

FROM THE BRONX TO THE BRITS: PPNYC TEENS TAKE LONDON



In the summer of 2002, two Teen Advocates from PPNYC's Bronx office and their staff supervisor went on an exciting trip to London for a conference on teenage pregnancy prevention. They were invited because England's public health minister had visited PPNYC's teen pregnancy prevention programs in 1999. The Teen Advocates compared notes with their English peers on sex education, strategized with public health minister Hazel Blears, and sipped tea at the House of Lords. Oh -- and they had a blast!



Anthony (third from left), public health minister Hazel Blears, Monica (first from right), with other teen participants in front of House of Lords.



An interview with Teen Advocates Monica and Anthony:

Q: What did you talk about with your English peers?



Monica (third from left), Anthony (fourth from left), and teen peers in the London Eye ferris wheel.

Monica: We talked mostly about sex education, myths about sex, self-esteem, and things like that.

Q: Where were they from?

Monica: Manchester, Sheffield, Devon -- all over. There were seven advocates from the United Kingdom and us.

Q: Did you find you had a lot or a little in common with teens in the U.K.?

Monica: We had a lot of things in common. We're their peers -- they might not understand what adults say but they understood us.

Anthony: Yeah, teens don't want to see numbers, they want to see reality. When we (PPNYC Teen Advocates) talk about sex and teenage pregnancy we're real -- we use skits, our newspaper "New Youth Connections," and sex trivia games. We answer questions. Otherwise people get bored.



Monica: And sometimes teens are too embarrassed to ask older people about myths, like the one about sticking your penis in lemon juice to check for STIs (laughter). So we had a lot in common.

Q: What reactions did you get from adults at the conference?

Anthony: They were mesmerized. They said they wanted to model some of their programs after the ones we have in New York, especially peer education.

Q: What was it like to have tea in the House of Lords?

Monica: It was like going to the White House. We went into a humongous room and everything had a red carpet. The House of Commons has a green carpet. They served us little egg and cucumber sandwiches, jam, tea, and cream and scones.



Monica (first from left), Anthony (third from left), and other teens making a presentation at the conference.

Q: What did you talk about with Minister Hazel Blears* and Baroness Doreen Massey?

Monica: We talked about our programs, like Teen Advocates and the Sisters Program. They mostly listened. Then Hazel Blears gave us and the other advocates certificates.



Anthony (first from right) and Monica (fourth from right) with fellow participants at headquarters of *Sneak*, a teen magazine.

Q: Is there anything you would change for future conferences on teen pregnancy?

Anthony: I think there should be more teens involved. Even though we met with other peer educators, we were the only teens to make presentations at the conference.

Q: Do you enjoy being a peer educator?

Anthony: I brag about it. Some guys are always like, "Do you have any condoms?" But I know the facts.



* Hazel Blears' full title is Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health.