



July 20, 2021

In the Winter of 2021, in the midst of the pandemic, the Point West Rotary & the San Juan Education Foundation sponsored a series of workshops conducted with Encina High School's "Restorative Practices" class. The objective was to develop, film, and produce short student-written PSAs with a target audience of their peers, as well as incoming 6th graders from Greer Elementary School.

The first two workshops in February were facilitated by local filmmaker and activist Imani Mitchell, who hosted a private viewing of her film "Whirlpool" for the Restorative Practices students. The viewing served to inspire the students, who learned a great deal about developing original content and the technical aspects and challenges of filmmaking. Imani was particularly effective in showing us that a clear vision, persistence, determination, and great team of collaborators can lead to great accomplishments. The experience was empowering.

Over the course of the ensuing weeks, the students were given a series of writing assignments that inspired the script development process. They addressed the following 4 questions:

- What is something that drives you crazy?
- Looking over the past year, what is something you missed?
- What is one piece of advice that has made a Big Difference in your life so far?
- Who inspires you?

In addition to addressing these questions, the students were challenged to consider the "look" of their content. In other words, what is the imagery that your film script might include?

By late April the material had been written, edited and was ready for recording. It was at this point that the project was entirely in the hands of the students. The unique obstacles of the pandemic - the virtual environment of Zoom, sound & lighting challenges, and the reticence of many to appear on camera - were overcome with the purchase of tripods that could be distributed to the students for use in their homes.

We started editing the first of our student footage in mid-May, with the remainder coming in through the end of month. Final edits were presented to the students for their approval with the result now being accessible on YouTube at:

In conclusion, this project was an exercise in overcoming extraordinary obstacles. Not only did the students rise above and overcome, the material they produced is an inspiration. I admire each of them for their courage and resilience. I'm confident that those who view them speaking their truths will feel the same way.

—Greg Alexander
Director of Education
B Street Theatre