



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **From Tragedy to Transformation: Tariq Khamisa Foundation Marks 30 Years of Teaching Forgiveness, Compassion, and Peace**

**San Diego, CA**

The Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF) will celebrate a major milestone with its *30th Anniversary Gala* on October 25, 2025, at The Country Club of Rancho Bernardo. The event, titled “TKF@30: A Legacy of Peace Gala,” will honor three decades of groundbreaking restorative justice work that has transformed lives, schools, and communities through compassion and forgiveness.

Since its founding, TKF has reached more than 2,000,000 youth, educators, parents, guardians, and community members, partnering with over 400 schools and 19 school districts across San Diego County to create safer, more compassionate learning environments grounded in empathy, accountability, and peacebuilding.

TKF was established in 1995 by Azim Khamisa after the tragic murder of his 20-year-old son, Tariq, while he was delivering pizzas. Choosing forgiveness over vengeance, Khamisa extended compassion to the family of the 14-year-old assailant and joined forces with his grandfather, Ples Felix, to launch a movement for peace. Together, they transformed personal loss into purpose, building a restorative model that has changed countless lives.

“Violence is a learned behavior. If you accept that as an axiom, nonviolence can also be a learned behavior, but you have to teach it. TKF has done that successfully for three decades, reaching more than two million students and proving that the tenets of nonviolence, accountability, empathy, compassion, forgiveness, and peacebuilding are teachable. Our youth are hungry for this information.”

- Azim N. Khamisa, Founder of TKF

The *Legacy of Peace Gala* will feature keynote remarks by Supervisor Monica Montgomery Steppe, with Mark and Hanna Gleiberman serving as honorary chairs. Kimberly Zink, Krystal Klemmer, and Klemmer & Associates Leadership Training will be honored for their partnership

in advancing TKF's mission. The evening will include musical performances by Michael Tiernan and Lee Coulter, hosted by Clint Bell, along with reflections from TKF mentors and community partners.

Among those sharing their stories is Veronica ("Vero") Hernandez, a TKF Lead Mentor whose life has come full circle through the program.

"TKF has truly shaped who I am today," said Hernandez. "As a middle schooler watching the Peace Assembly, I never imagined I'd have the opportunity to be a Lead Mentor helping others experience the same hope and healing. TKF taught me the importance of forgiveness, accountability, and peace. These values and the impact of the students I've worked with will continue to guide me throughout my journey of becoming an LMFT."

## **A True Story of Restorative Justice in Action**

Today, the story that began with loss has come full circle through Tony Hicks, the young man who took Tariq's life. After serving 24 years of a life sentence, his early release supported by the Khamisa family, Tony has rejoined the TKF mission as the organization's Community Impact Facilitator. In this new role, he plays a crucial part in advancing restorative education and outreach while pursuing a Restorative Justice Facilitation Certificate at the University of San Diego.

Reflecting on TKF's theory of change, the organization recognizes that the very interventions it provides today, mentoring, restorative circles, and peacemaking education, could have been the preventative measures that might have stopped Tony from pulling the trigger three decades ago. It is from this lived experience that TKF grounds its mission to teach forgiveness, build empathy, and expand its impact to ensure future generations have the tools to choose peace.

## **Scaling a National Model for Restorative Learning**

As TKF celebrates 30 years of transformation, it is launching the next phase of its Training Institute, focused on professional development and systemic change. The Institute offers a suite of evidence-based trainings, including *Developing a Restorative Mindset*, *Forgiveness and Healing*, and *Restorative Workshop Facilitator Training*, equipping school teams to teach TKF's restorative curriculum. Programs include *Restorative Circles Training* and *Parenting Workshop Facilitator Training*, empowering communities to extend these practices beyond the classroom and into the home.

Rooted in succession and sustainability, the Training Institute's expansion aims to empower universities, educators, community leaders, civil servants, and juvenile diversion professionals to implement TKF's Safe School Model at scale. By training those on the front lines, TKF is seeding peacebuilding across education and justice systems, ensuring that its message of accountability, empathy, and healing endures for generations to come.

Community members and sponsors are invited to join the celebration and support TKF's enduring mission. Donations, sponsorships, and tickets for the *Legacy of Peace Gala* are available at <https://tkf.networkforgood.com/events/82778-tkf-30-a-legacy-of-peace-gala> or by contacting [info@tkf.org](mailto:info@tkf.org). Join us in celebrating 30 years of compassion, forgiveness, and peacebuilding, and help empower the next generation to carry this legacy forward. Every contribution and ticket purchased directly supports TKF's programs that teach empathy, accountability, and hope.

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## About the Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF)

Founded in 1995 out of an extraordinary act of forgiveness, the Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF) is a San Diego-based nonprofit dedicated to creating safer schools and compassionate communities through restorative education. TKF's mission is to inspire accountability, empathy, forgiveness, and peace among youth, families, and educators.

For nearly three decades, TKF has been a national leader in restorative justice and peacebuilding, reaching more than two million students and adults through its acclaimed *Safe School Model*. Programs include mentorship, peace clubs, restorative circles, parent and educator workshops, and professional development through the TKF Training Institute.

TKF continues to transform lives by showing that while violence is learned, nonviolence and the courage to forgive can be taught. Learn more at [www.tkf.org](http://www.tkf.org).



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