

VICTORY OVER VIOLENCE AT A GLANCE BY YVETTE EDMOND, LOS ANGELES

Victory Over Violence is a grassroots initiative sponsored by the SGI-USA youth division that promotes awareness of the causes of violence and encourages youth to address solutions to break the cycle of violence. It aims to promote introspection among people in our communities while placing primary emphasis on the value of dialogue in building a culture of peace. VOV was inspired by the long-standing Buddhist traditions of non-violence and respect for all living beings, however, VOV programs focus not on religion, but on our human potential. Youth are encouraged to develop tolerance, trust and friendship with each other despite differences in race, religion and language. Colin Powell's volunteer organization, America's Promise and the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation endorse VOV. The following list includes some of the larger VOV activities, but smaller group discussions and school meetings continue to go on throughout the United States and abroad.

Since the launch of Victory Over Violence in August 1999:

- ✦ Over 5,000 small group discussions have been held throughout the United States.
- ✦ 110,000 pledges have been signed.
- ✦ Presentations have been given to various city officials around the country.
- ✦ San Francisco youth held a VOV meeting that attracted over 1,000 people and included 20 Non-Governmental Organizations.
- ✦ The mayor of Memphis, TN declared October VOV month.
- ✦ SGI-USA youth marched together with the Santa Monica, California Police & Fire Departments and other youth groups in "Night Out Against Violence"—a march to unify the Santa Monica community against violence.
- ✦ VOV meetings have been held in high schools and colleges throughout the nation.
- ✦ The Victory Over Violence project has received international attention with requests for information coming from France, England, Turkey, Mexico and other nations.
- ✦ A VOV portable exhibit was created and has been traveling around the United States since February 2000.
- ✦ Members created a VOV booth and participated in the Los Angeles Million Mom March where over 850 pledges were signed.
- ✦ Youth Peace Committee members in New York hosted an exhibit called "Closing the Gaps to Create Cultures of Peace" which was attended by Bangladesh's Ambassador to the United Nations, Anwarul Chowdhary.
- ✦ VOV project was presented at the Northern California United Nations Association on May 12, 2000 and at the Creating Cultures of Peace Committee meeting in April 2000 in San Francisco.

- ✦ VOV.com, the Victory Over Violence website, went online in February 2000.
- ✦ A Victory Over Violence dialogue entitled, “Fostering Nonviolent Activism in Youth” was hosted by the YPC and published in the March 2000 issue of *Living Buddhism* magazine with youth representatives from the Gandhi Institute, the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, the Simon Wiesenthal Center/Museum of Tolerance, Soka University and the SGI United Nations office.
- ✦ On May 25, 2000, Yvette Edmond, YPC Advisor, spoke about VOV at the SGI sponsored seminar in support of the Millennium NGO Forum, “Toward Creation of Violence Free Communities.”
- ✦ In June 2000, a Victory Over Violence concert featuring Nestor Torres was held in Puerto Rico, bringing attention to the widespread problem of youth violence and to encourage youth to live nonviolently.
- ✦ In October 2000, the University of Michigan adopted Victory Over Violence and held a week long series of VOV activities, which included seminars, panel discussions and culminated in a concert. Guest speakers included Dr. James T. Yamazaki, author of “Children of the Atomic Bomb.” The governor of Michigan and the mayors of Detroit and Ann Arbor, Michigan each proclaimed October 1-7 as Victory Over Violence week.
- ✦ In November 2000, Colin Powell’s organization, America’s Promise, endorsed Victory Over Violence.

Yvette is Youth Peace Committee Advisor.