

# Florida Youth Culture Festival

through establishing a tag in the neighborhood gang is more important than keeping peace. It took an entire courtroom—dubbed “The People’s Court”—to help him decide.

Should a girl be able to play basketball in competition with the boys, or is keeping her apart sexist? Jacksonville youth challenged this issue with a basketball scene where a girl wanted to be judged on her talents, not her gender. As she prepared to take a shot in a pickup game, some 70 members of the Boys and Girls Group came on stage and sang an endearing song of hope called “I Can.”

Even the audience was able to participate beyond offering standing ovations. The entire cast gathered on stage during the grand finale and led the audience in taking the Victory Over Violence pledge.

What had taken months to shape and build had come to an end, but in its place was a new sense of bonding and community. Young men

and women who had been nothing but strangers before the practices started were now close. They had experienced so much.

“Before I became involved in preparing for the concert, I was in a bad place with my life,” said Freddy Harfford, from Jacksonville. “I was unhappy, I didn’t have a job, I didn’t go to school. As soon as I got involved, things started to change. I started to study. I started to see results. I finished school and got a job.”

“Deeper than this though, I’ve changed. Now I think differently. Working with all these younger kids, I helped them and they’ve helped change me. They’re like my brothers and sisters. It was a great experience to work together with people, young and old, for the same goal.”

One supporter from Orlando, Kount Williams, expressed his pride at the development shown by the youth: “I’ve been a teacher and an assistant principle, so I know a little something about youth development. I can tell you I’ve never seen anything change kids so quickly into committed and concerned individuals like this.”

For more information and behind the scenes pictures, please visit the Florida Regional Web site's fall edition at <http://www.sgi-usa-florida.org>



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