

A clapperboard is positioned in the upper left, tilted diagonally. It features a black and white striped top bar and fields for 'PROD', 'ROLL', 'SCENE', 'CAMERA', and 'DATE'. To the right of the clapperboard is a director's chair with a black seat and backrest, and gold-colored metal legs. The backrest has the word 'DIRECTOR' printed on it in white. A black cone sits on the floor in front of the chair. The background is a plain, light color.

*Youth Media Force:  
A Case Study for Substance  
Abuse Prevention Methods  
Targeting  
Asian Americans and Pacific  
Islander Youths*

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# The Conflict

» Substance abuse among AAPI youth is a growing epidemic in our communities.

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Marijuana
- Ecstasy, Ex, E
- Meth
- Prescription Drugs



# Defining the Causes

- » One of the great challenges about accomplishing this objective is defining the culture of substance abuse amongst AAPI communities.
  - Social Pressure: What do the youth perceive their peers to be doing?
  - Generational Gap Coping Mechanism: Lack of communication between the youth and the parents due to language barriers create gaps, causing tension and miscommunication.
  - Cultural/ Religious Practices: Alcohol, Tobacco and Opium use have been a long honored tradition in Hmong culture. Traditions using alcohol is a very large factor in alcohol abuse among the young Hmong males.
  - Parent Involvement/ Lack of Involvement: Because many AAPI families are larger than the average 2.5 kids, many parents need to work two jobs to support the family, therefore, parent involvement in a youth's life may be minimal. Many parents do not follow the celebrations of popular Western culture or get involved with the youth's extracurricular life due to language barriers so the youth may feel unappreciated or not loved.
  - Gang Activity: The youth may look for family structure in gangs.
  - Family Support/ Lack of Family Support: Many AAPI parents do not know how to support their children's interests, or understand how to talk to their children in a way that their children would understand. Many parents were teen parents or orphans and may not have adequate parenting skills.
  - New Found Freedom: Many AAPI girls are not given the same freedoms as the boys causing many girls to runaway and getting into the wrong crowd. After being suppressed at home for so long, many girls are willing to experiment with substances once they have a chance to get out of the house, which may lead to addiction.

# So... What do we do?

**Empower the youth to make their voices heard:** Their voice is their most important tool. They have to know that their voices, their stories, their experiences and their desire to show this have the ability to help change someone's life.

**AAPI youths feel strength in groups of their peers:** They need to know that they are not alone. They support one another and they help keep each other "in check." They also share similar goals and objectives, which makes them work together as a team.

**The youth know why they do or don't abuse substances:** Most youths have been force fed information about substance abuse since preschool. They know what it does to them, and why they shouldn't use drugs. However, they also know that youths are rebellious and they sometimes don't care. So, they look deep inside and figure out why they themselves don't abuse substances or what prevented them from it.

**Youth Media Force:** is an initiative to bring together Asian American Pacific Islander youths to:

- 1) Learn about substance abuse prevention
  - 2) Use media productions to create material about prevention
  - 3) Teach the prevention methods to their peers through the media productions
  - 4) Support one another through positive relationships and recruit new members to the family
- » Youths engage in a series of challenging activities in media advocacy and production training, learn to utilize various media tools, work as a team, and produce community education resources for peers, parents and other community members about substance abuse.
- » Best of all... IT'S REALLY FUN! Boredom is one of the most common answers to why teens experiment with drugs. Sometimes the youth just needs to be stimulated. It is a fun and positive alternative to doing other things that could be harmful.

# Act I

**The Setup** - WILLIAM, An Asian American teen living on the North side of Minneapolis a.k.a "Murderopolis" finds himself alone again in his room. His mother and father are working their second job as medical assembly workers putting together hearing aids, while his older brothers are with their friends in the basement smoking all sorts of things and downing shots of hard liquor.

The young teen's room begins to stink like burnt plastic from the smoke seeping through the vents from the basement. It makes him dizzy, so he opens his window on the freezing December night. His breath crystallizes.

He has approached his parents about his siblings' drug addiction in the past, only to be met with a swift slap to the face as a warning if he was to interfere with his brothers' activities. Didn't he know that his brothers are the ones who contribute to the household? Didn't he know that without their help, the entire family, including all 5 children would be left out to die in the cold? What would their cousins say if they found out? They would lose face! If he interferes again, he is going to get kicked out!

# ACT 2

William reluctantly goes to school the next day and is surrounded by the "cool" classmates who constantly talk about where they can score some of the "good stuff." They always seem to have girls around them. William would love to be a part of the "cool" group, but he knows that the price he would have to pay is not worth it. Plus he also learned that not all girls like those kind of guys; and for a young man in high school, what a girl thinks of you is THE MOST important thing of course.

Lunch time and William's stomach is growling. His parents had "forgotten" to pay for the school lunch again. Both parents work two jobs, which means they make too much for a free or reduced lunch, but there never seems to be any money at home. William hopes that they have been saving some of it for his college education, but more than likely, it all goes into providing for the 14 people who live in their small house. His friends are in similar situations. Parents working two jobs, but no money. They will just have to wait until they get home to eat.

Sitting at the lunch table, he can hear other fellow classmates bragging about all the weed that they smoked, or how high or drunk they got during the weekend. They seem so content, and so happy. Not a care in the world... "You ain't impress'n nobody foo! You Lie! I saw you at the farmers market with your mom on Sunday selling lettuce! Why you trying to make people think you're a pot head?" A girl's voice shouts out at one of the students. William smiled.

# Act 3

After school, William heads over to the studio where he'll have a chance to create what he went through in the past two days into a short movie to show to his friends.

His mentor comes over to talk to him about his day. William describes his day to his mentor. "Sounds like you really need to let this out of your system huh? Why don't you make a short movie about it. I know a lot of students your age can relate. Bring it up to the rest of the guys and then we'll talk about it. I'm really proud of you William. You made some good tough decisions."

There was something about video and photography that speaks to him. Perhaps it was exhilaration of making something that would speak to his peers, or the power he feels over the world in which he is going to create. Perhaps it was knowing that he was going to do something that is going to help others make the right decision about substance abuse. Perhaps, it was knowing that someone will be listening to what he has to say.

He wasn't alone in this. Only after a minute or two, the other members of his after school video group comes in, chit chatting about their day at school.

"Hey you guys?... What would you do if a girl at your school... someone you liked told you that drug users don't impress her?" William asked.

"If I really liked her... I would invite her to this group." his friend replies. "She can star in your video."

William thinks about it for a moment, and responds, "I like where this is going."

# How this works

- » **What is the issue?:** Each substance needs to have it's own articulated discussion because each substance pertains to different types of youths. The mentor will be present to serve as a facilitator, and someone to keep the discussions going.
- » **Discussion:** The discussions are to find out what the youth knows about the substance and what they don't know. The mentor will have some information ready to present, but will focus on getting the youth to talk about the issues. Personal experiences are talked about if applicable, and everyone respects each other when speaking. Everyone has a chance to speak.
- » **Research:** The youth learn valuable research skills when looking for data to support their videos. They **MUST** cite the websites that they get their information from on the scripts, and must show to each other how the information is pertinent to their video.
- » **Planning:** Working as a team, they plan out which approach would be most effective. What sort of a video would they most likely pay attention to?
- » **Shoot:** They select the best director(s) and cast and crew for the video and then create a timeline for the shooting schedule.
- » **Edit:** The youth then put the movie together and create music for the score using programs such as Garage Band and Soundtrack.
- » **Submit:** Once the movie is done, they screen it and get critiques about it. Then they go back and clean it up for the final submission.

# Art and Life

## » *Does art reflect life, or does life reflect art?*

In making these short movies and PSA's, the youth gets to think about what honestly influences them and how they can use that information to influence their peers in a positive way.

The youth learn about themselves, and learn to love themselves through art, because what is art after all? It is an expression of self. The youth needs to know that they are important, and that their views are important... What they have to say are important.

It is when they feel a loss of control in their lives or when they feel that there is nobody to turn to or unloved or unwanted, they turn to the things that can temporarily make them feel better... drugs.

By making videos about their thoughts, their insights, and listening to what they have to say, with the support of caring friends and family (whom we pull in to attend the showings of the movies and family party nights as well as keep parents updated on the wonderful job their children are doing,) the youth feels a sense of the fulfillment that they need to stay off of the substances that they can temporarily use to replace these needs.

By keeping with friends who share similar goals and support a substance free lifestyle, it is much easier for the youth to feel a connection to a group of peers, which in turn gives them a sense of strength in their lives.

# Findings

- » Participants in the YMF program work to build their capacity toward understanding the issues that affect their environment. They become exposed to options that can help them to make better decisions and become better citizens of their community.
- » The issue of substance abuse continues to be a problem in our young society, most often higher in inner cities. Youths continue to smoke, consume alcohol, and use illicit drugs without understanding the full affects of the substance on oneself. Their influences are their peers whom may also lack experience to make a good decision, and their family situations. YMF promotes education of youths and youth advocacy.
- » Youth helping youth.