

# HEADLINES

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THEATRE  
FOR  
LIVING

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## **Innovative Theatre Company Works with Students to Crack Open Bullying Issue onstage February 12 – 23 - Don't Say a Word**

The script is based on November workshops conducted at two Vancouver high schools. The actors are students. The language is uncensored. The material is real.

Headlines Theatre has a 22-year history creating forum theatre, a unique approach that erases the boundaries between stage and audience. Because it's interactive.

### **And get this: it's fun.**

Forum theatre is a blast. Instead of viewing passively, the audience watches a one-act play once, examining conflicts without resolutions. Then the play is performed again and audience members are invited onstage to put their ideas for resolving those conflicts into action. It's extremely engaging, and full of surprises.

### **Ever wonder what they're thinking?**

Understand where youth are coming from by watching their point of view unfold dramatically onstage. Participate with a lively, engaged audience of theatre-goers, activists, kids, parents, educators, and families, as they enter into active dialogue about this very important issue. Know that the factors that contribute to bullying are the responsibility of the community: we are all complicit.

Experience forum theatre, and put your ideas into action.

**Don't Say a Word**  
Interactive theatre about how not to get your ass kicked  
presented by Headlines Theatre, directed and joked by David Diamond  
February 12 –23

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## **The Project So Far**

Six short forum plays were created with 40 students during intensive workshops at Gladstone and Sir Charles Tupper Secondary Schools during November and December, 2002. Hundreds of high school youth then took part in the interactive performances, gamely jumping into the action to experiment with ideas for tackling the problem of violence in their halls. The atmosphere at the shows was electric.

## **What's Next**

Six student actors, chosen from the original 40 participants, and four apprentices in design, stage management, and crew will work with the professional Headlines team to create an original forum theatre play using the workshops as a starting point. February's public performances bring the experience to a broader community.

## **Students' Comments about the Workshops**

"In my lifetime, I've gotten into a lot of trouble and after this I can look at what's happened and see that it didn't make any sense at all. Watching these plays, you get to see how other people feel."

*- Grade 10 student*

"I think the diverse group of races, ages, and gender is what makes the experience powerful. You can step into this environment and see what everyone else feels. And I got to look at it through their eyes. This was the most worthwhile experience I've had in high school."

*- Grade 12 student*

"Our eyes were opened to bullying behavior that happens every day. A person can be a bully without realizing it."

- Grade 10 student

## A Word from the Vice Principal

“Our school community benefited tremendously during all stages of the workshop...Within the community as a whole, there has been a raised awareness of bullying, the many forms it can take, and the strategies to handle situations in which someone is bullied.”

- Don Odegaard, Vice Principal, Gladstone Secondary

## Press and People Talk about Headlines

“As an educator and researcher with over 20 years of experience investigating youth social development, I can assure you that this project (**Anti-Bullying Project, Don't Say a Word**) represents a novel and potentially significant approach to helping address bully-victim problems in our schools....I was privileged to view the anti-bullying play that Headlines Theatre completed (in 2001) in Richmond and was thoroughly impressed by the attention and the interest of the students, both on stage and in the audience. The effect was clear and it was powerful.”

Shelley Hymel, PhD  
Professor, Faculty of Education, UBC

“(Diamond) knows that there are, always, more questions than answers, and that real life drama is long on pain and short on simple heroes or villains. Headlines makes their difficult material dance. **Corporate U** offers an advanced course for the educated heart and an intelligent seminar on globalization in a single evening.”

Tom Sandborn, *The Globe and Mail*, Dec. 11, 2000

“They (the youth) are empowered, not passive; spontaneous, not scripted; subjects in their own right, not mere objects of another's actions. There are no pre-determined outcomes but endless surprises. Just like in real life. **Street Spirits** was an excellent example of a particular kind of interactive theatre. Encore!”

*Forte Magazine*, September 1999

“The Firehall Theatre rocked. Laughter, anger, frustration and sadness filled the place, and a generosity of spirit came from both sides of the stage...Personally, I have to figure out what I'm going to do about the **squeegee** kids at Main and Terminal, an

intersection I go through almost every day. There's no way I can look away, look embarrassed or fiddle with the radio. That corner will never be the same again."

*Jo Ledingham, Vancouver Courier, May 30, 1999*

"The empowering nature of **Squeegie** was clear. The street involved youth that developed the production were given a voice and a safe environment in which to express their experiences. As an agency dedicated to the increased education and general health of our children, it was a pleasure to be able to lend support to the project.

Thank you for your dedication and enthusiasm. It is inspiring."

*Michelle Fortin, Special Services Co-ordinator*

*Watari, May 31, 1999*