

# PSAs for peace

## Teens, Holocaust survivors discuss social justice, freedom of speech for public service announcement videos

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A public service announcement video screening hosted by Summer Film Camp on Wednesday, June 27 featured videos made this year and last year as part of a PSA workshop. These workshop sessions were presented by the Righteous Conversations Project, a Los Angeles-based organization of Holocaust survivors and teens who work together to address issues of injustice in the world. Among the audience at the screening were three survivors who had come to see the work they had been a part of. One of the videos shown used a survivor's story to discuss censorship and the need for people to take advantage of their freedom of speech.

"The Righteous Conversations Project was started by four Harvard-Westlake moms and their daughters under the wing of the non-profit organization Remember Us. The goal of Righteous Conversations is to offer teens an opportunity to dialogue with Holocaust survivors and become stewards of their stories; to offer these survivors assurance that their stories will be carried forward through time; to motivate teens not to be silent witnesses to injustice and instead to be vocal agents of change," said Samara Hutman, Executive Director of Remember Us.

Remember Us works to bring children preparing for their Bar/Bat Mitzvahs together with the memories of the children who were lost during the Holocaust.

The Public Service Announcement Workshop is the centerpiece of the Righteous Conversations Project and brings survivors and teens together to create videos about ongoing injustices around the world. The program was started at Harvard-Westlake School, and the first workshop session was last June. Since then, the Righteous Conversations Project has hosted another workshop this summer at Milken Community High School in addition to a second one at Harvard-Westlake.

The workshop is taught by video arts teacher Cheri Gaulke, who heads the program, with four master teachers, who work with production teams. Hutman facilitates connections between survivors and teens.

The screening on June 27 featured five videos from the PSA workshop sessions, including two from last year's workshop. Both of these videos, one concerning the unethical creation of consumer products, titled "Learn the Difference", and another concerning prej-



Lucas Ryan/Santa Monica High School

**FIRST DAY PLANNING** — Teacher Cheri Gaulke, center, gives instructions on the first day of the Righteous Conversations workshop. Volunteer Michelle Paster and teaching assistant Henry Hahn '14 document the opening discussions of the week. Seated students Jonathan Vuelvas, Kareli Acevedo, Vanessa Perez, Sophia Lopez, Laura Lopez and Grace Waronker listen.

udice against same-sex parental figures, titled "Love Our Families", have been selected for film festivals, often winning prizes for Best PSA, and have been used by organizations to promote their causes.

There were two more videos made this summer that were shown that were still in post-production. The first, titled "It's Not Just One", illustrated the harmful effect of littering, and another, titled "Be an Abolitionist", worked to raise awareness about human trafficking by discussing slavery unended.

Hutman announced at the screening that the Righteous Conversations Project had been chosen to receive grant funding from the Righteous Persons Foundation, an organization that was founded by director Steven Spielberg using his share of the profits from the movie "Schindler's List".

The final video to be shown, titled "Seek Truth", told the story of Auschwitz survivor

Helen Freeman. This partially animated film short is about Freeman's experience as a survivor living in America, and how she learned to take advantage of her freedom of speech.

Freeman had never talked about her past.

"I used to have my sleeve down all the time. I covered it. I didn't talk about it for 20 years," Freeman said.

Everything changed when her son called home from

Northwestern University, saying his professor denied the reality of the Holocaust and asking for the truth. She was brought to tears because she had never told her son that she was a survivor.

"I felt like I was betraying my people ... An awakening came to me that nobody would understand unless I spoke out," Freeman said.

She started speaking at schools about her past in order to spread awareness about the Holocaust. Four years ago, Freeman visited

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"An awakening came to me that nobody would understand unless I spoke out."

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— **Helen Freeman**  
Holocaust survivor

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Lucas Ryan/Santa Monica High School

**A RIGHTEOUS CONVERSATION —**

Survivor Helen Freeman speaks with workshop students Sawyer Kroll and Trey Carlisle.

Harvard-Westlake School to speak for the first time. She has been very involved with the school since, especially because she has three grandchildren there. Freeman said that her efforts to spread awareness and the efforts of others working for the same cause can change overall views on the Holocaust.

The animated beginning of the video shows Freeman receiving a phone call from her son. The background of the animation is of gray skies and pouring rain. The video ends with an animated image of Freeman's arm, branded with a number that fades into a real-life image of the tattoo.

Students Sofia Barrett from Lower Merion High School in Philadelphia and Purag Moundjian from Pasadena High School made the video during this summer's workshop session at Harvard-Westlake, having conceived the idea for it while talking with survivor Harry Davids after hearing Freeman's story. The two experimented with animation in the video, and had to hand-draw every drop of rain in the background.

"It is so important that we embrace something that we have in America - free speech," Barrett said.

"I have always been a sort of activist. I used to spread awareness on Facebook, but I never really took action until now, so I guess this was a starting point for me," Barrett said, "I love that films inform people about what's happening in the world."

**Watch screened PSAs online —**

"Learn the Difference" at <https://vimeo.com/33303341>

"Love Our Families" at <https://vimeo.com/33303761>



**FILM CAMP Summer 2012**

Students shoot a scene of a movie they had written themselves during a film basics course June 18-22. Among them are Nikta Mansouri '15, Joss Saltzman '16 and Turner Thompson from Chandler School. Teaching Assistant Gabe Benjamin '11 gives them suggestions.

Photos by Marcella Park '15