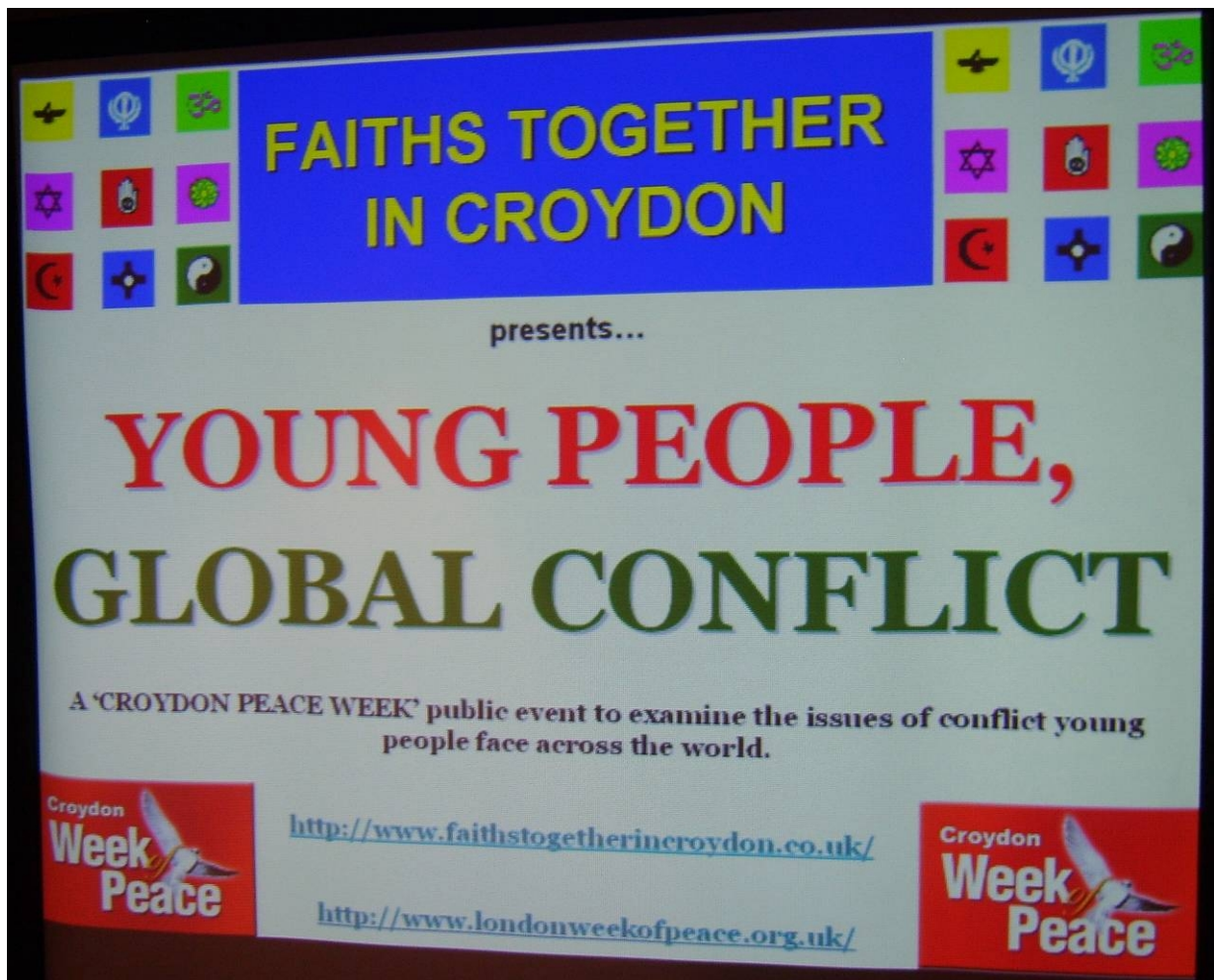




**A REPORT FROM THE CROYDON PEACE WEEK
EVENT**

YOUNG PEOPLE, GLOBAL CONFLICT



**16 SEPTEMBER 2008
THE TERRACE
FAIRFIELD HALL**

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INTRODUCTION

Faiths Together in Croydon (FTC) is the local inter-faith network for the London Borough of Croydon. We represent Croydon's inter-faith community and have a membership covering numerous faith groups in Croydon across the various forms of belief that exist in the borough. We represent the local inter-faith community on several mutli-agency partnerships, including the Local Strategic Partnership. We also:

- Engage in, and promote inter-faith dialogue and action;
- Organise events centred around various subjects of interest to all Croydon's communities;
- Facilitate responses to public consultations;
- Share information to and from Croydon's various faith communities; and
- Coordinate – with Croydon Council – the celebration of winter faith festivals such as Eid-UI-Fitr, Diwali, and Christmas.

We began in 2003 with a series of newsletters and meetings bringing people of different faith communities together to share news and insights on different topics. We current represent the views of over 250 members, and deliver a work-plan centred around:

- Improved inter-faith dialogue in Croydon
- Inter-faith events
- A louder and more coordinated voice for people of faith in local and national decision making; and
- Increased opportunities for people of faith to work together and with others to improve Croydon for Croydon people

Croydon Peace Week is the London Borough of Croydon's contribution to the London Week of Peace. Croydon has consistently supported London Week of Peace and is committed to its aims of reducing crime and the fear of crime, raising awareness of community safety, and improving community cohesion.

The *Young People, Global Conflict* event was designed to highlight that conflict affects young people across the world, i.e. it is not just a local or national issue, but an international issue. We wanted to highlight that our young people are facing situations that echo the experiences of their counter-parts in a number of countries, and that a global push for peace is to the benefit of young people in the UK as much as it is elsewhere. The content of the event was set up to reflect these aims and to explore solutions to bring about peace that could be acted upon by Faiths Together in Croydon and our partner organisations.

FILM

The event began with a brief talk by Les Kemp, the Buddhist community representative on the steering group of Faiths Together in Croydon. Les is also very active in campaigning for peace including promoting the work of the United Nations, campaigning for Unicef, and against the use of Land Mines. Les is an active of the United Nations Association, the community voice to the United Nations in the UK.

Les introduced the film 'The Peacekeepers', a film about the peace keeping efforts of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (the DRC). Due to time constraints, the event only allowed for excerpts of the film to be shown, however this enabled the audience to get a useful understanding of the pressures at the United Nations headquarters in New York and events on the ground in the DRC.

The film enabled attendees to witness how young people were caught up in the conflict either as victims of violence and displacement themselves, and in some cases as 'child soldiers' often forced to participate in the conflict.



DISCUSSION

Following the film the audience participated in a discussion about the film, and wider issues of youth conflict. A panel consisting of Les Kemp, and local representatives from the UK Youth Parliament – David Battersby and Thomas Sampson – gave their own insights on the film and the wider issues concerning conflict and young people.

The discussion covered several topics including parenting and family issues, self-esteem, discipline, the lack of inter-generational harmony, and media representations of conflict and young people.

Many participants including some panel members had not had the opportunity to examine the issues of conflict involving young people from a global perspective, and panel and audience members pointed to the relative lack of media coverage concerning such issues.

One older member of the audience highlighted the lack of opportunity for him to engage with young people, particular around matters that affect them and encouraged more opportunities for inter-generational working on subjects where there were mutual benefits such as anti-social behaviour. He congratulated Faiths Together in Croydon in setting up such an event.



The issue of the perceived lack of discipline shown by some young people arose, with various perspectives on the causes of the issue provided. Some participants pointed to a perceived lack of parental control and the reluctance of some parents to challenge negative behaviours and in some instances the setting of bad examples to children by parents.

Another audience member highlighted that wider community members did not take responsibility in caring for the children and young people in their neighbourhood, and that this reinforced the lack of discipline. Another participant considered that it may be too dangerous to challenge the behaviour of young people 'in the street' as it may be met with a negative, or in some cases, violent response.

Many delegates, especially the younger delegates, pointed to the need to provide young people with constructive activities to deter or distract young people from 'hanging around the streets'. It was also felt that perhaps young people were being let down by adults in the community who were 'too busy' to provide support to young people (through voluntary work or by running a sports club), but that these adults need to be encouraged to be 'part of the solution'.

It was highlighted that there is a variety of youth provision available in the borough. It was replied that perhaps either the provision available does not cater to all tastes, or perhaps needs to be publicised more widely. It was also noted that some activities need to reach those 'hardest to engage', as often the current activities are taken up and enjoyed by young people, but perhaps they are not the ones who are involved in conflict, such as gang activity.

It was agreed by several delegates that faith communities could contribute to this agenda but that their contribution should involve young people in the planning and design of the project or initiative, or perhaps some people would not attend. It was stated that young people themselves – through 'word of mouth' – are often the best way of publicising what is available.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from the discussion and evaluation sheets included:

Recommendation	Potential provider
It is difficult to affect media reportage, therefore world events should be highlighted using alternative means	Schools (including supplementary schools and pupil referral units); Colleges; Organisations planning similar events (faith / voluntary / statutory – including FTC)
Increased opportunities for inter-generational work	Youth service; voluntary groups offering youth provision; faith communities (including FTC)
More adults should be recruited to participate in voluntary work designed to address youth conflict, crime, and anti-social behaviour	Safer Croydon Partnership; Volunteer organisations; faith communities

Increase activities for young people and/or increase the publicity of such activities

Youth service; faith communities; and other deliverers of youth provision

Publicise current activities more widely using innovative techniques i.e. face book etc.

Youth service; faith communities; and other deliverers of youth provision

All youth provision should involve young people in its planning design and implementation

Youth service; faith communities; and other deliverers of youth provision

EVALUATION

All attendees that fed back their evaluation sheets rated the event as excellent or good; and the panel speakers as informative or very informative.



Some respondents would have preferred the film excerpts to have shown more footage of the actual conflict situation and less of the discussions taking place at the United Nations.

Other comments related to:

- Being very appreciative of the opportunity for inter-generational dialogue;
- Being kept informed of progress

- Acknowledgement that Faiths Together in Croydon had given young people a voice, and ensured that young people outnumbered adults on the panel i.e.

“It was great to hear young people giving their views on the issues that affect them”



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Faiths Together in Croydon would like to thank all of those who promoted and attended the event and made it a success.

In particular we would like to thank:

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