

A Messenger of Hope

Honor Respect

Hope

Using Power of Good

Leadership

Commitment

STORY

When Edward James Olmos wanted to deliver a strong anti-drug and anti-gang message to kids in the barrios in his film *American Me*, he went home to East Los Angeles. There he invited young gang members like George Sarabia and Gil Espinoza as extras and crewmembers. He hoped to demystify the glamour of gangs, while giving kids new skills and a way out of the gang world. Before he met Eddie, George had only one goal in life: to come back from prison a hero -- having earned his "stripes." He now shares his life-changing story with other young people, asking them to stop the violence. "We all have a choice. You can do whatever you want to do," George says. Then he pauses and adds, with quiet intensity, "Think about it. What you could do. What you could be."

ACTIONS

- Have students imagine they were George or Gil. Why did they join the gang? What were they searching for? What was their life like? What were the risks of leaving the gang? What kind of future did they have before and after working with Eddie?
- Create a list of ways to stop the cycle of violence. Create slogans to post in your school.
- Write a letter to your newspaper inviting adults to become role models for students -- and look for ways to give young people meaningful jobs and hope for their future

Language Arts

Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think kids join gangs? What do you think could be done so they don't?
2. If there were more people like Eddie Olmos, there would be less gangs? Why /why not?
3. What is a barrio? What is the culture of these people, their expectations for each other?
4. How can you be a messenger of hope for those in your life?

Lessons You Can Learn

1. Hope is the opportunity to see the future.
2. Caring adults are messengers of hope to young people.
3. Role models can set an example and show young people a different way of life.
4. Helping others can become a way of life, especially within our families.
5. Providing people with jobs gives them hope and an opportunity to change their lives.

Social Studies

- Clip and share newspaper articles about urban riots and violence in from 1960's-1990. Which cities have made the most progress in resolving the racial injustices and inequities?
- Watch TV footage on the LA riots in 1992. Explore why this happened. How can churches, schools, businesses work together to heal and prevent this tragedy in the future?
- Research various programs that have been successful in rehabilitating gang members.

Community Service

- Contact *Americanos: Latino Life in the United States* (Times Warner), *Lives In Hazard Educational Project*, U.S Dept. of Justice to learn how to create interracial dialogue that bridges America's racial divides to solve community problems.
- Reward students with the Stone Soup for the World badge of courage for service.

Edward James Olmos is featured on the *Stone Soup for the World* educational video.