



Common Peace,

Center for the Advancement of Nonviolence

Dear Family of Friends and Supporters:

On a recent visit to Central Juvenile Hall in Los Angeles where approximately 670 children between the ages of 8 and 18 are housed for violent offenses – I was struck by the appearing innocent faces of many of the children, by the gentleness and tears with which the teen girls responded to *Silent Night* and the other Christmas carols myself and my friends were singing, by the young man who anxiously volunteered to read his poetry as our choir hummed in the background, by the tender and soothing ways the children chose to pet Gigi, the sweet and incredibly patient therapy dog, and by the constant words of gratitude expressed by these same children for our coming to the facility to sing.

I asked myself: “Can these same children be gang members, murderers, rapists?” What happened? At what point in the life cycle of each of these children was there a disconnect, a diversion into the violence, a going-along because of peer pressure, or perhaps a surrender made – into the hopelessness into which they had been born? Could they have imagined that their actions and decisions would forever alter their lives and personal freedom in the way that it has? And could they have imagined another way . . . a way out of the madness, **and in the direction of peace?**

“**Violence,**” said Martin Luther King, Jr. – “. . . is the language of the unheard.” What was it these children were trying to express, to communicate, through their limited outlets, that no one heard? Is it possible that listening to them now and truly hearing them will result in a more peaceful life, even if it is a life spent behind bars? And how do we reach those children who are still on the outside – who are struggling with drugs, alcohol, gang violence – who are trying to find their way? How can we, their **Beloved Community**, shore them up that they may successfully navigate life’s waters to a safe port?

The old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is especially true in these times. At **Common Peace, Center for the Advancement of Nonviolence** we are providing that ounce of prevention. We are introducing powerful pro-active nonviolence tools and strategies to children, adults, and teachers - so that they may steer their lives and their students’ lives in the direction of peace and reconciliation. Through our **64 Ways to Practice Nonviolence** curriculum and poster, our **Race Relay** theatrical experience, our **Compassionate Listening** seminar, and our basic and advanced **Nonviolence Trainings** and **CEU Teacher Trainings**, we are offering alternatives – inspiring individuals to activate the peace process – to activate change in their lives. **We cannot, however, do this work alone. We need your Commitment . . . your Support!**

Ever increasing cut-backs in Los Angeles after-school programs, the high unemployment rate, increasing student to teacher ratios resulting from the recent 30,000 plus LAUSD teachers being laid off – and the fact that in 2008 – 2009 only 52% of students attending LAUSD high schools graduated - are all factors contributing to a significant shift in the quality of family and neighborhood life in Los Angeles. This is a breeding ground for violence and a recipe for potential disaster.

As 2010 draws to a close, please consider supporting the nonviolence work of Common Peace. Through your donations, we will reach more children. Please visit our website @ www.commonpeace.org and donate whatever amount you can. A \$5 donation will allow us to donate a **64 Ways to Practice Nonviolence** poster to a school, a \$45 donation will allow us to purchase and donate a **64 Ways to Practice Nonviolence** curriculum and poster to a teacher and/or classroom of your choice during our upcoming **Season for Nonviolence**, January 30 – April 4th. With a \$500 donation we can train 20 teachers in the basic principles and practices of nonviolence -- and \$5,000 will fund a performance of our **Race Relay** project, or fund our **Ways to Practice Nonviolence Animation** program in a Los Angeles high school. **Any amount is appreciated!**

Thank you for all that you have given to the world in 2010 in heart, mind, and action . . . in the name of **Peace!**
Wishing you and yours a Peace-Filled Holiday Season, and an abundance of Loving Action in the New Year!

The Staff and Board of Directors
of Common Peace, Center for the Advancement of Nonviolence

www.commonpeace.org