

Alfred University's Napolitano, Elawad appear as guests on televised discussion of new film project
5/04/18

ROCHESTER, NY Dan Napolitano, assistant dean of the Alfred University School of Art and Design, and Alfred University alumna Mawia Elawad were guests on Thursday's televised discussion of a new film project that focuses on efforts to overcome youth violence in Rochester.

Discussion of the film, *Creating Hope Beyond the Front Row*, was the subject of a "Need to Know" news segment which aired Thursday on WXXI, Rochester's public television station. *Creating Hope* is a sequel to the 2015 film, *The Front Row*, which aimed to combat gang and youth violence in Rochester by emphasizing the consequences of action.

View Thursday's full Need to Know segment [here](#).

Beyond the Front Row focuses on helping youngsters recognize and reach their potential while realizing the importance of giving back to their communities. It is set to premier on May 10 at 7 p.m. at Rochester School of Arts. Both films were produced by The Front Row Coalition, a group of groups and agencies formed to look at ways to combat youth violence in the Greater Rochester area.

"It is a dynamic video about people growing up in the city who have struggled and overcome major obstacles to reach their goals and dreams," according to The Front Row Coalition website. "Their stories will encourage youth who are facing similar challenges to press on, get help, complete school, and reach beyond to a place of success a place where they can give back."

Napolitano is founder of Alfred University's Art Force 5, a program that uses community-based art to inspire discussion on topics of equality and social justice. Elawad graduated from Alfred University in December 2017 with degrees in communication studies and Spanish (global studies minor) and is former student leader of Art Force 5.

Established in 2006, the Art Force 5 program combines social justice with an art therapy approach. In addition to providing non-violence workshops, Art Force 5 specializes in creating community-built art. In 2016, Art Force 5 won the Unite Rochester Challenge, a grant to help the city address critical issues such as racism and poverty, and spent that summer partnering with city police and local youth centers to create a series of projects to engage the community in critical conversations. Last year, the group engaged in a statewide community art project that recognized the women's rights movement, and this summer will oversee a team of students from SUNY institutions conducting outreach in New York City neighborhoods.

Art Force 5 is a part of the Front Row coalition. Napolitano said the group took part in making *Creating Hope Beyond the Front Row* by "engaging youth in 'art, discussions, and creativity over conflict' workshops."

Napolitano and Elawad were joined on Thursday's WXXI discussion by Wayne Harris, retired deputy chief of the Rochester Police Department, and Dr. Michael Scharf, founding member of the Rochester Youth Violence Partnership.