

## **CAMS Peace RUNWAY March: Fashion Resistance to Militarism Fundraiser**

Saturday, September 29, 2007 at Art Share in Downtown Los Angeles

A Report by Arlene Inouye

The contrast couldn't be more striking- community parents, students and families piling into Art Share, a funky youth space in the Arts district of Los Angeles last Saturday night on September 29th. Later a yellow school bus rolled in from Lynwood High School, organized by Art Teacher Anna Christensen who took seriously the call to have her students design and make their own T Shirts for Peace. And in between the peace activists, teachers and organizers from across the city arrived a very long black limo. Designer Julia Gerard who was inspired to incorporate "peace" into her upscale outfits, opened a gallery and has dressed artists including Prince and his band, Tina Turner, Bob Dylan and Angelina Jolie. She brought a team of models including children to compliment our runway.

All came to support the **Coalition Against Militarism in our Schools Fashion Resistance to Militarism Fundraiser**, and to cheer on over 20 models who strutted fresh threads for peace while holding posters from "Yo What Ever Happened to Peace." This was a first time experience for almost all of the student models ranging from a middle school student to young adults and the Homegirls Cafe (assisting at-risk and former gang involved youth). But there was also the experienced including Jesse Reyna Jr., a designer in high school who is launching his "creatures from jessejr" line. We also were grateful for the adult CAMS designers who offered to help- Alice Powell and John McCabe and designers Alphonso Orozco, Melissa Garsen, EyeOne Seeking Heaven, Gabriel Lara -Adikt One, Jorge Ruano and graf artists Tommii Lim, Marco Zamora and Tomas Moreno. Music rocked the house as WilB and his son along with DJ's spun songs to this multigenerational crowd of three to four hundred. One thing was certain- the vibes were positive and strong, and you couldn't help but have fun, enjoy and affirm the youth as they didn't dress to impress but dressed to address, the militarism in our schools.

This event was also a first time learning experience for those of us on the CAMS organizing committee. Our hunch about what would not only draw in youth and their families, but really excite and empower them, became a reality. We had no idea that we would also find new allies and supporters - artists and designers, students, parents and organizational supporters that have broadened our reach. Though we were aware that the event was not designed to raise a lot of funds for our work to demilitarize schools and provide alternatives, we consciously chose to focus on the youth and their families. And we are expectant and are already receiving the benefits of this approach.

The night also had an educational focus on women in the military and the impact of women in war. The models walked the catwalk in outfits demonstrating women's roles including a military bride, entertainer in a bikini and woman warrior in transformed army ghee made by Eli Painted Crow, US Army from 1985-2005. The outfits were from the Women's Resource Center in Oakland, who inspired the event from their RUNWAY Peace Project. Veterans Maricela Guzman and April Fitzsimmons each shared about their personal experience in the military and what every girl should know about it.

The work of CAMS was also demonstrated through skits, and short DVD clips of our work including the leafleting team, Addicted to War Books to Schools Project, Project Great Futures and the Arlingtonwest film shown in school assemblies followed by speakers.

The program flowed, and despite the heat and cramped space, it was a memorable time. Parents have thanked us for giving their child an opportunity, and the students have been excitedly talking about it, calling for pictures, and dying to see the video that our multimedia director Gregory Sotir is putting together. They are asking us when the next Fashion RUNWAY for peace will be. We don't know, but one thing for sure, we need some recovery time! Thanks to everyone who supported us in this adventure.