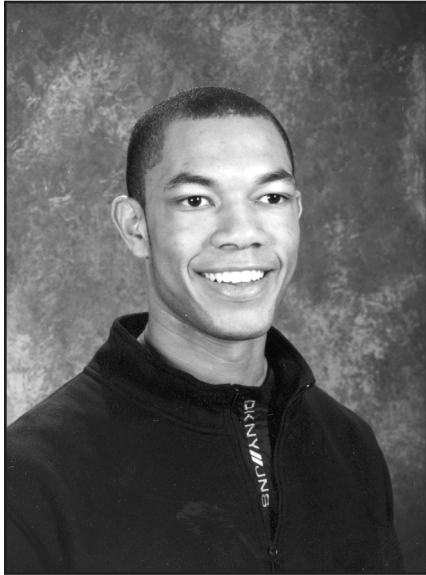




# Annual Report

2000-2001

## Letter from the Chair of the Youth Commission



I am elated to present to you the 2000/2001 Youth Commission Annual Report for the City and County of San Francisco. Through desire, dedication, and discipline, the Commission overcame adverse circumstances this year and surpassed expectations while building on the thresholds established by the Commissions before us.

Since my appointment by Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr. and election as Chair by my fellow Commissioners, youth participation in government has broadened. Furthermore, the Commission's media exposure, rapport with other Bay Area Youth Commissions, and input to the Mayor and Board of Supervisors on how to disseminate funding for youth programs have all grown. Twenty-two resolutions have been passed. Stalled projects have been rejuvenated. New initiatives have begun. It has been an honor for my fellow Commissioners, the Youth Commission Staff, and me to serve over 85,000 youth constituents in the City and County of San Francisco.

The Youth Commission's purpose is to educate youth and adults and encourage youth to amplify their voices in legislative policy discussions affecting them. We listen to the wants and needs of youth. Then we hold hearings, press conferences, educational forums, community meetings, and meetings with appointed and elected officials to lobby on behalf of youth issues.

Each year, the Commission engages in a cornucopia of endeavors that continue to bridge the gap between youth and government. Among some of these endeavors this year were:

- The Silent Survivor ShoutOut for National Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- The Education Committee's press conference on the state of San Francisco's public schools
- The Speak Your Mind Series of youth-led, youth-attended community town-hall meetings
- Visits to the State Capitol in Sacramento to visit with San Francisco's elected representatives
- School outreach presentations to over 1000 students in classrooms and community centers

This Annual Report explains our preeminent endeavors and accomplishments. I hope that this report will stimulate inquisitiveness, create awareness, and provide direction for individuals, organizations, and communities that interact with youth. It endeavors to have an influence on our public health, our juvenile justice, our education, our housing and transportation, and our culture and urban environment.

Youth apathy and inertia towards politics and government must be surmounted. Youth must learn to amalgamate in leadership, liberation, decision-making, and empowerment in order to ensure and affect positive change in our future.

The opportunity to work with the Mayor, Board of Supervisors, fellow Commissioners, Department Heads, community groups, and youth in serving as your Youth Commission Chair has been gratifying during this enriching tenure. An initiative to create a caring and compassionate City and County for today's youth to develop and evolve is in place. I welcomed all input throughout this Commission year and trust that, collectively, an even better future for our youth is promising.

**Myron Howard Johnson, III**  
**Chair, San Francisco Youth Commission 2000/2001**



## Letter from the Director

This year the San Francisco Youth Commission celebrated its 5th Anniversary. Over these past five years, the Commission has grown from a community-based movement to a ballot victory to a full functioning City Commission.

Seventeen young people from throughout the City and County of San Francisco, representing the diversity and spirit of all our neighborhoods, make up the only Chartered Youth Commission in the country. The Commissioners volunteer their time and energy. They serve with dedication and a true commitment to improving the lives of San Francisco's children and youth. I am proud to work with each of them and to be a part of such a dynamic organization.

The 2000/2001 term was a milestone for the Commission. At the start of the year we made a list of priorities and committed ourselves to strengthening the Commission so that it could more effectively represent the voice of youth at City Hall. We made outreach to our youth constituency a top priority and created the first Youth Commission logo. An intensive school-outreach program allowed us to reach over 1000 of San Francisco's public school students through classroom presentations and workshops. The Speak Your Mind Series of youth-led town-hall meetings provided hundreds of youth with an opportunity to speak out on education, public health, homelessness, and domestic violence. During this term the Commission passed 22 pieces of legislation, more than any other year.

As we celebrate year five and plan for year six, we are so grateful to the many people who have contributed to the development of the Youth Commission. Past and present Youth Commissioners and staff, San Francisco's youth and their allies, community-based organizations and government agencies, have all played large roles in the Commission's growth and success. We thank you for your support during the first five years and we hope that you will join us as we continue our charge to make San Francisco a place where youth are succeeding and leading in their schools, in their communities, and in their City Hall.

**Colleen Montoya**  
Director, San Francisco Youth Commission



## 2000-2001 Youth Commission

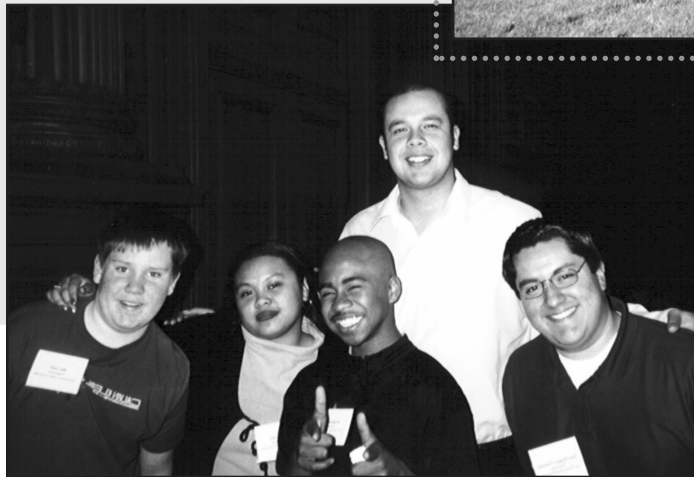
- **Tanene Allison, 19**  
Community Affairs Officer & Member, Culture & Urban Environment Committee  
Appointed by Supervisor Leslie Katz/Supervisor Matt Gonzalez
- **Jesse Arreguín-Fernández, 16**  
Member, Housing & Transportation Committee  
Appointed by Supervisor Alicia Becceril/Supervisor Gerardo Sandoval
- **Kamel Jacot-Bell, 21**  
Member, Culture & Urban Environment Committee  
Appointed by Supervisor Tom Ammiano
- **Rolando Bonilla, 23**  
Member, Public Health Committee  
Appointed by Supervisor Gavin Newsom
- **William Fosselman, 18**  
Media & Public Relations Officer & Member, Housing & Transportation Committee  
Appointed by Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr.
- **Michael Geodzhayev, 13**  
Member, Housing & Transportation Committee  
Appointed by Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr.
- **Myron Howard-Johnson, 17**  
Chair & Member, Education Committee  
Appointed by Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr.
- **Max Lantz, 13**  
Member, Juvenile Justice Committee/Education Committee  
Appointed by Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr.
- **Benjamin Lockett, 14**  
Member, Education Committee  
Appointed by Supervisor Michael Yaki/Supervisor Aaron Peskin
- **Maria Martin, 12**  
Member, Public Health Committee  
Appointed by Supervisor Mabel Teng/Supervisor Jake McGoldrick
- **Benjamin Matranga, 17**  
Member, Public Health Committee  
Appointed by Supervisor Barbara Kaufman/Supervisor Sophie Maxwell
- **Jessica Meksavan, 17**  
Member, Culture & Urban Environment Committee  
Appointed by Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr.
- **Antonechia Smith, 13**  
Member, Juvenile Justice Committee  
Appointed by Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr.
- **Anthony E. Valdez, 16**  
Government Affairs Officer & Member, Housing & Transportation Committee  
Appointed by Supervisor Sue Beirman/Supervisor Tony Hall
- **Gerlie Vedad, 20**  
Member, Housing & Transportation Committee  
Appointed by Supervisor Amos Brown/Supervisor Chris Daly
- **Mari Villaluna, 20**  
Operations Officer & Member, Juvenile Justice Committee  
Appointed by Supervisor Mark Leno

### Youth Commission Staff

**Colleen Montoya**, Director

**Nicole Derse**, Youth Empowerment Coordinator

**Ron S. McCan**, Youth Policy & Program Coordinator



## Youth Commission Committee Reports

- The **Housing and Transportation Committee** deals with issues such as affordable housing for youth, homelessness, and transportation. The Housing Committee, the largest of the five committees, held a very successful and well-attended Town Hall Meeting that was a part of the Commission's Speak Your Mind Series. At the meeting, we received a lot of useful outside information from different community organizations and members, including homeless youth and adults personally affected by the lack of housing in San Francisco. Also in attendance were members of the Board of Supervisors – President Tom Ammiano and Supervisors Mark Leno, Chris Daly, Aaron Peskin, and Tony Hall, who all came out to speak on the housing crisis in San Francisco.

Overall, the Town Hall Meeting was an opportunity for the Housing Committee to hear what the community wants and needs in regards to housing. The notes that we took and the voices we heard were our guide in writing a report entitled "There's No Place Like....: A report on youth housing and homelessness". In addition to the hearing, the Committee sent out surveys to different community organizations asking for more input. The Committee's report was presented to the Board of Supervisors, the Mayor, as well as City Departments and community-based organizations.

– *Gerlie Vedad, Committee Convener*



- The **Education Committee** had a very good year. On January 31, 2001, at Mission High School's Little Theatre, the Committee held a youth forum on education: "Huge Classes, Broken Textbooks, Old Computers...What Should Be Done?" The forum was held to give youth in San Francisco an opportunity to voice their opinions on education issues that need to be implemented and/or altered in the San Francisco Unified School District. Over 100 youth from all over the City and County participated. After the forum, the Education Committee conducted extensive outreach and school presentations. Through the outreach and presentations, we gathered additional input from students.

With the acquired information, the Committee created a report that was submitted to the Mayor, Board of Supervisors, City Departments, Superintendent, Board of Education, and students. The report, entitled "Youth Speak Out on the State of San Francisco Schools," included students' concerns and specific recommendations to the city's policy makers on what needs to be done for youth. We are optimistic that our recommendations will encourage change and positive dialogue in our communities, neighborhoods, and most importantly in our schools.

– *Max Lantz, Committee Convener, Myron Howard-Johnson, Commissioner, Ben Lockett, Commissioner*





The **Culture and Urban Environment Committee** took on a couple of issues this term. After holding a roundtable discussion on budget priorities, we found a common concern — drugs. Every community member present, regardless of neighborhood, was concerned about the sale and use of drugs in his/her community. After that discussion, our committee looked into the current action being taken in our city around drug use. During the second half of the term, the committee focused its attention on the school wellness centers and how those centers can be best utilized to meet the health and wellness needs of San Francisco's high school students.

— *Tanene Allison, Commissioner*



The **Juvenile Justice Committee** had a busy year. Its primary focus was the over-incarceration of youth in San Francisco and the community driven effort to support alternatives to incarceration. Much of the year was spent researching the juvenile justice system. The Committee met with community members—both youth and adults—who are familiar with the system and visited programs that serve as alternatives to incarceration. The Committee members also worked with members of the Board of Supervisors and community members to begin planning a joint hearing between the Juvenile Justice Committee and the Board's Rules Committee. The hearing will be co-sponsored by youth and adults and will be an opportunity for youth to come to City Hall and speak out on the issue of juvenile justice and the incarceration of young people.

— *Mari Villaluna, Commissioner*

The **Public Health Committee** held its Town Hall Meeting, part of the Speak Your Mind Series, at the Excelsior Youth Center in January. The purpose of the meeting was to gather information about youth health priorities from youth and their allies. Topics included wellness centers, sex education, and school safety.

— *Rolando Bonilla, Commissioner*



## Shaking the Legislative Branch

One of the fundamental purposes of the Youth Commission is to advocate for policies and budget decisions that support young people. One way this is accomplished is through the legislative process. The following is a list of some of the resolutions and commendations passed by the Full Commission throughout the 2000/2001 term. The Commission passed a total of 22 resolutions this past year. For information on the status of any or all of the resolutions, please contact the Youth Commission office.

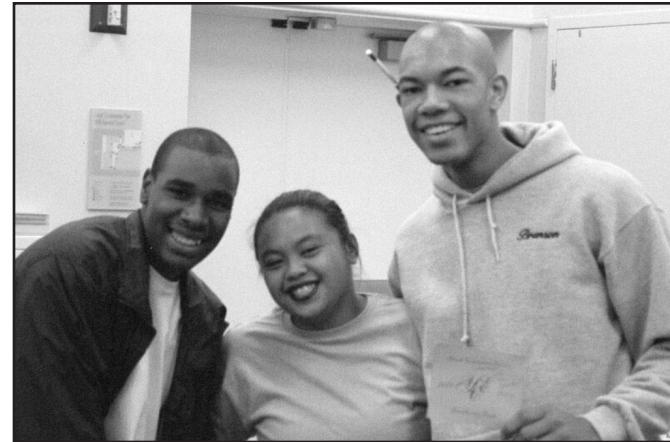
RESOLUTION	DATE	SUBJECT
00-03	11/21/2000	Urging the Recreation and Park Commission and Department to approve a plan for and construct a park and clubhouse at 23rd and Treat Streets in the Mission District
00-04	11/21/2000	Urging the Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco to appoint a youth to the San Francisco Health Commission
01-05	3/28/2001	Requesting sanitary conditions within the San Francisco Unified School District high schools and middle schools
01-07	3/29/2001	Urging the San Francisco Department of Parking and Traffic to make an extensive effort to enhance pedestrian safety at the end of Phelan Avenue, especially in front of Archbishop Riordan High School, by adding flashing crosswalk lights
01-08	3/28/2001	Resolution urging the Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco, the Board of Supervisors, City Departments, and citizens of San Francisco to recognize the positive contributions youth make to our city, state, and country.
01-11	3/29/2001	Urging the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to waive all fees to minors 17 and under at swimming pools throughout the City and County of San Francisco

RESOLUTION	DATE	SUBJECT
01-13	5/21/2001	Urging the Board of Supervisors to urge the California State Legislature to adopt and Governor Davis to sign AB1261, the bill which would extend services of transitional housing for foster youth
01-15	6/04/2001	Urging the Superintendent of Public Schools and the San Francisco Board of Education to work to provide more funding for visual and musical arts instruction through the upcoming 2001/2002 budget cycle
01-16	6/04/2001	Supporting the efforts of the Department of Children, Youth, and their Families and Youth Making A Change to help create and fund school wellness centers, and urging the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to appropriate \$700,000 in this fiscal year, 2001/2002, budget (to be matched by DCYF and the Children's Fund) and to ensure an annualized appropriation of no less than \$700,000 in order to fully implement the creation and maintenance of the wellness centers in our public high schools
01-19	6/04/2001	Urging the Board of Supervisors to support the important work of San Francisco's YouthLine, through a 2001/2002 budget add-back of \$50,000
01-20	6/19/2001	Urging the Board of Supervisors to support and fully fund the \$100,000 for Supervisor Mark Leno's resolution to create an Office of Adolescent Health within the Department of Public Health
01-21	6/19/2001	Urging the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco to collectively allocate \$400,000 to the Excelsior Health Center

## Term Highlights

### Speak Your Mind Series

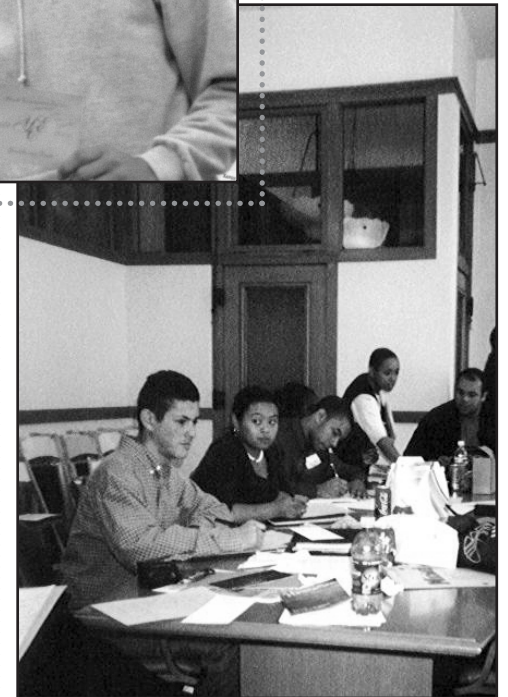
At the beginning of 2001, the San Francisco Youth Commission held the Speak Your Mind Series, a series of youth-led town hall meetings to inform the Youth Commission, the Mayor, and the Board of Supervisors, the Board of Education, and different City Departments on youth-related budget and policy issues. The Culture and Urban Environment Committee, the Education Committee, the Housing Committee, and the Public Health Committee each held events during the last weeks of January at various sites throughout the city. In addition to numerous youth, youth-activist groups, and concerned citizens in attendance at these events, Supervisors Tom Ammiano, Chris Daly, Matt Gonzalez, Tony Hall, and Mark Leno were also present at different meetings. In response to the information gathered at these events, the Youth Commission prepared reports, which included policy recommendations, for the City's leaders. For more information or to receive copies of the Commission's reports, please contact the Commission office. — *Max Lantz, Commissioner*



### A Turning Point for San Francisco's Youth?

This year, the Youth Commission came to understand the full span of influence and power we can hold through a seemingly simple resolution before the Board of Supervisors. The resolution, with no reference to committee, stated that to "enhance public safety", youth who had committed the zero-tolerance offense of bringing a handgun to school would potentially be sent to Turning Point Academy, a new military boot camp in California.

While the Youth Commission was aware that we initially lacked the information necessary to state an opinion on the Board resolution either way, members of the Executive Committee quickly began researching the issue. Within 24 hours of learning of the legislation, we compiled a packet of newspaper articles and government reports that held strong opinions against the creation of the Turning Point Academy. Members of the Youth Commission then visited with Supervisors and provided each with a packet of information on the Turning Point Academy.





On the day of the scheduled vote by the Board of Supervisors, the Commission learned that one of the Board members removed her name from the legislation and a second Supervisor asked that the resolution be sent to committee for further review. In the weeks that followed, Commissioners brought the issue to the attention of the community and the media. The reaction by the community and local media supported the Commission's concerns about the Academy and we were eventually notified that the Supervisor who had originally sponsored the legislation had decided to drop it from the agenda. This act made San Francisco the only county in the state to say that it would not send its youth to the Turning Point Academy.

Through the process surrounding the resolution, the Youth Commission came to better understand how it could best bridge the youth community and City Hall. The voices of youth were heard, and for the first time many youth learned how to work within the government structure for positive change. We believe that defeating the Turning Point legislation was one battle won, but that there are many more left to fight.

We must take it upon ourselves, as a community, to examine what causes youth to bring guns to school. We must also look at what alternatives currently exist for rehabilitation. With the recent trends of school shootings, we cannot afford to look away. Today a large number of our youth are angry and frustrated and are unable to articulate with words how they feel, so instead they turn to bullets. It is the mission of the San Francisco Youth Commission to draw attention to the positive aspects of today's youth, and to give all youth a place where they feel that their concerns are heard. We believe that there is great hope in the youth community and that all of us working together can do something, must do something, to create change! — *Tanene Allison, Commissioner and Mari Villaluna, Commissioner*

### Silent Survivors Shoutin' Out

One of the purposes of the Youth Commission is to provide a space for the voices of children and youth. Perhaps some of the most marginalized among us are children and youth from abusive households. On October 25, 2000, the San Francisco Youth Commission held a Silent Survivor ShoutOut to coincide with National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The event's purpose was two-fold; one, to provide a safe place for survivors to tell their stories and to receive validation; and two, to raise community awareness and discussion on the topic of domestic violence.

Sometimes it seems that the Commission is in rhythm with the pulse of the community. Sadly, that was the case with the ShoutOut. A day before the event, the front page of all the local papers reported on the murder of a mother by her boyfriend in front of her two young children. In the wake of such news, the community had an opportunity to respond through the ShoutOut.

Most of the speakers at the event were youth, including some Youth Commissioners. The youth shared their personal experiences with domestic violence. A teenage girl shouted, "I saw how my mother was treated, and I'm not going to let it happen to me. I'm worth more than that. I'm breaking the cycle!" A mother told solemnly about not stopping the chain of violence before her children witnessed it.

Throughout the evening, it became quite visible how wide spread the problem is. Domestic violence crosses cultures, classes, races, and gender.

The event fulfilled its purpose of bringing together the community to raise discussion. Everyone from the Mayor, to the District Attorney, to our city's youth, came together on common ground. Perhaps though, the most fulfilling outcome of the ShoutOut came through the widespread media coverage. What I consider our greatest accomplishment was that we provided options for survival as well as personal stories of struggle. Our local Spanish-language television station that covered the event included a hotline for those in situations of domestic violence. Within 24 hours after airing the ShoutOut story, the calls to that line went up by 30%. The Commission's Silent Survivor ShoutOut served its purpose.

- *Tanene Allison, Commissioner*



## Urban Warriors

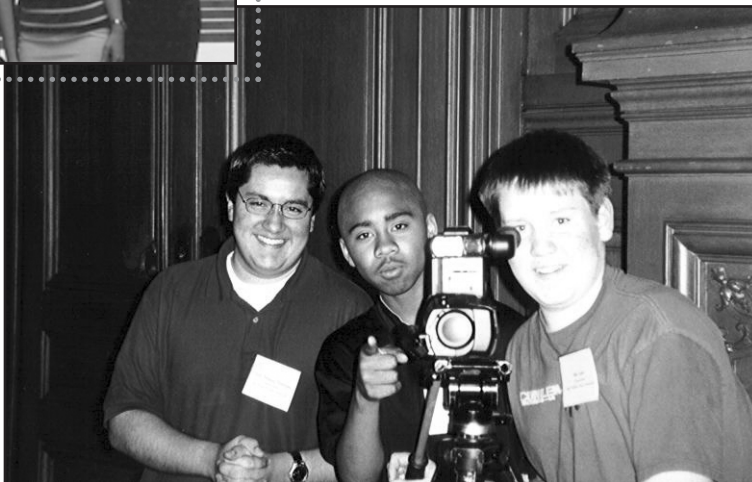


*Poem by Tanene Allison*

And the themes all seem played out  
 And the words echo in my mind  
 From some long lost time  
 Whispering sweetly...

Hope

Hope for what  
 That there are answers for the community's "why's"  
 and "how's"  
 That Columbine was a dream,  
 Waiting to escape this nightmare  
 Where kids kill kids  
     age six  
 Average age of entry in to prostitution  
     age fourteen



Hope for  
 The battle of education  
 The battle of communication  
 The battle of rehabilitation  
 The battle of money spent on prisons vs. schools

Survival 101  
 A freshman course required

The girl looks into my eyes  
 On the corner she cries  
 Unable to give voice to her...  
 What was the word?

Hope?

And the child scribbles softly  
 Red ink upon the page  
 "Dear Mayor:  
 Please help my family  
 we've no where to live",  
 And she looks up at me  
     Wide eyes brimming with tears

Asking:  
 "Will he answer me?  
 I'm not old enough to vote"  
 Who sends our children these messages  
 of priority  
 In election seasons

Where is the hope?

Step inside a high school  
 Functioning illiterate  
 Shoutin mad lyrics to a rap memorized

Titled Boxed  
 Where is the hope  
 Orphaned by society  
 The village we never knew  
 Wandering angry into a polluted future  
 Your children are dying  
 With the messages we send them  
 Eminem  
 Yes, We control the media  
 We control the spending

Listen  
 Before a gun replaces a voice  
 Listen  
 Because one way or another  
 We will shout back!

To the system which took away our words  
 Through lack of education  
 To the community which disbelieves our passion  
 To the country which ignores our promise  
 Crowded into classrooms  
 And the state which locks away our dreams  
 Destined to replicate  
 The passed on cycle  
 of Hate.

Where is the Hope?

On the streets?  
 In the classrooms?  
 In the prisons?  
 In the bootcamps?  
 Creating futures robbed away in our sleep

We're shoutin back!

What matters in a day and age  
 When children's rights  
 And youth's rights  
 And women's rights  
 And gay and lesbian's rights  
 And, well, human rights  
 Are not on the new agenda of the Nation

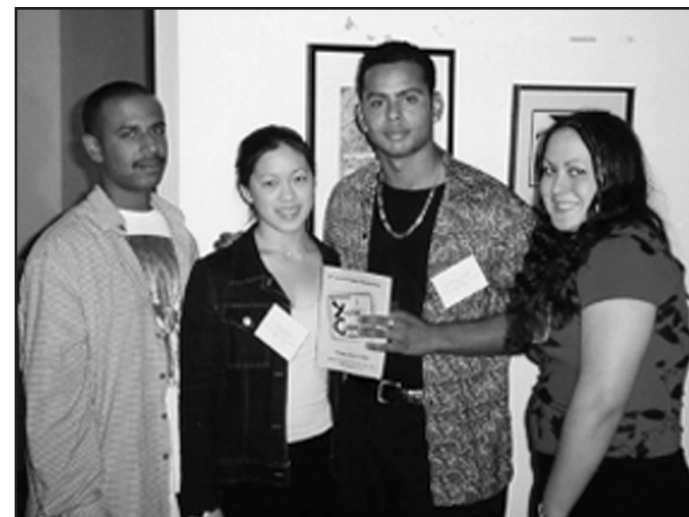
What matters?

We've got to find each other  
 We've got to listen  
 Through voice  
 Through poetry  
 Through song  
 We've got to reflect  
 In legislation  
 In policy

We've got to Listen.

Because there, in our words,  
 That's the only place  
 We're gonna find

Our Hope.



## **San Francisco Youth Commission**

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