forum.
- The booklet we get was very deadly. It would’ve been cool if we made posters.
- This was better than school.
- Fabulous!
- Awesome forum – definitely do it again!
- I’d definitely go again.
- Super people – I loved the videos and all the different people.
- Everything was presented very well.



***Background on the Coalition Against Violence – Avalon East***

*The Coalition Against Violence – Avalon East is a non-profit organization comprising representatives of community and government whose work, in one way or another, is related to violence prevention and early intervention. This Coalition educates and advocates around violence as a community concern and responsibility, and is 1 of 10 Coalitions throughout the province working in partnership with the Violence Prevention Initiative, Government NL.*