

the slur, but in doing so reminded me that a lot of people don't like Black Americans (he, too, used bigoted language to make his point). Offended once more, I reiterated my outrage and ended the conversation. Unfortunately, neither of the men involved considered the language he used to be offensive, but rather merely "a figure of speech." I do live in a small, rural town, but I am still disbelieving that in the 21st century, two grown men could use such odious terminology.

Yet, the many public and private agencies that exist to combat some aspect of America's struggle with racism, bigotry, prejudice, stereotyping, and hatred make it clear that we have not overcome these challenges. While noticeable progress has been made with regard to issues raised during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, examples described here demonstrate that we have not fully realized the goal of Martin Luther King, Jr.: that his children be judged by their accomplishments rather than the color of their skin.

Prejudice and bigotry are learned behaviors. Though young children may notice the differences in people, they do not attach stereotypes to them. It is the adults in their world who teach them this. Floyd Cochran, former member of the Aryan Nation, made two important points when he suggested that those who espouse racism and hatred target the 25 and under crowd, and they count on the general public's complacency (Rosellini nd). So how do educators combat racism and hatred? How can they, as significant adults in the world of children, ensure that students learn to respect and honor the differences in the people around them?

In the fight against intolerance, teachers may want to consider ad-

ressing at least three areas. First, examine the curriculum used to impart your content. Look with a critical eye at all the materials: textbooks, movies/videos, games, worksheets, Web sites, stories/poems. Eliminate those that overtly or subliminally teach stereotypes. If they cannot be eliminated, then make a discussion of the stereotype part of the teaching-learning experience. Incorporate materials that actively explore stereotypes and teach tolerance.

Second, examine your classroom and your school for stereotypes. Discuss with your colleagues ways to eliminate stereotyping in signage, bulletin boards, newsletters, and other artifacts of the school.

Third, examine your own behavior. Take time to reflect on your personal beliefs and actions. Vow to change teaching strategies or techniques into which you may have inadvertently incorporated activities or behaviors that promote stereotyping. Speak up, in a respectful way, when others engage in behavior that models intolerance.

Some useful resources, appropriate no matter what age or subject you teach, include the following:

- Southern Poverty Law Center (Morris Dees and Joe Levin, founders). Committed to racial equality, the center provides a broad range of materials including a newsletter at www.splcenter.org. Through its *Teaching Tolerance* magazine (www.tolerance.org/teach/magazine), educators can learn about innovative tolerance initiatives in schools across the country.
- Tolerance Education Center (Earl Greif, founder and Holocaust survivor). A library of audio and visual materials aimed at helping young people

understand the consequences of intolerance and bigotry can be found at <http://toleranceeducationcenter.org>.

- Goodcharacter.com is a multi-faceted resource for teachers. To find tolerance-related materials for K–12 students, click on Great Web Resources at www.goodcharacter.com.
- Peace Education Center. Designed for teachers interested in anti-bias issues, this site is at www.tc.columbia.edu/Peaceed. 

References

Rosellini, L. nd. If ignored, hate groups thrive. *The Intercom*. College Park: Pennsylvania State University. Wikipedia. 2009. Ku Klux Klan.



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