

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

Celebrating civil rights milestones set in 1963, a pivotal year in the struggle for human freedom

SEEING PRIVILEGE

Teaching that shifts perspective

REGIONAL STEREOTYPES

We're not who you think we are

TITLE IX TURNS 40

Leveling more than the playing field

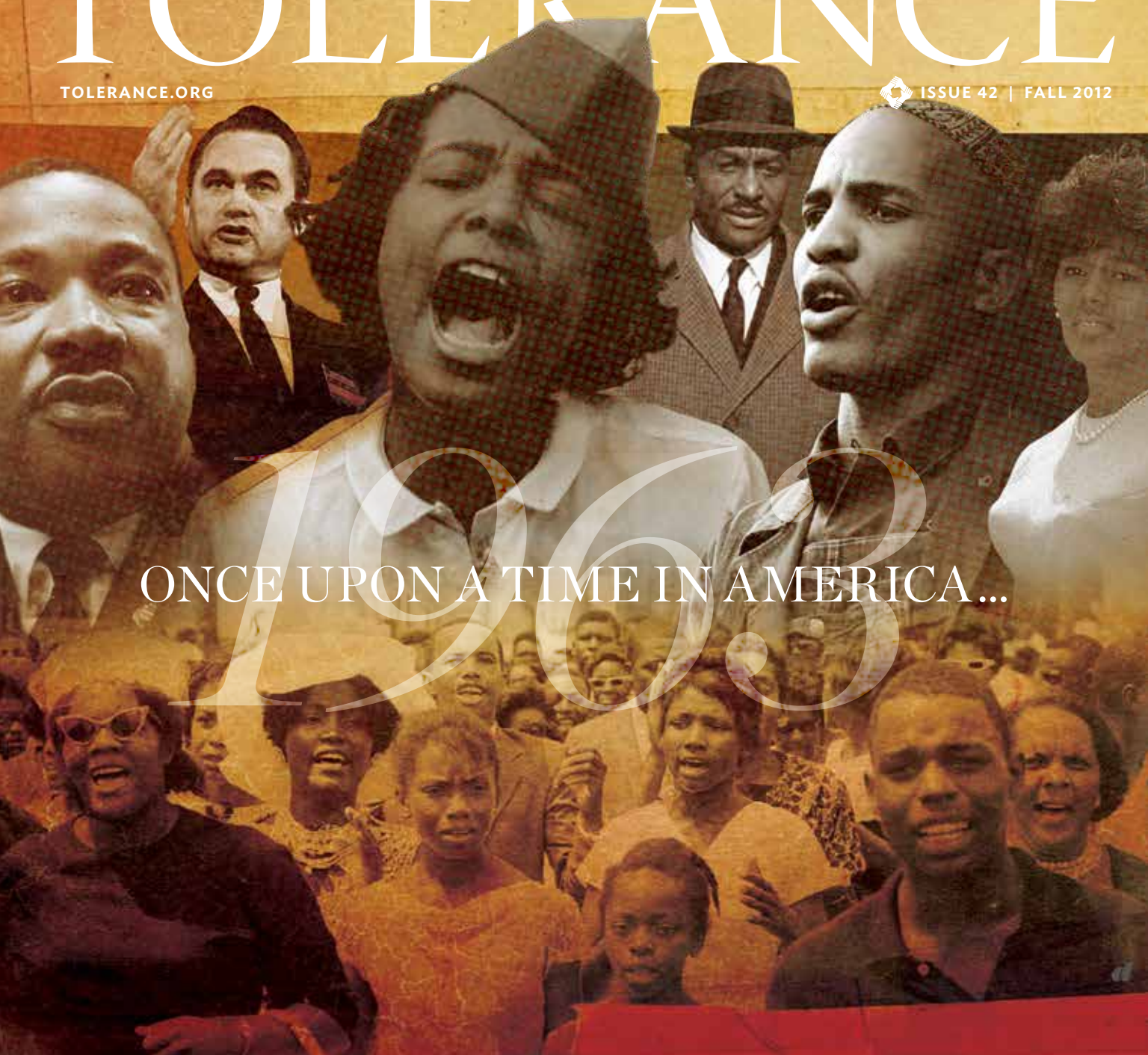
TEACHING TOLERANCE

TOLERANCE.ORG

ISSUE 42 | FALL 2012

ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA...

1963



FREE
TO TEACHERS

WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO

Introducing two guides from Teaching Tolerance that provide a 360-degree view of school-culture issues and provide direction for educators trying to build an inclusive, nurturing school climate.



SPEAK UP AT SCHOOL

How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes


Speak Up at School gives educators the tools to help students and themselves turn from bystanders to upstanders and explains how to respond to biased remarks from peers, parents or even administrators.

tolerance.org/speak-up-at-school

LEARN HOW TO RESPOND TO BIASED REMARKS FROM

- PEERS
- PARENTS
- ADMINISTRATORS

IMPROVE YOUR SCHOOL'S CLIMATE?



RESPONDING TO HATE AND BIAS AT SCHOOL

“Many of the questions we receive are from educators seeking advice about how to respond when someone—a student, a colleague, even a parent—uses biased language or stereotypes in school.”

Maureen Costello,
Director of Teaching Tolerance

RESEARCH-BASED STRATEGIES FOR

- REDUCING BULLYING
- CREATING A WELCOMING SCHOOL CLIMATE
- PROMOTING SCHOOL-WIDE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Responding to Hate and Bias shows educators how to respond to a hate-related incident in their schools or communities and guides them through crisis management and post-crisis efforts at improvement.

tolerance.org/hate-and-bias

Download *SPEAK UP and RESPONDING TO HATE AND BIAS AT SCHOOL* Today!
tolerance.org/publications



TEACHING TOLERANCE

ISSUE 42 | FALL 2012

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ACTIVITY EXCHANGE
 Challenge your students with these lessons on diversity. (see page 17)

NEED LESSON PLANS?

Teaching Tolerance has hundreds of anti-bias lesson plans online—and they're FREE.



DIFFERENT COLORS OF BEAUTY

Six creative lessons to help students develop their racial or ethnic identities in a nurturing classroom environment. (PreK-5)

- ▶ self-portraits
- ▶ literary criticism
- ▶ interviews
- ▶ poetry
- ▶ reflection

CHECK OUT ALL
OUR NEW SERIES

FREE ONLINE

tolerance.org/activity/series



TEACHING TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

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Perspectives

“Always give a word or sign of salute when meeting or passing a friend, or even a stranger, if in a lonely place.”

—TECUMSEH



I WRITE THIS a few days after the horrific shooting at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin, yet another of the all-too-common tragedies that remind us of the terrible virulence of hate.

We responded by urging educators to honor the victims by learning more about their beliefs. Because that’s the principle Teaching Tolerance is founded on: the idea that learning about others—and understanding their struggles—helps loosen our apprehension and lessen our propensity to see them as alien or inferior.

This issue features a range of stories that twine around this essential theme. The cover story looks back to the struggles of the civil rights movement in 1963. Other stories provide strategies to confront the obstacles students face because of race, gender, ability, LGBT status and poverty. These are perennial topics because fear is a hardy weed.

You’ll also see a story that’s a little different, one that invites you to consider stereotypes that, to most folks, don’t seem all that harmful. These are the labels we bestow upon people based on where they hail from here in the United States. You’ll recognize them from TV: the flakey Californian, the aggressive New Yorker, the milquetoast Midwesterner.

They may seem superficial, but I’d argue that their easy acceptance creates a frame of mind all too willing to classify people and judge them accordingly.

And judging people based on these regional stereotypes hurts. I know.

When I was 10 years old, my family moved from Brooklyn to Staten Island, both boroughs of New York City. We joined a migratory flood launched by the Verrazano Narrows Bridge. Before the bridge, only ferries connected the island to other parts of the city, and the place was almost rural. With the opening of the bridge or, as it’s been called, “the guinea gangplank,” all that changed. That nickname—a reference to the fact that many of the Brooklyn migrants were Italian-American—was a mild form of the vitriol toward newcomers to which I quickly became familiar.

Within months, this particular ex-Brooklynite learned two things: not to admit to the half of her heritage from Italy and not to flinch when asked, “Are you a native?”

I worked—hard—on changing my accent, by learning how to talk like the Beatles. It worked, in that people couldn’t tell I was one of “them,” especially after I married a native. But even 40 years after the bridge was built, the distinction thrived. One of the last people I met on Staten Island, an engineer hired by the buyers to inspect the home my husband and I were selling, followed the introductions with the inevitable question, “So, are you a native?”

It’s long past time to recognize that none of us are “native.” We’re all coming, at least figuratively, from somewhere else—another ethnicity, religion, culture, race, ability, sexual orientation, set of experiences, point of view.

Here’s hoping that this issue helps you in your work to nurture students who reject provincialism, who welcome newcomers and who encounter the rich diversity of our world fearlessly.

—Maureen Costello

TEACHING TOLERANCE COMMUNITY



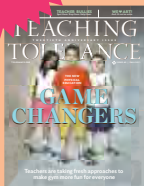
- I foster DIVERSITY in my classroom.
- I create an INCLUSIVE SPACE for my students.
- I teach about SOCIAL JUSTICE.
- I believe in EQUITY.

Sound like you?

Want to meet other educators who feel the same way?

Join the Teaching Tolerance community for thought-provoking news, conversation and support from educators who care about diversity, equal opportunity and respect for differences in schools.

**FREE
TO TEACHERS**



TEACHING TOLERANCE MAGAZINE

Read about current social justice issues, see which anti-bias lessons are working best for your peers and get the scoop on books fresh from the publisher.



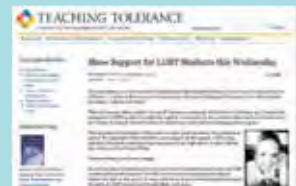
FACEBOOK

Add your voice to the conversation—share ideas, comment on breaking news and let us know what you're doing to teach tolerance in your school.



NEWSLETTER

Stay up-to-date on anti-bias education. Sign up and we'll email you weekly updates on resources, events and news.

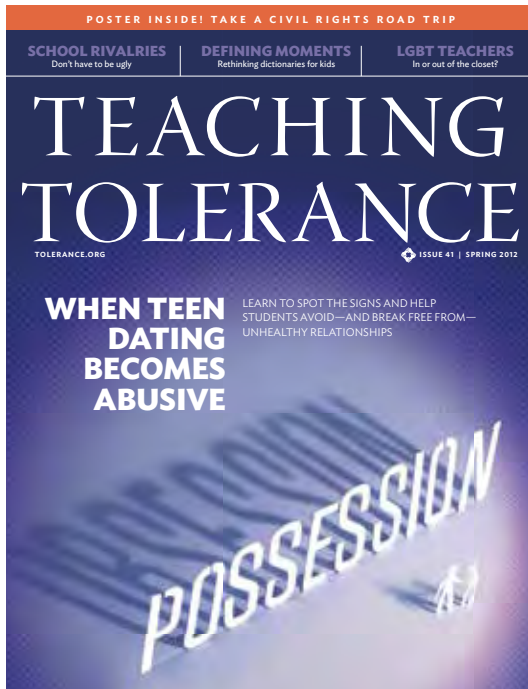


BLOG

Read and discuss other educators' real-world experiences.

FIRST BELL

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THE HALL 13 LESSONS LEARNED 14 TELL IT TO THE PRESIDENT 15



Reader Exchange

“Possession Obsession” inspired this conversation online.

I would hope a parent would teach their child these things. I would not leave these topics up to the school.

—SUBMITTED BY TRACIE CINQUEGRANA WARREN

My daughter volunteered with Safe Harbor when she was in high school. The organization has a program that goes into local schools and talks about dating violence. It used to be called the Megan Project. Megan was shot and killed by her boyfriend in 1997 as she sat on the life-guard stand at a local neighborhood pool. He then killed himself. This was during the day in front of about 30 or so people, including children. She had recently broken up with him. It is a bigger issue than people realize, and it has been going on for a long time.

—SUBMITTED BY DARLYE HERT

Our last issue once again sparked a lively response, particularly to “Class Outing,” an article that explored the fragile gains in acceptance of LGBT educators. Many of you emphasized that sexual orientation has nothing to do with an aptitude for teaching and that gay students need role models too.

Teaching Tolerance addresses real-world issues with intelligent discussions, provides useful resources and personalizes contemporary problems around tolerance. It is a great resource for parents, kids and teachers.

SUE ELLEN CHRISTIAN

‘COMING OUT’ TOUGH FOR ALL SCHOOL STAFF

I just finished reading the “Class Outing” article. I

am an “out” lesbian, however, I am not a teacher. I am an education support professional (ESP), perhaps better known as a classified employee. If you think coming out as a teacher is hard, try doing it as an ESP. We average about a third of the legal protections and earn significantly less, so we are even more vulnerable. And even more invisible.

JOLENE TRIPP
Redlands, Calif.

TIMELY STORY ON TEEN VIOLENCE

Thank you for making teen-dating violence a cover story in your magazine. As a violence prevention coordinator for a domestic violence center for the past 13 years, it is nice to see how many places teen-dating violence is being addressed. Your article was well written and provided access to support information. These are always important to see in articles on this topic. Thank

you for your great work all around and including this issue in the magazine!

JENNIFER REY
Delray Beach, Fla.
 VIA EMAIL

“ROAD TRIP” FALLS SHORT

I was enjoying the prospects of the “Civil Rights Road Trip Post Card Activity” but was disappointed at the exclusion of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, especially as a person raised in Rock Hill, S.C. I went to school with the children of the Friendship Nine and was part of the first fully integrated class of South Carolina public school students. To overlook those states and the role they played in furthering civil rights, not just in the South but for the country as a whole, is a disservice to those who have worked for civil rights and to those who have benefitted from those efforts. If the story of struggle is left incomplete, those in South Carolina, Georgia and Florida are penalized with a lingering stigma that they did not or have not done anything of note. This, I feel, is increasingly



important in a time when popular culture continues to sell the American South as a land of uneducated people—hillbillies and red-necks—as opposed to the diverse cultural, social and economic region it is. The struggle continues for civil rights, a just society and to break stereotypes.

WILLIAM DANIEL
Denver, Colo.

“CHILDREN’S MARCH” MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

I have looked several times to see if *Mighty Times: The Children’s March* had been put on DVD yet, so finding out this year that it has been is totally awesome. I first used *The Children’s*

March at the 50th anniversary of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. I was new to teaching sixth grade and history. Your video was amazing. I learned so much and felt so proud of these children. Every year I can’t wait to show it to my next two classes of children, as well as the three other classes that borrow it. One year I had a lady in class who had been hosed down when she came south to visit family for the summer. Every year the children are amazed at what happened. And every year teachers fall in love with your video.

JOANNE WELLS
Eclectic, Ala.

Barbara Cavett Nagy
 Teaching Tolerance is a great resource for educators who believe in helping all students find success. I have been pleasantly surprised at the range of topics in the lesson plans.

Marcelle James
 Brave, gutsy and thoughtful. These people are dedicated to uplifting humanity.

Beau Weaver
 A tremendous tool for a tremendous problem.

Jamey Katherine Hardy
 The article about gay teachers really hit close to home. It’s too bad there are so many people who can’t look past another’s, especially a teacher’s, sexuality and see that we are STILL great teachers!



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!
 Have an opinion about something you see in *Teaching Tolerance* magazine or on our website? Email us at editor@tolerance.org. Please put “Letter to the Editor” in the subject line. Or mail a letter to 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104.

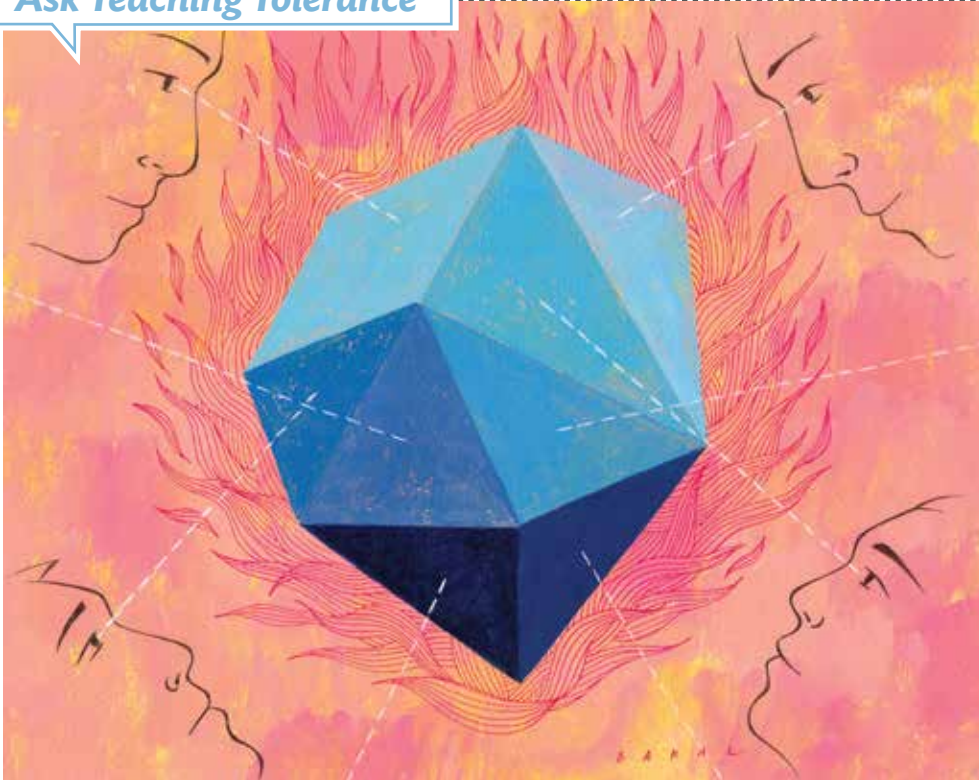


Becca Wertheim
 @Tolerance_org You know you’re meant to be a teacher when you’re a 20 year old who would rather read *Teaching Tolerance* magazine than *Cosmo*.

DID YOU KNOW?

1 in 10 children display gender non-conformity before age 11. On average, they are more likely to experience physical, psychological and sexual abuse and experience post-traumatic stress disorder by early adulthood. —PEDIATRICS

Ask Teaching Tolerance



Q You recommend that we teach about the undocumented, but I'm concerned about irate parents. How can we teach about controversial issues that have a political undercurrent without making them political?

Take a page from anti-evolutionists: Explain that you're teaching the controversy. Seriously, controversy about public policy is at the heart of living in a democratic society. Students need to learn about controversial issues. The ability to explore a topic or issue deeply and to understand other perspectives is essential, not only for citizenship, but also for college and career readiness. Your best strategy is to focus on the facts and promote discussion of all perspectives.

Your best defense is in the learning standards. Both the Common Core and all social studies standards call for students to identify different points of view and read deeply about current issues.

How can we introduce students to issues like poverty in a setting where some may be personally struggling with the problem and others may be blissfully unaware?

You've taken the first step: recognizing that this is a tough problem. The next

step is to examine your own beliefs about poverty and people living in poverty. It's important to recognize that poverty is a condition—sometimes temporary—and not an identity characteristic. The final step is to teach about the social forces that contribute to poverty, then to build empathy by looking at how poverty affects people's lived experiences.

During school spirit week, a teacher objected to the planned "Nerd Day." How can I support this

teacher to other colleagues and administrators?

Preachers and teachers often share the mission to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." Point out that when the purpose is to build spirit, it's self-defeating to do so by poking fun at people, especially unpopular or marginalized people. Whatever the proposed day, be it nerd, hillbilly, red-neck or ghetto (and we've heard about them all)—ask the question: Is this going to make someone who's probably already feeling excluded feel better or worse? Then decide.

I have colleagues who boast about being colorblind.

What do I say to them?

Let them know that no one likes to feel invisible or have their everyday reality denied. Ours is a society in which one's race—sadly—has a real impact on one's lived experience. Remind your colleagues that their race may be conferring privileges that others don't have, and that it's important to open their eyes to see how race affects our lived experiences. And reassure them: Recognizing race doesn't make them racist. Judging people based on their race is the problem.

ASK TEACHING TOLERANCE!

Need the kind of advice and expertise that only Teaching Tolerance can provide?

Email us at editor@tolerance.org with "Ask TT" in the subject line.

Will We Learn From Trayvon Martin's Death?

On Feb. 26, Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old African-American high school student, was fatally shot on his way home from the convenience store. He carried a package of Skittles and an iced tea. He had no weapon.

Evidence of misconduct has clouded the case: An officer told a witness her story was incorrect. Tapes of a 911 operator telling Zimmerman not to pursue Martin were withheld from the public.

We must ask ourselves: Why would police take the word of a man holding a pistol over the body of a boy? Why is 13-year-old Austin, an African-American neighbor, afraid he will be stereotyped by neighborhood watch members and police just as Martin was?

Some of these questions will be answered by investigators. Other questions—the deeper, more disturbing ones that ask about equality and intolerance—must be answered within our classrooms and our courtrooms ...

— Alice Pettway



... and readers replied:

“Powerful message here ... Trayvon’s death is indeed a sounding alarm that must be heeded—to prevent future tragedies and to permanently end the racism that incited his murder.”

“Tolerance would say that we need to look at the people and the situation without putting race into it automatically. I think it is a tragedy that the promise of this young man has ended too soon. I am not quick to assume it was a racially motivated incident.”

GET THE FULL DISCUSSION HERE

tolerance.org/blog/will-we-learn-trayvon-martin-s-death



DID YOU KNOW?

95% of all teens ages 12-17 are now online.
80% of them use social media sites.

—PEW RESEARCH CENTER



HAVE YOU SEEN OUR BLOG LATELY?

Check out some of the most talked-about blog posts. Go to tolerance.org and search for these headlines.



Families Come in All Shapes and Sizes



Writing the Powerless Out of History



Making Homelessness More than a Stereotype



Why Service is a Skill Worth Learning

FREE STUFF!

These web resources offer diversity-rich information and materials for teachers.

NoDumbQuestions.org is an online global network where anyone can use video, audio, photos or text to ask “dumb questions” and tell personal stories about LGBT experiences. The site has a helpful “Kids & School” section.

NoDumbQuestions.org

Teachers, students and parents can find a wide variety of high-quality educational materials at **EDSITEment**, a website of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Lesson plans cover subjects such as art and culture, foreign language, social studies and literature and language arts.

edsitement.neh.gov

One World Education provides free online teaching resources. Each year, it offers registered users 12 curriculum units based on “youth-written primary sources about personal experiences with culture, local and global issues.”

oneworldeducation.org/one-world-curriculum-overview

Visible Thinking, part of Harvard University’s Project Zero, offers helpful resources that boost students’ thinking skills and content knowledge. Numerous “thinking routines” guide students’ ideas on important topics across disciplines.

pzweb.harvard.edu/vt



Hammett is an associate professor of English at the College of the Mainland in Texas City, Texas.

When Everything Hangs on a Second Chance

“I WANTED TO tell you something,” the student said. “I’ve been in prison, and ...” I held up my hand for him to stop and then replied, “I don’t want to know why you’ve been there. Let’s move forward with a fresh start.”

It’s not uncommon for students in my developmental college English courses to have been in jail or in prison. However, I’ve discovered that I prefer not to know the reasons behind these legal problems. I just want to help these students improve their lives through education, and this is why I teach.

Developmental courses are filled

with students of various ages, from 18 year olds to senior citizens. They usually have one thing in common—scoring below college level on entrance exams. The challenges for first-year, developmental students are overwhelming. They are often insecure about attending college. Some have language barriers and many lack study skills.

Others tell stories of being single parents or caregivers for spouses and parents. There are students who are mentally and physically disabled as well as military veterans. There are also fresh-out-of-high school teenagers who feel

they don’t belong in developmental courses because they are recent graduates. It’s a motley crew of apprehensive students who need to bond to make it through the hectic semester.

In developmental classrooms, it’s normal to see adults with 3rd- or 4th-grade skills sitting next to 12th grade-level students. Many people cannot understand how these adults passed their high school exit exams and received diplomas when they clearly cannot read or write properly. Yet developmental classes are full of them. What is important is that none of them are pre-judged as illiterate or unteachable. By extending an extra lifeline, developmental teachers offer these students second, third or fourth chances in their lives and careers.

I suppose having “walked a mile in



SHARE YOUR STORY What motivates you to get up each morning and serve students in our nation’s schools? We want to hear from you. Send your submission for the “Why I Teach” column to editor@teachingtolerance.org.

“In developmental classrooms, it’s normal to see adults with 3rd- or 4th-grade skills sitting next to 12th grade-level students.”

their footsteps” helps when it comes to overlooking the backgrounds of developmental students. I, too, was an older adult student at the age of 30 when I returned to community college. My past was littered with mistakes—two failed marriages, child custody and support troubles, and numerous low-paying jobs. With a household full of children, my minimum wage job was not enough to sustain us. Yet I was scared to return to college for another try.

When I finally stepped back into the college classroom, no one questioned me about my past. As I juggled the roles of mother, wife, student and worker, I made it through the first semester by spending countless hours with tutors. Then, I finished a second semester. Suddenly, education was a golden opportunity to start over; it meant a new future.

I made excellent grades. My life changed. Education gave me the confidence to apply for scholarships, and it led to invitations from honor societies. This encouraged me to do better each semester and to set new goals. As I moved forward, I discovered friends with similar interests. Not once did they ask me about my past. They judged me solely on my accomplishments. Education gave me a new life.

After I graduated from a four-year university and got my first teaching job, I decided to pursue a master’s degree. I wanted to teach at a community college and give students with backgrounds similar to mine opportunities to better themselves. Every semester, I encounter people whose lives are in turmoil, and I tell them “education will change your goals and dreams.”

Many of these students contact me or return to visit 5 or 10 years later to tell me how education did make a difference. I don’t want to know why it took them so long to enroll in college. I just want to make sure they have all the chances they need to build a better future.

— Beth Hammett

Inspiration Knows No Gender

When the Dallas public school district decided to show its 5th graders *Red Tails*, an action-adventure film based on the Tuskegee, Ala., pilots who formed the country’s first black aerial combat unit, it was a tremendous idea. The district felt students would be inspired by the story of these men who fought segregation, integrated the Army and were trained as combat pilots for the United States during World War II.

But when district officials learned that the theater was too small to accommodate all the 5th graders, they made a dreadful decision to allow only boys to benefit from the inspiration the Tuskegee Airmen offer. The incident became an example of what holds us all back.

Inspiration comes in a variety of forms and speaks to us all in different ways. Making determinations along gender lines does not honor our unique interests and abilities; it only makes flawed assumptions. ...



... and readers replied:

“It’s infuriating how many forces seem to be trying to turn the clock backward for women: legislation to ban access to birth control; Arizona, banning Chicano studies, which of course, includes both genders. When it comes to civil rights, I guess we can never rest or consider a battle won.”

“Thank you for sharing this. The stories of the women who flew the big bombers across the United States and around the world during WWII is amazing as well ... The women not only flew aircraft to deliver them to the men, but flew them dragging targets across the skies for artillery target practice. In this day and age when women are serving in the military, making a decision like this for girls is truly backward—and does a huge disservice to our country as well.”

GET THE FULL DISCUSSION HERE

tolerance.org/blog/inspiration-knows-no-gender

DID YOU KNOW?

250,000 U.S. children are prosecuted, sentenced or incarcerated as adults each year in the United States. About 10,000 children are held in adult jails and prisons on any given night, two thirds of them while they are awaiting trial, despite high risk for sexual abuse and other harms.

—CAMPAIGN FOR YOUTH JUSTICE



Open the Door to a Safe Learning Environment

The first word counselor Torrye Reeves teaches her students each year is “advocate,” a role she fills for both students and staff. The educator who nominated Reeves calls her a “powerhouse” and says she “works tirelessly every day to make sure students are learning in a safe environment.” Reeves says her goals, like fostering cultural awareness and

respect, hinge on good communication accomplished through regular classroom visits and an open-door policy for her office.

Why did you become a counselor?

When grading a 3rd grade writing assignment, I came across a paper that read, “Ten years from now I will be living in my Section 8 home, collecting my weekly food stamps and hanging out in the club with my friends.” I realized this child was only

speaking of what she knew, and that it was up to me to show her the world had so much more to offer. I saw that I could better serve students as a school counselor. Thus began my journey.

How do you feel the role of a counselor has changed in the past 20 years?

While great things have occurred over the past 20 years, many negative things have also taken place. School counselors are recognized and held accountable as professionals in the mental health field. Along with that has come a great deal of responsibility. Many school counselors are faced with administrative duties and are being pulled away from what counts the most—working with students.

How would you rate your school’s efforts toward diversity? What is the counselor’s role in supporting that diversity?

I believe our school is on the right track in recognizing and appreciating the diversity of our population, but we haven’t tested our limits. I conduct an activity with my students in which I stand at the front of the class with another adult. I ask the students to identify differences between us. Their immediate answers are often about race or hair length—physical attributes. I point out that appearances can be deceiving. Sometimes students are unaware of my Native American heritage. It gives the class an opportunity to talk about less apparent diversity.

We interview your favorite administrators in each issue of Teaching Tolerance.

“Students and teachers learn from one another when we create an open and loving space.”



What drives your commitment to anti-bullying programs?

Our school has relatively few bullying problems, and I am enthusiastic about keeping it that way. I believe that all students should be able to learn in a safe and healthy environment. Students must see from their own point of view in order to truly learn from a situation or moment, so I conduct anti-bullying activities with students in their individual classrooms to address ethnic, racial and religious diversity.

How do you help students and staff become more understanding and respectful of differences in culture, religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation?

Constant reminders and open communication are key in raising a community of culturally aware and respectful students. I give teachers a 3R Card (Relax, Relate and Release) students can use to come see me when they need to cool down, get away from an issue or just talk. I also visit every classroom in my school at least once a month. It’s refreshing to see how many of the students and teachers learn from one another when we create an open and loving space.

What is the single greatest challenge at your school? How are you addressing it?

I believe the single greatest challenge in schools today is raising self-sufficient kids who are able to problem-solve and make wise decisions. I focus on giving

students the skills to use in times of difficulty and encourage them to follow through when a problem arises.

What’s the best way to keep parents involved in educating their children?

Communication, communication, communication! Keeping parents involved as active participants in their child’s academic and social/emotional lives is best. Our school has an eBlast and a Twitter page, and I send out quarterly bulletins about my classroom visits. Parents can also find helpful information on my web page.

What are your favorite books on social justice issues?

I absolutely *love, love, love* Patricia Polacco and Jacqueline Woodson. To name a couple: *The Junkyard Wonders* (Polacco) and *The Other Side* (Woodson).

We’ve heard you engage your students in creative ways. What’s the craziest stunt you’ve pulled?

This year for National Red Ribbon Week I transformed myself into Rock Star Ruby—the Red Ribbon Week Diva. Students are still trying to figure out if I am Rock Star Ruby. Of course, I will never tell.

DOWN THE HALL

Know an excellent administrator, librarian or counselor we should interview? Email us at editor@tolerance.org and put “Down the Hall” in the subject line.

Lessons Learned

Each week we post lessons to help you teach social justice. Activities are grade-specific and address a range of issues. Here are five of the most-visited in recent months. Find them at tolerance.org/activities.

Different Colors of Beauty: Looking Closely at Ourselves
(Early Grades)

Students explore skin color through self-portraits.

Different Colors of Beauty: Looking at Race and Racial Identity Through Critical Literacy in Children’s Books
(Early Grades)

Students develop an understanding of racial stereotypes by looking critically at literature.

Immigration Myths
(Middle and High School)

Students deconstruct common myths about immigrants and the process of immigration in 21st century America and then share their new knowledge.

Family Tapestry: My Family Rocks!
(Early Grades)

Students explore the definition of family, examine different types of family structures and consider what makes their own families unique through fun activities like a scavenger hunt and family portrait.

Issues of Poverty: What is Poverty?
(Middle and High School)

Students compare the government definition of poverty with the actual cost of living in their own communities. They come to see that someone can work fulltime and still live in poverty.

DID YOU KNOW?

1 million—The number of youth who start high school every year, but don’t make it to graduation.
—NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO

THE WINNER OF the 2012 presidential election will face huge challenges when it comes to education. We wanted educators—the real experts—to have their say on the issues they think are most important. So we asked our readers to tell this year’s candidates why students matter, what they need and how to improve schools. Here are a few of the responses.



REPEAL NCLB AND RESET PRIORITIES

I’ve been teaching for over 30 years. A student I taught in third grade now has a daughter in our school. He came to talk to my fourth graders. I recall that he had severe dyslexia. Reading, writing and math were all challenging for him, although he was one of the most compassionate children I’ve known. He would have had trouble passing the No Child Left Behind tests. He might have felt unworthy and perhaps might never have gained the confidence to do what he loves and excels at.

He is now in the Air Force, a medic, whose job is rescue. Among other things, he’s been to Afghanistan three times and helped after hurricanes. He showed the students a video clip of himself from the previous week, parachuting out of a helicopter to rescue an injured man on a boat in the ocean.

I want you to know how vital it is to treat children as individuals, each with a different mix of strengths, challenges, interests, family structures, home environments, resources and so on. The No Child Left Behind Law ignores all this,

aiming to judge every child in the United States by the same limited and limiting criteria. I urge you to repeal NCLB and help Americans value individual differences.

RUTH KROMAN GORRIN
Berkeley, Calif.

TIME TO PROTECT LGBT TEACHERS

Gay kids need role models like all kids. Some of the best role models for any kids are their teachers. Yet many of us teachers in America live in fear of losing our careers and livelihoods if we are found out to be gay. Being gay does not affect how a teacher teaches, nor is it discussed in the classroom. We need protection against being fired and our careers ruined for simply being who we are—which is what we tell our students they should be.

TERRI MORGAN
Atlanta, Ga.

LET’S HAVE A NEW CONVERSATION

Please reframe the conversation about teaching. It’s not about the unions, tenure, an inferior curriculum or standardized tests. It’s about poverty. It’s a truism in education that you show me a student’s zip code and I’ll tell you how she’ll do on a test. Why doesn’t



anyone talk about closing schools in Santa Monica or Shaker Heights? Do you really think the teachers in those communities are so much better than the ones in East Harlem?

Clean up our inner cities. Give students healthy meals. Make certain they live in good homes and have adequate health care. Give them books and quiet spaces to learn. Ask a teacher. We know.

NANCY LETTS
Cortlandt Manor, N.Y.

BE PROACTIVE, NOT REACTIVE

I have spent years as a teacher and counselor in elementary schools, junior highs and high schools. We put monies into career guidance and focus the funding and personnel in the upper grades when all of our research and experience tells us to be proactive and create change where it is most effective—in the lower grades. What a waste that later we spend it on prisons and drug rehab instead of saving those lives before they go off track. Instead of increasing the counselors for elementary schools to teach positive coping processes we wait until there is a problem and then try to fix it.

The biggest impact I have is on children in kindergarten through third grade. None of this is new so why are we still reactive instead of proactive?

TALANA FAWSON
Ogden, Utah

FUNDING CUTS A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

Students want desperately to complete their educations and start their careers, but they are unable to due to the dramatic decrease in funding to institutions of higher learning. As dean of English and Social and Behavioral Sciences at a community college, I know firsthand the struggles to keep up with increased demands coupled with decreased funding. It’s a recipe for disaster. Please consider the long-term costs that a lack of education and deficient job skills will create for our country. Undereducated and uninformed voters create apathetic citizenry. Idle youth spawn increased vandalism and crime. And desperate people move from productive citizenry to crime and jail. These potential outcomes are much more costly than giving our students the education they desire and deserve.

JANET CASTAÑOS
El Cajon, Calif.

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ACTIVITY EXCHANGE

THIS ISSUE'S ACTIVITIES WERE ALL SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE TEACHING TOLERANCE ADVISORY BOARD. HAVE YOU CREATED A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY YOU THINK WOULD BE PERFECT FOR TEACHING TOLERANCE? TO SEE [SUBMISSION GUIDELINES](#), GO TO TOLERANCE.ORG/BLOG/TEACH-SOCIAL-JUSTICE.

GRADES PRE-K-2

Memories: Can-Have-Are

Every year, I prepare to celebrate Grandparents Day by reading *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* with my class. The book, written by Mem Fox and illustrated by Julie Vivas, fosters inter-generational friendships and respect for others.

Prior to the lesson, I fill a brown paper bag with five items that hold special memories for me. I choose items that align to themes in the book:

Something warm
Something from long ago
Something that makes me cry
Something that makes me laugh
Something as precious as gold

To begin the lesson, I ask the students what a memory is. We start a Can-Have-Are chart for memories. For example, memories can make you happy, have a special feel-

ing and are different for everyone. After a short discussion, I present each item from my bag and tell about the memory it holds for me. I then introduce the book and read it aloud.

The story is about a little boy, Wilfrid, who lives next door to a retirement home and gets to know all of its residents. Wilfrid befriends 96-year-old Miss Nancy and tells her all his secrets. He later finds out that Miss Nancy has lost her memory, and he makes it his mission to help her find it. But first, Wilfrid has to figure out exactly what a memory is.

After reading the story, we go back to our Can-Have-Are chart and add more information. We continue to discuss memories, compare Wilfrid's and Miss Nancy's memories and talk about how or why Miss Nancy lost

hers. Then I give each student a brown paper bag like mine and directions to fill it with five of their own memory items. The next day, students bring their bags and share their memories. Then they write about their items and make a short illustrated book.

As a culminating activity, we invite grandparents or older family members to the classroom to share our books or we make arrangements to visit a local retirement home to create new memories.

Cameron Calland-Jones
COGBURN WOODS
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ALPHARETTA, GA.



For more activities with good suggestions on talking about families, visit tolerance.org/activity/family-tapestry.

ACTIVITY EXCHANGE

GRADES 1-5

Understanding Prejudice through Paper Plate Portraits

This lesson is most effective if students have already begun exploring social justice issues like racism or gender stereotypes. You will need one paper plate per student. First, review the meaning of the word *prejudice*, breaking down the word into its parts, “pre” and “judge.”

Begin brainstorming about the types of judgments people might make without getting to know someone. Ask, “What is something someone might think about you just from looking at you?” I usually model with an example about myself. Younger children often mention judgments based on gender, age, size or clothing. My students have said, “Some people might see I’m a girl and think my favorite color is pink,” and “People might think that just because

I’m a kid, I don’t know a lot.” Older students may mention stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, religion, class or sexual orientation. Chart students’ responses, writing the broader categories on the board, such as “gender” and “age.”

Explain that students will be reflecting on the difference between what others might assume about them and how they truly are on the inside. Students will draw their faces on the outside or “bump” of the plate. They will then write a few words or phrases that they think someone might assume about them. On the inside or “crater” of the plate, students color in a heart and write words or phrases that describe their character/personality—who they really are.

For example, I have seen boys write down

“rough” and “violent” on the outside of their plates and “gentle” and “loves stuffies” on the inside of their plates. One of my students wrote down “small,” “dumb” and “weak” on the outside of her plate, while she wrote down “strong,” “curious” and “loves sports” on the inside. When students are finished, give them time to participate in a short “gallery walk” to admire the collective work of the class. Then facilitate a discussion about the activity, asking such questions as:

What did you discover?

Were you surprised by anything?

Did you make any connections between your plate and a classmate’s?

How did this activity help you understand the

meaning of prejudice?

What can we do if we notice or experience prejudice?

How can we try to stop it from happening?

Creating these “paper plate portraits” is a powerful, concrete and hands-on learning activity that encourages students to reflect on prejudice. It also helps them see how multifaceted they are as individuals (thinking about their “outside” versus “inside” selves). The lesson helps students to better understand the complex, pervasive issues related to prejudice and stereotypes, revealing why it is important that we all challenge biased assumptions.

Vanessa D’Egidio
THE SCHOOL AT
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
NEW YORK, N.Y.



Read answers to common questions about prejudice before teaching this lesson at tolerance.org/publication/beyond-golden-rule/common-questions-about-youth-and-prejudice.

GRADES 6-8, 9-12

The Study of Racial Representation via Television Commercial Analysis

In my Latino/Latina literature class, my primary intent is to help my students see the inequities created in our society by pervasive racism and discrimination. This project asks that the students watch two hours of television, focusing only on the commercials. Collaboratively, we assess how often Latinos/Latinas (as well as other racial and ethnic groups) are onscreen, and if they are onscreen, in what type of roles they are portrayed.

I record one hour of major network morning programming (e.g.,

NBC's Today Show) and an hour of prime-time television to get a variety of commercials aimed at different demographics. As a class, we watch only the commercials. After each one, students chart the products being advertised, the (perceived) race and gender of the actors and their prominence in the commercials (e.g., in the foreground or background, speaking or non-speaking).

We replay the commercials as often as necessary to get accurate data. Ultimately, students tabulate the number of people in the commercials, group them by race, and create a bar graph to illustrate their findings. Additionally, the students reflect upon their research and answer these prompts:

What does your research generally tell you about Latinos/Latinas in TV commercials?

Check out some early-grade-level activities on media literacy and social justice at tolerance.org/activities/media-literacy-social-justice.

What are your thoughts about this?

Were you surprised by anything?

I ask the students to reflect upon what they have seen and read in class to come to a new understanding about racism on television as well as a new perspective about Latinos/Latinas and their place in American society.

Daniel Rubin
LAS CRUCES
HIGH SCHOOL
LAS CRUCES, N.M.



ACTIVITY EXCHANGE

GRADES 6-8, 9-12

What Is the Universal Language?

Students are often told they speak *incorrectly* or *use bad grammar*. Telling students of color in rural or urban areas that they speak “incorrectly” or “ghetto” can have a negative effect internally.

I give students in my class the opportunity to analyze their “home” language (the first language they learn at home). I do not make students feel bad for the way they speak; however, I give them opportunities to translate terms or phrases into Standard American English.

One of the most rewarding and entertaining activities I use to teach Standard American English is one that I call *What Is the Universal Language?*

Before beginning the activity, I play “Soldier” by Destiny’s Child. After listening to the song, I pose the question “Is there anything wrong with this song?” Students share their opinions as we chart their answers on the board. After a few minutes of discussion, I show the students three words: *translate*, *formal* and *informal*. I give them 15 seconds to reflect on the list of words. After the reflection, students get up and move to the words if they’ve ever heard them prior to this lesson. This gives me the opportunity to learn about their prior knowledge of these terms.

Once students are back in their seats, we view a

PowerPoint presentation that explains the difference between the “home language” and Standard American English. Following the presentation, students are grouped in teams to translate lyrics and phrases into Standard American English. After the groups translate the lyrics we discuss dialects and cultures within different regions of the state (e.g., the Gullah culture of South Carolina and Georgia). Additional activities allow students to understand and appreciate these differences:

- Summarize the U.S. Constitution for two audiences: A) urban youth; B)

American professionals.

- Translate hip-hop song lyrics into Standard American English.

- Write a commercial selling a product of your choice in Standard American English and African-American Language. Students perform their commercials; the class notes the differences and analyzes their effects on the audience and product being marketed.

Each of these activities concludes with students comparing language of a culture versus Standard American English. Students learn to appreciate language and understand the importance of mainstream language usage.

Tamika Shuler
HEYWARD GIBBES
MIDDLE SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, S.C.

Download Tamika’s PowerPoint presentation online at tolerance.org/Tamika-PowerPoint.



What Does Justice Require of Victim-Perpetrators?

A United Nations role-play brings to life the challenges of creating social justice and helps students learn to use opponents' statements to bolster their own arguments.

Background: Should child soldiers be prosecuted for war crimes? This essential question guides a unit on Catholic teaching on rights and responsibilities. Before the role-play, we read the Vatican human rights letter *Pacem in Terris* and compare the rights and responsibilities outlined with those in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Students understand that both documents support self-determination, family preservation and a truthful government. These documents also help hone students' compare/contrast and classification skills, and frame a discussion on how

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights is available online at un.org/en/documents/udhr

the conception of rights differs between church and state.

We also look at the legacy of African colonialism and read UNICEF documents on child soldiers—who they are, what they do and how they become involved in conflict.

The students read *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* by Ishmael Beah. The memoir allows us to ponder a more challenging question: What should be done with victim-perpetrators? Should we hold child soldiers accountable for war crimes if their rights were violated first?

Role-Play: The role-play helps students begin framing arguments for and against prosecuting child soldiers for war crimes. It also addresses an English standard—use another's argument to bolster your own argument. Students are randomly placed into six groups: UNICEF, the Vatican, former child soldiers, warlords, the

government of Sierra Leone and diamond traders. They are told to present a position to the United Nations supporting or rejecting a resolution to prosecute child soldiers for war crimes.

The groups take 45 minutes to prepare their argument using class materials. They are required to stay in character during both work time and the United Nations role-play. They are expected to anticipate the arguments of other groups, address other groups' shortcomings or work on ideas that support their group's position.

Each group has five minutes to make its case to the United Na-

tions. "Talks" follow, and groups mingle and form coalitions that might help them restate/reframe their resolution position.

During the role-play, students complete a handout outlining their argument, other groups' arguments and how they can either discredit other positions or use them to bolster their own. They integrate this information into a second round of five-minute presentations.

The result: A consistently engaging activity. Students actively participate, negotiate and present nuanced arguments.

Sarah McCann
CRISTO REY JESUIT
HIGH SCHOOL
MINNEAPOLIS,
MINN.



ACTIVITY EXCHANGE

GRADES 9-12

Teaching the Levees: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Community Problem Solving



“Teaching the Levees” is an instructional resource provided by Columbia University Teacher’s College to support democratic dialogue and civic engagement about the Hurricane Katrina disaster. The curriculum model provides opportunities for interdisciplinary instruction for community problem solving and social justice learning. In this activity, teachers use the following instructional framework to plan an exhibition emphasizing culturally responsive instruction across academic disciplines. This activity is designed to give students practice in cooperation and exchanging, identifying and refining ideas for a culminating unit of study.

Planning Process

1. Implementation

Overview—The students should clearly describe the problems the community is facing using a

process model to guide learning. Ensure the relevancy of topics and allow students to narrow the scope of the situation presented in the area of interest and the underlying problem. Thereafter, allow students to build consensus around a common project theme.

2. Prior skills and knowledge—Determine what students already know and what they will learn. Develop a series of essential questions to guide research and inquiry.

3. Resources Needed—Identify instructional materials and supplies needed for your project. Resources may include various types of research references, agencies contacted, field trips, interviews and speakers.

4. Develop an outline of responsibilities, including specific tasks and roles for team mem-

bers to foster a sense of shared responsibility.

5. Plan collaboratively to draft a list of cross-curricular activities for a culminating school-wide/community exhibition of student projects.

Sample list of interdisciplinary activities:

Science: 9th-grade Biology “Creating a DNA Database for Identification”

Language Arts: 11th-grade American Literature “Poetry Display of Katrina Victims”

Social Studies: 11th-grade U.S. History “Cultural Mapping the Katrina Diaspora Migration”

Foreign Language: 10th- through 12th-grade “Spanish Katrina News Broadcast”

Engineering: 10th-through 12th-grade Engineering Concepts “New Levee Design”

Extended learning: The problem-solving model deepens understanding about connecting students’ identities to world issues and creates work of value. The UNESCO community problem-solving module is recommended to scaffold instruction for extensive thematic projects. This process can be used as a framework to address community problem solving in a broader context. Recent disasters in Haiti and Japan are topics that can be considered as alternatives.

Cleopatra Warren
FREDERICK DOUGLASS
HIGH SCHOOL
ATLANTA, GA.

Download the “Teaching the Levees” Curriculum Toolkit. teachingthelevees.org

An illustration by Whitney Sherman showing the lower legs and feet of a woman in a blue dress with a scalloped hem and red high-heeled shoes. She is walking on a blue floor covered with numerous silver coins. The style is painterly with visible brushstrokes.

MANY AFFLUENT STUDENTS ARE OBLIVIOUS TO ISSUES OF RACE AND CLASS. HERE ARE TWO TEACHING STRATEGIES DESIGNED TO OPEN THEIR EYES.

CONFRONTING WHITE PRIVILEGE

BY **KATY SWALWELL** ILLUSTRATION BY **WHITNEY SHERMAN**

EVEN AS THE United States becomes more diverse, a new era of “white flight” is unfolding. Whether they live in urban, suburban or rural communities, white students are likely to attend schools that reinforce their perceptions of cultural dominance. The average white student attends a school where 77 percent of the student body is of their race. This racial segregation is often linked with economic segregation. As the gap between rich and poor widens, fewer than 7 percent of white children attend high-poverty schools.

In general, educational research tends to focus on the effects segregation patterns have on kids from low-income families or communities of color. However, not investigating the educational experiences of white, affluent students wrongly frames them as the successful norm to which others are compared.

For teachers working within homogeneous groups privileged by race and class, providing a critical multicultural education is of tremendous importance. A robust, diverse democracy depends not on self-interested, uncritical kids, but on young people who are willing to step outside of their comfort zones. To do that, students must understand how race and class influence their lives and want to work to make the world a better place.

But bringing multicultural education into racially uniform classrooms can be a daunting task. Parents and administrators may see no need for attention to inequality. They also may encourage teachers to superficially cover or celebrate “other” cultures in uncritical ways. Because the majority of public school teachers in the United States are themselves from similarly homogeneous communities of privilege, they may feel intimidated by or unprepared for this kind of work.

What specific strategies for engaging these students are most effective at raising awareness without also provoking guilt or anger? Data that I

collected while studying two teachers as part of a case study during a school year point to two different philosophies.

Bursting the Bubble

The first teacher in my study, Vernon Sloan, calls himself a “suburban missionary” intent upon “bursting the bubble” in which his students live. When asked to describe the reasoning behind his elective Urban History course, he explains, “There’s that artificial line that separates the poor from the affluent that the media presents us—this image of poverty being bad, and then the people are bad so we have to protect ourselves. ... You have to cross that line.”

Sloan has worked for 30 years at a public high school in a large suburb that is diversifying, but remains predominantly white and upper-middle class. One of the students described the community this way: “Everything here is so nice and kept clean, and it’s not like the rest of the world. The people that live here—they know what they want and try to keep out what they don’t want. ... It’s a nice place to grow up, but it’s not real.” All of the 14 students who participated in the study described themselves as living in a “bubble.” They acknowledged why the suburb might be desirable (“clean,” “safe”), yet they felt sheltered and wanted to be exposed to the “real world.”

Myth of Meritocracy

The belief that people receive wealth or income solely by virtue of hard work and talent, without considering privileges and access that others don’t have.

Sloan sought to give students some of that exposure, to “burst” (or at least “trouble”) their “bubble.” For example, Sloan is one of the few adults in their lives who has

talked explicitly about how his gender, race, class, language and sexual orientation grant him privilege. The naming of racism and classism was a theme throughout the course: Students located their families’ personal histories in relation to white flight, interviewed older people about racial memories and examined local housing policies. Sloan also encouraged them to critically discuss racism within their schools. For instance, he pointed out that the hallway where some newly arrived black students hung out was called “The Jungle.”

Sloan also described white ethnicity and explained the different histories of groups that “became white.” He got them to cross the border of their bubble by taking them on field trips to places outside their comfort zones and by supporting a student exchange with a school that has a homogeneous black population. Rather than focus on traditional academic assignments, Sloan’s elective course was rooted in getting students to share experiences and personal stories.

When asked to describe the course’s impact, one student said, “People like

What Works?

To burst the bubble and disturb the comfortable successfully, keep these do’s (and examples) in mind:

Do emphasize listening to multiple perspectives and voices of marginalized people. (Collect oral histories tied to racial issues.)

Do examine local residential patterns in relation to historical and contemporary forces. (Study maps based on census data to understand patterns of white flight.)



Mr. Sloan make [our suburb] not as much a bubble.” Other students said that they now saw their community with new eyes and expressed frustration that its racial isolation had been hidden from them. Some, however, expressed frustration with what they perceived as mixed messages of the course. They pointed out that while Sloan tried to show the humanity of people in low-income neighborhoods, he also warned students about violence and gangs. “I don’t know what he really wants,” said one student. “Maybe he doesn’t know.”

At times, Sloan’s approach seemed to reinforce and romanticize students’ stereotypes of an exotic “other.” By the end of the semester, the majority of the students advocated charity over addressing root problems. While presenting the world as either “inside” or “outside” the bubble (“Us” and “Them”) may fit the way these students view the suburbs, it does little to challenge how such ideas can limit their critical thinking. “Bursting the bubble” can thus be a powerful framework, as long as the bubble’s existence is, itself, examined and critiqued.

Disturbing the Comfortable

The second teacher in my study, Liz Johnson, has worked at her school for more than a decade. The school is an elite private academy located in the heart of a posh urban neighborhood. This academy has an explicit mission to prepare students to be justice-oriented citizens in a multicultural democracy—and charges upwards of \$25,000 a year to do so.

Twelve students from Johnson’s required Modern American History course participated in the study. None described their community as a bubble. Instead,

Do connect students’ experiences to the realities of injustice. (Identify and critically reflect on racial segregation within the school and community.)

Do solicit both cognitive and emotional responses to primary sources. (Assign art projects, poetry, short documentaries and traditional academic essays tied to those sources.)

Do offer opportunities for students to “re-network” their diverse privileges with people from marginalized groups. (Provide time for students to participate in community projects related to issues of injustice.)

“DISTURBING THE COMFORTABLE” CAN BE A VALUABLE FRAMEWORK FOR WORKING WITH PRIVILEGED STUDENTS WHO TYPICALLY HAVE BEEN TAUGHT TO FEEL AT EASE—LEARNING ABOUT INEQUALITIES CAN BE UNSETTLING.

they talked about how unsheltered they were compared with suburban counterparts and other elite students in the city. Despite the homogeneity of their student body, most of the white, upper-class students described themselves as cosmopolitans who are comfortable in any situation. “I feel like you’re exposed to a lot more in the city,” said one. “The suburbs are very sheltered. Almost everyone’s the same, which is very unfortunate.”

Rather than bursting bubbles, then, Johnson’s approach was to trouble her students’ sense of ease. “You can’t just target the oppressed,” she explains when asked why she chose to teach at this school. “I mean, I don’t think my kids are the oppressors, but they belong to the oppressor class, more or less.... The cages need to be rattled, and that’s what I’m doing. I have this motto: ‘Disturb the comfortable and comfort the disturbed.’”

This meant that Johnson focused much of her students’ attention on sources documenting historic and contemporary injustices. Students wrote essays, debated and participated in role-playing in order to examine their thinking. Throughout the semester, Johnson assigned readings and written work that demanded reflection from many perspectives.

These lessons were often connected to required social-action projects overseen by a team of teachers. Students

divided into groups to address social issues such as the drug war, LGBT rights or religious intolerance. They conducted research to learn more about their topics, then met with local leaders and participated in political activities, such as lobbying the state legislature or soliciting signatures for petitions. Homework assignments included reading manifestos on social action and conducting interviews with community activists.

Most of Johnson’s students showed great depth and breadth of knowledge about contemporary social issues. It was not unusual for them to think about and question their own positions on inequality, including a fascinating discussion on the lack of diversity at their own school.

However, some students focused less on their insights about inequality and more on how the course benefited them personally. When asked what he would take away from the semester, one student said, “Ms. Johnson’s class has taught me how powerful it is to speak without a script and how easy it can be when you just have the confidence to do it. It’s opened up a lot of opportunities to use that skill other places.” Another student said that the academy was the “right kind of segregated upper-class school” because “we know what the lower class is missing out on and what

we could help them gain if we, like, worked with them or something.”

“Disturbing the comfortable” can be a valuable framework for working with privileged students who typically have been taught to feel at ease—learning about inequalities can be unsettling. However, teachers should guard against over-emphasizing the need for merely intellectual opinions when they are not backed up by emotional responses. Also, teachers should avoid cultivating a sense of righteous exceptionalism that makes students feel even more comfortable.

Lessons Learned

These case studies show how race and class operate in different contexts. Students from a public school in a middle-class, majority-white suburb demonstrate significantly different thinking about themselves than do kids in a big city attending an expensive private school that serves a mostly upper-class white population. These differences affect how teachers should frame their approaches to multicultural education. Students who see themselves living in a bubble may need to have that bubble burst; students who are confident cosmopolitans may need to have their comfort disturbed.

This is not easy work. In both cases, the teachers’ good intentions did not always work out as planned. Even so, these approaches can be effective. It takes teachers and students willing to investigate more deeply the ways in which their communities are diverse and to question why homogeneity exists. Ultimately, teaching about diversity in places where there seems to be little of it can help students ask why the world is the way it is and, more important, how it can be better. ♦



Toolkit

Encourage students to find out how diverse their social circles really are.

VISIT >> tolerance.org/bursting-bubbles

Yoga IN Public Schools

More public schools are discovering yoga for kids can benefit classroom management—and learning.

BY LISA ANN WILLIAMSON
ILLUSTRATION BY JON REINFURT

TOO OFTEN, LEARNING in Chelsea A. Jackson's classroom was a struggle with cheerless chaos. Her 3rd graders at the Title I school in Atlanta struggled to pay attention, and bickering, fussing and general behavior problems frequently interrupted lessons. School-wide, it seemed classroom creativity was frowned upon, teachers felt defeated, and pressure to improve standardized test scores was squeezing the life out of students and teachers.

So Jackson took a chance. Personally, she had been turning to yoga to help manage stress, and had found that the practice improved her fitness, attitude and self-confidence. Why couldn't her students benefit in similar ways? She covered her classroom window with construction paper to reduce distractions. She showed her students how to focus on their breathing. She



demonstrated a few simple poses.

Jackson says the effects were better than she had hoped in the weeks that followed. Student attention spans increased. They were resolving their own conflicts. Lessons went more smoothly. She describes how, before standardized testing, her students would request a “few minutes for breath.” And it apparently paid off—though she did not teach to the test, she says her students’ scores were among

the school’s highest.

Classroom management has always been a challenge for most teachers. But what if student concentration could be augmented with several calming breaths and a chance to stretch desk-cramped young bodies? That is the question a growing number of schools are exploring by introducing yoga classes and practices into their buildings. And a limited—but growing—body of research indicates yoga for kids may

be an effective strategy for proactively managing classroom behavior and efficiently boosting student learning and performance.

An Ancient Practice

Yoga's history stretches back thousands of years, and its practice has roots in Hindu, Jain and Buddhist religious practices in India and East Asia. It has been described as a discipline for focusing and connecting mind, body and spirit, and has found adoptees among other religions as well as the non-religious. A secularized form that emphasizes fitness and stress-reduction is now well established in Western countries, and one can find a proliferation of yoga studios in most American cities. Studies prove yoga as a regular practice can help lower blood pressure, reduce heart disease, improve strength and balance, and deal with depression and other maladies of mental health.

Jackson is now pursuing her doctorate in education at Emory University, studying yoga integration in the classroom. She and other advocates of yoga for kids point to learning-specific benefits, including:

- ➔ fewer fights and arguments among students;
- ➔ better student decision-making;
- ➔ increased self-awareness and self-esteem;
- ➔ improved concentration and retention; and
- ➔ more efficient use of class time.

In other words, yoga offers a potential means to address a wide range of challenges in the classroom.

That has been the experience of Susan Solvang, executive director of K-12 Yoga in Milwaukee. Two years ago, the organization began a pilot program in Cass Street School, bringing in

lead and assistant instructors to conduct two classes a week with more than 350 K-8 students. The instructors taught mindful breathing and basic poses, but also modeled calm, respectful behavior. "Students started to be mindful," Solvang says. "They checked how loud they were speaking or if their tones were harsh in talking



to another student. We saw students changing reactive behavior to creative solutions."

After the first year, the results at Cass Street School were tabulated. Using the U.S. Department of Education's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, the team calculated disruptive incidents. In the year before the yoga program was introduced, there had been 225 classroom disruptions, 320 disorderly conducts and 150 fights. During the pilot program in 2010-2011, these metrics were all cut by more than half: 110 classroom disruptions, 40 disorderly conducts and 52 fights.

While broad-based evidence of

yoga's potential benefits for students awaits research on a larger scale, limited studies and anecdotal evidence continue to convince educators to give it a chance. And the relatively low cost can often be covered through grants or professional development budgets.

Overcoming Objections

However, school-based yoga is still met by resistance from some parents who believe its roots in Eastern religions mean it should have no place in public schools. Some devout Christians fear it could lead young minds toward other religious beliefs or mysticism. A few districts have banned yoga, as well as visualization practices or meditation instruction.

In some instances, instructors can address concerns by a yoga demonstration sans yogic nomenclature. (One program has removed all yoga references from its "Power Moves Kids Program for Public Schools.") But if families remain uncomfortable with the practice, they can have their kids sit out the program.

Still, people like Tara Guber, a yoga instructor with more than 25 years of experience, make it their mission to bring legitimacy to yoga in the classroom. In 2002, Guber set out to create a model in-school program, offering yoga three times a week at the Accelerated School in Los Angeles. According to Guber, teachers found that the best time to give an exam was immediately following yoga class, since sessions resulted in calm, relaxed—but focused—students.

Is yoga in the classroom worth the effort? Guber argues that a yoga practice—even once a week—helps students feel safe, show greater acceptance of others' differences and demonstrate better conflict management among themselves. All that adds up to more time and energy for teaching and learning. ♦

This 1972 law
was never just
about sports—
it radically
changed every-
thing about
education
for girls and
women.



BY **CARRIE KILMAN**
ILLUSTRATION BY **CELYN BRAZIER**



BEYOND THE PLAYING FIELD

WHEN KRISTEN GALLES was a 7th grader in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, she wanted to enroll in shop class. But there was a problem. At Harding Junior High School, only boys could do that. It's just how things were in 1976.

"When I was growing up, I didn't know a woman who was a lawyer or a doctor," Galles says now. Seeing females in those roles "... helps you see your own future and what you can become."

Galles recalls an era that might sound absurd to 7th graders today. It was a time when girls were discouraged from taking math and science classes, when quotas limited female college enrollment, when pregnant students weren't allowed to stay in school, when athletic opportunities for girls were almost nonexistent.

All that's changed thanks to Title IX, the federal statute that mandates gender equity in schools receiving federal funds. In the early 1990s, Galles became the first person to file—and successfully settle—a Title IX challenge against a high school. Today, Galles is one of the most outspoken Title IX legal advocates in the nation.

This year, Title IX turned 40. Galles recently joined more than 300 legal scholars, educators and historians in Ann Arbor, Mich., to honor the law's

milestones and to reflect on the challenges that lay ahead. As they look to the future, these experts paint a cautiously optimistic picture.

"Title IX has fundamentally changed the country," Galles says. "So much has changed that our progress just can't be stopped. But at the same time, there is a lot of work to do."

Classroom Successes

The year 1972 was marked by turbulence—the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, hotly debated issues like the death penalty and mandatory school busing. And yet, in a show of bipartisan support, Congress passed Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Its first, essential phrase reads:

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

Title IX's most visible effects—and most vocal opponents—have been in school athletics. In fact, although athletics aren't mentioned in the original statute, "Title IX" and "sports equity" have become all but synonymous.

Most people, however, are surprised to learn the law does so much more.

"Title IX is working every bit as hard in the classroom as it is on the athletic field," says Nancy Hogshead-Makar, law professor at Florida Coastal School of Law and 1984 Olympic gold-medalist. "The original goal was access to education for girls and women as broadly as you can imagine—as broadly as education goes."

Among other things, Title IX requires safe and accessible learning environments for both sexes, guarantees pregnant and parenting students equal educational opportunities, and requires that course offerings and career counseling not be limited by gender.

Today, thanks to Title IX, more female students are not only playing sports, they're also enrolling in math and science classes in record numbers, going to college and entering nontraditional careers. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, between 1999 and 2009, female college enrollment rose 40 percent; graduate enrollment rose 63 percent. Today, more than half of all medical and law students are women.

In recent years, the law itself has expanded. In two separate cases in the late 1990s, the Supreme Court ruled that teacher-on-student and student-on-student sexual harassment

violated Title IX. “Prior to that, many courts were dismissing these cases,” says Neena Chaudhry, senior counsel for the National Women’s Law Center.

Ellen Staurowsky, a Title IX legal scholar at Drexel University, co-chaired the Title IX at 35 Conference five years ago.

“So many myths arose in the ’70s about what would happen to boys and men as a result of Title IX—but those things never panned out,” Staurowsky says. “In reality, we’ve seen a dramatic shift in the way we envision opportunity for girls and women, and the destruction of men has not happened as a result.”

Future Challenges

Title IX, which is enforced by the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR), has faced a perpetual backlash—mostly from men’s athletic teams that have been reduced in scope by schools that claim they are trying to comply with the law. The arguments used against Title IX today echo those from 40 years ago: it sets up quotas, it harms men, it’s reverse discrimination.

“There is this idea that Title IX was passed 40 years ago and—ta-da! Here we are!” says Hogshead-Makar, who in 2007 co-authored *Equal Play: Title IX and Social Change*. In truth, she



“So many myths arose in the ’70s about what would happen to boys and men as a result of Title IX—but those things never panned out. In reality, we’ve seen a dramatic shift in the way we envision opportunity for girls and women, and the destruction of men has not happened as a result.”

says, it has been a slog to reach today’s improved atmosphere, and the efforts to weaken the law—or blame it for unpopular moves—have never stopped.

For example, in 2011, the University of Delaware men’s track team filed a discrimination complaint with the OCR after the school, claiming Title IX compliance, reduced the track program to club status. Critics have accused the university of simply cutting minor sports like men’s track in the name of Title IX to focus on more popular

sports, such as football and basketball.

And in 2006, Title IX regulations were relaxed to allow greater latitude for single-sex educational institutions. According to Susan Klein, education equity director for the Feminist Majority Foundation, the move was a “step backward” that merely serves to “reinforce stereotypes of what boys and girls supposedly are used to.”

The threat of court challenges and legislative setbacks isn’t likely to go away any time soon. But the biggest challenge

facing Title IX’s future is something far more fundamental: the lack of proper oversight and enforcement necessary to make sure schools follow the rules.

The law requires every school in the country to name a Title IX coordinator. Yet the job is frequently given to staff members who lack either the training or the authority to adequately enforce the regulations.

Students can face huge hurdles when proving Title IX complaints. For example, a child who is sexually harassed by a teacher must meet a higher standard of proof than an adult making a similar claim against an employer.

When complaints *are* filed, advocates worry OCR investigators too often complete “desk audits” and don’t visit schools in person before determining compliance. Schools can lose federal funding for violating Title IX but, in reality, that has never happened.

And there is little financial incentive to comply with the law. Monetary damages are not awarded in successful Title IX challenges, so it can be cost-effective for schools not to comply.

“We see schools that still don’t have non-discrimination policies, still don’t have grievance procedures—or if they do, no one knows how to do it,” says Galles. “We’re not going to get there until there are consequences for schools that don’t take the law seriously.”

Importance of Education

In 2052, when Title IX turns 80, Galles

PROTECTIONS UNDER TITLE IX

BY DARLENE KOENIG

thinks the headlines might read, “Have We Made It? Are We Finally At Equity?”

Today, she says, “we’re somewhere in between.”

During the next 40 years, Title IX’s two greatest allies may turn out to be educators who care and an engaged electorate.

Teachers are well-positioned to ensure their schools uphold the promise of Title IX—not only are they better equipped than students to compare school procedures against the law’s requirements, but the law also protects teachers from retaliation if they speak up.

“Teachers have to be willing to stand up and help these kids,” says Galles. “You can make sure your school is doing what it’s supposed to be doing, and you can make sure your students understand their rights.”

It’s important that the public recognizes those rights, too. “It’s just a statute,” reminds Hogshead-Makar. “We get one crazy Congress in there, and it’s gone. Unless the public understands what Title IX has done for us, it could be over.”

Hogshead-Makar likes to think that in 40 years the challenges to Title IX may seem as quaint as a boys-only shop class.

“It would be great if, as a society, it was taken as a given that of course we would treat boys and girls, men and women, equitably,” she says. “And that the law would be somewhat irrelevant.” ♦

Most people know that Title IX prevents discrimination toward girls and women in athletic programs that receive federal funds. But it also ensures gender equity in the following areas:

Access to Higher Education—Before Title IX, many colleges and universities refused to admit women. Those schools now must provide equal consideration to both sexes in admissions and financial aid.

Career and Technical Education—Title IX states that schools must treat male and female students equally in offering career and vocational education classes. Career and guidance counselors cannot discourage either sex from pursuing a career based on outdated ideas about what might be suitable.

Pregnancy and Parenting—Under the law, pregnant students cannot be barred from classes or school-sponsored activities. Although schools can set up separate programs designed specifically for pregnant and parenting students, they must be voluntary and offer opportunities equal to those in the regular school program.

Employment—Teachers and administrators at the primary, secondary and college levels are protected against sex discrimination in hiring, promotion and salary considerations.

Learning Environment—The law mandates that, in most cases, the learning environment be accessible and supportive to both sexes. Single-sex programs must follow specific guidelines that do not provide unequal educational opportunities or perpetuate stereotypes about the interests or abilities of either sex.

Math and Science—According to the law, girls and women must be allowed and encouraged to take upper-level math and science courses that can lead to high-skilled, higher-paying careers.

Sexual Harassment—Students are protected against sexual harassment by teachers, staff members and their fellow students through a set of grievance procedures.

Standardized Testing—Scores on standardized tests often are affected by the types of questions that are asked. Title IX requires that tests be designed and used in a way that is free of gender bias.

Technology—The law requires equal access to computers and other technology for both genders.

In addition, each school is required to have a trained Title IX Coordinator to enforce all aspects of the law.



MEETING MATHIEW

BY PAUL ROUD ILLUSTRATED BY KIM ROSEN



Students with hidden disabilities can be a handful. Fellow students dislike them. Teachers are wary. But these students need not be lost in the shuffle or ostracized. Educators, parents and the students themselves can—working together—change the attitudes and behaviors causing so much trouble.

THE TWO TEACHERS who asked for my help didn't mince words. They said that students were calling Mathew, the new 7th grader, "weird" and "obnoxious," even "disgusting." When pressed for details, they explained that he walked down the hallways with books piled high on his head. They said he picked his nose constantly, sometimes using both hands.

Other kids had already begun to isolate this new student. The boy also said things to students that seemed mean. To a student who had answered a question incorrectly, he yelled out, "Geez, you really are ignorant." To a heavy student he asked, "Exactly how much do you weigh?" Normally understanding teachers were losing their patience.

Even if you've never had a student like Mathew, you probably know what it's like to have a pupil who tests your tolerance. And the student who evokes a strong negative reaction in you is

likely stirring similar feelings in classmates. Mathew's situation demanded action. After getting support from the principal, Mathew's parents and most importantly Mathew, I decided to conduct a "disclosure meeting." Mathew's classmates would be informed that he was coping with Asperger's syndrome.

Asperger's syndrome is a hidden disability. Physically, individuals appear perfectly normal. Their cognitive intelligence is average or higher. Yet they have great difficulty interpreting everyday social cues such as facial expressions or body language. As a result, they often impinge on others. Typically, they stand too close, interrupt conversations and continue to speak whether or not anyone is interested.

The disclosure meeting was based on the belief that we could nurture the middle schoolers' innate compassion if we could help them to connect with Mathew's emotional pain. As a psychologist, I have long been intrigued by a phenomenon that psychotherapists experience all the time but rarely talk about: Therapists don't necessarily care about new patients who first walk into their office. Yet in nearly every situation, after the patient begins to talk about his or her deep suffering, something magical happens. The therapist quickly comes to care, and often times care a great deal, for this person. And it's not because therapists have a special capacity for caring. Self-help and 12-step groups are successful for precisely this reason.

But adolescents are famous for their self-centeredness. Were we hoping for too much from his classmates? Martha Snell, a professor of education at the University of Virginia, suggests that due to their stage of development, middle schoolers can barely help themselves from making fun of anyone who is different. She believes that those with disabilities are especially vulnerable.

However, my own experience with adolescents (and younger children as well) has shown that they tend to

demonstrate great compassion to a child who is blind, in a wheelchair or has cancer. Their reactions are most likely to be insensitive and even brutal when the disability (such as depression or anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, bipolar, Tourette's or Asperger's) is hidden and misunderstood.

The Disclosure Meeting

All of the adults present—Mathew's parents, four teachers, the adjustment counselor and principal—were aligned in our purpose: Elicit an empathic response from the students. We felt that we could do this best by focusing on a few key messages:

We Are All the Same: We All Have Challenges

After introducing ourselves to the class, I began:

Oftentimes, it is easy to think that we are very different from one another. That no one is like us. But the reality is that we are more similar than different. ... We all have our challenges. Some of you don't see that well and need glasses. Some of you have learning disabilities—it may be difficult to read or do math. Some of you have trouble focusing or even sitting still. Many conditions are easy to recognize—a person has an assistive listening device or is in a wheelchair. But there are other conditions where you can't see the person's challenge.

Mathew, who you all know, has courageously chosen to share with you today that his challenge is Asperger's syndrome. (Mathew had decided to come to the meeting, but sit in the back and remain quiet.) I continued:

One effect is that Mathew doesn't read social cues as well as most of you do. For example, it is harder for him to understand if someone is kidding or being sarcastic. This leaves him very vulnerable—a person with Asperger's might think someone is being nice when they are really making fun of him. It also means that you, all of you, as his classmates and decent human beings, have a responsibility not to take advantage of this vulnerability.

If You Think that a Student Could Benefit from a Disclosure Meeting ...

Speak with a professional at your school who is trained in the psychological well being of students. Lone teachers should not conduct disclosure meetings. There is the risk of traumatizing the student you are trying to help if he or she comes under attack by other students during the meeting or if more personal information is revealed than the student had agreed to disclose.

Before conducting a disclosure meeting, the only legal obligation of the school may be to attain parental permission. It is unethical, however, to conduct such a meeting without also attaining the student's informed consent. Informed consent means that the student really understands the essence of what will be disclosed and any possible risks. Though these risks are quite minimal with a skillfully conducted meeting, students should be apprised of them. When a student has special needs, informed consent can be a sensitive and subtle task requiring the skills of a psychological professional.

A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities is an excellent source to help students decide whether to disclose or not. Go to our online Toolkit for resources at tolerance.org/meeting-matthew



Connecting with Another's Emotional Pain Leads to Empathy

Mathew's mother was terrific at helping students feel what it was like to be Mathew:

My son is wonderful, but believe me, I also understand how difficult he can be. He interrupts; I don't know if he is listening; he stands too close. And there are times when he keeps talking when I just want him to keep quiet.

Her openness was a gift. His classmates didn't need to use their energy denying their own negative feelings—enabling

them to move on and make room for new feelings. She also spoke of her son's suffering:

I am sure many of you don't want to think what it would be like not to have any friends. Mathew has a lot of sadness that some other kids don't seem to like him. He is confused. He doesn't understand why no one wants to eat with him during lunch or sit with him on the bus.

Disability ≠ Inferior

Mathew's mother had a deep understanding of how her son, like anyone

with a disability, is much more than his disability. She went on:

What really frightens me is that these things might scare you off, that they will get in the way of seeing his terrific qualities. You've probably noticed that Mathew, like lots of people with Asperger's, is very smart and has an amazing memory. And it's as though he can't tell a lie or even a fib. So if you want to know the truth about something—"What do you think of my new haircut? How's my paper?"—he is going to tell it like it is. If you want someone who can

be a genuine friend, loyal and truthful, Mathew is your guy.

Risk vs. the Payoff

Despite our high hopes, we feared the meeting could backfire. Would the students use details of Mathew's disability to open their hearts, or could it become fodder for their jokes and derision? By appealing to their sense of decency, the principal let students know how wrong it would be to use this information against Mathew. He began:



I would like you to close your eyes and begin to think about whatever embarrasses you the most ... That thing that you can barely admit to yourself ... The thing about yourself that you hope no one notices, ever.

Now, if you can, imagine making the decision to have a meeting with your classmates so that everyone can talk about this thing that most embarrasses you. You decide to do it because you believe that it will be good for your own growth, good for your classmates and good for your school. Imagine the courage you would need to have to make this decision ... Now, please open your eyes.

I'm sure that I don't need to say how cowardly it would be for someone to use the information to give him a hard time. Thank you.

Students Respond

The principal finished up and immediately a large hulking boy

raised his hand. I held my breath. Just the week before, I had met with this boy because a couple of students had accused him of bullying. I feared that he might use this meeting as a high-profile opportunity to flex his muscles at Mathew's expense.

"I have something I need to say," the boy said. He then turned around to face Mathew. Mathew looked away. "I know I didn't treat you good. I was kind of mean. But I didn't know you had this." A tear rolled down the boy's face. Then to the amazement of everyone, he started to sob. Through his tears, the boy continued on, "I mean I am really, really sorry."

As the rest of us caught our breath after this boy's soulful expression of remorse, a girl yelled out, "I really love you, Mathew," adding as she looked around the room for confirmation, "We all love you."

Then a girl who was known for her conscientiousness asked for clarity:

So how do you generate positive feelings for the student whose behavior distracts the whole class from your carefully planned lesson? Can you really feel compassion for the boy who makes fun of other students?

While our feelings can seem beyond our control, there are steps you can take:

1. ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR FEELINGS.

The sooner you acknowledge your negative feelings, the sooner you can let them go. If the goal is to nurture the compassion of your students, you can begin by acting compassionately toward yourself. This means accepting yourself—feelings and all.

2. REMEMBER: IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU.

There are reasons the truly difficult student is acting the way he is. A student's challenging behavior—even when you are the focus—is not personal. For the student abused at home, you might be the symbol of authority that has mistreated him. The child who has become a prickly thorn in your side could be reeling from a family crisis—a raging custody battle

Helping the Unlikeable Student

It is difficult to admit—even to ourselves—that there are students we don't like. It's embarrassing: Aren't we supposed to have good feelings for all of our students? Ideally, yes, we would like all of our students. But we are real people, dealing in the real world with some very difficult students.

“Let’s say that I’m working in a small group with Mathew, and he goes on about something that doesn’t have anything to do with the topic. Do we just ignore him?” Mathew’s mother was quick to respond, “He wants to know when he is turning off people. You are doing him a favor when you tell him.”

The Impact Over Time

In the following weeks, I was in frequent contact with Mathew and his teachers. There were some obvious positive changes. He no longer ate alone in the cafeteria. There were no reports of exasperated teachers or kids making fun of him. His mother reported that he was developing a friendship with a classmate.

A year after the disclosure meeting, I met with Mathew and some of his teachers. Students always seem eager to guide a lost classmate in the right direction. The disclosure meeting

helped Mathew’s classmates recognize how lost he was in social situations. Now, they were taking satisfaction in helping him find his way.

If he was taking too much air time, a peer would tell him. If Mathew was publicly picking his nose, a classmate would let him know that he should stop. But now the students’ intention was to help rather than harass him. This enabled Mathew to stay open and consider whether he wanted to change his behavior.

Mathew made extraordinary changes in only a year. The student feedback was far more powerful and effective than any possible adult intervention. The speech therapist who was charged with helping him learn how to behave in social situations recently said there was no longer a need for her services. Although a diagnosis of Asperger’s doesn’t simply go away, a casual observer would

never pick up that there was anything unusual about this boy.

The changes to his peer community were no less profound. They had strengthened their connection to one another by establishing a new social norm: Acts of compassion were viewed as a sign of strength and character.

By embracing this quirky student, his classmates could all experience the safety of knowing that their environment was less judgmental and more accepting. His classmates seemed happier—bonded by the responsibility and freed by the safety that is created whenever people decide to take care of one another. ♦



Toolkit

Learn how to prepare yourself and your students for a disability disclosure.
VISIT >> tolerance.org/disability-disclosure

can leave a child without any solid ground under his feet. The anger spewing from your pupil might be the result of a parent getting fired and the financial meltdown that follows. Students’ stress is often compounded by directives from parents not to say a word to anyone.

There could be a hidden physiological or psychological explanation: A general anxiety disorder can make it impossible for anyone, even a conscientious student, to stay seated and attentive. The adolescent’s explosive outbursts that wreak havoc in your classroom may be the result of an emerging mental illness.

3. LEAN INTO YOUR AVERSION.

Try to make meaningful contact with the difficult student. Instead of sending her to the office, ask to speak after class. For these students, going to the office is business as usual, a conversation with a caring teacher is not.

4. LISTEN.

Students will often share their personal stories if you can listen without judgment. Listening is a gift to difficult students. When

they are able to accept this gift, it can make a real difference in your life and theirs.

5. CONSIDER THE CONTEXT OF THEIR LIVES.

As a committed teacher, you want your pupils to learn your subject. But sometimes mastery of a subject must be secondary. When a young person is alienating the most important people in her life, she is struggling with the very meaning of life. Her most basic need, like all of us, is to feel respected and loved. If you can offer this to a student who feels neither, you have fulfilled your responsibility as a teacher—and as a human being.

6. BE VIGILANT WITH THESE STUDENTS.

No matter how small the improvement, let them know you notice and that you respect their efforts.

7. APPRECIATE THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT OF YOUR KINDNESS.

You set the tone for your class. Students are much more likely to treat each other with respect and tolerance when the teacher is kind to all students—even those who are the most challenging.

Struggling in Suburbia

Many suburban schools are facing what for them is a new problem—poverty.

BY DAVID MCKAY WILSON



IN DENVER'S WESTERN suburbs, a social studies teacher thought up a novel approach to teaching her students the unsettling realities of urban homelessness. She assigned them the task of sleeping overnight in the backseat of the family car.

But the assignment held a surprise in store for the teacher—one that provides a glimpse into the reality of 21st-century poverty in America. The teacher did not realize that one of her students

was homeless. The girl had already spent many nights in her parents' car.

"These days in suburbia, you never know who you will have in your class," says Sheree Conyers, homeless liaison for the Jeffco Public Schools of Jefferson County, Colorado. "These are hard times. So many of our families are in transition."

A decade ago, the Jeffco Schools had just 59 homeless students in a district that serves about 86,000 students. By 2012, there were close to 3,000,

representing 3 percent of the district enrollments. At Parr Elementary School, 28 percent of the students were homeless, according to a 2012 report.

The increasing poverty in Jefferson County, where close to one in three students qualifies for free and reduced price lunch, reflects the explosion of poverty in suburbs nationwide. Throughout the 2000s, the suburbs were home to the largest and fastest-growing poor population in the nation, according to a 2011 analysis of U.S. Census data by the Brookings Institution. From 2000 to 2010, the report also says, poverty grew by 53 percent in the nation's suburbs.

This rapid change has left many educators behind. They are still teaching as if the suburbs have remained immune from the poverty that has long troubled urban areas, says M.J. Lechner, a University of Colorado-Denver professor who oversees seven student teachers at Parr. "Some teachers have been responsive [to the changes]," she says, "while others are still struggling to give up the notion that all kids are the same as they were 10 years ago."

A Poorly Defined Problem

The explosion in suburban poverty is part of a larger, more disturbing trend. Childhood poverty nationwide is at its highest point since 1993, with 16.5 million, or 22 percent of children ages 18 and under living in poor families, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. Race is still a factor. For African-American children, the poverty rate was 38 percent; for Latino children, it was 32 percent.

Being classified as "poor" means that a family of four earns no more than \$22,314. However, the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University estimates that families typically need twice that income to cover their basic needs. That looser definition puts 44 percent of American children in low-income families.

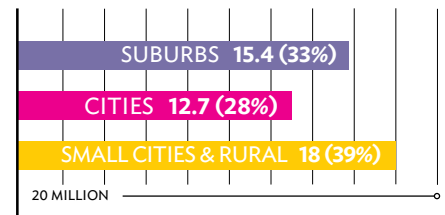
The growth in suburban poverty has had a major impact on suburban schools, like those near Denver.



Without the safety net of social services that city governments provide for the urban poor, suburban schools have had to scramble to set up programs that address basic needs, such as adequate food and clothing, for their students from low-income families.

The Jeffco district has established school-based food banks and an emergency fund for health needs, such as eyeglasses or medication. It also has held clothing drives at schools with large homeless populations. Schools feed students free or low-cost meals during the week, but not on the weekends. So 13 Jeffco schools have partnered with community sponsors and local food banks to provide food for the weekends.

WHERE DO PEOPLE IN POVERTY LIVE?



At Parr, school officials have even altered the curriculum to accommodate homeless students. But some teachers have not adjusted to the new reality. "If a student has neither the place nor the tools with which to complete tasks sent home, they are often reprimanded or punished by missing

recess,” Lechner says. “This makes our homeless population feel even more singled out and ostracized.”

Who Are the New Suburban Poor?

According to Scott Allard, an associate professor at the University of Chicago, the new suburban poor are a mix of old and new poverty. In more mature cities, like Chicago and New York, poverty has grown up around the inner-ring suburbs, where urban families have migrated from rundown city neighborhoods and the recession has deepened financial need. Many such communities experienced a spike in poverty during the economic downturn of the late 1980s.

The new suburban poverty, says Allard, has developed in the outer-ring suburbs, which underwent tremendous growth in the 1990s and 2000s. New

immigration patterns have brought immigrants directly to the suburbs as well, unlike previous waves of newcomers who first settled in urban areas. In addition, Allard says, these outer-ring suburbs were hit hard by the recession, and by the subprime mortgage bust, which has led to foreclosure on more than 6 million homes.

“It’s not unusual for immigrants now to go straight to the suburbs and become part of the working poor,” says Allard. “The changes in the suburbs have been significant.”

This means that the face of suburban poverty can be diverse. Impoverished immigrants may lack both language skills and job prospects. In addition, some who were once members of the suburban middle class have lost their jobs and their homes. A traditional view of America’s

underclass is that poverty is a cultural phenomenon that gets passed down from generation to generation. But the new suburban poverty, at least in part, comprises families descended from the middle class who find themselves suddenly poor.

How Educators Can Help

Teachers can help low-income students simply by knowing all their students better. A teacher who’s aware that a student is sleeping in a car—or just struggling to stay in her house—will be more sensitive about approaching topics like homelessness. Teachers can also help by confronting biased attitudes against low-income neighbors. Jokes about “rednecks,” “white trash” or dressing “ghetto” should be addressed as they come up in classrooms and hallways.

COMBATING THE “CULTURE OF POVERTY”

Educators grappling with the new poverty in the suburbs often turn to popular writers such as Charles Murray and Ruby Payne. They will find themselves misled.

According to *The New York Times*, “The libertarian writer Charles Murray has probably done more than any other contemporary thinker to keep alive the idea of a ‘culture of poverty,’ the theory that poor people are trapped by distorted norms and aspirations and not merely material deprivation.”

Murray reinforced that idea in his 2012 book, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010*. One of his long-held beliefs is that social programs make the problems of poverty worse, not better. But Murray’s libertarian beliefs leave him little room to do more than call for less government. “I don’t do solutions very well,” he says.

Payne, an educational consultant, has had a more direct impact on schools. Her work is rooted in a long-held view that much of American poverty is generational, with children growing up in families that have been mired in the underclass for two or more generations. Although her outlook is popular, critics argue that her characterizations are overly simplistic, even bigoted, and harm relations between teachers and students.

According to Payne, children whose families have been poor for generations tend to value relationships over achievement, believe in physical fighting to resolve conflicts, view the world through a strictly local lens and value food for its quantity rather than quality.

Low-income children run into problems, says Payne, because their schools are run on the hidden rules of the middle class. These rules hold that work and achievement are the driving forces for decision-making, that fights are conducted with words rather than fists, the world is defined in national terms, and food is valued for its quality rather than quantity.

Paul Gorski, an assistant professor of integrated studies at George Mason University, says that Payne’s approach—considered a “deficit” model because it focuses on what low-income children lack—doesn’t hold up. The increasing diversity of the poor in the suburbs, he says, makes such an approach even harder to justify. “The suburban poor are diverse, and becoming even more diverse, so the stereotypical version of the poor, urban person just doesn’t work anymore.”

Gorski says that educators need to move away from a focus on the “culture of poverty.” Instead, they should look at more structural issues, such as the lack of resources in some schools that teach the poorest children. Today, that includes suburban schools struggling to address the needs of a new wave of impoverished children.

“We talk about education being the great equalizer, yet our poorest students are in the least equipped schools,” he says. “We don’t need to fix poor people. We need to fix the system.”



SUBURBAN POVERTY INDEX



5 MILLION
number of suburban families added to poverty rolls since 2000



ONE THIRD
portion of the nation's poor who live in suburbs



2.7 MILLION
the number by which suburban families outnumber urban families living in poverty



Help with fees. Students who are suddenly impoverished usually avoid field trips and extracurricular activities that require fees. In some cases, they'll even misbehave right before a big event to be prohibited from going. Make sure teachers are on the lookout for this behavior, and make sure the school has a response. For example, see if the PTA can create a fund to keep these students from being marginalized.

Find out what's needed. Ask parents what's needed to help their children stay in school. Perhaps they need the library open late a few nights a week to have a place to go after school. Perhaps students need more computer access to complete assignments. Perhaps they need help with meals or transportation.

Provide services. After the problems have been identified, advocate for ways to address them.

Conyers, Jeffco's homeless liaison, says one of the simplest things educators and support staff can do is to simply remain alert. A student's sudden poverty is likely to show up in increased absences, exhaustion, mood changes, change in performance and an unkempt appearance.

Also, educators should understand that the families of these students now face the daunting task of navigating the labyrinthine social-service network—a disorienting and often embarrassing task. "These former middle-class families don't know how to apply for food stamps, they don't know where to begin," Conyers says. "There needs to be more hand-holding." ♦

But much of the most important work needs to take place at the administrative level. Here are some tips for school administrators who might be seeing widespread poverty at school for the first time:

Watch for changes of address. Families facing sudden poverty may move a lot. In many cases, the parents are understandably afraid their children will be forced out of a desirable school or district. This puts great stress on the

students—stress the school or district can ease in part by helping the parents understand their rights.

Work around the car culture. Gasoline and car maintenance can be huge expenses. Don't assume that parents can always shuttle their kids to and from school activities.

Become familiar with the McKinney-Vento Act. This federal law guarantees the rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness to a free and

appropriate public education. It requires a local homeless education liaison in every school district. It also ensures enrollment, access to services, school stability and academic support.



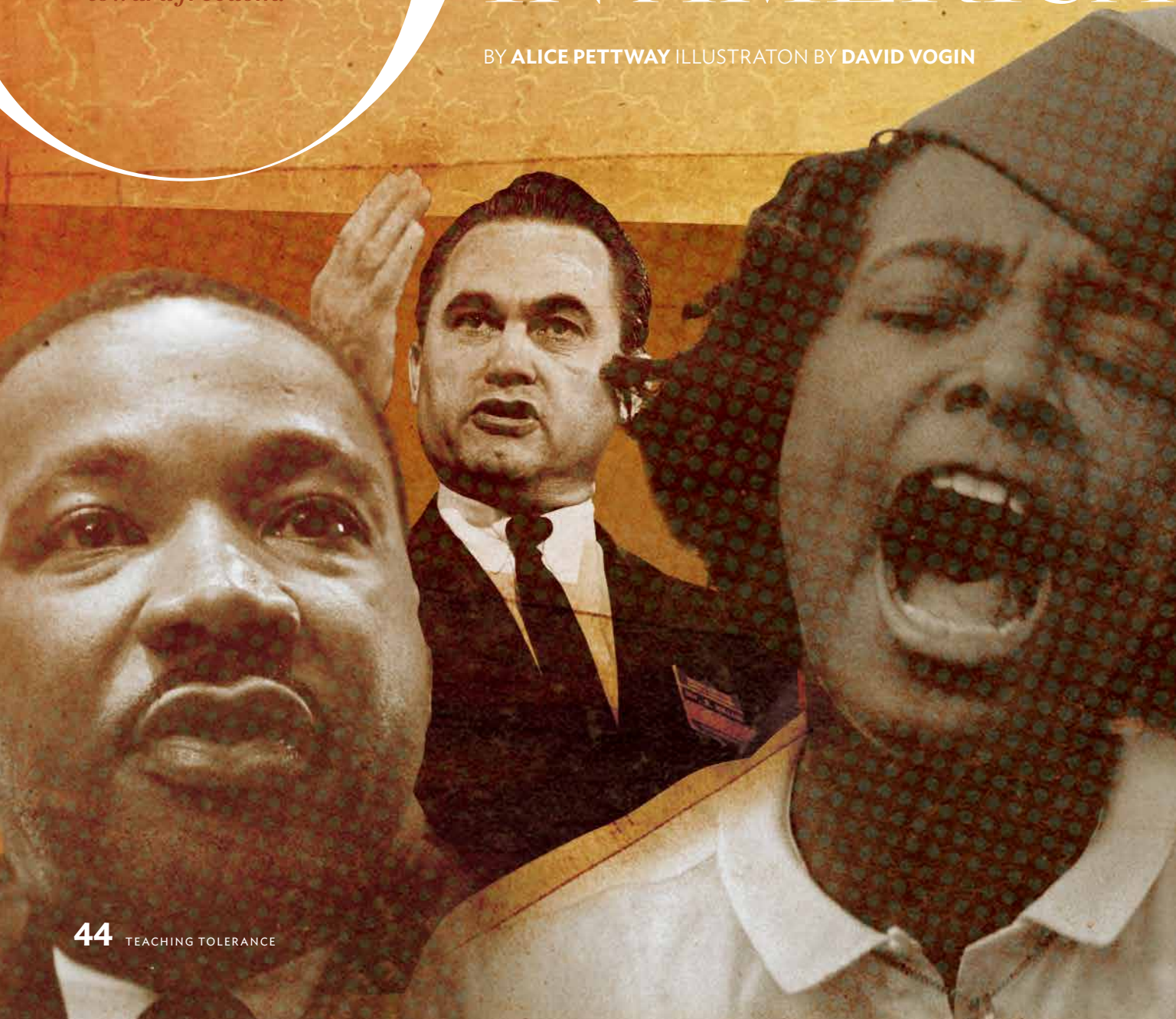
Toolkit

What assumptions do you hold about students and poverty in your area? Evaluate your district's response to the problem. VISIT» tolerance.org/make-a-plan

*Don't sugarcoat
history in teaching
the civil rights movement.
Students deserve the full
truth about both the racial
bias that caused it and
our hesitant steps
toward freedom.*

NCE UPON A IN AMERICA

BY ALICE PETTWAY ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID VOGIN



TIME

EVERYONE LOVES FAIRY tales—the easily identifiable villain, the flawless hero and, of course, the happily ever after. So it's not surprising that teachers of the civil rights movement often skip the more confusing or distasteful aspects of that era, such as the dissension among black leaders and the racism that was widespread then, even among moderate white Southerners. Fairy tales have a place in our culture, but when history's thorns are pruned until our past becomes just another story, we are doing a disservice to both our students and ourselves.

This school year we will mark the 50th anniversaries of many pivotal events in the civil rights movement. It would be easy to teach the familiar heroes and villains, but 1963 was messier than that. That year was a turning point in the movement—a period when civil rights leaders overcame differing viewpoints to conclude that small successes were no longer enough. If equal rights were to be attained, hard decisions had to be made—and acted upon.

The cast of 1963 includes the figures students already expect to see on the stage: Martin Luther King Jr., President John F. Kennedy and T. Eugene (Bull) Connor, the public safety commissioner in Birmingham, Ala. But there were many others. What of Fred Shuttlesworth? Medgar Evers? Bayard Rustin? A. Philip Randolph?



When you plan your curriculum this school year, invite these and other lesser-known figures into your classroom. Students will engage more fully with the civil rights movement when it is presented in all its complexity.

JANUARY Time for New Tactics

By the end of 1962, the stress of conducting small, simultaneous actions across the South had taken its toll on civil rights workers. Resources, both human and financial, were depleted, and there hadn't been a major victory since the Montgomery Bus Boycott of



1955-56. But when newly elected Gov. George Wallace of Alabama declared “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever” in January 1963, it was clear to civil rights leaders that a change in strategy was needed.



APRIL 3 Fred Shuttlesworth Invites Martin Luther King Jr. to Birmingham

Fred Shuttlesworth and other civil rights leaders made the strategic decision to consolidate their efforts in Birmingham, the most segregated city in the South. Shuttlesworth invited King to come from Atlanta and join them. Activists in Birmingham conducted daily mass demonstrations against white business owners and city officials who continued to enforce segregation. Many protesters, including King, were jailed.

King's *Letter From Birmingham Jail*, written on April 16, 1963, will be marked on every civil rights anniversary calendar this school year. But unless students read it in context, they will not see it for what it was—won't understand why King and others had come to believe that small, isolated victories would no longer suffice. The time for extreme action was at hand.

MAY 2 James Bevel Calls for a Children's Crusade

Perhaps the most extreme action a society can take is to purposefully put its children at risk. This is what one of King's aides, James Bevel, proposed: a children's march that would pit young students trained in nonviolent protest against Bull Connor's Birmingham police force.



The march began on May 2. Police confronted the young protesters, who were assaulted with fire hoses, attack dogs and tear gas. Steve Klein, communications director of the King Center, says that Connor “filled the jails with children.” Televised images of this brutality sparked international outrage.

Shocked by the violence, President Kennedy called for King to end the march. King agreed, but Bevel refused and pushed forward. Bevel's tactics worked. In June, Kennedy proposed



a comprehensive civil rights bill in order to avoid more brutality against the young protesters.

MAY 11 Vivian Malone and James Hood Enter the Schoolhouse Door

Every student knows that the schoolhouse door can loom large on the first day of classes. Imagine then, the fears facing Vivian Malone and James Hood as they sat in a car listening to Gov. Wallace's threats to block them from entering the University of Alabama. Imagine the moment of decision when they stepped from the car to be escorted past Wallace at the doorway of the university's Foster Auditorium. The students' escorts were National Guard soldiers—the same soldiers who had stopped them from entering the campus just hours before.

Despite these obstacles, both stu-



dents showed a great deal of courage as they walked in and paid their student fees. "I didn't feel I should sneak in," Malone said years later. "I didn't feel I should go around the back door. If [Wallace] were standing in the door, I had every right in the world to face him and to go to school."



Music in the Movement

When asked about the music of the movement, most people think of "We Shall Overcome." But there were many other songs, such as "I've Been 'Buked, and I've Been Scorned," performed by Mahalia Jackson during the March on Washington. Songs like this one gave voice to a passion that many in the South felt was not safe to express any other way.

I'VE BEEN 'BUKED AND I'VE BEEN SCORNE

I've been 'buked an' I've been scorned, children
I've been 'buked an' I've been scorned
I've been talked about, sho's you're born

Dere is trouble all over dis world
Children, dere is trouble all over dis world

Ain't gwine to lay my 'ligion down

Children, ain't gwine to lay my 'ligion down

DISCUSSION

Gospel music, and religion in general, played a key role in the civil rights movement. How do the lyrics of this traditional gospel song sung by Jackson at the march relate to the challenges faced by civil rights activists?

dered

JUNE 19 Civil Rights Bill introduced in Congress

AUGUST 28 the March on Washington

SEPTEMBER 10 Birmingham schools integrated

SEPTEMBER 15 the 16th Street Baptist Church bombed

NOVEMBER 22 President Kennedy assassinated



JUNE 12 Medgar Evers Killed by a White Supremacist

The civil rights movement did not spontaneously arise, full-blown. Activists had planned and nurtured it for a long time in their communities. Medgar Evers, for one, began tending the movement in Mound Bayou, Miss., as president of the Regional Council of Negro Leadership (RCNL). He later became the first field secretary for the NAACP.

Bit by bit, Evers cultivated community resistance against inequity. He made bumper stickers, led protests and investigated vigilante violence, such as the murder of Emmett Till.

As Evers' accomplishments grew, so did the determination of white supremacists to stop him. On the night of June 12, a member of the White Citizens' Council shot Evers in the back as he walked from his car to his home. The murder took place just hours after President Kennedy had given a powerful speech supporting civil rights.

Evers' death was but one violent act among many committed by segregationists who were set on stopping

Discussion

Why do images, particularly film, often have the power to move people to action?

TV viewers in 1963 were repulsed and angered by images of protesters being sprayed with water hoses and attacked by dogs. Do you think their reactions would have been less intense if the victims of police violence had not been children?

► FACT ◀

Television Moves the Nation

The Birmingham campaign caught the attention of more white Americans and non-Southerners than any campaign before it. Television viewers worldwide were outraged by Bull Connor's brutal use of fire hoses and attack dogs against students.

the movement. Community organizers acknowledged the danger, but continued to build the movement at the local level. In so doing, they ultimately overcame this violent opposition. Their individual courage made universal change possible.



AUGUST 28 Rustin and Randolph Realize Their March on Washington

Civil rights leaders had faced racial bigotry all their lives. But they had not necessarily been subject to other types of intolerance, and intolerance can be harder to recognize when you're not the target. Perhaps this accounts for some of their resistance to the activism of Bayard Rustin—an openly gay former member of the Communist Party.

In 1941, Rustin and A. Philip Randolph (an atheist and socialist) conceived the idea of a march on Washington to protest discrimination in the

U.S. armed forces. President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued the Fair Employment Act to appease them and, as a result, the idea was shelved.

More than 20 years later, Rustin and Randolph's plan for a march on Washington was revived. Civil rights leaders chose Rustin to be the chief detail man for organizing the march despite their fears that his homosexuality and political inclinations would be played up in the press by enemies of the movement. Those fears prompted the organizations involved to publicly ignore his contributions.

Rustin remained undaunted, throwing himself into his task. "The mood is one of anger and confidence of total victory," Rustin wrote. "One can only hope that the white community will realize that the black community means what it says: freedom now." A week after the march, *Life* magazine featured Rustin and Randolph on its cover as the organizers of the March on Washington.

None of these now-legendary events ended racial discrimination for good. "Happily ever after" isn't for history books. What we can say, though, is that the individuals behind these events made choices—incredibly difficult choices—and the ones they made advanced the cause of civil rights in crucial ways.

We still fight segregation. We still struggle against racial discrimination. But we have made progress; we even have an African-American president. When we teach our students the civil rights movement in all its gritty detail, we show them that they don't have to be Prince Charming to slay the dragon. We help them see that ordinary people can create extraordinary change. ♦

Toolkit

Download the text of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail," review lessons with video footage from 1963, and access ideas for teaching about the civil rights movement. VISIT ► tolerance.org/the-year-1963



Making Invisible Histories Visible

This innovative program helps at-risk students stay in school and builds community, both in school and out.

BY **ANA MARIA HANSSEN**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ROBERT ERVIN**

HANNAH PAREDES, 14, never thought that she'd fall in love with history by cleaning a grave. She didn't know much about Vietnam War heroes either, and the name Milton A. Ross was meaningless.

But it all came alive when she participated in the Omaha Public Schools' "Making Invisible Histories Visible" program, or MIHV. Omaha's schools have a low failure rate among 8th graders but a high one among high school freshmen. MIHV was created to help at-risk students "adjust to the increased demands of high school," says Emily Brush, the project's coordinator.

Hannah is one of the 9th graders who have taken part in this seven-day camp held every summer since 2010. By working alongside teachers and mentors, the program's 44 students bring history to life by discovering the hidden stories of North Omaha's African-American neighborhood. Students spend time there talking with people. They also work with archival material and collect oral histories. Their goal is to piece together the community's often invisible history.

Harris Payne, director of MIHV and supervisor of social studies for Omaha schools, says that one of the goals of the project is to create a powerful connection between the students and the subjects they are studying. The philosophy is "get the students outside and have them experience the world," Payne says. "That's a very



powerful teaching moment that the students will not likely forget."

A Neglected Hero

During her research, Hannah learned that Milton A. Ross was a decorated African-American soldier who died in Vietnam. Hannah and her teammates also discovered that this war hero's grave was overgrown

Hannah Paredes at the cemetery where Milton Ross is buried.

and unintended, a situation that they rectified with some garden tools and flowers. “MIHV made history come alive—it’s no longer just a boring textbook,” she says. “And it was kind of a wake-up call for me to do better in school.”

Having at-risk students experience history first-hand is the key to increasing motivation and the reason for creating the program. Students involved achieved a statistically significant improvement in their knowledge of history and their abil-

► QUIZ ◀ Local history is

- nearby
- personal
- not in your textbook
- all of the above

ity to research using my community as a tool for learning.”

The students created a digital archive of their work (ops.org/invisible-history) that is broken into 16 wide-ranging topics including civil rights, music, sports, work and church. Part of the idea behind MIHV was to close a gap in local African-American history, says Payne. “We live in a multicultural country, and we wanted the kids to see themselves in what they learn.”

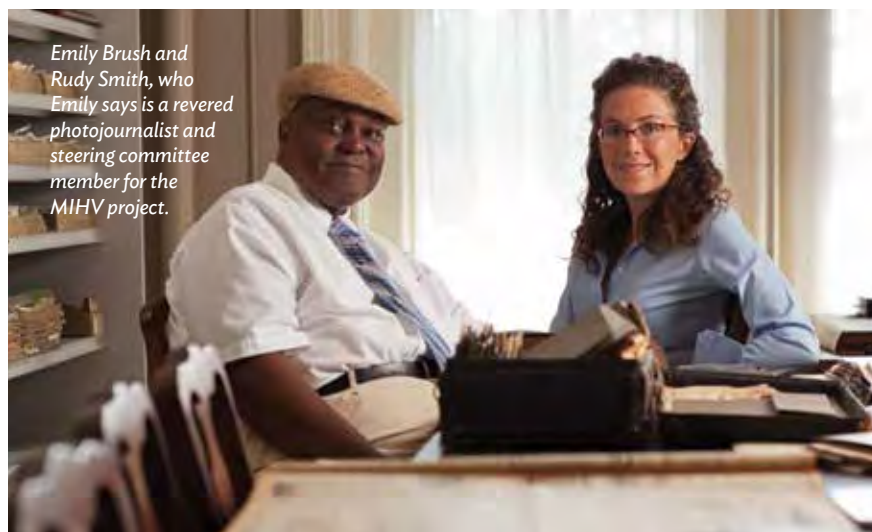
and how they will be measured, capital and human resources, and what the end product will look like. “Our staff consists of teachers, graduate students, historians, a project director and an administrator,” he says. “Each has a specific role to plan and each has a unique contribution to the project.”

The biggest challenge is getting people in the community and the school to buy into the vision of a project that gets beyond the superficial aspects of history. “We use the example of postcards as a tool to communicate what we are trying to do,” Brush says. “You see postcards in every city, but how often do they truly reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of that city?”

Teachers who participated in MIHV say that it helped students—and themselves—discover new ways to relate to their community and their history, going beyond what’s normally taught, such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. “The biggest thing I got out of the project was an appreciation for revealing histories that haven’t been traditionally taught,” says Nicholas Wennstedt, a history teacher at Bryan High School in Bellevue, Neb. “I’ve carried this lesson over into all the classes I teach.”

Teachers also say that there’s no mistaking the boost in academic enthusiasm seen among students in the program. McKenzie says that she is already ahead of her U.S. history class. Ronnie has found that he’s way ahead on his research skills and knowledge of multimedia tools. Hannah says that she’s getting straight A’s. She adds, “That knowledge I got from the program made me want to be an archeologist when I grow up.”

That is what MIHV does, says Payne. “We use the past to get students to dream about the future.” ♦



Emily Brush and Rudy Smith, who Emily says is a revered photojournalist and steering committee member for the MIHV project.

ity to use online technologies. The program also gave teachers a better grasp about how to teach African-American history. “I used to hate school,” Hannah says, “and after participating in the program, I love it.”

Other students who took part in MIHV agreed. McKenzie Clayton, 14, worked on a story about Omaha’s African-American newspapers. She says that the program improved her writing, research and critical-thinking skills as well as her social skills. She also learned a great deal about her own personal history by doing practice interviews with family members. Ronnie Turner, 16, now a junior at Burke High School in Omaha, says, “The program really affected my

Brush emphasizes how MIHV animated North Omaha, a neighborhood that has been stigmatized for being predominantly African-American. News reports about the area often focus on negative aspects such as crime or poverty. “MIHV brought a new, positive light to [the community] through the student’s dedication to tell the untold,” says Brush.

Spreading the Success

Other school districts that want to emulate this program need to work closely with the community beforehand, discussing the vision of the project. Payne says that it’s important to develop an action plan that includes goals



Toolkit

Let your students discover the “hidden” stories in your own community. Find instructions for conducting oral history interviews online.

VISIT » tolerance.org/oral-history-handout

THERAPY OF LIES

‘Conversion therapy’ poses as a medical treatment—but it’s really a type of bullying. Know what it is and how to help when LGBT students are told to ‘pray away the gay.’

BY SEAN PRICE ILLUSTRATION BY KEITH NEGLEY

AT AGE 14, John Johnson (not his real name) came out to his parents after one of several suicide attempts. His father, a conservative Roman Catholic from a military background, was especially upset to find out that his son was gay. He cornered John in their Houston home and beat him, breaking his leg and sending him to the hospital. John ran away to stay with friends. His mother found him and convinced him to return home. However, his parents insisted that he begin conversion therapy.

Conversion therapy comes in many forms, ranging from informal chats with counselors to aggressive physical coercion, but all are based on the belief that a gay male or a lesbian can be changed “back” to heterosexual behavior. It isn’t just alarmed parents who turn to this therapy. Many LGBT individuals seek out such treatment in an effort to leave behind the social stigma of homosexuality.

Supporters of conversion therapy frequently try to get their message into classrooms (see Conversion Therapy in Schools, p. 52). Thus, it’s important that educators know more about

Not Just for Christians

Many people attribute conversion therapy efforts solely to conservative Christians. It’s true that most counselors and “ex-gay” spokespersons are evangelical, born-again Christians. However, secular, Jewish, Catholic, Mormon and Muslim conversion therapy programs exist as well.



them and their cause. Wayne Besen of Truth Wins Out, a group that combats anti-LGBT extremism, points out that educators are among those most likely to deal intimately with teenagers like John who are going through conversion therapy. “As long as people are made to feel ashamed for who they are, these groups will exist,” Besen says.

Going Straight

Conversion therapy goes by many names, including ex-gay therapy, reparative therapy and reorientation therapy. Whatever it’s called, the treatment is based on the belief that homosexuals are actually heterosexuals in denial. Most advocates of conversion therapy believe that gay men and lesbians have psychological issues, and that if those issues are addressed properly in therapy a straight life is possible. “‘Gay’ is a self-chosen identity,” says the website of Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays, or PFOX.

But conversion therapy has no grounding in mainstream medicine. It is a pseudoscience—junk science. That’s why it has been condemned by such groups as the American Psychological Association (APA) and the American

Medical Association (AMA). Dr. Jack Drescher, a New York psychiatrist who has written extensively about the conversion therapy movement, says that most of its practitioners are religious counselors. Many of them are unlicensed and all base their treatment on theories that are scientifically unsound. Drescher says that there is a popular belief, for example, that parents cause children to be homosexual.

As part of the treatment, conversion therapists also bombard patients with anti-gay and anti-lesbian stereotypes—that homosexuality is a grim, dead-end lifestyle; gay men are doomed to die of AIDS; lesbians just need to get in touch with their feminine side; all homosexuality leads to unhappiness and despair, Drescher says. “It’s like a concentrated burst of homophobia.”

What Hell Looks Like

For John, conversion therapy began at about age 14 and did not let up until he was 20. At first, the sessions were helpful in some respects. He was a troubled young man with a drug problem in addition to dealing with his family’s contempt for his sexual identity. John’s first conversion-therapy counselor

Conversion Therapy in Schools

Supporters of conversion therapy like to present their programs to schools as a kind of antibullying measure. PFOX President Greg Quinlan says that his group’s flyers urge “tolerance for all”—especially ex-gays. He also says that “PFOX has distributed informative flyers in some of the largest school districts in the country.”

Last February, a high school in Montgomery County, Md., became the target of a PFOX leafletting campaign. PFOX took advantage of the district’s policy allowing nonprofit groups to send flyers home with students. Many students and parents were outraged by flyers saying, among other things, that people can choose to be heterosexual. “If only one part of you has gay feelings, should your whole life be gay identified?” the flyer asked.

School administrators might be tempted to ban distribution of these types of flyers, but such efforts can often backfire by giving ex-gay groups and conversion therapists an excuse to claim that their free speech rights have been violated. That’s why the Southern Poverty Law Center urges educators, parents and community members to counter the false propaganda with the most powerful tool at their disposal: facts.

In the Montgomery County schools case, Superintendent Joshua Starr wasted no time in calling the flyers “reprehensible and deplorable.” Local groups partnered with Teaching Tolerance to put out a flyer explaining the disturbing truth about conversion therapy and offering resources to educators looking to offer an inclusive environment for all students—straight and LGBT alike.

Talking Points

Here are three common arguments made by supporters of conversion therapy and some ways to refute them.

We have testimonials from “ex-gays” that conversion therapy works. Anecdotes are not evidence. There are plenty of “ex-gays” who have renounced their conversions.

You’re just biased against ex-gays. It’s neither wise nor even possible to turn a gay person straight. Conversion therapy is not based on science, and there is no statistical track record that it works. Medical professionals have warned that it can cause depression.

Science doesn’t know what causes sexuality. This is true, but it has no bearing on whether it’s healthy to expose a teenager to conversion therapy. As the American Academy of Pediatrics states, “Therapy directed at specifically changing sexual orientation is contraindicated, since it can provoke guilt and anxiety while having little or no potential for achieving changes in orientation.”

“As long as people are made to feel ashamed for who they are, these groups will exist.”

listened to him and helped him work through some of those issues.

However, that counselor’s work did not change John’s sexual identity as his parents wished, so they found another counselor. John says that this pattern repeated itself. “When [counselors] were deemed as not making a change quick enough, my parents would fire them and hire a more stringent practitioner of reparative therapy until it got worse and worse.”

According to John, all of his counselors were evangelical Protestants. “I’d be brainwashed day after day after day, with them telling me about what hell was like and how I was going to be there,” he recalls. “And they began to ‘heal’ my relationship with my parents by trying to prove that my father was distant and my mother was overbearing. They were trying to show that I had this brokenness sexually and they were using my [drug] abuse against me.”

Lending an Ear

John could not escape conversion therapy, even after he went to college at Texas A&M University, because his parents still paid the bills. Finally, at age 20, he was able to secure his own financial independence. “We didn’t talk for a year after that,” John says. “But finally my father had a stroke. And on what we thought was his deathbed we finally came to grips with each other and forgave each other for what we had done.”

John and others who’ve been through conversion therapy say that teachers can be lifesavers for kids who are dealing with much more than the

usual teenage frustrations. “I think the biggest thing that a teacher can do is just to be there for the student,” he says, “for them to say, ‘If there’s ever something I can do—if you need [time] during lunch—then let’s sit down and talk.’”

That may be easier said than done, however. Students dealing with conversion therapy may also have other secrets. For example, some may be dealing with legal issues, such as physical abuse, that teachers are obligated to report. “It’s really difficult,” John says, because teachers then have to decide whether “to inform the parents about the issues that these children are having,” ignore the situation or try “to help the child by being a mentor to them.”

John’s friend Charles Banta found that one teacher helped both by listening and by being a good role model. Growing up in the small town of Wheatland, Iowa, Charles was 15 when he began conversion therapy. Charles’ religious parents had always been vocally anti-gay, so he desperately hoped the treatment would work. However, that feeling changed completely after meeting some of his band director’s gay friends. “I saw these successful older gay people just living their lives,” said Charles, who is now 19. “And at that point I started to wonder if I could just live being gay.”

But, says Charles, a teacher doesn’t need to be gay, lesbian or bi to be a good role model. Also, small gestures can mean a lot. His English and history teachers

allowed him to write freely on LGBT topics, something that helped boost his confidence. He agrees with John that just lending an ear to a student who’s in conversion therapy might save a life.

Having a strong LGBT community at school helps a lot too. However, most schools aren’t there yet. “I just went back to my school a couple weeks ago during spring break and encouraged them to put up Safe Zone signs,” Charles says. “If anyone had been willing to display that sign [when I was in school,] it would have given me a little more courage to go and talk about it.”

John says that he now enjoys a fragile peace with his family. He has joined the Marine Corps and built a strong group of friends. “What finally made me overcome [the trauma caused by the years of conversion therapy] was a very close friendship that I had at A&M and in the military,” John says. This friend “was able to see me for who I was, even though I never actually told him that I was gay until about a year ago, when Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell was repealed.”

Today, John is committed to educating people about conversion therapy. “This is my cause,” he says. John believes that parents and educators need to know about the dangers of conversion therapy. But, he adds, it’s even more vital to reach out to teens who are facing the same darkness that he escaped. “It’s all about giving them the hope that life will get better sooner or later.” ♦



Toolkit

We have two flyers to help you—and LGBT students—in school:

“Know Your Rights” gives students straight answers to their questions.

“Providing Safe and Supportive Environments for LGBT Youth” has advice for educators.

VISIT >> tolerance.org/therapy-of-lies



The importance of challenging regional bias in the classroom

You're Not from Around Here

BY **CARRIE KILMAN** ILLUSTRATION BY **JOHN S. DYKES**

ADAMS-FRIENDSHIP HIGH SCHOOL sits in the center of Wisconsin, a few miles east of a national wildlife refuge, surrounded by farmland. Vincent High School, in Milwaukee, sits near the northern edge of the city, a few blocks from a highway. Two schools in the same state, separated by a three-hour car ride

and a mile-long list of assumptions about what people “over there” are like.

Last spring, students from both schools spent a day together at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. It was the culmination of an online literature class called the UWSP Connections Project, led by pre-service teachers in professor Barbara Dixson’s English education course. In virtual classrooms, students read and discussed books that examined

issues of race, class and geography.

The online interactions gave them a starting place—but when they met in person, students were nervous.

“A lot of students from Adams had never met someone who was African American,” Dixson says. “They expected the students from Milwaukee to be like black people they’ve seen on television. And the idea of living in a city seemed scary to them.”



Students from Milwaukee weren't sure what to expect, either. They were afraid of being attacked by deer. And they worried they would have little in common with the kids from rural Adams-Friendship.

At first, students weren't sure what to say to each other. But by the end of the day—after a tour of campus, sharing final presentations, eating lunch in the dining hall—they were almost completely intermingled, connecting on Facebook, hugging each other goodbye.

On its surface, the Connections Project helps pre-service teachers

practice their instruction skills. But at its core, the project accomplishes something far more fundamental: It helps students overcome stereotypes about other places and the people who live there.

“We hope they'll realize that people who seem really, really different actually have a huge amount in common,” Dixon says. “It's a diverse universe out there, and students need to know how to live in a diverse world.”

Speaking in Code

Regional stereotypes exist everywhere. Sometimes they're rooted in cultural

cliché, like Drew Halevy's students in Dallas, who think all New Yorkers “are fast-talking, brusque and ethnic.”

Sometimes they're aimed close to home, like Karin Schwartz's students in rural Iowa, who think nearby cities are “big and scary and that bad things happen there.”

And sometimes they're directed to far-away places, like Stephanie Carrillo's students in southern California, who think the Midwest is “dreadfully boring; filled with cows, farms and malls.”

Regional stereotypes form the basis of popular jokes and television shows;

according to a 2008 study, they may be grounded, at least in part, in reality. Research published in *Perspectives on Psychological Science* found links between geography and personality traits—for example, New Yorkers were statistically more likely to be neurotic than, say, people in Colorado; Californians were statistically more open-minded than people in Tennessee.

As a result, regional stereotypes can seem almost harmless. In fact, Carrillo calls such stereotypes “one of the unexamined corners of intolerance.”

But dig a little deeper, and the destructive nature of regional bias quickly emerges.

Toni Schmader, a social psychologist at the University of British Columbia, studies the effects of stereotypes on students and teachers. Regional prejudice, Schmader argues, “can be code for race or socioeconomic status, or for a different educational orientation.”

For example, the belief that cities are “dangerous” can be embedded with racial assumptions about the people of color more likely to live there. And the belief that rural Southerners are “red-necks” is laced with assumptions about income, race and education level.

“One hundred years ago, people wore their prejudices on their sleeves,” Schmader says. “But [today] prejudice has gone undercover. People still have biases, but they know they’re not supposed to express them, so they get expressed in other ways.”

Carrillo, from California, describes how this transpires in her classroom: “Our students know it would be frowned upon to make fun of poor people. But it’s okay to say, ‘In the South, everyone lives in a trailer and goes to Wal-Mart.’ It’s a cover for looking at class through a negative lens.”

The effects on students can be no less harmful than other forms of prejudice. Studies have shown that exposure to negative stereotypes can cause students to underperform and can create an “over-praising effect” among

teachers, who may withhold critical feedback for fear of appearing biased.

Not surprisingly, one antidote—as Dixon found in Wisconsin—is regular exposure to people from different places. For example, while teaching in Rochester, Minn., where families came from many regional and even national backgrounds, Schwartz found students to be more inclined to accept differences. Now, teaching in a school with a more homogeneous population, Schwarz has encountered stereotypes that have been more difficult to break down.

“I worry,” she says, “about students missing out on experiences and interactions and the opportunity to learn about new places and new ideas.”

Jersey Shore Effect

Regardless of where they live, students and teachers say regional biases often come from, or are compounded by, the media. In fact, so many teachers mentioned a certain television program that the phenomenon could be called “the *Jersey Shore* effect.”

The popular reality show has drawn protest from the Jersey Shore Convention and Visitors Bureau, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and countless New Jersey natives, including Sam Grabelle, who now lives and works in Rhode Island.

“I used to be proud to answer ‘where are you from?’ with ‘the Jersey shore,’” Grabelle says. Now, “every time I meet a student from New Jersey, we share our woes over the proliferation of stereotypes in reality television about people from our home state.”

Halevy, the teacher in Dallas, grew up in New York City. Because of shows like *Jersey Shore* and *The Sopranos*, many of his students

think New Jersey is nothing but beach parties and mobsters.

Halevy tries to convince them otherwise. “I say, ‘You go to western New Jersey, and it’s all farmland.’ But they don’t believe it.”

So Halevy asks his students to imagine teenagers in Afghanistan, watching nothing but MTV and *Jerry Springer*.

“What would their perception of Americans be?” he asks.

The students think about it. “It would be horrible,” they finally say.

“Are all Americans like that?” Halevy asks.

“No,” they say, “of course not.”

Pam Williams, a speech language pathologist in a rural district in Maine, proves students aren’t the only ones at risk of the *Jersey Shore* effect: Recently, while driving south, she took an alternate route through inland New Jersey and was surprised to find rolling countryside. Now, whenever she hears



“It’s a hard thing to counteract. If students get in the habit of stereotyping at all in any one way, it leaves them more ready to stereotype in other ways.”

adults or kids passing judgment on the state, she tells them about that trip.

She worries most of her students, though, aren’t so lucky.

“Most of our kids live near the poverty level, and their families don’t have the resources to travel,” Williams says. “They have very limited exposure to anything beyond what they see on the television.”

Unintended Lessons

New Jersey certainly isn’t alone—every region, it seems, is the target of someone else’s joke. Yet no region seems to invoke as much bias as the South.

At the Hawken School outside of Cleveland, Andrew Cleminshaw discovered an unintended outcome while teaching *Black Boy*, Richard Wright’s haunting memoir of his Southern childhood.

“The book played into all the stereotypes they had about the South as this horrible, racist place,” Cleminshaw says. “Many of them had never been to the South and had no idea. They understand the book is historical. But many of them have a sense that while things have gotten better, the tradition continues.”

Documentaries and classroom materials that address the civil rights movement often portray “angry white people doing awful things,” Cleminshaw says, and can overlook the examples of white people, such as Anne and Carl Braden, who were allies in the struggle for civil rights.

“It’s a hard thing to counteract,” Cleminshaw says. “If students get in the habit of stereotyping at all in any one way, it leaves them more ready to stereotype in other ways.”

Learning from History

Part of the trick is to help students separate unfounded stereotypes from authentic regional differences.

Colin Woodard is a foreign correspondent for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. In Woodard’s recent book, *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America*, he investigates the origins of these differences.

“Some of our regional stereotypes,” Woodard says, “actually have historical roots.”

Early settlers in New England, he found, came from densely populated, relatively wealthy areas of the British Isles. In contrast, settlers in Appalachia came from war-torn areas, where there was little rule of law.

Evidence of these histories can be seen today, Woodard argues, everywhere from regional cultural values, to modern-day voting patterns, to why so many technological innovations come from California.

“Regionalism has defined our history to a degree that a lot of people don’t realize,” Woodard says. “A lot of these biases are an outgrowth of that history. Understanding this is important to education, in general, and to fostering tolerance, in particular.”

A student from Adams-Friendship High School summed it up in a final evaluation for the Connections Project: “Though we come from two completely different communities, we Adams kids and Milwaukee students can learn a lot from each other. Plus, we share the same ideas.”

Three Things Teachers Can Do

➔ **Work with a teacher in another town or region to help your students make connections.** “The best way to challenge these stereotypes is to reach across the divide and interact with people who are not like yourself,” says Stephanie Carrillo, a high school history teacher in Santa Monica, Calif. “Kids can walk away with actual, concrete knowledge that isn’t in a book—that is life-changing and will stick with them forever.”

➔ **Encourage students to examine their own biases every time they crop up.** Carrillo uses this example: “I say, ‘Think of a watch, any watch. What does it look like? Is it round, with numbers and hands?’ Most of them will say yes. I’ll say, ‘That’s a stereotype. If you look around, you’ll find watches that are square, digital, that have no numbers at all. But when you stereotype, you eliminate all these other possibilities.’ It’s a safe example to get students to think about what a stereotype is, how it becomes your go-to image, and how it’s not actually reflective of reality.”

➔ **Challenge regional bias wherever you see it.** Maggie Filbrandt, a junior in South Haven, Mich., spoke out when her school planned to host a “Redneck and Hillbilly” dress-up day as part of its annual Spirit Week. “Some students might take that personally,” Maggie says. “I think they’d feel bullied and that the school was saying, ‘that’s OK.’” Michigan’s anti-bullying legislation protects students against harassment based on economic status and geographic location. So Maggie talked with her mother, a member of the local school board, and they wrote a letter to the principal, alerting him to the state law. The day quickly became “Hawaiian Beach Day.” ♦



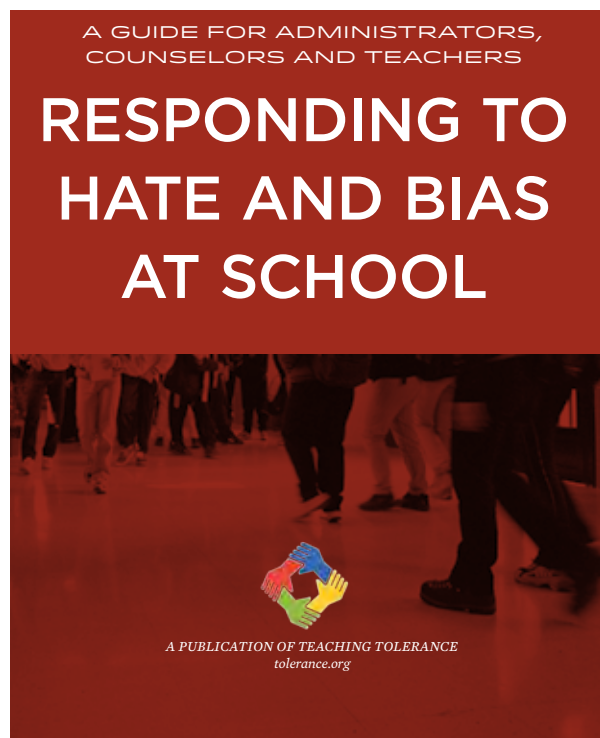
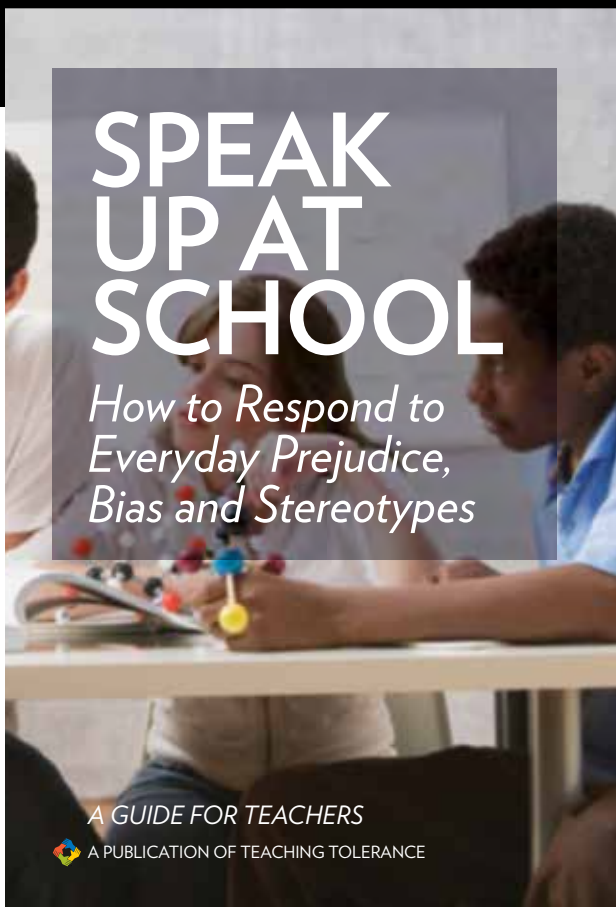
Toolkit

Does your state suffer from an unfair stereotype? Students can “state it differently!”

VISIT >> tolerance.org/geographic-stereotypes

New Resources *from Teaching Tolerance*

TWO NEW TOOLS FROM TEACHING TOLERANCE CAN HELP EDUCATORS ADDRESS ACTS OF BIGOTRY THAT THREATEN A HEALTHY SCHOOL CLIMATE.



EVERY SCHOOL HAS fire drills. Students know to line up quietly and leave the building. They know this because schools prepare for fires. Everyone has discussed the dangers involved and the importance of being ready.

But a fire is hardly the only crisis that can hit a school. Seemingly small acts of bigotry and hate can, if left unchecked, erupt into life-threatening fights, suicide attempts or widespread violence. Even when they don't, such acts can

*I am a person who will speak up against bigotry.
I will not let hate have the last word.*

– SPEAK UP AT SCHOOL –

leave behind poisonous—and unnecessary—hostility. The same forethought that goes into evacuation plans needs to go into making the ill effects of bigotry and hate less likely.

Many administrators are unsure about how to start building an inclusive school climate, let alone a crisis-management plan. That's why Teaching Tolerance has created two important resources: *Responding to Hate and Bias at School* and *Speak Up at School*. These booklets, which are revised and updated versions of previous works from Teaching Tolerance, lay out steps that educators need to take to make their schools safer, more welcoming places.

"We receive a steady flow of calls and emails from educators looking for guidance on these issues," says Maureen Costello, the director of Teaching Tolerance, "and there was clearly a need to help people recognize danger signs at school and address them before a crisis occurs."

Responding to Hate and Bias at School is written primarily for school administrators, although it provides valuable information for counselors and teachers as well. This booklet shows educators how to respond to a hate-related incident in their school or community. It also guides them through crisis management and post-crisis efforts at improvement.

Responding to Hate and Bias at School goes further, suggesting research-based strategies for reducing bullying and creating a welcoming school climate. It also provides ways to promote social emotional learning among faculty, staff and students. In developing model responses to incidents of bigotry and hate, Teaching Tolerance researched best practices and interviewed administrators, teachers and students from across the country. We also spoke with victims of campus incidents, teachers who train peer mediators, and organizations concerned with hate and bias at school.

Creating an inclusive learning environment requires leadership and a schoolwide plan, like the kind laid out in *Responding to Hate and Bias*. But it also requires the work of dedicated individuals throughout the building, day in and day out. That's where *Speak Up at School* comes in. This booklet is written for individuals. It provides advice for responding to verbal slurs, racist jokes or disrespectful remarks that can be heard anywhere in school and from anyone.

"These kinds of hurtful and biased remarks too often constitute the first steps in bullying and harassment," Costello says. "It's crucial to create schools that are free of bias and bigotry. But responding to offensive remarks takes forethought and courage."

Speak Up at School gives educators the tools to help students turn from bystanders to upstanders. It also shows educators how to respond when the biased remark or offensive joke comes from their peers, from parents or even from administrators. Costello says, "*Speak Up* coaches individuals to confront bigotry without being confrontational."

Not every intolerant remark is made in the same spirit. Some reflect genuine animosity, while others are said out of ignorance or a desire to get along with the crowd. *Speak Up* discusses these differences and explores the best ways to handle them. It also provides advice from teachers about real-life situations they've faced and what worked for them.

Educators at all grade levels and in all parts of the country agree that the most important thing to do in these situations is to act: Speak up against bigoted remarks every time they happen. "Stop what you're doing—whatever you're doing—and address it," says Sofía Galaviz, a 5th-grade teacher in Nampa, Idaho.

Costello says that people often have good intentions when it comes to confronting hate. Everyone wants to do the right thing. But addressing a racial slur or an anti-gay remark made by a friend or co-worker can be hard for anyone—unless they're prepared to take a stand. It's easy in volatile situations to say the wrong thing, making a situation worse.

"*Speak Up at School* gets people prepared," Costello says. "It helps individuals think through their responses to the day-to-day bigotry we all face."

Together, *Speak Up at School* and *Responding to Hate and Bias at School* give teachers and administrators a 360-degree view of school-culture issues and provide direction for educators trying to build an inclusive, nurturing school climate—a climate in which hateful acts are extinguished as swiftly as any life-threatening fire. ♦

Responding to Hate and Bias at School
and *Speak Up at School* are both
available FREE to educators.

Download online at
tolerance.org/don't-ignore-hate

What We're Reading

The Teaching Tolerance staff reviews the latest in culturally aware literature and resources, offering the best picks for professional development and teachers of all grades.



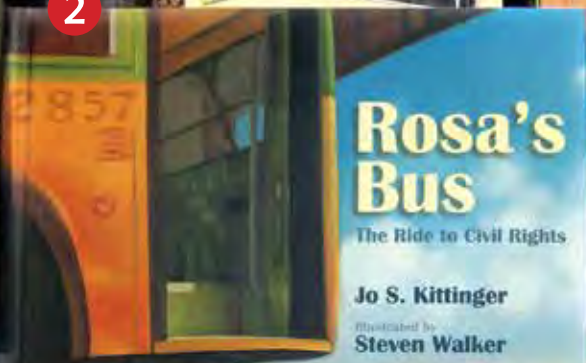
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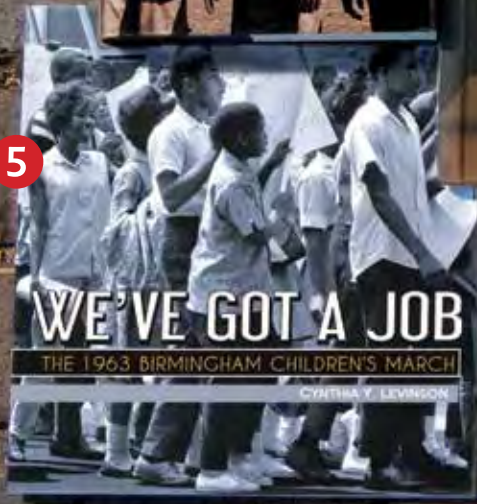


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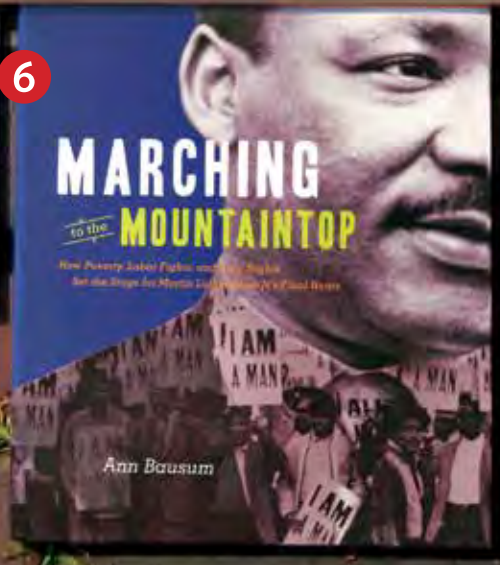


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"Fun and relatable."
— Lisa Ann Williamson



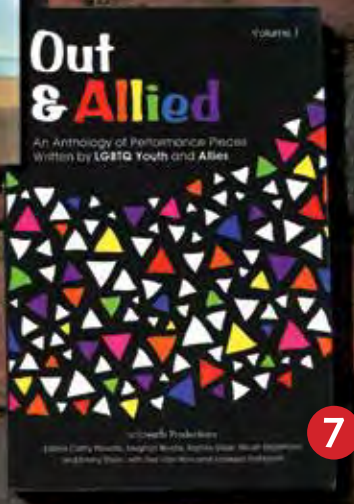
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6

"A perfect companion for Teaching Tolerance films."
— Thom Ronk

"Goes beyond the names we already know."
— Michelle Garcia



7

"A great handbook for LGBT youth activists"
— Alice Pettway

1 Few civil rights pioneers carry the romantic aura of the Tuskegee Airmen. That's why students will find *Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II*, by J. Todd Moyer, a great read. The book lays to rest important myths about the airmen even as it explains how they risked their lives to fight fascism. Just as importantly, Moyer's book shows how men and women at Tuskegee's Army Flying School challenged Jim Crow and helped pave the way for the civil rights movement.
middle and high school

2 In *Rosa's Bus: The Ride to Civil Rights*, by Jo. S. Kittinger, Bus #2857 becomes the vehicle for learning about the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the civil rights movement. A great book for very young readers to begin learning about the struggle for equal rights.
elementary school

3 *Dear Maxine: Letters from the Unfinished Conversation with Maxine Greene*, edited by Robert Lake and foreword by Sonia Nieto, is a rich collection of letters written by people who have inspired us—Gloria Ladson Billings, Herbert Kohl, William Ayers, Deborah Meier—to a woman who inspired them. In diverse voices, we hear a single lesson: The paramount goal of education must be freedom.
professional development

4 *Super Tool Lula: The Bully-Fighting Super Hero!* by Michele Yulo. Ten-year-old Lula who loves carpentry, collects rocks and plays the

drums is teased. Some classmates tell her those are not girl things. She then spins into action letting classmates know it's cool to be who they are. Great afterword for educators and parents with tips for handling bullying.
elementary school

5 *We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March*, by Cynthia Y. Levinson, provides comprehensive insight into the events of the Birmingham Children's March in 1963. Filled with personal stories from protestors and primary documents, *We've Got a Job* will inspire students to learn about the civil rights movement.
middle and high school

6 *Marching to the Mountaintop: How Poverty, Labor Fights, and Civil Rights Set the Stage for Martin Luther King Jr.'s Final Hours*, by Ann Bausum, tells the story of the sanitation workers' strike that brought MLK to the balcony of the Lorraine Motel. A must-have for any teacher who seeks to tell the full story of the movement and to explain how collective action can bring about real and lasting change.
professional development

7 *Out and Allied: An Anthology of Performance Pieces* gives center stage to a compelling collection of plays, poems and monologues written by LGBTQ youth and their allies. The chapters on presentation, production, writing and leadership transform this anthology into a young activist's handbook.
middle and high school

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Turning High-Poverty Schools Into High-Performing Schools by William H. Parrett and Katheleen M. Budge

Our Worlds in Our Words: Exploring Race, Class, Gender, and Sexual Orientation in Multicultural Classrooms by Mary Dilg

Re-Engaging Disconnected Youth: Transformation Learning Through Restorative and Social Justice Education by Amy Vatne Bintliff

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL

Nilda by Nicholoasa Mohr

Rebound by Bob Krech

Scars by Cheryl Rainfield

Crow by Barbara Wright

The Fat Boy Chronicles by Diane Lange and Michael Buchanan

ELEMENTARY

Sky Dancing by Ellen Erwin

Only One Year by Andrea Cheng

The Accidental Adventures of India McAllister by Charlotte Agell

Operation Marriage by Cynthia Chin-Lee





Questions for Readers

Right There: Create a chart showing the who, what, when, where, why and how of the story.

On My Own: In 1920, people wore roses to express their opinion of women's suffrage. What are some symbols people use to express their political and social views today?

Author and You: List three forces that weighed on Harry Burn's decision. Of those, which do you think was his greatest duty, and did he fulfill it?

Think and Search: Compare how Burn is described in the beginning and end of the story. What changed?

Resources to help students learn more about the passage of the 19th Amendment are available at tolerance.org/be-a-good-boy.



Be a Good Boy

BY JOHN MICKLOS, JR.

Aug. 18, 1920: Harry Burn fidgeted in his seat in the Tennessee House of Representatives. He touched the red rose on his lapel. Wearing that rose showed that he was against giving women the right to vote. Supporters of women’s voting rights—or suffrage—wore yellow roses. In Tennessee, the struggle for women’s suffrage became known as the war of the roses.

Burn reached inside his jacket and touched the letter he had just received from his mother urging her son to “be a good boy” and “vote for suffrage.” What should he do?

Many states had already passed the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, giving women across the country the right to vote. Only one more state was needed to ratify the amendment. Tennessee became the final battleground.

The Tennessee Senate quickly approved the 19th Amendment, and it was up to the House to vote yes or no. No one knew what would happen: 48 members of the House were for the amendment and 48 were opposed. A tie vote was a no. People from across the nation—both for and against women’s suffrage—filled the room. They waited silently as each representative called out his vote.

Sweat poured down Burn’s face. At age 24, he was the state’s youngest representative. Yet soon his vote might affect the entire nation.

Thoughts raced through his head: Many people don’t think women should vote, but women work as hard as men. Why shouldn’t they have the same rights? My mother knows more about politics than most men. She should be allowed to vote. I know I should support women’s suffrage. But what will other people think?

Burn’s name was called. The moment had come. Burn paused for just an instant. His mother’s words ran through his mind: “Be a good boy; vote for suffrage.” Burn raised his hand. “Yea,” he said. The amendment now had enough votes to pass. Women had won the right to vote!

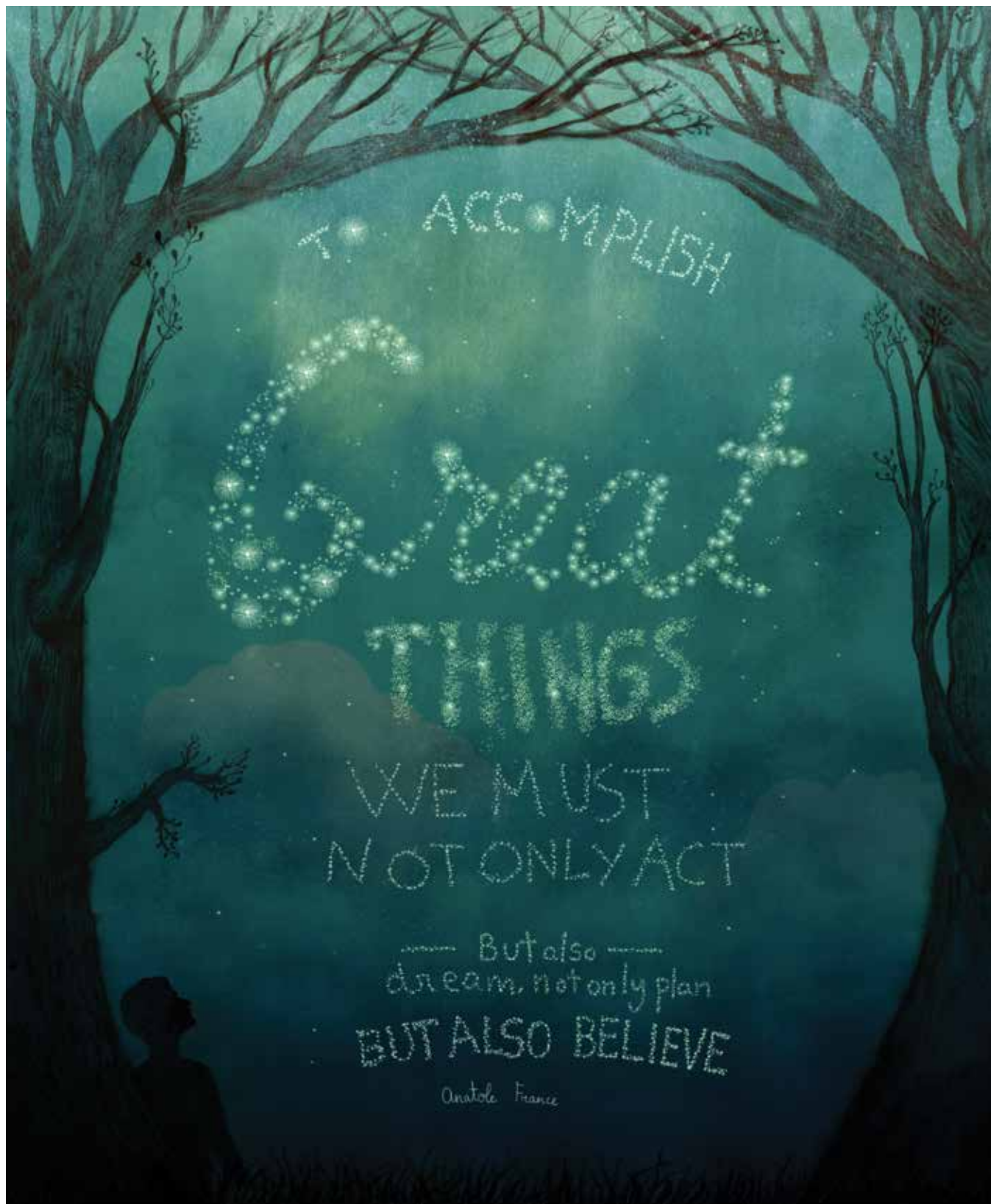
Supporters cheered. Opponents of women’s suffrage were angry. Why had Burn changed his vote? Afraid, Burn ran from the room. He thought the angry anti-suffragists might hurt him. He climbed up into the attic of the state Capitol and waited for people to calm down.

The next day, Burn addressed the legislature. He calmly defended his decision to change his vote. He said it was his chance “to free 17 million women from political slavery” and that “a mother’s advice is always safest for a boy to follow.” He will always be known as the person who cast the deciding vote for women’s suffrage. ✨

TEXT OF THE 19TH AMENDMENT

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.



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Grades 6-12

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AMERICA'S CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT
Follow the civil rights movement from Emmett Till to the passing of the Voting Rights Act. *Grades 6-12*

MIGHTY TIMES

THE CHILDREN'S MARCH

The heroic story of the young people in Birmingham, Alabama, who brought segregation to its knees.
Grades 6-12



VIVA LA CAUSA

An introduction to lessons about struggles for workers' rights—both past and present.
Grades 6-12

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Professional Development

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