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NYer of the Week

City At Peace - Diverse Group Of Teens Promotes Peace Through Performance

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With so much conflict going on in the world, some teenagers are trying to make sure tensions are eased here at home, and they're promoting peace through performance. NY1's Jennifer Rainville introduces us to our New Yorkers of the Week.

With only two weeks to go until opening night, every one of these teenagers is taking rehearsal time very seriously.

"We're not actors, we're not celebrities, and we're not making this up. This is stuff we live through, and we're just putting it in theater," says Miguel Reyes.

Almost two years ago, City at Peace, a national youth development program, brought the idea of peace through performance to New York City.

"I knew that it was a city that desperately needed it," says Elin Morgan. "I knew that it was a turning point kind of city, and I knew there could be lots of change made here."

The idea was to bring together teens from every borough, race, religion and background and begin taking the steps toward a city at peace.

"We went to schools, community centers, homeless shelters, anywhere where young people were, and we basically spread the word that we were doing it," says Paul Griffin. "Anyone who wanted to join had to come and do a small audition, although no one is chosen on the basis of talent."

Instead, they are chosen for their desire to make a difference. The teens begin their journey of self discovery and resolution by writing about their own experiences.

"You come here and you realize there are so many people like yourself, and just dealing with so many things, and you talk about everything - your life, what you're going through, what you've been going through - and then based upon that, that's what makes the show," says Olivia Salzano.

Then comes the dancing, singing, and acting - each piece filled with a personal touch.

But long before the show's debut, the teenagers say they're amazed at how much they've learned about themselves about others.

"We push away all the negativity and the stereotypes," says Manny Amill. "And we don't put people in boxes - we just let you be who you are and we accept you."

"When I came to City of Peace, I realized that there's many cultures and behaviors, and coming here is coming to a place I know that I'm one with everyone else," says Marlene Calderon.

As opening day nears, the teenagers adr they're surprised at how much they've accomplished, and are all the more excit to share their message with the world.

"Our ultimate goal is being united and knowing that we can do something as individuals and as the young adults that w are," says Reyes. "We can do something our community. We can make change for the world."

So, for their vision, and for trying to make a reality, the teens and leaders of City at Peace are our New Yorkers of the Week.

For more information about City at Peace for information on the upcoming performance, April 24-27, go to www.cpnational.org/ny or call (212) 924-9204.