



## ISSUE 1:

This is the first in a series of briefs, entitled *Listening for a Change*, that will explore the needs of young people, as identified by young people. The themes explored will speak to RYSE's work in elevating our values into action. The first of the series is focused on our value:

**Safety:** The RYSE Community commits to safety so all young people feel comfortable and confident being themselves while broadening their horizons.

## HOW WE ELEVATE SAFETY

RYSE envisions Richmond as a strong, safe, united community where youth have the opportunity to lead, to dream, and to love.

RYSE provides a safe space that meets ALL young people where they are. Our integrative approach balances what young people both want and need. All of our programs are designed to be flexible, adaptive, and adjustable for crises and opportunity. All of our staff are trained in trauma-informed approaches so that every interaction with a member is a place for healing and growth. RYSE also believes in the power of young people to lead and hold safety. One of the key practices at RYSE has been promoting young people into leadership and "culture keeping roles" within the Center.

## MEETING THE NEED: SAFETY & BELONGING<sup>1</sup>

Young people at RYSE report that they:

- 96% Feel as safe or safer at RYSE compared with other places they spend time.
- 74% Feel safer at RYSE.
- 91% Feel like adult staff members pay attention to what's going on in their lives.
- 89% Could go to an adult staff member if they were upset or angry.
- 88% Feel like they belong at RYSE.
- 78% Are paying more attention to their feelings and emotions.
- 70% Recently participated in activities or discussions about violence, conflict resolution or peer mediation at RYSE.

# LISTENING FOR A CHANGE

## LISTENING CAMPAIGN: WHAT IS IT?<sup>2</sup>

The Listening Campaign is a process of inquiry with young people to understand with more sensitivity, clarity, and empathy their lived experience of trauma exposure, marginalization and histories of oppression. RYSE is committed to acting on the needs and insights that young people share to inform more effective community supports and services, as well as more empathetic and empowering systems and organizations that are equipped to respond to and address the experiences and impact of trauma and violence.

<sup>1</sup> Results from survey completed by 150 RYSE members in August 2013. Every year RYSE conducts a member impact survey that measures sense of safety, sense of agency, relationships with peers and adults, and ability to imagine and achieve a positive future.

<sup>2</sup> In partnership with UC Berkeley School of Public Health faculty, RYSE's Listening Campaign engaged 400 young people through a combination of facilitated conversations, surveying, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. For the full Listening Campaign report please go to: [www.rysecenter.org](http://www.rysecenter.org)



## LISTENING CAMPAIGN: WHAT WE HEARD

Trauma amongst young people is:

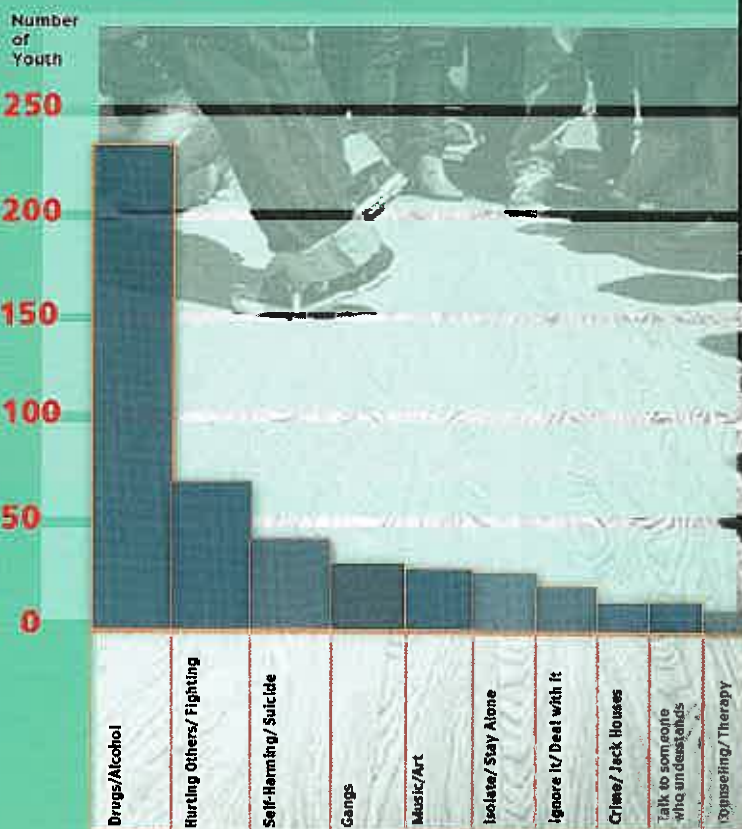
- Pervasive, assumed and multi-dimensional
- Organized through silencing and shaming
- Mediated through substance use and harm to self and others
- Reflected and reinforced through experiences with adults as unempathetic, judgemental and punitive.

Young people have expressed the need and desire to form trusting relationships with adults, that includes mentorship, guidance, and someone to listen to them without judgement.

### Types of violence youth experience:

Gang violence	3 in 5
Gun violence	1 in 3
Domestic violence	1 in 4
Bullying	1 in 4
Sexual violence	1 in 8

### Ways young people cope:



## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Partner with young people in the creation of safe spaces. Be the adult that a young person can trust and talk to without judgment.

### SCHOOLS

Ground district and school-site policies and practices for students, faculty, and administrators in trauma-informed, restorative principles. Introduce or enhance trauma-informed response training for district personnel. If you are in West Contra Costa, have school district representatives join our Listening Campaign Working Group. Schedule a Listening Campaign share out amongst school staff.

### SERVICE PROVIDERS

Develop a multi-level assessment and support process for youth served. Assess state of and capacity for trauma-informed services, programs, and investments. Introduce or enhance trauma-informed response training for staff. Let it be our collective commitment to hold one another's humanity in the midst of supporting the healing of our young people.

### POLICY & DECISION MARKERS

Support the creation of safe spaces for young people. Develop coordinated, integrated system of services, supports, and investments that respond to and address acute incidents of trauma and violence, and also create and sustain spaces for healing, restoration, and community-building. If you are a local representative, join our Listening Campaign Working Group. Consider innovative, long-term approaches to investing in children and youth services.

### YOUNG PEOPLE

There is a safe space for you at RYSE, and if RYSE doesn't feel like the right space we'll help you find that space.

### External Resources:

Street Literature: [tinyurl.com/streetliterature](http://tinyurl.com/streetliterature)  
ACES study: [www.cdc.gov/aces/](http://www.cdc.gov/aces/)

For more info please visit our website..

## ISSUE 2:

This is second in a series of briefs from RYSE that explore the needs of young people, how RYSE is meeting these needs, and what else we and others in our community can do to support young people. This issue is focused on:

**YOUTH LEADERSHIP: The RYSE Community values young people as creative, powerful, and responsible community leaders.**



*"We know we can't run the city- it's too complex- but our experience and our voices should count, especially because we're the most affected".*

*-LC Participant*

# LISTENING FOR A CHANGE

The Listening Campaign (LC) is a process of inquiry with young people to understand with more sensitivity, clarity, and empathy their lived experience of trauma exposure, marginalization, and histories of oppression. To date, the LC engaged over 400 young people from the diverse communities of Richmond and West Contra Costa County.

## WHAT WE HEARD

In the Listening Campaign, young people expressed feeling limited control over their circumstances alongside the desire and need to contribute in real and meaningful ways to decisions that impact their lives and their communities. They shared a complex analysis of their own agency and responsibility. While they often feel blamed for the circumstances they face and judged for the ways they cope, they also reflected, both personally and collectively, on the importance of healthy decision-making in light of and despite these circumstances. Ultimately, they want to take responsibility for their future and are ready to engage as leaders.

## TAKING ACTION: OUR RESPONSE

RYSE has developed a youth leadership model, called the RYSE Leadership Pipeline (RLP), that reflects and addresses the experiences and impacts of chronic trauma and inequity:

- ▶ The RLP exposes and enables members - however they enter RYSE - to consider their interest in formal and informal leadership within and outside of RYSE.
- ▶ The RLP includes introductory, intermediate, and advance levels of leadership training, skill-building, and opportunities for organizing and advocacy.
- ▶ The RLP is iterative and dynamic. The structure and design are reviewed yearly and adjusted to ensure we meet the real life needs and priorities of young people while supporting and strengthening their capacity and skills to lead and transform their communities.
- ▶ The RLP works in service of a larger aim: ensuring that young people are key stakeholders and decision-makers on issues and policies impacting their individual and collective well-being.



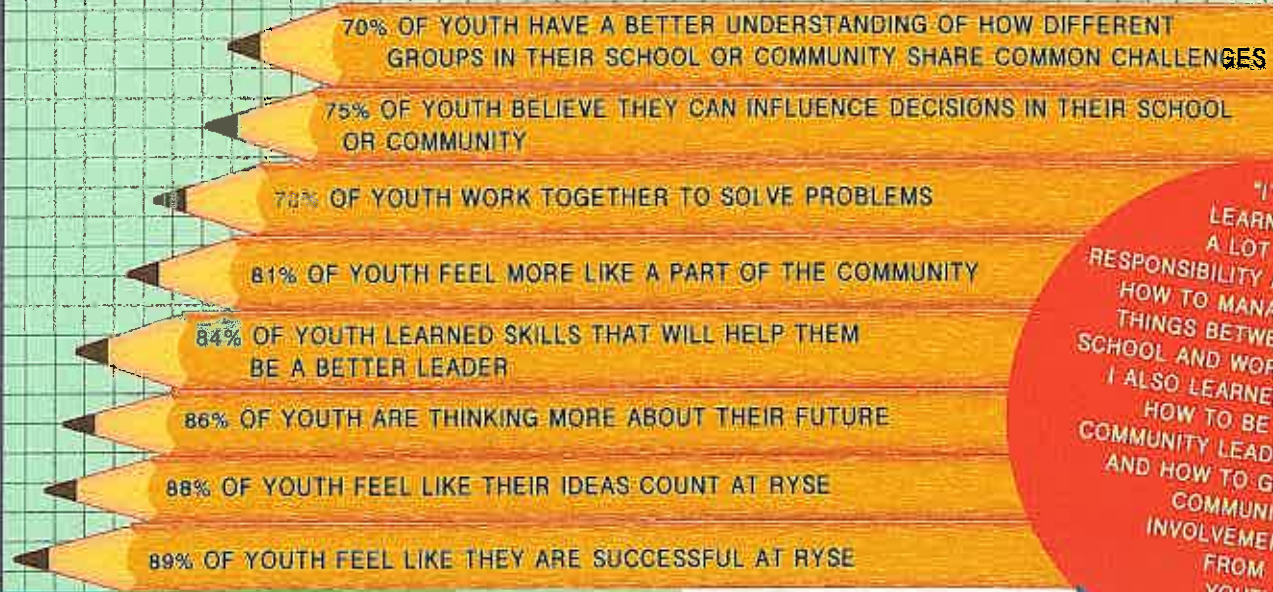
The RLP reflects key learnings from the youth organizing and youth development fields for leadership pipelines that:

- ▶ Respond to earlier and later stages of adolescent development;
- ▶ Address the holistic needs and priorities of youth and young adults;
- ▶ Allow for multiple points of entry and engagement;
- ▶ Connect to pathways for continued leadership from secondary and post-secondary education to career opportunities;



## MEETING THE NEED: FOSTERING COMMUNITY, HOPE AND ACTION

### SINCE COMING TO RYSE....



"I'VE LEARNED A LOT OF RESPONSIBILITY AND HOW TO MANAGE THINGS BETWEEN SCHOOL AND WORK. I ALSO LEARNED HOW TO BE A COMMUNITY LEADER AND HOW TO GET COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT FROM YOUTH."  
-YOUTH INTERN

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 % OF YOUTH

\*Results from survey completed 1/2014-2/2015

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

#### COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Young people are asking for and need role models and mentors. Be a mentor and commit to active listening and unconditional caring. Assume young people are capable of transformational leadership when given holistic supports.

#### SCHOOLS

Engage young people as the central stakeholders in their education. Provide ongoing training and support so they are prepared to engage. Wherever they are at the table, their decisions and input should be explicitly incorporated. Get trained in how to be a supportive adult<sup>9</sup>.

#### SERVICE PROVIDERS

Create and offer programs with enough structure and space for young people to learn, to try out new things, to make mistakes, and to innovate. If you don't already, engage young people in hiring staff at your agency, designing and evaluating programs.

#### POLICY & DECISIONS MAKERS

Engage young people in meaningful decision-making. Provide training and support so they are prepared to engage. When asking for input, be realistic and transparent where they will have meaningful influence on decisions. At the same time, avoid over-reliance on young people within such processes.

#### FUNDERS

Context is critical in measuring impact. Youth leadership development in conditions of chronic trauma and inequity require a long lens in vision, strategies, and investments. When funding youth leadership and youth development programs and agencies, ensure allocations that support young people's holistic leadership and well-being.

#### YOUNG PEOPLE

Your ideas matter! RYSE can help you find opportunities to work with other young people to address the issues you face.



\*Contact RYSE for training on adultism. Adultism is the systematic mistreatment of young people on the basis of their youth, including stereotyping, discrimination, negative attitudes or behaviors towards young people, and symbolizing respect, power, privilege, and the rights of participation on the basis of age. It includes the assumption that adults are better than young people, and entitled to act upon young people without their agreement. This mistreatment is supported and reinforced by the laws, policies, norms, social customs, and everyday practices of society. (See Adultism: What is it and how do we avoid it?)

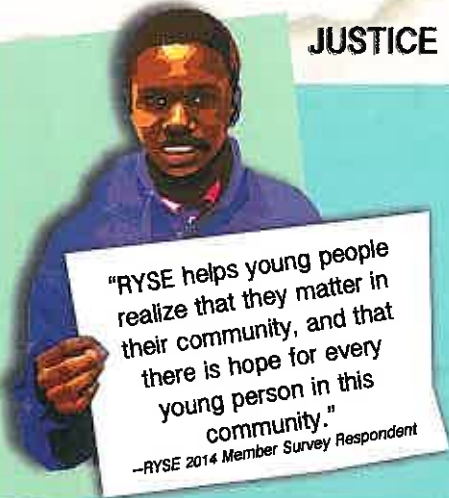
Read more here:

- [tinyurl.com/EnergizeMe](http://tinyurl.com/EnergizeMe)
- [tinyurl.com/FundersCollaborateWithYouth](http://tinyurl.com/FundersCollaborateWithYouth)
- [tinyurl.com/HRYouthProgramInventory](http://tinyurl.com/HRYouthProgramInventory)
- [tinyurl.com/Adulthood](http://tinyurl.com/Adulthood)



**ISSUE 3:** This is third in a series of briefs from RYSE that explore the needs of young people, how RYSE is meeting these needs, and what else can be done to support youth. This issue is focused on:

**JUSTICE & EQUITY:** The RYSE Community promotes justice and disrupts injustice in our communities.



## LISTENING CAMPAIGN<sup>1</sup>: WHAT WE HEARD

Young people shared that their experiences of chronic violence and trauma combined with constant negative media messages about their communities, impair feelings of hope and contribute to a belief that things won't change.

Anger was commonly noted as an initial reaction, overlaying deeper feelings of depression, grief, and anxiety. Young people expressed frustration with and desire to change their circumstances, as well as the lack of and need for more support from adults to create the changes they see necessary to have a healthy, productive life.

## TAKING ACTION: OUR RESPONSE

From RYSE's Vision Statement: *We envision communities where equity is the norm and violence is neither desired nor required, creating a strong foundation for future generations to thrive. We envision youth and adults working together in partnership to hold all public systems and the private sector accountable to serving the community and not exploiting its people.*

RYSE provides space, opportunities, and healthy connection with peers and adults to engage in reflection and critical thinking about the issues impacting their lives and communities. RYSE allows and encourages young people to explore and exert their influence to promote positive change in their own life and in their community.

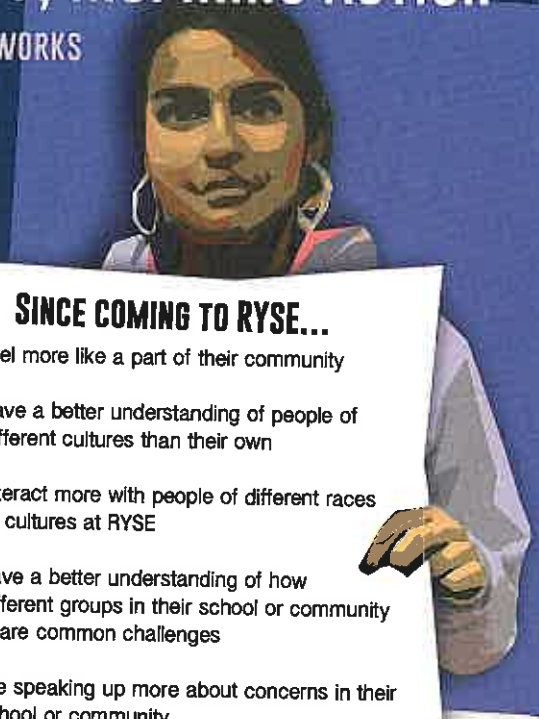
## MEETING THE NEED: FOSTERING COMMUNITY, INSPIRING ACTION

### UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE: WHAT ELSE WE KNOW ABOUT THE ISSUE AND WHAT WORKS

Dominant narratives of young people of color unjustly pose them as burdens and problems that need to be fixed.<sup>3</sup>

Conventional approaches and investments in youth development and youth violence prevention focus too heavily on shifting individual behavior and not enough on structural and institutional change. Rarely do these approaches or investments consult young people themselves.

Young people are key stakeholders in our community. Their experiences, ideas, and energy are critical and central to building and sustaining positive community change. RYSE exists because of the courage, commitment, and ongoing engagement of young people to organize and change conditions in their communities. Those same young people who mobilized for RYSE did so knowing they would most likely not reap the direct benefits.



### SINCE COMING TO RYSE...

- 87%** feel more like a part of their community
- 76%** have a better understanding of people of different cultures than their own
- 79%** interact more with people of different races or cultures at RYSE
- 70%** have a better understanding of how different groups in their school or community share common challenges
- 72%** are speaking up more about concerns in their school or community
- 74%** are more involved in the decision-making process regarding school or community issues

<sup>1</sup> In partnership with UC Berkeley School of Public Health faculty, RYSE's Listening Campaign engaged 400 young people through a combination of facilitated conversations, surveying, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews.

<sup>2</sup> Results from survey completed by 204 RYSE members in May 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Dorfman, L., DrPH, & Schiraldi, V. (2001). Off balance: youth, race, and crime in the news. Berkeley Media Studies Group and Justice Policy Institute.

<sup>4</sup> Blankenship, K.M., Friedman, S.R., Dworkin, S., & Mantell, J.E. (2006). Structural interventions: Concepts, challenges, and opportunities for research. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Science*.

## ELEVATING YOUTH VOICE & INFLUENCE TO PROMOTE JUSTICE AND DISRUPT INJUSTICE

RYSE believes that young people's stories and lived experiences should be the drivers and measures of justice and change. "Street Literature", an award winning video featuring RYSE youth and directed by young filmmaker Gemikia Henderson, speaks to our belief and investment in the power of narrative and counter-narrative, illuminating the collective pain, hurt, and judgment felt by young people of color in the killings of Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin, and Israel Hernandez. Its follow up, "Change Gon' Come", highlights both the struggles and dedication of young people to make changes in their own lives, despite and in light of the injustice they face, so that they, their families, and the young people coming up after them can live, love, and flourish.



*"As a community member, it's important to show we have the ability to change society's perception of us. As a director, I feel it's important to show what young people see everyday. In this way, my work addresses the question, 'How can you be down for change if you don't know what needs to be changed?' 'Change Gon' Come' addresses how we plan to change within ourselves to help change others."*  
-Gemikia Henderson

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Listen to young people – individually and collectively. Validate their experiences and feelings, including anger. Ask them how they are doing, what they need and want, and be patient with their answers. Research shows that having even just one supportive adult can mitigate and alleviate social and emotional distress. Be that adult.

### SCHOOLS

Foster a classroom and school culture that allows young people to share, empathize, create, and inspire. Cultivate young people's ideas and energy into lesson plans, school climate plans, and in the aesthetics and art of the school. When asking for input, don't over-promise or over-rely on students' influence and contribution.

### SERVICE PROVIDERS

Ask young people what they need and want, consistently and with meaningful responses. Incite love and inspiration in all programs and services. Provide space for young people to name, grieve, and heal the harms they face. Young people need and rely on us to be their advocates and speak their truths where and when they cannot. Speak up against the harms and injustice young people face, especially with other providers and adults. This is central, not tangential or optional, in our roles.

### POLICY & DECISION MAKERS

Invest in programs and approaches that commit to listening to and validating young people's experiences and feelings, and that are responsive and adaptive to their dynamic needs, interests, and priorities. Support spaces that elevate youth voice, expression, and action promoting justice and naming injustice. Involve young people in determining the measures of success that matter to them.

### YOUNG PEOPLE

You matter! Your lives matter! Your ideas matter! RYSE can help you find opportunities to work with other young people to address the issues you face and that are important to you.