



Santa Ana Youth Organize Conference Addressing Issues in their Community

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Popular notions of youth apathy will have to take a back seat this weekend. An all-day conference on Saturday in **Santa Ana** shows that young people not only care about issues affecting their community, but are also motivated enough to do something about them.

The effort arises from **RAIZ**, whose Spanish acronym translates into resistance, autonomy, equality, and leadership. The youth group centers on art, culture and popular education as tools of empowerment and is the driving force behind the '**Youth in Resistance**' conference that aims to connect students to local social movements.



"I started to be involved because I wanted to find ways to help out youth," says **Jesus Santana**, a 16 year-old sophomore at **Godinez Fundamental High School** and RAIZ member. "That's the main reason I joined a few months ago."

In the lead-up to the conference, Santana and others involved with the organization set about conducting a survey of 500 young people in the youngest city in Orange County to find out what issues they felt were most pressing and important in their lives. "We got high votes on immigration, police brutality, bullying, Chicano/Mexican history, drug abuse, student rights, teen pregnancy, domestic and hood violence," reports **Katie Alvarez**, a 16 year-old student at Godinez who is also involved with RAIZ.

Saturday's free conference open to ages 13-22 will be orientated around hour-long workshops based upon the results of the survey. "We're going to have guest speakers from other organizations who know about those issues," Santana says. "We just want to inform the youth of the things affecting us at school, in the community and even at home. We can make a better future for ourselves by overcoming these obstacles. "

Though this is not the first instance in which young people have congregated around these concerns, there is a difference this time around. "There's more youth involved, more students from high school

and the conference is growing," Alvarez adds. "It's showing everyone that we do care and that we want to make a difference. It's our future."

The Youth in Resistance Conference takes place Saturday at El Centro Cultural de Mexico, 313 N Birch St, Santa Ana. 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. RSVP online at www.youthinresistance.org. Breakfast and lunch will be provided.

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