



# Reflections

## On Leadership — The California Peace Prize

Leadership recognition at The California Wellness Foundation is pursued through programs designed to acknowledge exceptional individuals who demonstrate leadership on important health issues. This issue of *Reflections* examines the first of these programs — the California Peace Prize. Initiated in 1993 as a part of the Foundation's 10-year, \$60 million comprehensive grantmaking program, the Violence Prevention Initiative, the California Peace Prize has outlasted the life of the Initiative and serves as a model for many of our other leadership recognition programs.



Grantmaking for a Healthier California

# Reflections

On the cover: (Clockwise from top left) 2005 California Peace Prize honorees Otilio Quintero, Sayre Weaver and Maria Velasquez.

*Reflections* is a series produced by The California Wellness Foundation to share lessons learned and information gleaned from its grantmaking practices and strategies. This document and others in the series are available on the Internet at [www.tcdf.org](http://www.tcdf.org).

September 2005 • Volume 7 • No. 1

# *preface*



*In the late 1980s, both the Centers for Disease Control and the Surgeon General issued alarming reports indicating that violence had become a serious public health problem in the United States. By the time The California Wellness Foundation (TCWF) was established in 1992, gun violence had become the number-one killer of California youth. This frightening reality prompted the Foundation to launch the Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI) – a 10-year, \$60 million comprehensive grantmaking program dedicated to preventing violence against youth through a range of statewide prevention efforts.*

*Initiated in 1993 as a part of the Violence Prevention Initiative, the California Peace Prize was established as the Foundation's first leadership recognition program. The Prize has outlasted the life of the Initiative and served as a model for many of the Foundation's other leadership programs. Based on an idea of Andrew McGuire, executive director of The Trauma Foundation in San Francisco, California, the California Peace Prize honors the violence prevention efforts of three individuals annually with \$25,000 grants. Past honorees have included community activists, gang-members-turned-peace-advocates, educators, law enforcement officers, bereaved parents and juvenile court judges — and they are representative of hundreds of others who work every day to prevent violence in their communities.*

*Julio Marcial, communications officer at the Foundation, has been responsible for many of the communications efforts related to the California Peace Prize over the past few years, and as author of this edition of Reflections, he provides an overview of how the Foundation's investment in telling the stories of these extraordinary individuals has paid large dividends — in terms of furthering the honorees' work and advancing public policies to prevent violence in California.*

*TCWF employs an array of communications tactics — including publications, media relations, print and web-based advertising, video productions and targeted mailings to policymakers — to amplify the voices of the honorees. In an effort to counter the excessive media coverage of the traumatic effects of violence that seems to portray this problem as inevitable, we strive to present a persuasive case for utilizing a public health approach to violence — framed as a preventable problem that can be effectively addressed by empowering individuals and communities to reduce the risk factors that lead to violent behavior.*

*In media outlets across California, hundreds of newspaper, radio, TV and web spots have told the stories of the California Peace Prize honorees' work, reinforcing the message that violence is preventable and showing that individuals can make a difference. Honorees have reported that the media coverage and outreach to policymakers has resulted in invitations to work with elected officials on panels and commissions addressing violence prevention, and noted increased interest from potential volunteers, donations and other forms of support.*

*We hope this document will be useful both to those considering investing in leadership recognition and to those committed to violence prevention. We encourage your comments and feedback.*

**Gary L. Yates, President and CEO**  
The California Wellness Foundation

By Julio Marcial

## Reflections On Leadership Recognition — The California Peace Prize

**Background**

By the early 1990s, violence in California had reached epidemic levels. This was especially true for youth, with gun violence being the leading cause of death among the state's young people. In 1991, a total of 1,632 youth (ages 12-24) were killed by gun violence in California, according to the state health department's own statistical data.



By 1992 gun violence had become the leading killer of California youth, prompting TCWF to launch the Violence Prevention Initiative. Here Initiative grantee, Billie Weiss, founder of the Violence Prevention Coalition of Greater Los Angeles — speaks out at a press conference.

As recently as a decade ago, experts quoted in “Body Count: Moral Poverty...and How To Win America’s War Against Crime and Drugs” (Simon & Schuster, 1996), warned of “tens of thousands of morally impoverished juvenile super-predators” poised to “murder, rape, rob, assault, deal deadly drugs and get high.” National magazines and newspapers raised the specter of a growing population of predatory juveniles and young adults sparking this wave of violence.

Fortunately, we can now say that those predictions were

wrong. In fact, by the end of the 1990s, nearly all categories of crimes in California fell to levels not seen since the 1960s. From 1991 to 2003, the number of young people killed by gun violence in California decreased by 41 percent.

The causes of violence, like those of many health and social problems that face cities across the nation, are complex. It stands to reason, therefore that several factors may have contributed to this sharp and unexpected decline in violent crimes.

Some observers credit the “Three Strikes” law, which put more repeat offenders behind bars. Other commentators point to the presence of more police on the streets, a reduction in the number of guns in circulation, gang truces and more effective after-school and prevention programs.

The California Wellness Foundation (TCWF) believes that a strong contributing factor was the collective achievements of committed individuals working on the front lines to prevent violence in cities all across California. This issue of *Reflections* describes the Foundation’s approach to leadership recognition — we use strategic communications to illuminate the work of exemplary individuals who have made extraordinary community-based achievements as a means to inspire new leaders and advance positive health policy change.

**Violence Prevention:****The Importance of Grassroots Leaders**

TCWF views the injury and death caused by violence as a serious public health issue. In 1992, the Foundation launched its Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI), a 10-year, \$70 million grantmaking program focused on preventing violence against young people.



The Foundation's VPI Leadership Development Program was informed by violence prevention position papers published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the plan for violence prevention developed by the California Department of Health Services. These documents called for the nurturing of grassroots leaders who could address the root causes and consequences of violence in their local communities.

Despite the high rates of violence against youth in the 1990s, the individuals working to prevent it were on a lonely frontier. At that time, violence prevention barely existed as a concept. For example, in the early 1990s, Contra Costa was the only California county that had a violence prevention program. Most violence prevention efforts in California focused primarily on arrest and incarceration as a method of deterrence, which resulted in one of the highest youth incarceration rates in the nation — twice the national average.

There is no inherent conflict between incarceration and prevention. They both have a place along a continuum of programs that address social ills. In the 1990s, however, the state of California was narrowly focused on incarceration at the expense of prevention. During this time, the state spent approximately \$8 million annually on prevention — and billions on state-of-the-art prisons to house offenders.

Along with the lack of violence prevention resources provided by the state, the epidemic

of violence in California was exacerbated by newspaper coverage that painted a portrait of overwhelming and uncontrollable criminality. Editorial pages described communities affected by violence as bullet-ridden war zones.

According to the Center for Media and Public Affairs, crime coverage over the past decade was the number one topic in newspapers and on the nightly news. From 1990 to 1998, homicide rates dropped by half nationwide, but homicide stories on the three major networks rose almost fourfold.

In news coverage, community members trying to make a difference were either portrayed as helpless victims or simply ignored. And the only proposed cure for this epidemic was to add more police officers and more prisons.

Missing from this picture were the stories of thousands of unsung heroes in California who were putting their lives on the line every day to prevent violence and promote peace in their communities.

### **The California Peace Prize: Goals and Process**

TCWF established its annual California Peace Prize in 1993 to publicly recognize and reward the outstanding efforts of three individuals who had effectively helped to prevent violence and promote peace in their communities.

Initiated as part of the VPI's Leadership Development Program, which concluded in 2002, the California Peace Prize has continued

Missing were the stories of unsung heroes who were putting their lives on the line every day to prevent violence and promote peace in their communities.

past the life of the Initiative as a leadership recognition program under the Foundation's violence prevention grantmaking. Each honoree receives a cash award of \$25,000.

### **Nomination and Selection Process**

The California Peace Prize honorees are chosen through a rigorous, confidential process that is based on the recommendations of two distinct committees — nominating and selection, with final ratification by the Foundation's Board of Directors.

Annually, TCWF establishes a confidential nominating committee of at least 20 individuals from throughout California. Using criteria approved by the Foundation's Board of Directors, each committee member nominates one community leader who has made an outstanding contribution in addressing the root causes of violence. Each nominator provides a one- or two-page statement describing the nominee's contribution.

A TCWF-appointed selection committee, composed of up to five experts in violence prevention, reviews the nominators' statements and letters of recommendation for each candidate. Three individuals are then recommended for TCWF Board approval.

Since the first California Peace Prize was awarded in 1993, TCWF has worked hard to keep the process confidential and to avoid being lobbied by any individual or group. The honorees do not learn the identity of the nominators or the selection committee members.



At a recognition event in 1999 (left to right) Gilbert Sanchez, Clara Luz Navarro and Rubén Navarro received the California Peace Prize. Each received \$25,000 for their efforts to prevent violence.

### **Characteristics of the Honorees**

Since the inception of the California Peace Prize, 39 remarkable Californians have been recognized. Honorees include community activists, gang-members-turned-peace-advocates, educators, law enforcement officers, bereaved parents and juvenile court judges. These leaders, all of whom have established results-oriented violence prevention programs in their communities, are representative of hundreds of others working behind the scenes to make Californians safer.

The honorees also reflect the diversity of California and the sad truth that no community is immune from the effects of violence. Recipients have come both from small towns such as Visalia, Ukiah and Shingletown and from large metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, Sacramento and San Francisco.

Despite — or perhaps because of — their myriad perspectives and expertise, the honorees have united to pursue a single goal: to reduce the senseless killing of California's youth. The honorees also share a defining characteristic — each has worked tirelessly



without expectation of recognition. A few honorees were widely recognized pioneers of violence prevention, such as Judge Leonard Perry Edwards II, Constance Rice and Father Gregory Boyle, but most were completely unsung heroes who were scarcely known outside their immediate circle of supporters.

### **Promoting the Honorees: Focus and Strategies**

The California Wellness Foundation employs an array of communications tactics — including publications, media relations, print ads, web-based advertising and video productions — to amplify the voices of the honorees and their underserved communities. The goal is to inspire policymakers and the general public to support violence prevention as a key aspect of community health and wellness.

The focus of our communications message is neither the Foundation nor the California Peace Prize itself. Rather, we spotlight an important public health issue and highlight how people — many of whom have been largely ignored by the media — are making a difference in their communities. This message is consistent with the Foundation's goal of recognizing and encouraging leaders who are working to increase health and wellness within their communities.

Our strategy is to counter the excessive coverage of the traumatic effects of violence with a viable alternative to those reports that seem to

portray violence as inevitable. The Foundation makes a persuasive case for utilizing a public health approach to violence, framed as a preventable problem that can be effectively addressed by empowering individuals and communities to reduce the risk factors that lead to violent behavior. This violence prevention approach is exemplified by the work of the California Peace Prize honorees.

The California Wellness Foundation chooses to dedicate a portion of nongrantmaking resources to publicizing the work of the honorees. Why? Because the people most affected by social problems often have little or no opportunity to contribute to policy changes and proposed solutions for the issues that disproportionately affect their lives. In the same vein, the community leaders we honor are frequently so absorbed in their work that they haven't the time to pursue major media coverage about this important issue. So it is our charge to amplify their voices so that their stories are heard by the news media, policymakers and opinion leaders.

The Foundation dedicates a portion of nongrantmaking resources to publicizing the work of the honorees.



## Target Audiences

Prime target audiences for the Foundation are the news media. Covering violence exclusively from a law enforcement perspective has long provided reporters and editors with attention-getting headlines. The message of the California Peace Prize introduces a different approach that combines broadly appealing

stories about local heroes in California communities with a focus on the causes of violence and the components of successful prevention programs.

Policymakers and local elected officials are other key audiences. The goal is to inform and educate them about the unsung heroes and the programs they initiated that are preventing violence-related deaths and injuries.

By recognizing the honorees, the Foundation

seeks to re-energize the commitment of these violence prevention leaders and to draw attention to the exemplary qualities that make them stand out. Equally important, these awards encourage the public, the news media, policymakers and local elected officials to think of violence as a preventable public health

issue — one that can be addressed by individuals who serve their communities and advance important policy changes that improve the health of communities across the state.

## Broad-based Advertising

Over the past decade, advertisements with photos of the honorees and brief descriptions of their work have appeared in leading newspapers throughout California — for example, the *Fresno Bee*, *Los Angeles Times*, the *Orange County Register*, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *San Jose Mercury News*. The ads have ranged in size from a quarter- to full-page.

An important part of our strategy is placement in ethnic news media that reflect the honorees' backgrounds and the communities they serve. We have translated and adapted the California Peace Prize advertisements for Spanish-language newspapers such as *Hoy*, *La Opinión*, *Nuevo Mundo* (San Jose) and *Vida en el Valle* (Fresno).

Ad placement in the Asian/Pacific American media market has included the following Vietnamese-language newspapers: *Thoi Bao* (Oakland), *Viet Merc* (San Jose) and the *Viet Bao Kinh* (Orange County and Los Angeles). Ads in Japanese community-oriented newspapers have included *Rafu Shimpo* and *Pacific Citizen*, the biweekly newspaper of the Japanese American Citizen's league.

In 1997, Chea Sok Lim — a Cambodian-American who left his war-ravaged homeland



Part of TCWF's communications strategy is placing ads in ethnic news media that reflect the honorees' backgrounds and the communities they serve.





only to discover violence in this country — was recognized with a California Peace Prize. Since we wanted our communications efforts to resonate with Cambodian-American communities, we decided to work with IW Group, an Asian-American communications firm, to assist us in sharing Chea Sok Lim’s story and explaining the public health approach to violence prevention from a Cambodian cultural and linguistic perspective.

To acknowledge honorees of Native American heritage, ads have been placed in *Indian Country Today* and *Native American Times*, the largest independently owned Native American newspaper in the United States. And for honorees of African-American descent, we have targeted newspapers that include the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, the *Los Angeles Watts Times*, the *San Francisco Bay View* and the *Sacramento Observer*.

### **Informing Policymakers**

We found the practice of placing ads in the *Sacramento Bee* in mid-January to be strategic for a number of reasons: the California legislature is in session, which addresses our objective of reaching policymakers, and it coincides with the flurry of human interest stories in the media about “heroes” that surround the remembrance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Another strategy used to reach key policymakers is the mailing of a poster of the California Peace Prize advertisement, accompanied by a cover letter from the

Foundation’s CEO, the news release and biographies of the honorees, to the California governor’s office, the entire California delegation of elected officials, and to local elected officials in the counties where the honorees reside. Additional recipients include appointed officials and department heads at the state, city and county levels who are concerned with health, juvenile justice and domestic violence. The objective of this mailing is twofold: to reinforce the message that violence is a preventable public health issue and to call attention to the accomplishments of the honorees.

Over the past decade, the Foundation has received congratulatory letters about the work of California Peace Prize recipients from elected officials, including the president of the United States, the governor of California, county Boards of Supervisors and city council members. Honorees have also received official commendations and have been included in official ceremonies across California.

### **Media Campaign Results**

When gauging the effectiveness of our communications efforts, we go beyond tracking gross impressions of ads, counting news media placements and monitoring website hits. While that information is worth knowing, we are far more interested in learning about how our efforts to promote the honorees’ dedication to violence prevention has helped them further their work.

The objective is twofold: to reinforce the message that violence is a preventable public health problem and to call attention to the accomplishments of the honorees.

In the past 10 years, 150 articles on the California Peace Prize honorees have appeared in newspapers across California, reinforcing the message that violence is preventable and showing that individuals can make a difference. Radio, television and the web have provided additional coverage. All of the media have portrayed the honorees as advocates and citizens proactively working to make their neighborhoods safer.

- In December 2002, the *San Jose Mercury News* ran a front page, above-the-fold story with a color photo about Brian Contreras of Salinas (2002 honoree). The same story was also featured on the front page of the *Contra Costa Times* and the *Monterey County Herald*. The article included a biographical sketch of Contreras, with examples of how his 2nd Chance program helped Salinas youths renounce gang life and return to school or go to work.

- A four-page feature article on Wayne Sakamoto (2002 honoree) and his work to reduce school violence appeared in the February 2003 issue of the *California*

*Journal*, an award-winning, nonpartisan, independent magazine devoted to in-depth coverage of California state policy issues.



After an opinion editorial by 2004 honoree Zelenne Cardenas appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard contacted her to help purchase a community center for the kids living on "Skid Row" in downtown Los Angeles.

- Coverage for the 2004 honorees included a two-page article in *La Opinión*, with photos of each honoree. A two-page article about the Rev. Anthony Ortiz appeared in the *San Jose Mercury News*. An opinion editorial, "Childhood Dies on Skid Row," based on honoree Zelenne Cardenas' acceptance speech at the 2004 Foundation luncheon, was published in the *Los Angeles Times*. Cardenas' op-ed resulted in numerous letters to the editor as well as a phone call from the office of Lucille Roybal-Allard, who represents

the 34th Congressional District in California. She is working with Cardenas to locate and purchase a community center for the children and families living in downtown Los Angeles.

The Foundation has also created a media platform from which to draw public attention to the proven effectiveness of community leadership as a strategy to prevent violence. In November 2003, the *Los Angeles Times* published "New Thinking Can Help Defeat



Gang Violence,” an opinion editorial by Gary L. Yates, TCWF president and CEO. The article praised the 2003 California Peace Prize honorees for helping reduce the levels of violence in their respective communities.

While broad media coverage of the award program has spread the violence prevention message throughout California, the most tangible results of the campaign have involved direct contact with the honorees themselves. We follow up with them on a regular basis to see whether public and media attention created by our communications program has attracted more resources to the honorees’ organizations and increased advocacy opportunities on a local or statewide level.

The results have been gratifying. Many honorees have been asked to work with elected officials on panels and commissions addressing violence prevention — and to share their knowledge and experience at information-gathering forums. Honorees have also reported increased requests for additional information, interest from potential volunteers, donations and other forms of support.

**The Honorees**

In the following pages, we present a diverse group of California Peace Prize honorees from over the years and share the effects this leadership recognition has had on their lives and their organizations. Much of this information comes from interviews conducted at the Foundation’s final Violence Prevention

Initiative conference in San Francisco in December 2002, and from the evaluation of the Initiative’s Leadership Development Program conducted by Oakland-based Leadership Learning Community.

All of the honorees have powerful stories to tell about how violence affected their lives and how it fueled a commitment to prevention. The combined work of these pioneers and unsung heroes has contributed to making a profound change in the way California views prevention of violence against youth. We believe it has been important to invest Foundation resources to tell the honorees’ stories to the public and other key audiences in order to help advance their important work.

**Lorna Hawkins, Drive-by Agony (1993)  
Lynwood (Los Angeles County)**

The first of Lorna Hawkins’ sons to die was Joe. He was 21 when gang members shot him



on the night before Thanksgiving in 1988. A child counselor in the Los Angeles area community of Lynwood, Hawkins found an

outlet for her grief by forming Drive-by Agony, a network of grieving mothers whose children died in similar circumstances.

Vowing to make the public aware of the lives lost through gang violence, the group expanded its reach by tracking news stories about the latest killings and visiting the families of murder victims. Then, in 1992, Hawkins’ son

The results have been gratifying. Many honorees have been asked to work with elected officials on panels and commissions addressing violence prevention.

Gerald, a 22-year-old criminal justice major at Compton College, was also shot and killed by gang members.

“My sons meant everything to me, and I want people to know that,” Hawkins said. “I also want other mothers to know that, yes, it’s devastating; yes, you may feel like dying or killing yourself, but the best thing to do with that grief is to give back and help others. It’s all about getting out of yourself and your pain, and helping others.”

In 1993, Hawkins became one of the first honorees of the California Peace Prize for her tireless commitment to preventing violence against youth.

After being awarded the California Peace Prize, Hawkins received widespread public acknowledgment for her work. Former Gov. Pete Wilson presented her with the Sharon Tate Victims of Crime Advocate Award. In 2003, Hawkins was named “Person of the Week” by the late Peter Jennings, then anchor and senior editor of ABC’s “World News Tonight.” Hawkins’ story is also related in a chapter about death and dying in “Understanding Your Health,” by Wayne A. Payne, Dale B. Hahn and Ellen Maver (McGraw-Hill, 2004). She has been interviewed on national TV and radio and has been profiled by many newspapers.

Her story took on legendary dimensions in the song “The Ballad of Lorna Hawkins,” performed in 2000 on Mother’s Day during the Million

Mom March on Washington, D.C., a gun violence protest in which an estimated 750,000 people participated.

Hawkins has been a member of the city of Lynwood’s Public Safety Commission since 1996. Operating in Compton, Lynwood, Watts and several Los Angeles communities, her group continues to educate thousands of youth about violence prevention and to support victims of gun violence. Hawkins has also led marches in California, Illinois, Michigan, New York and Wisconsin. As a result of the widespread publicity about her work, she has become an advisor to other mothers who have started similar programs across the country, and she devotes a portion of her time to victims’ rights issues.

**Judge Leonard Perry Edwards II, Santa Clara County Superior Court (1996)  
San Jose (Santa Clara County)**

Leonard Perry Edwards II, supervising judge of the Family Resources Division of Santa Clara



County Superior Court, is one of the country’s leading experts on legal issues pertaining to juvenile and domestic violence. In 1996,

the Foundation honored him with its California Peace Prize for his pioneering work in violence prevention.

Judge Edwards has devoted his long career to implementing and disseminating innovative approaches to the treatment of abused



children, the rehabilitation of youth and the rights of victims of violence. He pioneered the use of mediation in child protection cases, which provides an alternative to the high-pressure courtroom environment. This procedure has now been adopted by approximately 60 courts across the nation. In 1999, he established one of the country's first dependency drug treatment courts.

In 1985, close to 4,000 children were under the jurisdiction of the Santa Clara Juvenile Dependency Court. Today, after 24 years of Judge Edwards' leadership, this number has fallen by more than 25 percent, despite a 20 percent population increase. During this same period, annual adoptions have increased from less than 30 to more than 240. The court's success has been attributed to long-term planning, a commitment to change, the implementation and utilization of best practices, and strong judicial leadership.

Judge Edwards is a prolific author and lecturer, founder of the Juvenile Court Judges Association of California, and past president of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. In 2004, he was the first juvenile court judge to receive the William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence, presented annually to a state court judge who exemplifies the highest level of judicial excellence, integrity, fairness and professional ethics.

Judge Edwards stands out — not only for his numerous achievements but also for his lead-

ership style, which has positively influenced courts in California, the nation and the world.

**Officer Malcolm "Jerry" Williams, Oakland Police Department (1997)  
Oakland (Alameda County)**

In 1992, Officer Malcolm "Jerry" Williams was an undercover narcotics officer working in the



Lockwood/Coliseum Garden complexes, one of the most notorious public housing tracts in the country. When people were murdered

elsewhere in the Bay Area, it was not uncommon for their bodies to be dumped in these barren and blighted housing complexes.

A few years later, when Williams was serving as a community housing police officer with the Oakland Housing Authority Police Department, he helped transform these two dangerous housing projects into peaceful communities that remained homicide-free for eight years.

Williams, the local housing authority, the Oakland Police Department and the community worked together to build a police substation at Lockwood, conduct a community audit of community resources and their availability to residents, offer health education training for residents and start a volunteer program in Haves Court Middle School and Lockwood Elementary. Williams also persuaded the local garden center to subsidize a day-care center and helped initiate a community lunch program for the kids.

Officer Malcolm "Jerry" Williams helped transform two notoriously dangerous public housing projects into peaceful communities that remained homicide-free for eight years.

Assistance from local organizations and elected officials, along with millions of dollars in federal grants, enabled Williams to initiate “Operation Weed and Seed.” The focus of the project was to “weed out” violent crime, gang activity and drug use, and then “seed” the economic and social restoration of the area.

In 1997, the Foundation honored Williams with its California Peace Prize for his efforts to develop trust and partnerships among youth, their parents and the Oakland community.

After receiving the California Peace Prize, Williams was profiled by national and local news media organizations, including one that dubbed his work “Miracle on 65th Avenue.” Williams was amazed at the sudden interest in his work. “The next thing I knew, I had news commentators tripping over their feet trying to get to my office,” he said. “They were competing to get the story.”

His groundbreaking methods and outstanding results were cited by former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, who visited the public housing complexes on two occasions.

The recognition and resulting media coverage also began to expand Williams’ influence as a violence prevention expert. Police departments in troubled communities across the country requested more information about his methods, which led to speaking engagements across the U.S. and Canada. Williams also provided technical assistance to cities that wanted to replicate his form of community policing and

taught college courses on the role of police in violence prevention.

### **Gianna Tran, East Bay Asian Youth Center (2000) Oakland (Alameda County)**

When Gianna Tran was 12, she and her family left Vietnam to seek refuge in the



United States. Tran quickly learned that violence was not a problem unique to Vietnam’s war zones. In 1988, she began working

with juvenile probationers at the East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC).

Promoted to associate director, she has helped transform the organization into a multicultural center that provides services in 12 languages for youth throughout the East Bay’s diverse neighborhoods. In 2000, the Foundation honored Tran with its California Peace Prize for helping Asian youth in Oakland develop the confidence and communication skills to resist gang life.

Tran uses her professional training and her personal experience to develop strong youth leadership and create community models for preventing violence against youth. In addition to her work at EBAYC, Tran’s grassroots advocacy of mental health and drug, alcohol and physical abuse treatment, has helped spread the word that violence prevention improves the health of entire communities.



Since receiving the California Peace Prize, Tran has often been called upon by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency and the Alameda County Juvenile Probation Department to discuss issues related to at-risk Asian and Pacific Islander youth. Her work and her organization have been featured on PBS' "NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" and on "Voices from the Trenches," a project of San Francisco-based KQED-TV 9 that addresses juvenile justice issues in the Bay Area and Northern California.

Last year, "C me in, C me out," a documentary about Oakland's Cambodian gangs, produced by EBAYC's Streetside Productions video program, was awarded an honorary mention in the Best Short Documentary category at the 2004 Oakland International Film Festival.

"Violence takes many shapes and forms and comes in many different ways," Tran said. "The people in the Vietnamese community see violence as an individual family problem, not as a community problem. To compare it to a preventable disease may be something very new to immigrants, but I think that's the best way to make people understand that it is a serious thing."

Tran's utopia is one where the services offered at EBAYC would be unnecessary. She would like to help create a truly healthy community by developing the ability of young men and women to lead others in violence prevention.

**Brian Contreras, 2nd Chance Youth & Family Services (2001)  
Salinas (Monterey County)**

Growing up in Modesto, Brian Contreras experienced firsthand the effects of gang



violence. After spending time in prison, he decided to turn his life around.

Relocating to Salinas, similar in size and demographics to

Modesto, he became aware of escalating gang violence. In 1989, frustrated with what he thought were inadequate prevention efforts by local agencies and organizations, Contreras founded his own program, 2nd Chance Youth & Family Services.

In the beginning, 2nd Chance was primarily an outreach program for gang members. Contreras and his staff redirected youth to lead productive lives. In 1993, Contreras decided to bring the program to North Salinas High School, which had experienced some of the worst fighting among the city's schools, including one incident in which a teacher was shot.

Contreras and his staff worked throughout the school year to build relationships with the rival gangs in the school, eventually persuading 175 students to attend a conflict mediation meeting to resolve underlying tensions within the group. By the third year of the North Salinas High program, 2nd Chance achieved a

"This [California Peace Prize] helped to establish our agency as the premier gang prevention and intervention program in Monterey County," said 2001 honoree Brian Contreras, a former gang member who founded the 2nd Chance Youth Program in Salinas.

95 percent reduction in incidents involving weapons and a 65 percent reduction in gang fights. The number of expulsions dropped from 22 to three.

2nd Chance now serves seven schools in Salinas and North Monterey County. Over the past decade, 2nd Chance Youth & Family Services has given second chances to more than 3,000 youth ranging in age from 11 to 18.

Since receiving the California Peace Prize in 2001 for his outreach to gang members and at-risk youth, Contreras has been involved in numerous public activities. He has served on panels and committees to provide expertise on gangs and juvenile violence, and has participated in discussions with the city of Salinas about the positive impacts of funding violence prevention activities.

Contreras was elected chairman of the Monterey County Juvenile Justice Commission and was appointed to the board of directors of United Way of Monterey County; he is currently chairman of its Human Resources Committee. He has also served as chairman of the California Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission.

In 2004, he was named a distinguished fellow by California State University (CSU), Monterey Bay, for community and public service. The award is the highest nonacademic recognition granted by the CSU system.

Contreras was also asked to participate in the Safe Schools/ Healthy Students Initiative and

the Gang Violence Reduction program of the Monterey County Sheriff's Office. He was invited to meet with U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer when she came to Salinas in 2004, to discuss the high levels of gang violence in Monterey County.

"Receiving The California Wellness Foundation's California Peace Prize was similar to getting the Good Housekeeping seal of approval," said Contreras. "This helped to establish our agency as the premier gang prevention and intervention program in Monterey County."

### Successes of Other Honorees

The work of other California Peace Prize honorees has been recognized by many influential individuals and institutions. The examples cited below are just a small sampling of the public acknowledgments received.

**Barbara Aragon** (1998 honoree) is a consultant for the National Native American



AIDS Prevention Center who helps Native American organizations learn how to better serve their constituencies. Aragon, who is Laguna

Pueblo and Crow, facilitates organizational development and strategic planning sessions throughout the United States. She was formerly director of training for the American Indian Training Institute in Sacramento. As a Violence Prevention Initiative fellow of the Epidemiology and Prevention for Injury





Control Branch of the California Department of Health Services, Aragon recently developed a community intervention approach utilizing storytelling to assist communities cope with unresolved issues of grief and loss.

**Karen Bass** (2003 honoree) is the founder and former executive director of the



Community Coalition of South Los Angeles, which leads community-based campaigns that help root out the causes of crime.

After the 1992 civil unrest, her group helped liquor store owners transform their businesses into grocery stores, laundries, family counseling centers and other beneficial enterprises. The Community Coalition has closed motels that were known as drug trafficking centers, improved the quality and selection of foods in local supermarkets, and secured millions of dollars in repair funds for local schools.

Bass worked with the Los Angeles City Council to provide youth in the 10th District with summer recreation and short-term employment opportunities. She also helped establish the 8th District Empowerment Congress, a model for the Los Angeles Neighborhood Council program. Elected in 2004 to the California State Assembly, where she represents District 47, Bass has been instrumental in reframing the issues of crime, violence and poverty as public health issues.

**Father Gregory J. Boyle** (2000 honoree) is a Jesuit priest and executive director of Los



Angeles-based Homeboy Industries, which helps at-risk and formerly gang-involved youth to become contributing members of the

community through employment training and job placement. He is currently a member of the California State Commission on Juvenile Justice, Crime and Delinquency Prevention and serves on the National Youth Gang Center Advisory Board. Father Boyle, nationally renowned for demonstrating the importance of adult attention and guidance in preventing youth from joining gangs, is a frequent speaker at conferences for teachers, social workers and criminal justice professionals.

**Azim Khamisa** (2003 honoree) is founder and president of the Tariq Khamisa Foundation,



which teaches youth in San Diego about the consequences of violence and provides methods for addressing conflict in nonviolent ways.

The foundation was created in memory of his 20-year-old son Tariq, who was murdered in January 1995. In an amazing act of forgiveness, Khamisa reached out to Ples Felix, the grandfather and guardian of his son's killer. Now working together, they are committed to "stopping children from killing children" and breaking the cycle of youth violence.

After receiving the California Peace Prize, Khamisa was selected to participate in the third annual “Synthesis Dialogues” in Rome in 2004. He was one of 14 Americans in a group of 30 delegates from a dozen nations, including religious leaders, scholars, elected officials and researchers recognized worldwide for their efforts to increase human understanding. Among the participants was the Dalai Lama.

**David Lewis** (1994 honoree) is co-founder of Free at Last, a community-based recovery center in East Palo Alto. He was invited to participate in a peace conference convened in San Francisco in 2000 by Tibet House, an organization dedicated to preserving the principles of peace, compassion and harmony.



“I actually got to sit onstage with the Dalai Lama,” Lewis said. “And I got to sit down with Bill Clinton and have a serious conversation with him about violence and the incarcerated population and substance abuse. And he heard me. I think it was because I was a California Peace Prize winner.”

**Chea Sok Lim** (1997 honoree) escaped the bloody civil war in his native Cambodia only to find gang violence and poverty threatening young immigrants and refugees in his new home in Orange County. In response to these challenges, he helped organize The Cambodian Family, a community-based nonprofit agency



that provides supportive services for immigrants and other low-income residents, to strengthen their chances of life without violence. Because of Lim, children who would have been lost to gangs or fatally caught in the crossfire are now college-bound.

**Beckie Masaki** (1998 honoree) is the founder and executive director of the Asian Women’s Shelter in San Francisco, a multilingual, multicultural program designed as a refuge for Asian battered women and their children. Ten years after Masaki founded the shelter, she received the California Peace Prize. The resulting attention she and her agency received from the ethnic press has helped her expand the scope of her violence prevention work and connect it with a growing national and international nonviolence peace movement.



**Bo Taylor** (2003 honoree) is the founder of Unity One, a South Los Angeles program that negotiates truces and cease-fire agreements with gangs while helping to prevent violence by offering positive alternative activities and job opportunities. The program has served as a catalyst for a range of efforts that have kept policymakers, the media and the general public aware of gang violence and its toll on the health of Los Angeles neighborhoods.



Since receiving the award, Taylor has visited Africa with Harry Belafonte, actor, singer,



activist and Jim Brown, former NFL Hall of Fame inductee, to meet with leaders in the region who have long championed nonviolence as a means to create peace and justice. Taylor has also hosted a weekly talk show, “Reality Talk,” on Los Angeles’ KKBT-100.3 FM, where he encourages listeners to participate in community dialogues to reduce gang violence. Taylor has been cited by the Los Angeles City Council for his commitment to prevent violence and promote peace.

### Summary

As noted at the beginning of this article, crime and violence rates in California have fallen significantly over the past decade. During this time, the state of California passed some of the toughest gun control laws in the country and dramatically increased spending for violence prevention and youth safety programs—including after-school opportunities and job training. The public health focus on violence prevention also attracted new players and fostered new collaborative partnerships among educators, health professionals, community leaders and government officials.

Yet violence against youth is still a public health epidemic. Gun violence remains the second leading cause of death for California’s youth. More than 6,000 young people, on average, are hospitalized each year in California for some form of violent injury.

To adequately address this issue, the role of law enforcement must continue to be augmented by a comprehensive public health focus on the environmental factors that contribute to violence—from the lack of after-school activities to easy access to firearms and alcohol.

Perhaps the most profound lesson the Foundation has learned from its California Peace Prize is that many committed individuals are working to keep young people safe in California. The well-being of our communities is largely determined by the character, skills and resources of such individuals, who take it upon themselves to become leaders.

Hidden within the pages of our grant applications and between the lines of grant dockets is a potent force for change: the passion and commitment of community leaders. Although we in philanthropy are aware of this phenomenon, we may not easily recognize or understand its relationship to the issues we care so deeply about.

Indeed, we often look for “community participation.” And we know that change must take place “at the community level.” But how does that happen? It happens through the individual actions of community leaders who connect disadvantaged constituencies with the institutions of our society. Whether large or small — government, business or nonprofit — local or national — urban or rural — institutions cannot meet the social and economic

To adequately prevent violence, law enforcement must be augmented by a comprehensive public health focus on environmental factors that contribute to violence.

challenges of disadvantaged communities without the participation of community members and their leaders.

Healthy communities need involved citizens. The lifeblood of a civil society is citizen concern and citizen action. The California Peace Prize honorees' experiences offer practical, proven examples of how to strengthen and build healthy communities and how to spread the word that violence is preventable.

Whether seeking to solve a community problem, involve neighbors in the cause, or be more effective as a support organization or funder of community leadership programs, we believe there is something of value to be gained from telling the California Peace Prize honorees' stories. They demonstrate that there is no single method of preventing violence — just as there is no single cause of the problem. For this reason, The California Wellness Foundation has found that an investment in telling the stories of these extraordinary community-based leaders pays large dividends — in terms of furthering their work and advancing public policies that prevent violence in California.

## The California Peace Prize Honorees

1993:	Norman Berry
1993:	Lorna Hawkins
1993:	Bong Hwan Kim
1994:	Sylvia Castillo
1994:	David Lewis
1994:	Gayle Zepeda
1995:	Deane Calhoun
1995:	Rev. Romie Lilly
1995:	Judith Magsaysay
1996:	Glenda Savage
1996:	Leonard Edwards
1996:	Jitu Sadiki
1997:	Chea Sok Lim
1997:	Barbara Rivas
1997:	Malcolm Williams
1998:	Barbara Aragon
1998:	Carol De la Torre
1998:	Beckie Masaki
1999:	Ruben Lizardo
1999:	Clara Luz Navarro
1999:	Gilbert Sanchez
2000:	Father Greg Boyle
2000:	Matt Sanchez
2000:	Gianna Tran
2001:	Joan Cuadra
2001:	Brian Contreras
2001:	Constance Rice
2002:	Joseph Myers
2002:	Raja Rahim
2002:	Wayne Sakamoto
2003:	Karen Bass
2003:	Azim Khamisa
2003:	Darren "Bo" Taylor
2004:	Zelenne Cardenas
2004:	Patricia Giggans
2004:	Anthony Ortiz
2005:	Otilio Quintero
2005:	Maria Velasquez
2005:	Sayre Weaver



# Violence is Preventable!

**The California Wellness Foundation**  
*Grantmaking for a Healthier California*

The California Wellness Foundation established its annual California Peace Prize in 1993 to publicly recognize and reward the outstanding efforts of three individuals who have worked to prevent violence and promote peace in their communities. Since the inception of the California Peace Prize, 39 remarkable Californians have been recognized. Honorees include community activists, educators, law enforcement officers, bereaved parents, juvenile court judges and former gang members who became peace advocates. These leaders are representative of thousands of others working behind the scenes to make Californians safer.



To learn more about their work and the Foundation, visit [www.tcwf.org](http://www.tcwf.org)

Produced in 2005, this commemorative poster was designed to illustrate the diversity and breadth of the California Peace Prize honorees.



## *about the author*

---

*Julio Marcial is a communications officer for The California Wellness Foundation. In his role as manager for the Foundation's electronic communications materials, he serves as editor and writer for the Foundation's website and editor of a series of web-based lessons-learned documents. He also works with the vice president of communications on news media partnerships and public affairs outreach to local elected officials and policymakers. Before joining the Foundation in 1998, Marcial was a junior market research analyst as part of a fellowship to the H.H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and worked as a community relations representative at Montecito Bank & Trust. Marcial received a bachelor's degree in sociology of mass communications from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is currently a member of the Hispanic Public Relations Society, the Communications Network, Hispanics in Philanthropy and the Southern California Grantmakers.*

**The following previous issues of *Reflections* can be accessed at [www.tcwf.org](http://www.tcwf.org) in the Publications section:**

"Reflections On Our First Initiatives"

"Reflections On the Impact of Devolution on California"

"Reflections On the Connections Between Work and Health"

"Reflections On Strategic Grantmaking"

"Reflections On Capacity Building"

"Reflections On Sustainability"

"Reflections On Public Policy Grantmaking"

"Reflections On Communications Strategies That Accent Grantees"

"Reflections On The Safety Net: A Case for Core Support"

"Reflections On Evaluating Our Grants"

"Reflections On The Violence Prevention Initiative"

Principal Editor: Cecilia Laiché

Design: Quon Design

Printing: Challenge Graphics

**THE CALIFORNIA WELLNESS FOUNDATION**

6320 Canoga Avenue  
Suite 1700  
Woodland Hills, CA 91367  
818 593.6600 phone  
818 593.6614 fax

**Website**

[www.tcdf.org](http://www.tcdf.org)