6-1-2002

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Recommended Citation
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The Southern Poverty Law Center and the Teacher Training

Posted on June 1, 2002 by Editor

By Mark Szymanski <marks@pacificu.edu>

Fight hate and teach tolerance. This call is the banner that greets you when you log on to the Teaching Tolerance web site (1). Before September 11th, it was easier for some people to read this banner and pass it off as another slogan for a small number of peace promoting groups whose ideals were far out of the minds of mainstream culture. Now, hate and tolerance are words that represent ideas and actions that we see more frequently. Every morning we awake to headlines describing violent acts followed by acts of retaliation in the Middle East. This cycle has been repeating itself for so long that it is becoming impossible to keep track of which act is one of violence and which is one of retaliation. When did it start? More importantly, When will it end?

Hate fuels violence, and violence fuels hate. As a result, educators are left wondering what they can do to teach their students to fight hate and promote tolerance. One way educators can help their students move toward tolerance is to use the resources created by the Teaching Tolerance project (1). The Teaching Tolerance project was created at the Southern Poverty Law Center (2). The center, located in Montgomery Alabama, describes itself as an organization that "combats hate, intolerance, and discrimination through education and litigation". Since being founded in 1971 as a civil rights law firm, the center has become a world leader in funding tolerance education programs. The center developed the Teaching Tolerance Project in 1990 after research they conducted showed an increasing number of youth involved in hate crimes.

The Teaching Tolerance project has a variety of free and low cost resources educators and community leaders can use to fight hate and promote tolerance. These include the Teaching Tolerance magazine (3), published twice a year, which highlights tolerance projects conducted around the country. In addition, educators can find classroom activities (4) that range from how to create a contract for bullying (5) to understanding homelessness and poverty (6).

The classroom resources link provides educators with an abundant array of free and low cost
materials. K-3 educators can use the Starting Small curriculum set which includes a film Starting Small and a 250 page text. The activities in the curriculum promote self-reflection and group discussion about tolerance. In addition, the text profiles exemplary pre-k through 3rd grade classrooms in which peace, equity and justice are guiding themes.

Secondary educators can use a curriculum set called A Place at the Table which includes a film, a text, and lesson plans. In the film, A Place at the Table, young people describe how their families have found a place at the American table. The book provides a narrative that explores and develops the themes and stories described in the film. The teacher’s guide provides 13 detailed lesson plans for use in the middle and upper grades.

In addition to the packaged resources provided by the Teach Tolerance project, educators can also apply for grants to support their own tolerance projects in their schools and communities (7). The grants are non-renewable and are awarded in amounts up to $2,000. There are no deadlines for submission and the types of projects they fund are conceptual in nature and must have a direct impact on students. As they state on their web site, the types of grants they support are:

* small-scale, resourceful, student-focused projects that promote acceptance of diversity, peacemaking, community service or any other aspect of tolerance education;

* well-focused, integrated and organically appealing, in that they are uniquely suited to the specified needs of particular learners;

* responsive and beneficial to the manifest needs (financial, social, affective) of the wider community from which the proposal originates;

* creatively resourceful and economically responsible, involving staff, community and in-kind contributions wherever possible;

* reflective of ongoing rather than one-time-only events or activities.

The Teaching Tolerance project has created a comprehensive set of resources that are well designed and easily accessible to educators from all over. Whether you choose to use their curriculum or design a project of your own, if you feel powerless to respond to the escalating violence and hate we see in the media, the Teaching Tolerance project gives you a place to start. Start with your own students. Show them they have the power and can learn the skills that will enable them to fight hate and promote tolerance.

References:

(1) http://www.tolerance.org
(2) http://splcenter.org/
I also, want a followup to this repair. It really is fascinating. I when had a repair produced over a cast iron exhaust manifold for just a 1932 Packard.

Awesome talk! Thank you so significantly for hosting Great.