

Hart High School “Peace Pole”

How to polarize people for peaceful reconciliation? How about a “peace pole”?

When William S. Hart High School, in Santa Clarita, CA. erupted into racialized brawls in May, 2006, the community vowed it would never happen again. The school’s proactive approach was so dynamic that it was named a Zerohour school by the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission. Administrators and students established a club to focus on community building, called ***Change of Hart***, and began campus-based activities which to foster a new campus culture.

The pole commemorates the community’s decision to celebrate these changes by placing it in the center of the high school’s campus. Doing so ushers the community into an international movement of peace building. More than 200,000 peace poles have been erected in 180 different countries around the world, in a variety of sites.

“The copper pole will tower ten feet over the campus, and will have four to six sides engraved with a written message, ‘May peace prevail on Earth,’ on each side. The message will be a permanent statement of the school’s commitment to recognizing the diversity of the school population,” says Greg Lee, the district’s diversity coordinator.

The pole will cost about \$2,000 and will be unveiled in the central courtyard of the school on September 11th. This is an expense that will be shared by the school and district as a whole, and it will hold the peace message in English, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Korean, Russian, Swahili, Arabic, Hebrew, Hindi and Shanouk, an American Indian language.

“The peace pole represents the community’s support and enthusiasm for the work that ***Change of Hart*** students began after the riots on their campus. It is a way for the community to reaffirm that this will never happen again,” comments Josh Parr, Senior Relations Human Relations consultant and liaison to the school.