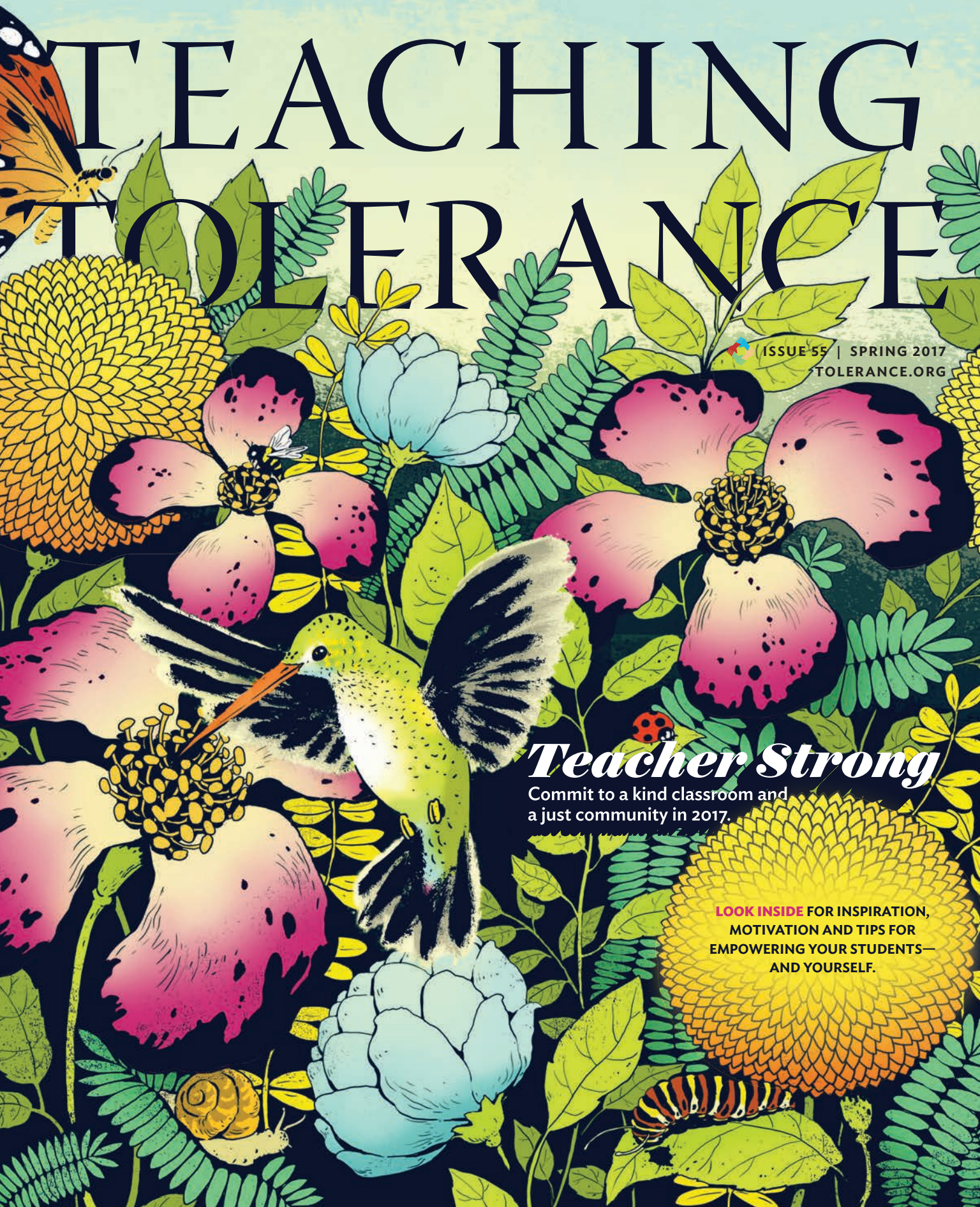


**James Loewen**  
On Teaching About Slavery

**Immigrant Students**  
Protect and Prepare Youth and Families

**Islamophobia**  
Schools Take a Stand



# TEACHING TOLERANCE

ISSUE 55 | SPRING 2017  
TOLERANCE.ORG

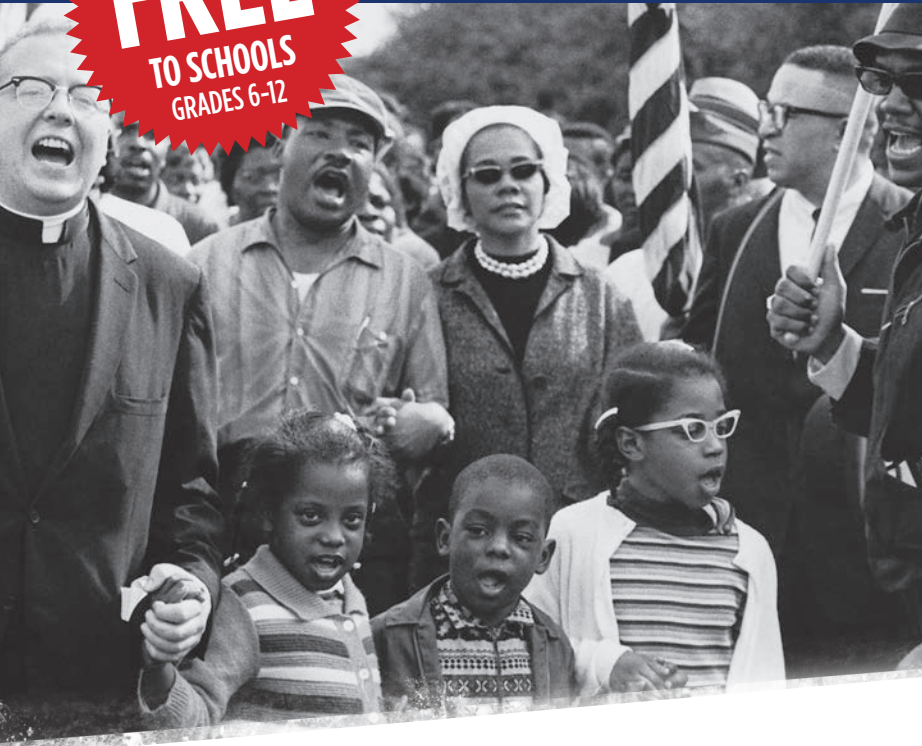
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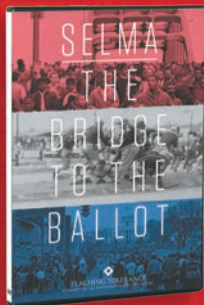
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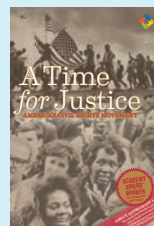
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# TEACHING TOLERANCE

ISSUE 55 | SPRING 2017

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ILLUSTRATION BY **CHRISTINA UNG**

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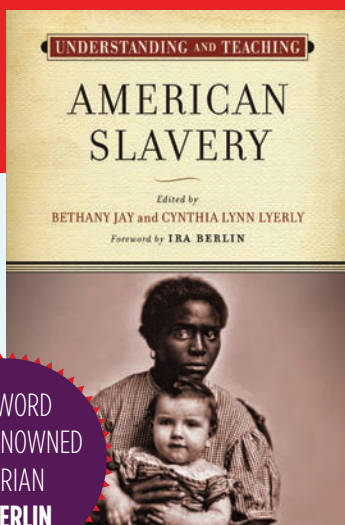
What’s it like to be a Muslim student in the United States? We asked five young people from across the country for their perspectives.  
[tolerance.org/muslim-students](http://tolerance.org/muslim-students)



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TEACHING TOLERANCE  
RECOMMENDS

# Understanding and Teaching American Slavery



FOREWORD  
BY RENOWNED  
HISTORIAN  
IRA BERLIN

Teaching Tolerance recommends *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery* to help educators teach this critical history well. This powerful collection of essays offers a variety of approaches to engage students, from breaking down the institution's constitutional foundations to examining present-day references in hip-hop music. *Read an excerpt on page 54 of this issue.*

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## Perspectives

**“There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.”**

— ELIE WIESEL



**DON'T LOOK NOW**, but hate is back in our schools. ¶ Of course, it never entirely disappeared, just as it didn't disappear from American society. For a while though, it hid in the dark spaces and didn't parade in plain sight. Now it's in the open again, and educators are among those on the front lines working to prevent it from growing and festering. ¶ Exactly 25 years ago, the first issue of this magazine launched the Teaching Tolerance project. The founding editor, Sara Bullard, wrote that our goal was “to care about all of

parents will be deported and their families separated. About Muslim students who worry about internment camps or registries. About LGBT students, African American students and others fearful of a future in which blatant bigotry is once again socially acceptable.

Anxiety like that is bad enough, but it's been exacerbated by the taunts, “jokes” and cruelty of other students. It's hard to know what's worse: the Nazi salutes, shouts of “white power” and hand-drawn swastikas, or the in-your-face harassment dished out to classmates who are already vulnerable.

Most of the teachers we surveyed care deeply about their students. They want to protect the ones who are hurting and help those who are lured by hate to reject it. These teachers are coming out as allies and working with colleagues to find solutions.

But it was also disheartening to hear from educators who don't think there's a problem. Many minimized harassment they had personally witnessed by characterizing it as “teasing.” Others, whose students don't include our most vulnerable, told us that their school community had moved on from the election, and so should we. Some insisted that there were no problems that our survey didn't create. And some “reassured” their immigrant students that, as long as they were “legal,” they had nothing to worry about.

To which I say: If fear or harassment are present in *any* of our schools, it concerns us all. None of us can afford to look away.

—Maureen Costello

our children and to help them care about each other.” She talked about the many teachers who strive for harmony in the classroom: “What they share,” she wrote, “is a belief that tolerance is at the core of good citizenship. Neither neighborhoods nor nations can survive without it.”

What she didn't write about were the reasons Teaching Tolerance came into existence in the first place, and why it was created by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). The Center was best known for battling hate in the form of the Ku Klux Klan. SPLC co-founder Morris Dees had won stunning victories against the KKK in court and started the *Klanwatch* project to monitor the hate group's activities.

Despite these efforts, hate crimes continued, and most of the perpetrators were young men whose complete initiation into a world of racial and ethnic hatred was a done deal by the time they were 18. If the SPLC really wanted to fight hate, we needed to start sooner, because bias and “othering” take root in childhood. Announcing the project, Morris said, “Our work in the classroom must complement our work in the courtroom.”

In the quarter-century since, our schools and our country have changed dramatically. Both became more diverse, and the need to teach tolerance, to “welcome the differences and delight in the sharing” became more important than ever. Teaching Tolerance—and others—created programs and developed practices that promote social emotional learning, celebrate diversity and improve school climate.

A new urgency has emerged in the aftermath of the 2016 presidential campaign. Bigotry and bias are once again on the rise.

Our most recent report, *After the Election: The Trump Effect*, was based on a survey to which more than 10,000 teachers responded. We asked them to tell us about their schools and their students, about incidents of bias and stories of hope. The survey produced over 25,000 comments, each one a small snippet of life in school today. For a few hours each day, I've read, catalogued and pondered those stories.

They're heartbreaking.

I've read about students from immigrant families terrified that their

# SPLC ON CAMPUS//JOIN THE MOVEMENT!



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initiative—coming in 2017.  
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**[SPLCONCAMPUS.ORG](http://SPLCONCAMPUS.ORG)**

## **FIGHT HATE AND STOP BIGOTRY.**

Check out the Southern Poverty Law Center's newest initiative for college students: SPLC on Campus.

Developed to support emerging and existing student activists, SPLC on Campus provides free resources and support to club members.

Do you attend college or work with college students? Start a club today, and advocate for the issues you care about—like voting!



**TEACHING  
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# FIRST BELL

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## Reader Reactions

Our magazine feature story “Don’t Say Nothing” encouraged educators not to remain silent about race and racial inequality, and it got lots of attention on social media. Haven’t read it yet? Visit [tolerance.org/dont-say-nothing](http://tolerance.org/dont-say-nothing).

We teachers cannot stay silent and expect our students to respond to anything else we want to teach them. Reaching across the racial divide, artificial as it is, is important for the future of all of us.

SUBMITTED BY BETH HOOVER

VIA FACEBOOK

In the classroom setting it is very tricky to tackle the topic of race. Especially during Hispanic Heritage Month and during Black Heritage Month. I try to focus on the positive, on the music, but kids are sharp, very sharp, and they know. They know when we are glossing over things.

SUBMITTED BY LISA MARKLEY

VIA FACEBOOK

*The Fall issue of Teaching Tolerance magazine and our 2016 election resources sparked a lot of reactions from readers, from a critique of our advice to appreciation for our cover art.*

## TIMELY TOPICS

I just read through the 2016 *Teaching Tolerance* magazine and it is one of the best issues you’ve published. The topics are timely and just perfect for the students to learn and be informed.

—MARY LOUISE HOOPER

VIA MAIL

**TEACHING AS HEALING**  
[On “Breaking My Silence

About 9/11 in Class”] Thank you, Teacher Phillips, for your courage to open this important discussion with your class (and yourself). So often in life, when we reveal, we begin to heal. Thank you for sharing and for jolting me out of my own silence about those horrible days.

—JAN SCHROEDER

VIA FACEBOOK

*Editor’s note: You can read this blog—and many others—on [tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org). Just search for the blog by title or go directly to [tolerance.org/breaking-silence](http://tolerance.org/breaking-silence).*

## EMPOWERING ACCEPTANCE

I am so profoundly empowered and moved to see how many resources and exquisite values that Teaching

Tolerance embodies. As someone who was born into a minority group ... I absolutely value the education necessary to fight ignorance, which, I believe, leads to growth in individualized forms of acceptance.

—MIRIAM RENZ

VIA EMAIL

ONE-SIDED VIEW

I am shocked that in your article “Teach 2016” you address student questions about inflammatory rhetoric and hate speech BUT DO NOT EVEN MENTION questions students may pose about why a certain campaign is being questioned by the FBI about possible “classified” email leaks? ... Your “advice” was clearly one-sided.

—LORI REDMOND

VIA EMAIL

BRINGING HOME PERSPECTIVES

[On *Perspectives for a Diverse America*] ... Just found an amazing free online resource for multiple levels with a variety of texts. I’ve been looking for curriculum models to use with my kids at home because as much as I love our schools, we know that the narratives of history and justice need some

work, and children of color (as well as all children) need to learn how to engage and value their identities in this turbulent world.

—ABIGAIL REBECCA

VIA FACEBOOK

using your *The Children’s March* video and it blew up all my plans because the students were asking so many questions, good questions. Thank you!

—ROC SCHMEELCKE

VIA FACEBOOK



Editor’s note:

Did you know our film kits are FREE to educators? You can order Mighty Times: The Children’s March and others here: [tolerance.org/teaching-kits](http://tolerance.org/teaching-kits).

HUGS!

[On *Perspectives for a Diverse America*] I

want to HUG the Anti-bias Framework and everyone involved in creating it. Seriously.

—ANONYMOUS

VIA SURVEY

*Editor’s note: Our Anti-bias Framework has been renamed the Social Justice Standards! You can download PDFs of the Standards in English and Spanish here: [tolerance.org/social-justice-standards](http://tolerance.org/social-justice-standards).*

SO TIMELY

Thank you @Tolerance.org for powerful lessons in Fall magazine on teaching 2016 elections — while promoting acceptance & tolerance #SoTimely

—GAIL DESLER

VIA TWITTER



Virginia Welsh

I treasure [*Teaching Tolerance* magazine]. I became familiar with it and used it extensively in my role as diversity advocate. I learned and still learn so much from it. I recommend to anyone wanting to broaden understanding [of] issues of diversity. Subscriptions are free to teachers.

VIA FACEBOOK

FINDING COMMON GROUND

I am an elementary school counselor, and the election lessons and articles are so helpful. I just met with two fourth-grade students. ... The two had an intense conversation about immigration, which led them to my office. Having this information helped to facilitate a much-needed conversation. We were able to work together to find common ground. Each person felt heard and left feeling respected.

—MARIE CUSIC

VIA EMAIL

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](mailto:editor@tolerance.org) with the subject line “Letter to the Editor.” Or mail a letter to 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104.



STELLAR TWEET

[@Itaub](https://twitter.com/Itaub)



Thank you @Tolerance\_\_org for #Civility2016 chat! And to the teachers everywhere trying to model ethical discourse in uncivil times.

## Ask Teaching Tolerance



**Q:** I'm an elementary teacher and would like to put up a small Black Lives Matter poster in my classroom. Have other elementary teachers done this? Is it appropriate for a public school setting?

Within an emotionally supportive and respectful classroom community, elementary students can have developmentally appropriate, restorative conversations about the Black Lives Matter movement. Karen Schreiner, a second-grade teacher and Teaching Tolerance Award winner, designed a unit to help her Oakland, California, students understand the movement. Now, her classroom walls feature a related timeline and student artwork.

Teachers can begin by providing context to promote a discussion about Black Lives Matter. Prepare younger students by reviewing vocabulary and definitions first. What is a protest and what is its

purpose? When and why did the movement start? How does Black Lives Matter relate to the civil rights movement?

Then educators can have students craft their own messages related to the Black Lives Matter movement. Discuss the range of students' messages, and post the messages around the room, allowing all voices to be heard. An activity like this allows students to process their own thoughts and find support in taking purposeful action.

Before planning a lesson related to Black Lives Matter, check with your administration, or review school or district policies. Or, like Schreiner, notify families and give them a chance

to offer input and resources. With this support, educators can initiate meaningful discussions about the movement with students.

### **How do my school and I respond if a student's parents do not support their gender identification or expression?**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits gender- and sex-based discrimination in federally funded schools. That means it protects students' gender identification and expression, even if parents do not approve of it. Ultimately, educators' responsibility is to act in their students' best interests and to create an environment in which all

students feel safe to learn. A key component of students' safety is whether they can express their full identities at school.

Teachers should use students' preferred pronouns, which is one way to make them feel safe. Ask students to specify their preferred pronouns in a survey and tell them your own. Avoid gender-specific phrases like "boys and girls"; try "scholars" or "thinkers" instead.

If a student's family does not support the child's gender identification, arrange to have a conversation with them and the school's counselor. We also suggest that you consult Gender Spectrum's Gender Inclusive Schools Toolkit, which helps students and adults plan how they will communicate about gender. You can also tell the student that they can speak with the school's counselor or psychologist without parental consent.

You or the counselor can try to bridge the conflict by using mindfulness techniques. A Teaching Tolerance Advisory Board member points out that recognizing different perspectives is the first step toward compassion. Check on your student and encourage them as they work with their family to find understanding.

### **ASK TEACHING TOLERANCE!**

Need the kind of advice and expertise only Teaching Tolerance can provide? Email us at [editor@tolerance.org](mailto:editor@tolerance.org) with "Ask TT" in the subject line.



BLOG 11.10.16 // TEACHING

# What to Say to Kids on November 10 and the Days After

BY MAUREEN COSTELLO

Educators and parents had one job [on November 9]: Reassure kids and help them feel safe in the wake of the most ugly, damaging and high-stakes election in American history. For the foreseeable future, in fact, they'll need to double down on creating a school climate that's free of fear and feels safe.

But safety isn't enough, and it's not the only thing our children—and our country—need right now. Kids will sniff out false reassurance, and they will learn that the adults who are doling it out can't be trusted. They desperately need their teachers and parents to tell them the truth: Everything is not OK. We have work to do, and we can do it.



## And readers replied...

I feel the best kindness we teachers have to offer beyond a sense of immediate safety (no small thing) is the message of responsibility. Some of my students will be old enough to vote in the next election and all will be old enough to be active. They were kind of taken aback when I pointed it out, but maybe also reassured that they won't always be in this position. Knowledge really is power! And they need power.

The teachable moment in this is how to reestablish a sense of "public" in your public school. It's less about the election result itself and more about civility, respect, inclusion, listening ... qualities that were absent during the campaign itself. It's also a chance to analyze results for older students, debate the efficacy of the Electoral College. Isn't this what school is really for?

[READ THE FULL POST HERE](#)

[tolerance.org/blog/what-say-kids-november-10-and-days-after](http://tolerance.org/blog/what-say-kids-november-10-and-days-after)



## HAVE YOU SEEN OUR BLOG LATELY?

Check out some of the most talked-about blog posts. Go to [tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org) and search for these headlines:



**Teaching My Daughter That Africa Is a Continent**  
BY PATRICE GOPO



**Your Voice Is Safe Here**  
BY BARBIE GARAYÚA-TUDRYN



**Dear Olympic Media: Do Better by Women Athletes**  
BY COLLEEN LUTZ CLEMENS



**Dispelling Six Myths About Transgender Identity**  
BY RICK MULA

## DID YOU KNOW?

*Gender-nonconforming students may be more likely to face school discipline due to dress codes that reinforce binary gender norms.*

—GLSEN

# A Little Girl and a Horse Named Freckles

I remember the first time I met Eliza. She was navigating, with the assistance of an adult, a set of stairs as a new kindergartner at Mt. Desert Elementary School. Having been her case manager for over three years now, I have many memories of our shared time, but one time stands out. Following an outing that I was not part of, I initiated a math lesson with Eliza. But she wasn't ready for math. Instead, she had a question for me.

"What your horse's name, Ms. Sharpe?"

"Eliza, I don't have a horse."

But she persisted. "What your horse's name, Ms. Sharpe?"

Now I was searching my past. I *did* have a horse once.

"Eliza, I did have a horse when I was a little girl, but I don't have a horse now."

She looked at me steadily. "Freckles," she concluded.

Although I have absolutely no memory of ever telling Eliza about Freckles, I must have told her this story at some point, and she remembered because that's the kind of person she is. The details of people's lives are deeply important to her. I later learned from staff who had been part of the outing that, just before getting off the bus to return to school, the group had been talking about people and horses they knew.



*Karen Sharpe is a special education teacher at Mt. Desert Elementary School in Northeast Harbor, Maine.*

Moments like this are why I teach. Moments when students I work with reveal their profound strengths. Moments when I hope that some of my nurturing and nudging have helped them to reach those milestones.

My desire to help those who need a voice arrived early in my life. As a small child, I was always moved by the plight of the smallest and weakest

kittens in a litter. Later, at my elementary school, I found that I gravitated toward the marginalized children who watched from the periphery but did not join in the fun on the playground. These were children who needed a voice, an advocate.

I chose a career in education and, although I taught fifth grade for 13 years, the idea of teaching special

## 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 600-word submission for the "Why I Teach" column to [editor@tolerance.org](mailto:editor@tolerance.org).

education began to knock early on. As I encountered struggling students in my classroom, I yearned to have more time to devote to them. What they needed was just the right teaching method and a little more one-on-one time with their teacher.

Motherhood had me taking a break from the classroom, and I tucked away what was becoming a passion for teaching special education. A conversation with a special educator friend later re-ignited that passion, and soon afterward, I got certified as a special education teacher.

I have been fortunate to have Eliza and other young people in my life as they and their families have helped me to answer my own questions about my purpose and brought me to a place of deeper compassion.

To the delight and wonderment of Eliza's parents, family and friends, Eliza has surpassed her doctors' predictions. She walks. In fact, she runs and jumps. She talks—and she finds great joy in conversations with others. I am thankful for those teaching moments when the unlikely becomes a possibility. The moment when a little girl insisted that I did, after all, have a horse named Freckles.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

*Schools with student populations that are at least 90 percent white spend about \$733 more per student than schools mostly comprised of students of color.*

—Center for American Progress

*In the 2013–14 school year, the most common home languages for ELL students were Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Vietnamese. Students with Spanish-speaking home environments accounted for 76.5 percent of ELL students.*

—National Center for Education Statistics

BLOG 9.23.16 // MEDIA LITERACY, TEACHING

## Teaching Ideology and Banned Books

BY CODY MILLER

My students are always surprised by the innuendos and juvenile humor in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. "But this is Shakespeare!" some of them gasp. This reaction leads into conversations about why the play is rarely banned. Arguably, *Romeo and Juliet* deals with as many controversial topics as [Sherman] Alexie's and [Marjane] Satrapi's texts. The difference? Shakespeare is a "classic" writer.

I unpack with my students the ideology behind the term *classic*. Does it mean old? Somewhat. We then brainstorm what so-called classic texts students are familiar with in order to find common themes among them. Are these texts written by Europeans? Largely, but there are some American writers. Are they all written by males? Not all of them, but certainly women's representation is lacking. How many authors of color appear on classic lists? Not too many. What about LGBTQ writers? Almost nonexistent. So why is Shakespeare's coverage of controversial topics OK, but not Alexie's or Satrapi's? With this conversation, students come to see the ideological forces behind the banning of books.



### And readers replied...

As a Native, I cannot express how true to life Alexie's books are. People find them objectionable because they directly counter the whitewashed view of Natives we were all presented with in school. ... Alexie is raw, real and talented—and that scares people. The "easiest" solution is just to ban his books, and no one will have to "deal with" the conversation, controversy, mistreatment of Natives, and divergent views his literature contains. His [work] makes people question what they've been taught to believe, and that scares people.

When I was teaching high school, I had an extensive classroom library and on Banned Book Week I set up a table of banned books and told the kids to check with their parents before choosing any of them. By creating the forbidden fruit, those books were read by a good number of students, who otherwise would never pick up a book.

[READ THE FULL POST HERE](#)

[tolerance.org/blog/teaching-ideology-and-banned-books](http://tolerance.org/blog/teaching-ideology-and-banned-books)

Librarian Amy Trulock works at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall in Los Angeles County.



Not all educators stand at the front of a class. In each issue, we interview an outstanding educator who works outside the classroom.

## An Ambassador for Libraries

Amy Trulock is the librarian at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall, a short-term detention facility in Los Angeles County, and the library is part of the County of Los Angeles Public Library. Trulock strives to show Los Padrinos residents that their library—and the public library system on the outside—is a place where they can find a teen-centered community space, resources and enrichment opportunities. In short, she's an ambassador for libraries.

### **The Los Padrinos Library opened in August 2016, and you're its first librarian. What inspired you to work at a youth detention hall?**

I took a class in correctional library management [in grad school], and it was there that I really thought that I could be suited for a juvenile hall

library. But I was also still really drawn to the public library. ... I was a teen librarian at two different [county] locations, and when I saw this transfer opportunity [to Los Padrinos Library] come up, within the hour, I had talked to my current supervisor and also submitted my name to be on the transfer list to be interviewed.

I just think it's the best of both worlds; I get to be a teen librarian in a public library that's embedded in a juvenile hall facility. So, by doing that, I get to not only supplement [residents'] academic work—to supplement what they're doing in the school, provide them with recreational opportunities—but I also get to be an ambassador so that they can see the library as a place that they want to continue to go to when they're released.

### **How does the library collection support the residents' literacy and personal growth?**

We're not just providing recreational reading material but a nonfiction range: on things such as health, including mental health and addiction; stories of kids that have survived ... foster care, gotten out of gangs; books on teen parenting, searching for jobs and applying for college.

We're working on building a collection that *truly* has something for everyone, that has diverse characters and that also covers a range of reading ability. We do have a small Spanish collection that we've been building, and we're looking to also add a story-time and parenting collection so that those [who are] teen parents ... will be able to practice reading to

**“It’s more than just books. The library is a valuable resource for the rest of their lives.”**

their children for when they’re out. That way, we can encourage literacy not only in the teen residents, but then work toward making a difference in the next generation.

It’s more than just books; it’s important to introduce them to everything we have to offer. The library is ... a valuable resource for the rest of their lives. All of the students, when they leave the system, are given a [Los Angeles County] library card. ... It’ll already be filled out for them. There is nothing that they have to do other than be released and continue on their journey and then to start enjoying that [library access] on the outside.

**What’s a common barrier in your daily work, and how do you tackle it?**

Honestly, I think one of the main barriers is that this is a very transient population. ... I think that’s definitely a positive on one end because if kids aren’t staying in the system long and they’re getting released, that’s wonderful. But it does take some fine-tuning because each week it’s different; each week we’re meeting new people.

I think it’s very important that we, both Elsa [the library assistant] and I, come here from a very

nonjudgmental place. ... Whatever they’re struggling with, whatever [in] their past has brought them here, we can find a book that can help give them hope and give them some guidance or find something they can relate

to. I think that’s also very important when you’re dealing with such a diverse population and when you’re dealing with children. They need to feel safe; they need to feel respected at the same time.

**What’s one of your early successes with residents?**

Every time someone says that they don’t want to get a book [or] they don’t really like to read and we still find a book for them, that’s a success. That’s been happening at least once a day since we’ve been open.

One girl came in and mentioned that she had a headache, and I asked if it was because of allergies from the winds, and she said that she had been crying. And another one of the girls asked her why she’d been crying, and she said because she realizes she’s all alone in the world. The other girl said [something like], “But you’ve got books.” The fact that they see [the library] as something that is a positive in their life, that’s a real win for us.

**DOWN THE HALL**

Know an excellent administrator, librarian or counselor we should interview? Tell us all about them at [editor@tolerance.org](mailto:editor@tolerance.org).

**Lessons Learned**

Our classroom resources are grade-specific and align with the four domains of the Social Justice Standards: Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action. Find the lessons at [tolerance.org/classroom-resources](http://tolerance.org/classroom-resources).

**Who Is an Immigrant?—Identity (Elementary School)**

Students explore the idea that where people come from is *one* part of their identity, not their *entire* identity.

**Exploring Young Immigrant Stories—Diversity (Elementary School)**

Teach students about diversity in their classroom and around the world with hands-on exercises and youth stories.

**STEM by the Numbers—Justice (Elementary School)**

Students use data and statistics to examine the underrepresentation of women and people of color in science and engineering careers.

**STEM for All—Action (Elementary School)**

Build students’ knowledge of STEM jobs by having them research scientists and brainstorm ways to make science careers accessible to everyone.

**FREE STUFF!**

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

Narrative 4 is a global story-exchange platform that encourages empathy and positive change by helping people share their personal narratives.

[narrative4.com](http://narrative4.com)

End Zero Tolerance works to keep students out of the criminal justice system and in school by distributing up-to-date statistics and digital resources, including toolkits and policy reform examples.

[endzerotolerance.org](http://endzerotolerance.org)

A Silent Epidemic, a data-driven visual app from NPR, explores the disturbing lack of counseling and treatment opportunities for public school students with mental health disorders.

[apps.npr.org/mental-health](http://apps.npr.org/mental-health)

Teach This Poem, from the Academy of American Poets, provides K-12 teachers with interdisciplinary tools and activities for bringing poetry into classrooms.

[poets.org/poetsorg/teach-poem](http://poets.org/poetsorg/teach-poem)





## HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS?

### POP QUIZ TRUE OR FALSE?

1. Public schools must enroll and register every child who resides in their geographic boundaries regardless of the child's or parents' citizenship. **TRUE.** *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in public schools on the basis of race, color or national origin. The U.S. Supreme Court also ruled in Plyler v. Doe (1982) that such discrimination violates the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment.*

2. Parents can “opt out” of having their child receive ELL services. **TRUE.** *Even if families opt out of ELL services, the student must still be assessed for proficiency annually.*

3. Schools do not have to screen ELL students for advanced programs, such as Gifted/Talented, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate. **FALSE.** *Screenings must be inclusive and provide language accommodations.*

4. ELL students can't be considered for eligibility in special education while they are receiving ELL services. **FALSE.** *A school cannot delay a special education evaluation because a student is receiving ELL instruction.*

5. Once a student leaves an ELL program, they do not have to be monitored. **FALSE.** *All students must be monitored for two years after exiting an ELL program.*



## Vocabulary

Here are words and acronyms you should know when working with English language learners.

### CHARACTERIZING STUDENTS

#### ➤ **English language learner (ELL):**

A student who is in the process of acquiring English language skills; also referred to as an English learner (EL). The U.S. Department of Education specifies ELL as the most appropriate term because it privileges accomplishments over deficits.

#### ➤ **Limited English proficient (LEP):**

A federal term referring to a person whose primary language is other than English and who has limited English proficiency in one of the four domains of language proficiency—speaking, listening, reading and writing. This term is commonly used to describe

DID YOU KNOW?

*In a 2014 survey of Muslim students in California, ages 11 to 18, one in five said they'd experienced discrimination by a school staff member.*

—COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC  
RELATIONS—CALIFORNIA

## ELL BY THE NUMBERS

# 4.5 MILLION

ELL students attending school during the 2013–14 academic year

non-English-speaking parents and families of students. Many social justice educators do not use this term because it characterizes students and their families based on a deficit rather than a strength.

### OTHER TERMS COMMONLY USED IN SCHOOLS

Educators tell us that these are terms to pay attention to:

➔ **Culturally and linguistically diverse students:** Often used to describe a base of students in a school or district who may or may not need ELL services; characterizes multilingualism as an asset.

➔ **Language-minority students:** Describes students who speak a language other than the majority language at their school but is often used to refer to students who do not speak English, taking on a meaning that devalues multilingualism.

➔ **Students of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL):** Predates and is commonly interchanged with ELL but is often used to “other” ELL students.

➔ **Students of English as a second language (ESL):** Considered outdated, as it downplays the value of multilingualism.

### APPROPRIATE TERMS CONCERNING LEGAL STATUS

➔ **Unaccompanied minor or unaccompanied child:** A child under 18 who immigrates to and arrives in the United States without parents or guardians. Many unaccompanied minors arrive looking for family members already present in the United States. Many are also released from immigrant

detention facilities and supervised by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement.

➔ **Undocumented:** Preferred term to describe foreign nationals who are residing in the United States without legal status.

### INAPPROPRIATE, PEJORATIVE TERMINOLOGY

➔ “Illegal” and/or “aliens”

➔ “Anchor babies”

➔ “Parachute kids”

### A NOTE ABOUT TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

The protection of national origin requires education departments and school districts to take action to remove language barriers for ELL students and their families. Title VI also requires districts to respond to peer-to-peer bullying based on race, color or national origin.

## Federal Laws Protecting ELL Students

In addition to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and *Plyler v. Doe*, the federal laws below protect ELL students in our schools.

The **EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ACT (EEOA)** of 1974 prohibits discrimination against students. It also requires school districts and states’ departments of education to take action to ensure equal participation for everyone, including removing language barriers for ELL students.

The **EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)** of 2015 authorizes the U.S. Department of Education to award grants to state education departments, which may issue them as subgrants to K–12 school districts. The subgrants are intended to go toward improving ELL students’ instruction and abilities to meet state academic content and achievement standards. By accepting federal funds, districts are required to provide language accommodations to non-English-speaking families.



WEBINARS  
**WATCH  
LIVE OR ON  
DEMAND!**

## SPRING 2017 WEBINARS

# Be a Force for Equity and Justice at Your School!

Be a force for equity and justice at your school! These grab-and-go PD sessions offer timely resources, advice and strategies. Topping out at 45 minutes, you can participate live or watch on demand. Each webinar comes with a certificate of completion.

### **JANUARY 10**

Equity Matters Part I: Developing Empathy

### **JANUARY 17**

Equity Matters Part II: Engaging Families Through Home Visits

### **JANUARY 31**

Let's Talk! Teaching Black Lives Matter

### **FEBRUARY 21**

Equity Matters Part III: Confronting Implicit Bias

### **FEBRUARY 28**

Equity Matters Part IV: Understanding Equity Literacy



**TEACHING  
TOLERANCE**

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

**ALL SPRING WEBINARS BROADCAST TUESDAYS  
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# An Open Letter to Teachers Everywhere



## *I am troubled.*

As an educator, as a parent and as an activist, I am deeply troubled as I rethink public education and struggle to reconcile ideology with reality in our nation's classrooms and schools.

Collectively, I hear educators—and parents and politicians and others—say children are our future. We say that we want students to think critically, that we want them to be problem-solvers, to ask questions, to challenge us to make the world a better place.

And yet I see educators setting aside these high aspirations, choosing safety and compliance over boldness and creativity. I see educators silenced by the fear of professional disfavor and criticism.

I want a revolution of hope. I want educators to seize a golden opportunity to rethink the nature and purpose of public education.

A revolution that eliminates the hands-off practice of urging students to resolve their own problems while leaving students vulnerable to bullying

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BY RHONDA THOMASON

ILLUSTRATION BY KEITH NEGLEY

# *“I want a revolution of hope.”*

and burdened with issues too huge for them to ever resolve. A revolution that no longer supports sanctions that allow educators to ignore bullying or harassment when it echoes one’s own personal biases. A revolution that eliminates sanctioned school prayers that favor a particular religion and affirms the acceptance of students with differing beliefs.

Imagine such a revolution.

Imagine an educational system in which educators invoke standards of compassion, empathy, action and reason as they question the deep regularities that suppress achievement.

Imagine the power of educators valuing dissent and affirming what students *can* achieve rather than magnifying what they *can’t*.

Imagine educators giving ourselves permission to be vulnerable learners acknowledging that our judgment might be biased. Imagine us inviting troubling, courageous conversations that have the power to move us beyond our confidence and challenge our own assumptions and biases.

Imagine listening deeply to parents and students willing to help us get to know the “inside” of their experiences. Imagine unveiling ingrained stereotypes in order to create communities of belonging, abundance and trust.

Imagine competent educators who deserve and command autonomy and respect—and then use it to create classrooms of equality and sharing, where *all* students find their cultures reflected in the stories teachers tell, the languages they speak and the facts textbooks reveal.

As an educator, I often skated on the edge of revolution and compliance. While compliance may secure careers and livelihoods, it can leave teachers depleted, students tested rather than taught and marginalized rather than empowered. Compliance feeds mediocrity. Boldness is a catalyst for grassroots revolution—a revolution that serves our students as they enter the challenges of a wonderful and sometimes cruel world.

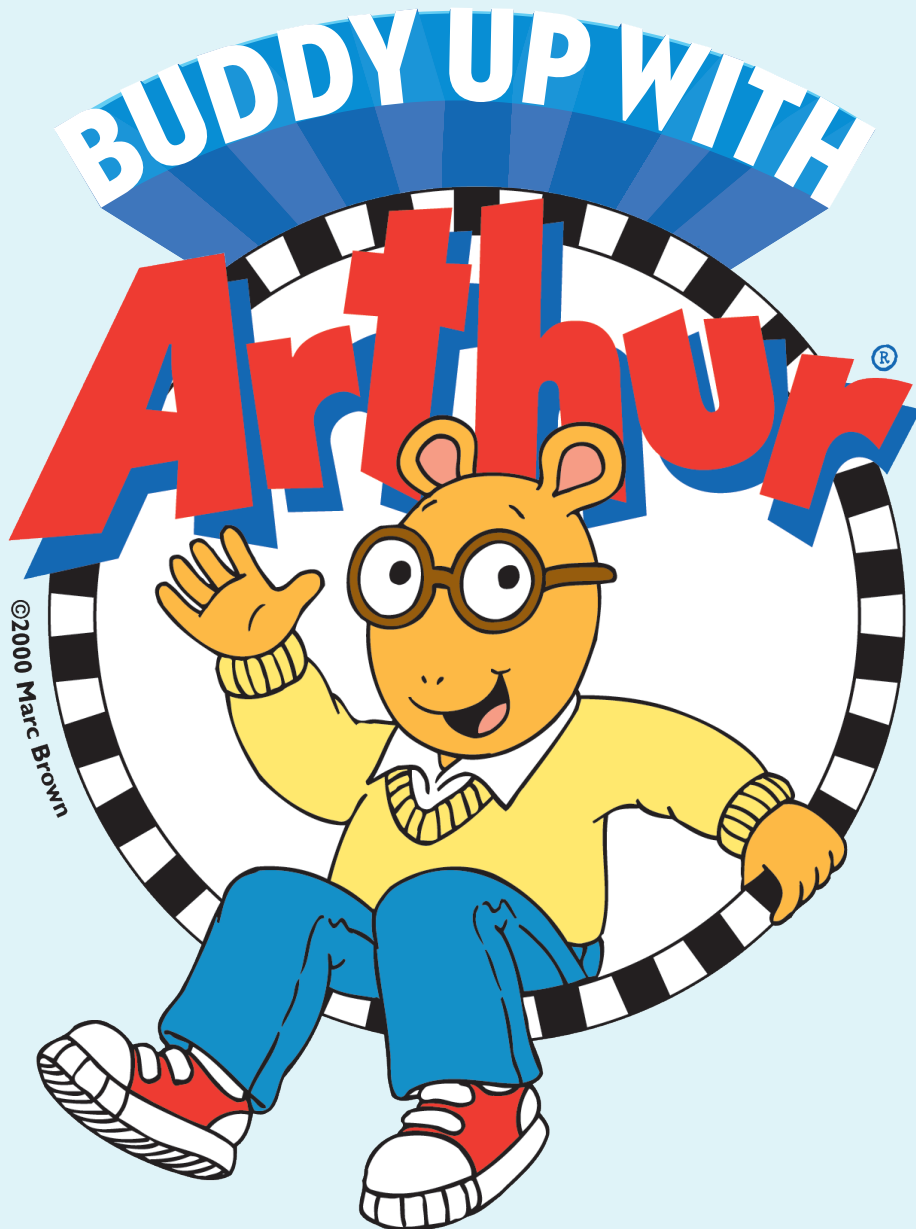
May we become a nation that again values public education as a pathway to

equity and achievement. And through the small daily revolutionary actions of critical educators, may we insist that our voices and actions serve to empower this generation to create a better world.

May we become educators who seek out students’ experiences, interests and talents as a means of engagement, and may our passion empower those who have little power. Authentic caring is a powerful force, and it always is worth the cost. ♦

*Thomason is a retired teacher who has worked with both Teaching Tolerance and Welcoming Schools. She lives in Montgomery, Alabama. Thomason’s open letter first appeared in the Fall 2008 issue of Teaching Tolerance.*

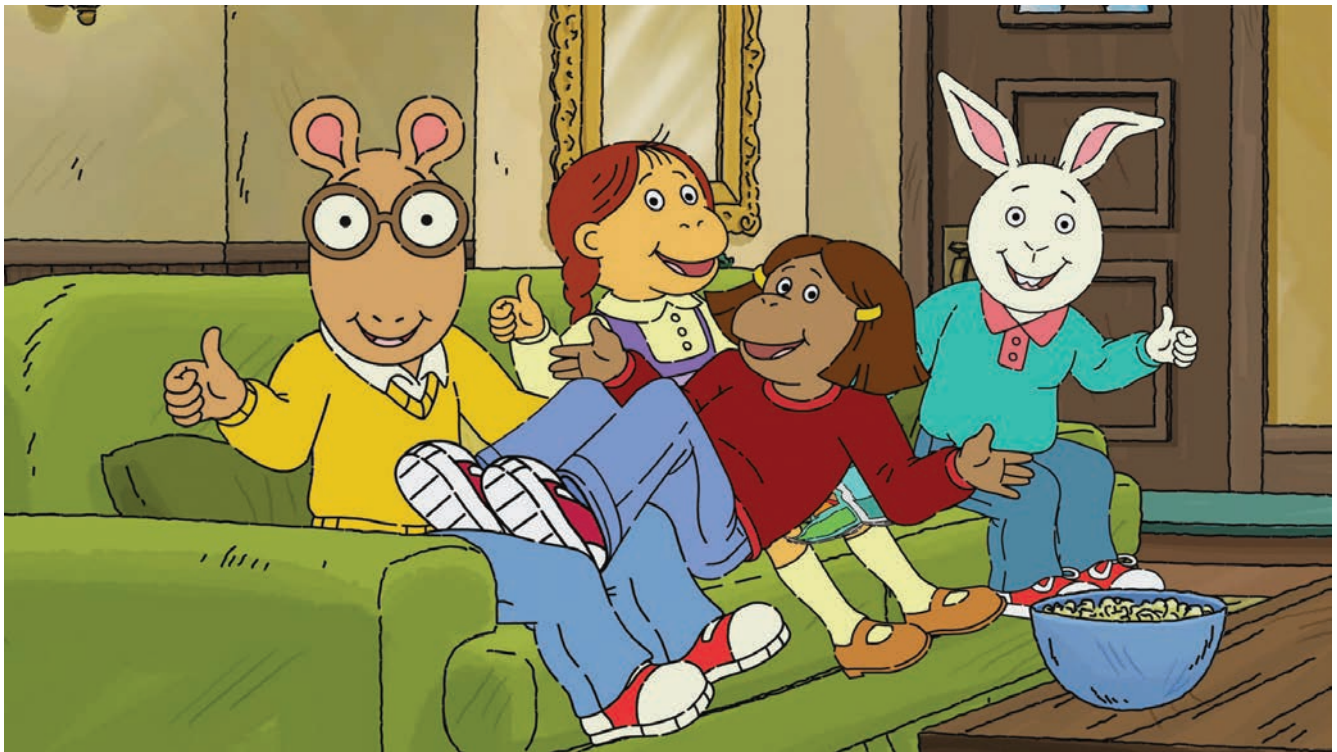




EVERYONE'S FAVORITE AARDVARK IS COMING  
TO A CLASSROOM NEAR YOU.

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY MAUREEN COSTELLO

**OF ALL THE** stars produced at WGBH—Boston's public broadcaster—Arthur the aardvark is unquestionably one of the most recognizable. Since making the leap from books to television in 1996, Arthur has experienced the daily trials of childhood alongside his elementary-age fans on the eponymous PBS Kids children's show, currently produced by WGBH and Oasis Animation, Inc. Teaching Tolerance spoke with WGBH Senior Executive Producer Carol Greenwald about the secret to Arthur's longevity and how the new *Arthur Interactive Media (AIM) Buddy Project* can help support anti-bias education.



**Could you begin by telling us *Arthur's* origin story?**

We began working on *Arthur* in 1993. I don't know if you remember who Peggy Charren was, but she was a proponent of quality children's television and literacy and a founder of Action for Children's Television. One study she did showed that kids were more likely to read books if they saw them on TV. Our children's programming team was inspired by that, and went on a hunt to find a great book series that could sustain what PBS was looking for, which was a daily television series.

The way we ended up finding *Arthur* was that someone gave my then-3-year-old son a copy of Marc Brown's book *Arthur's Teeth*. Unlike the other kids' books I had been reading, I realized I didn't want to hide this one under the couch because it could stand up to repeated readings. Our team recognized by looking at what was there in the *Arthur* books—and what we dreamed of making—that we could do a lot of modeling of positive social emotional relationships between kids.

**How has *Arthur* stayed relevant for over 20 years?**

A lot of things kids experience today haven't changed from 20 years ago. Getting a pair of glasses, dealing with a bully or going to a new school—those are things that kids have always and will always experience. Those experiences are at the heart of many of our *Arthur* stories. At the same time, because we've been able to stay in continuous production, we've been able to respond to new trends and keep abreast of them—like episodes that address internet bullying as well as the new trends in social media. Even though our kids are too young for social media, we do recognize that it's in their world, and we've been able to respond to it.

**How is *Arthur's* message relevant to anti-bias educators?**

Since we started the show, it has always been a goal that none of our characters would be perfect. They would all stumble up against things that would mess them up; they would make mistakes; they would do things that real kids do

as they're learning, experimenting and figuring out who they are. As a consequence, what we've been able to do is to build stories around those experiences, both for the kid who makes the mistake and for the kid who's experiencing the impact of that mistake.

I think this actually does fit beautifully with what anti-bias educators are doing. Here are these characters in this world who are bumping up against all the things every kid bumps up against—and the trick is to intervene before things get solidified, before these mistakes become more serious. We give them the opportunity to really think about and discuss these things in what I hope is an authentic context.

**Why do you think children relate so well to the characters on the show?**

In part, it has to do with our characters never being perfect. In creating these characters, we really tried to include a range of personalities and life experiences. We've tried hard not to make any character identified as a specific ethnic group or



skin tone because we want kids to identify with the characters across the board. I have two interesting stories about that. One is about five years after we started the show, we did a research study that looked at what the appeal was of all the characters. Across social, economic, racial groups, Buster was the character both boys and girls said, “He’s the most like me.” We were very interested in that because it shows just how appealing a kind of a goofy character who occasionally makes mistakes is to kids. One of the things we did with Buster was put him in a family structure where his mom is a single parent, and that’s clearly very appealing.

Recently, a young African-American woman on my staff said to me, “Oh, you didn’t know Arthur was black?” I said, “You know, I did not. I’m glad you feel that way.” My hope is that any kid can look at any of these characters and say, “Oh yeah, that character is me.” I’m delighted that that’s what people are experiencing.

#### **Tell me a little bit about the *Arthur Interactive Media (AIM) Buddy Project*.**

As we began developing the AIM program, we took a look at a vocabulary-building show we had produced earlier called *Martha Speaks*. This was a reading buddies project. Research results showed us the program made an impact on kids’ vocabulary skills, which was great, but we also found there were subsidiary effects that had to do with school-climate improvement: the development of positive relationships between the older and younger buddies and an increase in self-esteem for the older buddies. It was like, “Whoa, this is some gold here.” We thought it would be great to try to combine the rich resource we have in *Arthur* stories with this buddy-pairing mechanism for reaching kids.

We partnered with a research team from the Institute for the Advancement of Youth Research and Development at Tufts University, under the direction of Dr. Richard Lerner, to create a program that focuses on five

### **Learn More About the AIM Buddy Project!**

AIM is a supplemental social, emotional and character development curriculum designed to help teachers fill programmatic gaps and accelerate learning. The free 20-session package includes interactive media, teacher planning videos, and a teacher guide that supports the planning processes and provides instructional support on the five AIM topics.

[t-t.site/aim-buddy](http://t-t.site/aim-buddy)

key topics—empathy, forgiveness, generosity, learning from others and honesty—that we thought would help build kids’ pro-social skills and, in effect, create a positive school climate and a reduction in behaviors like bullying. We created media and activities around these topics that were pulled from this rich *Arthur* resource.

Three years ago, we piloted the first interactive comic and unit of curriculum focused on empathy. Since then, we’ve created four additional media tools and curriculum units. The full program was part of a year-long research study during the 2015–2016 school year. The research data is now being analyzed, and reports will be ready for the program dissemination in January 2017.

Participation in a character-focused buddy project does a couple of things. One is it establishes a relationship between older and younger kids, and it gives those kids a context to have conversations about these issues that are maybe a little complicated to understand, maybe a little abstract, but then when they play the games and interact with the characters, it feels more concrete to them.

#### **What do you think adults who care about diversity, equity and social justice can learn from the ways in which children respond to *Arthur*?**

Children have not yet built up those big walls that adults have. There’s an ability to be open to new ideas, and to be able to take on this kind of learning that isn’t so deeply embedded or so rock hard that you can’t crack it, which is exactly why I feel so privileged to have worked on *Arthur* this long. I also think it’s so crucial that we are targeting kids in this age group. They are all growing up in an incredibly diverse world, they’re going to be experiencing this on an everyday basis, and it’s just crucial that we find ways for kids to understand and appreciate their differences, but also recognize where their similarities are and where they can work together. ♦

*Costello is the director of Teaching Tolerance.*





# Immigrant and Refugee Children

A GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

**THIS GUIDE WAS** created for educators, school support staff and service providers who teach, mentor and help open the doors of opportunity for undocumented youth and unaccompanied and refugee children currently living in the United States. Educators, school support staff and service providers are often the first individuals a student and/or family comes out to as undocumented.



Moreover, they are often the first ones to witness the impact of increased enforcement measures on students and their families.

Schools should be safe havens that embrace all students and families, regardless of citizenship and national origin, and that includes unaccompanied and refugee children. The 1982 U.S. Supreme Court case *Plyler v. Doe* ruled that undocumented children have a constitutional right to receive a free public K–12 education, which provides the means to becoming a “self-reliant and self-sufficient participant in society,” the court wrote, and instills the “fundamental values necessary to the maintenance of a democratic political system.” However, today’s increased enforcement measures by the Department of Homeland Security and campaign promises made by the incoming administration threaten that right for thousands of undocumented youth and the 4.1 million U.S.-born children who live in mixed-status households with at least one parent or family member who is undocumented.

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#### FACTS ABOUT UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

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An undocumented student is an aspiring citizen who came to the United States without legal documentation or who has overstayed his or her visa. These students:

- Often don’t know they are undocumented until they begin the college application process;
- Don’t qualify for federal grants or loans, even if they are in financial need and their parents pay taxes;
- Are racially and ethnically diverse, from all corners of the world, and are part of the 11.5 million undocumented immigrants in the United States.

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#### EDUCATOR’S FAQ ABOUT IMMIGRATION RAIDS

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**What impact do raids have on children and youth?** Research consistently shows that immigration enforcement actions have a harmful impact on the health, safety, academic performance and overall well-being of children, including U.S. citizen children living in mixed-status families. According to a 2010 report by the Urban Institute, children who witnessed parents or family members apprehended in a home raid were much more likely to experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder than children whose parents were arrested in other settings, including greater changes in sleeping and eating patterns and much higher degrees of fear and anxiety.

Several teachers in North Carolina also reported significant behavioral changes and increased absenteeism among students following a local community raid, including among U.S. citizen students.

**Are there places where raids are prohibited?** Yes, with exceptions. According to a policy memorandum released by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency in 2011, commonly referred to as the “sensitive locations memo,” ICE officers and agents are to refrain from enforcement actions at least at the following locations and events:

- schools (including preschools, primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and universities, and other institutions of learning, such as vocational and trade schools);
- hospitals;
- churches, synagogues, mosques and other institutions of worship, such as buildings rented for the purpose of religious services;
- funerals, weddings and other public religious ceremonies; and
- public demonstrations, such as a march, rally or parade.

*Note: The sensitive locations policy memorandum may be reversed. School leaders should stay informed about possible changes.*

**Is there a federal law that prevents schools from sharing student information?** Yes. Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), schools are prohibited, without parental consent, from providing information from a student’s file to federal immigration agents if the information would potentially expose a student’s immigration status. If ICE agents present a school with a removal warrant (deportation order), the school is still permitted to refrain from providing student information, as the warrant is administrative, not judicial. Under FERPA, schools may disclose directory information without consent, but they are required to allow parents and eligible

Download the full guide, including tear-and-share resources for students and families. [t-t.site/AFT-pledge](http://t-t.site/AFT-pledge)

students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Some schools [and the Southern Poverty Law Center] have also interpreted the *Plyler* decision as prohibiting them from requiring students to provide Social Security cards or birth certificates as a condition of enrollment, test taking or participation in school activities. For more on FERPA, see [familypolicy.ed.gov/ferpa-parents-students](http://familypolicy.ed.gov/ferpa-parents-students)

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### WHAT EDUCATORS, SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF AND COMMUNITIES CAN DO

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- Issue a statement—in English and in other languages spoken at the school—articulating that the school supports immigrant students/parents and affirming publically that it is a welcoming site.
- Stress the importance of taking proactive steps to ensure the safety and well-being of children and entire communities.
- Distribute “know your rights” materials to students, families and communities about what to do if a raid occurs or an individual is detained. [unitedwedream.org/toolbox](http://unitedwedream.org/toolbox)
- Identify a bilingual person at your school who can serve as the immigration resource advocate in your building or on your campus.
- Work with parents to develop a family immigration raid emergency plan.
- Provide a safe place for students to wait if a parent or sibling has been detained.
- Provide counseling for students who have had a family member detained by ICE.
- Work with your school board to pass a resolution affirming schools as welcoming places of learning for all students, distancing the schools from enforcement

actions that separate families.

- Strengthen relationships with local institutions of higher education and community-based organizations that can support the needs of unaccompanied children and students with interrupted formal education.

- Maintain—in English and in other languages spoken at the school—a list of resources, such as the names of mental health providers, social workers, pro bono attorneys and local immigration advocates and organizations that can be shared with your students and their families.

- Partner with a pro bono attorney, legal aid organization or immigrant rights organization to schedule a “know your rights” workshop on campus to inform students and families about their rights.

- Find out if there is a local immigration raid rapid response team. These teams usually consist of attorneys, media personnel and community leaders who may be able to provide support.

- Participate in National Educators Coming Out Day, held annually on November 12, and “come out” in support of undocumented students.
- Participate in National Institutions Coming Out Day, held annually on April 7. [unitedwedream.org/nicod](http://unitedwedream.org/nicod)

For additional tools and model resolutions to create safe, welcoming environments for all students, visit [aft.org/immigration/ICERaid](http://aft.org/immigration/ICERaid) and view the toolkit for this story.

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### TAKING ACTION BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

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**Advocate to stop raids and halt deportation proceedings.** Unaccompanied children and youth should be in school, not in detention centers awaiting deportation. Educators can play an important role in protesting raids and halting deportation proceedings. For example, if a student has been detained by ICE, you can send a letter of inquiry to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security,

asking for prosecutorial discretion to be exercised or considered, or you can file a formal civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

You can also distribute the United We Dream deportation defense guide, which was published to inform members of Congress and other elected officials about the role they can play in stopping the deportation of their constituents and other community members.

Elected officials have successfully advocated for individuals in removal proceedings for years and continue to employ this process to help immigrant communities even today. The guide is also a useful resource for community advocates and people in deportation proceedings seeking support from their elected officials. To download the guide, visit [unitedwedream.org/deportationdefenseguide](http://unitedwedream.org/deportationdefenseguide).

**Adopt resolutions.** School districts are responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of all their students while they are in school. One way to create a welcoming school environment and protect undocumented students while in class and on school grounds is to pass a resolution that restricts ICE agents' access to school property, similar to the one the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) passed in February 2016. The LAUSD resolution:

- Forbids immigration enforcement agents from going on campus without approval from the superintendent and the LAUSD law office.
- Forbids school staff from asking about a student's immigration status or that of family members.
- Provides teachers, administrators and other staff with training on how to deal with immigration issues and how to notify families in multiple languages of issues.
- Asks all schools to treat students equitably, including those receiving free and reduced price meals, transportation and other services.
- Requires the superintendent to come

up with a plan to provide assistance and information for students and families "if faced with fear and anxiety related to immigration enforcement efforts."

Such resolutions can also improve protections for students by affirming that the schoolhouse doors are open to all students, no matter their prior academic attainment or their language proficiency. For additional information about what actions cities and counties can take to protect immigrants and make communities welcoming places for all, visit Cities for Action. [citiesforaction.us](http://citiesforaction.us)

**Make public statements.** Educators, administrators, students and community allies can make public statements denouncing immigration enforcement raids to reassure students and families that their local school remains a safe haven.

➤ Statement from Kevin M. Maxwell, CEO of the Prince George's County (Maryland) Public Schools: [bit.ly/1shXnvW](http://bit.ly/1shXnvW).

➤ Statement from the San Francisco Unified School District reassuring families that any ICE request for access to a district school will go through a thorough review process: [bit.ly/1OTMTHV](http://bit.ly/1OTMTHV).

**Create an online petition to prevent a student's deportation.** Online petitions are powerful tools for building public awareness and community support. See the petition below for 19-year-old Kimberly Pineda Chavez, who was detained in the United States after escaping violence in Honduras. [notonemoredeportation.com/portfolio/kimberly](http://notonemoredeportation.com/portfolio/kimberly)

**Organize a rally or walkout opposing ICE raids and deportations.** In February 2016, educators and community allies in Durham, North Carolina, organized a rally in support of a high school student detained by ICE. Actions like this help to support individuals fighting their deportation cases. The student's teachers even mailed school assignments to his detention facility to help him stay on top of his work. "There is nothing that will hold me back from giving a kid his classwork and finish their education and graduate," teacher Ellen Holmes told a local news station. ♦

## Resources

Additional examples, resources and tools to take action:

Take Action to Stop Deportations  
[unitedwedream.org/action/stop-deportations/open-cases](http://unitedwedream.org/action/stop-deportations/open-cases)

Post-Election Talking Points and Resources  
[ilrc.org/daca-talking-points](http://ilrc.org/daca-talking-points)

Post-Election Resource for Schools  
[ilrc.org/post-election-resource-schools](http://ilrc.org/post-election-resource-schools)

Know Your Rights and What Immigrant Families Should Do Now  
[ilrc.org/know-your-rights-and-what-immigrant-families-should-do-now](http://ilrc.org/know-your-rights-and-what-immigrant-families-should-do-now)

Family Preparedness Plan  
[ilrc.org/family-preparedness-plan](http://ilrc.org/family-preparedness-plan)

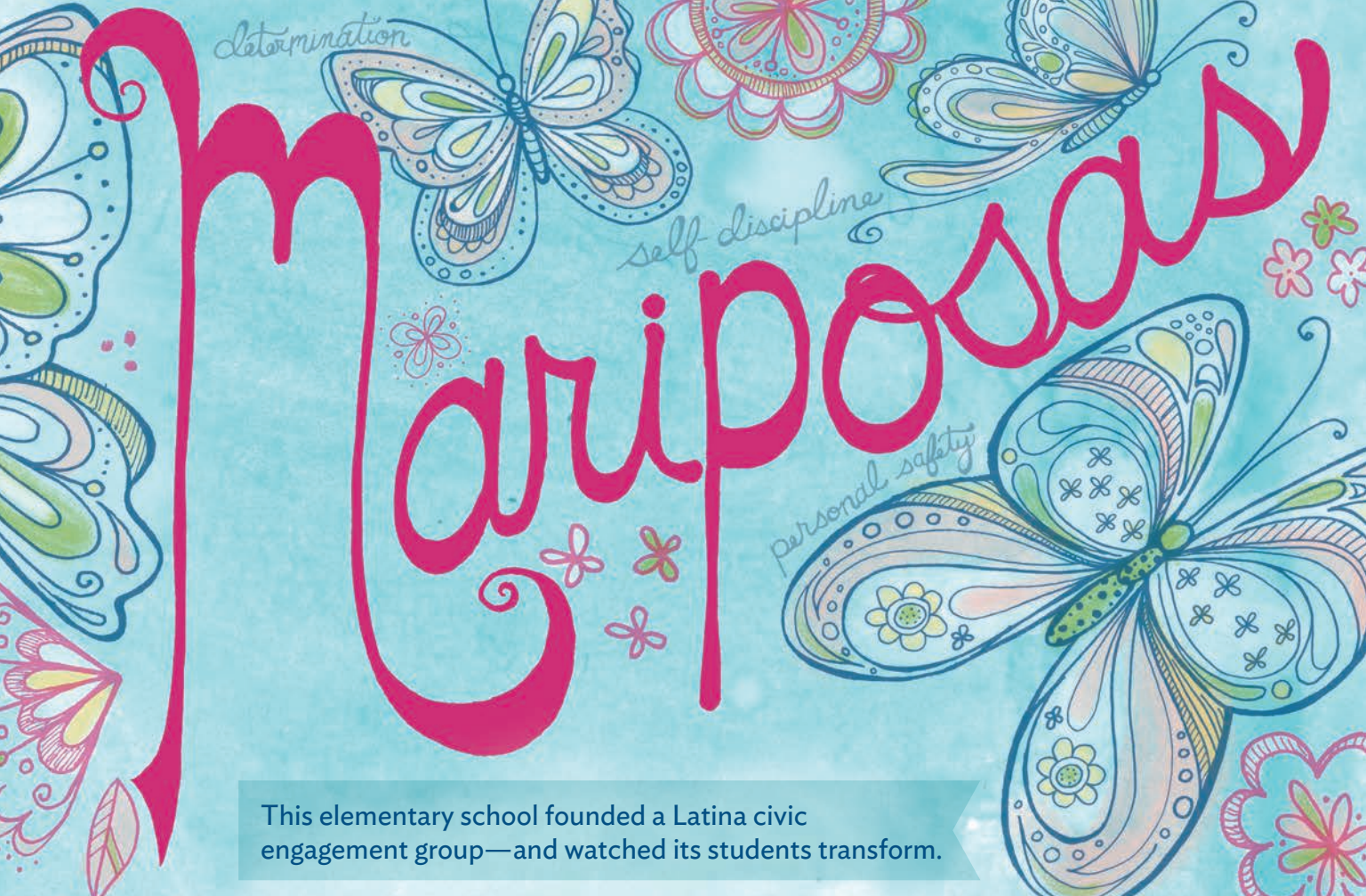
**EDITOR'S NOTE** *This content was originally published by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and its partners: United We Dream's Dream Educational Empowerment Program, the National Immigration Law Center and First Focus. This excerpt was adapted and reprinted with generous permission from the AFT.*



### TOOLKIT

Support and affirm your immigrant students with these resources. VISIT » [tolerance.org/immigrant-guide](http://tolerance.org/immigrant-guide)





This elementary school founded a Latina civic engagement group—and watched its students transform.

BY JEY EHRENHALT ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH CALVERT

**IN 2013**, the first dual-language elementary school in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, opened its doors: Frank Porter Graham Bilingüe Elementary School. Principal Emily Bivins was thrilled to be offering services to approximately 450 K-5 students, almost half of whom were Latino.

But partway through the first school year, Bivins and her staff noticed something: The Latina students rarely raised their hands, even those who were at the top of their class. When school counselor Barbie Garayúa-Tudryn asked the students directly why they weren't volunteering, one girl replied, "Think about the white kids. They know all the answers. They're always right. I'm not always right. Think about what their parents do; they're doctors and lawyers. Our parents clean their houses."

The feelings of inferiority this student described were all too familiar to Garayúa-Tudryn. She came to the United States from Puerto Rico as a teenager and remembers immediately noticing a vastly different racial context. "People no longer viewed me as an equal," she recalls.

Garayúa-Tudryn wanted the Latina girls attending Frank Porter Graham to have what she hadn't—a resource that would boost their voices and help them feel confident in their identities despite navigating unfamiliar waters. With Bivins' support, she decided to launch an empowerment group for Latina students called *Mariposas* (butterflies), a metaphor symbolizing transformation and migration.

The *Mariposas* curriculum focuses on six themes: determination, self-discipline, curiosity, activism, tenacity and personal safety. While the group's bottom line is to improve school and community engagement, Garayúa-Tudryn and other group leaders work toward academic and personal success by discussing the realities of the Latino diaspora in the United States, collaborating with families and promoting civic ownership and socio-emotional health.

It's necessary work, and not just because school participation is low. According to national data, one-third of Latino students do not expect to achieve their educational goals,

and 14 percent drop out of school. Hispanic girls have higher than average rates of mental health issues and a higher rate of suicidal thoughts and behaviors than either non-Hispanic white female students or Hispanic male students. With the highest teen pregnancy rate of any racial group, Latina youth face a double minority threat.

Garayúa-Tudryn knows these risks—particularly for girls hovering around middle-school age—and puts them front and center in her programming.

“At the beginning of the year, I create a survey with the goal of rating the girls on their personal perceptions, from academic motivation, to parental relationships, to personal safety, to self-esteem, self-value, self-perception,” she says. “Last year, body image was a huge red flag. There were a lot of girls that were bordering with eating disorders, and I brought in the eating disorder specialist from UNC, who happens to be also bilingual, to come and talk to the parents and also to come and talk to the girls. I do use

a lot of data to drive the curriculum.”

One of the ways Garayúa-Tudryn seeks to mitigate risks and debunk feelings of inferiority is by educating first-generation American Latina girls about their rights to an equal education. This knowledge builds confidence and translates into higher rates of participation at school—a critical college and career readiness skill.

“If you don’t have your voice, and if you’re just living in the margin and nobody’s really noticing it, ... you’re not going to try to put your voice out there in collaboration with others,” she says. “You’re just going to continue ... with the same behavior, which is the behavior of someone that’s marginalized.”

The girls started a tally system to track their participation. If one student denigrates her performance that week, other group members offer support, applauding the risks she took in spite of her fears. One fifth-grader, Silvia, says she is no longer afraid to volunteer in class. “If I never raise my hand and I never give my ideas to people, then how can they help me?” she reasons.

Garayúa-Tudryn also shares achievement data with *Mariposas* families, engaging them in the responsibility of keeping the girls on track at school.

“Last year and the first year of *Mariposas* ... [the girls] were under the grade level that they were supposed to be. I had the meeting with the parents explaining, ‘OK, this is the deal. You have four months to really push your girls at home.’ I had the girls also in the same meeting and I said, ‘And you guys have four months to get it together. This is what you should be doing at home.’ I gave the parents a list of all the things that could be helpful, but I didn’t stop there. I had the girls also do rating scales of their efforts at home, so they were keeping track of their homework and keeping track of how much extra reading they were doing. Between the efforts at home and the hard work of their teachers, by the end of the year 97 percent ... were at or above grade level in reading”

## Interested in starting your own civic empowerment group? Here’s a breakdown of the nuts and bolts.

🔍 **Look at Your Community** School achievement and discipline data are important jumping off points for identifying which students need services, but don’t stop there. “Talk to parents, and talk to students,” suggests José Nambo, assistant principal and *Mariposas* facilitator. He and other group leaders maintain that their model could work for any identity group.

“Imagine modeling civic engagement for this community from the LGBT lens!” says Garayúa-Tudryn, adding that a civil engagement group could even work for white students by focusing on privilege and helping them become healthy allies to marginalized people.

👥 **Start Small** *Mariposas* began with just 12 members. “You can really craft your message and style,” Nambo says. “Beginning with a small group gives you the opportunity to ask, ‘How is this working?’ A small group will humble you and give you direction.”

👪 **Require Family Participation** Families are the backbone of *Mariposas*. “Without the support of these families, there’s no way I would be able to do any of this,” says Garayúa-Tudryn. Parental investment in the group is high, she says, in part because attendance at meetings is mandatory and in part because the benefits to the girls are so apparent.

💰 **Find Funds** In its first year, *Mariposas* received a \$450 seed grant from the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools Public School Foundation. The group also receives a small stipend from local instructional supply funds. At \$400, it covers basic materials for weekly meetings such as poster board and colored pencils. The rest of the group’s funding is used solely for the end-of-the-year trip. *Mariposas*’ fundraising goal for the trip is \$4,500.

To meet the goal, 15 parents come together as a fundraising committee. They vote on fundraising ideas and coordinate responsibilities with the rest of the group. This year, the committee voted to contribute \$100 per family to the trip fund to relieve stress on the facilitators. “This promotes ownership and empowerment, by moving parents from receiving to giving,” says Garayúa-Tudryn.

The fundraising committee also utilizes Donors Choose, an online education funding source. Through Donors Choose, they raised \$876, enough to pay for the bus to travel to Washington, D.C. Learn more at [donorschoose.org](https://donorschoose.org).



# “PIES, Volar”

para qué los quiero si tengo alas pa’

~FRIDA KAHLO 1953

Although the *Mariposas* families have been effective in helping their girls achieve academically, they’re often limited in their ability to model civic engagement. Most *Mariposas* members are citizens, but their families often don’t have the social capital to navigate social and political obstacles. While the girls in *Mariposas* come from loving homes, many of their parents are still learning to communicate the privileges that citizenship affords. Many have not exercised rights such as freedom of speech or the freedom of assembly.

“As parents, we feel we don’t have the right to get involved, because we are immigrants, so we step aside,” says Laura Bernal, whose daughter is a *Mariposas* member. “But our children must understand that their reality is different.”

*Mariposas* offers the opportunity to help its members realize the full potential of their citizenship while still honoring the families’ past and present realities. At one weekly meeting, students gave examples of their families’ determination, telling the narratives from heroic angles. First, kids interviewed their parents about difficult or frightening moments in their lives when they thought they couldn’t go on but found the strength. (Many parents told their immigration stories while others chose different examples.) Then, families used poster board and markers to depict their stories. The girls were instructed to use positive adjectives in order to “flip” the narrative of struggle.

“What if, instead of looking at living undocumented as living in fear, you looked at it from the perspective

of courage, of celebrating the human spirit?” Garayúa-Tudryn explains. “You need courage to leave a risky situation in your country and start over in a place where many people do not want you, where getting a job is difficult, where you risk getting detained by the police without a license. That takes courage to wake up in the morning.”



In the three years since its founding, *Mariposas* has grown from 12 to over 30 student members. The group now includes elementary, middle and high school girls; the older students act as moderators and mentors to the younger. There is currently a waiting list to join the group.

The assignment culminated with a gallery walk in the cafeteria, where families used sticky notes to write encouraging words on each others’ projects. Posters depicted near-death experiences crossing the border, stories of loss and living in storage units. Over cake, the group celebrated their determination and resilience and the courage it took to share their stories with their children. Many of the parents were in tears.

“When you take stories of adversity and flip them into stories of glory—of

how the human spirit is able to overcome, even in the worst of circumstances—there is power that our students stand to get from that,” Garayúa-Tudryn says.

In addition to helping the girls find heroes within their own families, *Mariposas* focuses on connecting its members with role models who can encourage them to exercise their political power. The group recently took a trip to Washington, D.C., where they met with Latina civil rights attorneys, a Latina DEA agent and the president and CEO of the National Council of La Raza, Janet Murguía. They even met with Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. These empowered women became instant role models.

“I had no idea Latinas could be so powerful,” says *Mariposas* member Joana Tellez-Flores, reflecting on the trip. “If someone like me made it to the White House, then why can’t I?”

That growing confidence, says Bivins, is palpable in *Mariposas* members.

“We do see huge changes in the kind of work that they’re doing, the engagement in the classroom. We’ve seen girls step up to the plate and say, ‘I want to lead that effort,’” she says. “Before, you just felt a meekness and a ‘Let me step to the side,’ and now you see these girls, they’re just out there. They’re out there, and they feel more comfortable floating in and out of a variety of social circles and circumstances, which I think is amazing.” ♦

*Ehrenhalt lives and writes in Western Massachusetts.*



When it comes to hard truths about school segregation, journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones tells it like it is.

# Conversations Aren't Enough

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY MAYA LINDBERG PHOTOGRAPHY BY KARSTEN MORAN

**Nikole Hannah-Jones** is an award-winning investigative reporter and staff writer for *The New York Times Magazine*. She is also a major voice covering racial segregation in U.S. schools and the lived experiences of students of color. Hannah-Jones spoke with Teaching Tolerance about the barriers to equitable, integrated schools and classrooms and why we must find ways to overcome them.

## How did you start writing about school segregation?

The only reason I ever wanted to be a journalist was to write about race and racism. That's what inspired me to want to write. That's what inspired me to want to chronicle the stories of people who looked like me in communities that I grew up in. I think that's why I always loved history and journalism even as a child; I would look around and just see how differently people who lived in black communities lived compared to people who lived in white communities. I really wanted to understand why that was.

My very first job out of grad school was to cover a majority-black, heavily segregated school district in Durham, North Carolina. For me, just the only way to cover that school district was to be writing about school segregation and the impact. This would have been about 2003, so right after No Child Left Behind gets passed and you're starting to see the results of this decision to engage in high-stakes

testing and to say, "We're not going to try to break up poverty and racial isolation. We're just going to hold these poor black schools to very high standards. We're going to hold them to the same standards as white, middle-class schools." ... You're hearing about turnaround schools and you're seeing principals and staff being removed at these high-poverty schools, and I'm a beat reporter who's spending a lot of time in these schools and really seeing the

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**"While adults are talking about the problem, there are children in these classrooms right now who are being deprived of the education they deserve and who are going to face lifelong consequences for that."**

futility of it all. That's how I started writing about segregation.

## How does racial segregation create and uphold school-based inequalities, specifically along racial lines?

Clearly from the founding of this country and from the founding of public education in this country, both of them were built on a racial caste system that put black citizens on the bottom. And so when we look at data, we know there's never been a single point in the history of this country where black students in black schools have received the same educational opportunities. ... That's why integration is so critical because that has been the only way that we have been able to ensure equal educational opportunities. ...

When I say integration, I don't mean just within a building, but I mean integrated classrooms. Because in a system that privileges white students, when black and brown kids are sitting next to those students, they're going to get

## Check Out These Highlights of Nikole Hannah-Jones' Recent Work

### **Choosing a School For My Daughter in a Segregated City**

In this article published in *The New York Times Magazine*, Hannah-Jones chronicles how she and her husband “surrendered their advantage” when they chose to send their daughter to a segregated public school.

[t-t.site/choosing-a-school](http://t-t.site/choosing-a-school)

### **The Problem We All Live With: Part One**

Hannah-Jones teams up with the radio program *This American Life* to examine the unintentional desegregation plan of Missouri's Normandy School District—the district from which Michael Brown graduated.

[t-t.site/problem-we-all](http://t-t.site/problem-we-all)

### **Segregation Now**

Coinciding with the 60th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, Hannah-Jones reports for *ProPublica* on the resegregation of city schools in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

[t-t.site/segregationnow](http://t-t.site/segregationnow)

what the white students get. When they are not, then they do not get what the white students get.

At this point, I think we need to understand [that] when ... half of all schoolchildren are black and Latino and very soon half of all children born in this country will not be white, if you marginalize those students and keep half of your population from receiving a quality education, that's going to hurt everyone. It's not just going to hurt black and brown kids anymore, because you are keeping half of your population from being able to go on and get the education to be the leaders in our society, to come up with the next new innovation, to be the lawyers or the doctors, or the schoolteachers or the professors.

### **What arguments against school integration do you hear when you're talking to parents, families and educators in the field?**

I think the biggest argument that you hear is that it just politically won't work. I think what you hear is white parents are not going to go into these schools. If you try to force white parents to put their children in integrated schools, those white parents will withdraw from the system, they'll pay for private schools or they'll move to an area where there is no racial diversity. What you hear over and over is that it's too hard. You don't hear people saying it's not the best thing for children; you hear people saying it's too challenging.

I think the argument that you hear from black parents is that integration always came on the backs of black children and that it was black children who had to leave their neighborhoods. It was black schools that have been closed down, black teachers and principals [who] were laid off, and at this point, that the burdens have been too high and not enough payoff. I think those are the arguments that you hear from black parents: ... integration has never been equally borne, and an unwillingness to

keep chasing white families who don't want their children around their kids.

### **In your reporting, you often focus on the lived experiences of black students who attend or have attended segregated schools. What common themes and topics do they raise?**

I think the most common thing—and the most devastating thing—is they understand why they're in segregated schools. They understand that society as a whole does not value them. ... They also know that they are not receiving the same education that their peers in white schools are. They understand that link between race and resources very clearly. ... [T]hey'll say, “They don't think we're good enough.” “They don't think we're as smart as them.” “They don't want their kids around us.” “We don't get the same things that they get.” This is the thing that we as adults want to pretend: one, that these things aren't true, and two, that somehow kids aren't smart enough to understand that. But they absolutely are.

### **What do you see as the biggest barriers to achieving school integration?**

The biggest barrier is lack of will. I think what I try to show in my work is, again, you always hear that it's too hard. Segregation was not easy to create. There was a lot of effort that went into creating segregated schools and neighborhoods and a lot of resources from the federal government, down to the local government, down to the private citizen. But we were willing to do that because all of those resources were being put toward benefiting white students and white families. We are unwilling to put those same resources to making the system more equal, so I think ... the biggest barrier is a lack of will, and there's still a lot of racism and discrimination that we have to overcome.

There's been research and studies that show that white parents say that they want integrated schools or say that the only thing that matters about schools is test scores, but when they're



actually making the selections, the racial makeup of the school, particularly how black a school is, plays a larger role than the test scores or the reputation of the school. I think that is probably the most difficult thing to overcome: ... the fear that white parents have of large numbers of black children and the belief that the more black students you have in a school, the less safe that school is and that those students are not, as a whole, as smart or dedicated as their own children.

**How can educators build awareness around school segregation and take action to bring about change?**

I have seen a lot of conversations in the last few years, and I know that my work has spurred a lot of conversations, but conversations aren't enough. So while adults are talking about the problem, there are children in these classrooms right now who are being deprived of the education that they deserve and who are going to face lifelong consequences for that. The only thing I would say is

communities need to decide if this is intolerable, that it is untenable and that it is unjust, and then they need to fix it. It's not my role as a journalist to say how, and it's going to be different ... in every community, but I think my role as a journalist is to not let us ignore what we're doing to children.

**Is there anything else we haven't talked about that you want the readers of *Teaching Tolerance* to know?**

The only thing I guess I would add is we don't do our children a service by pretending that racial injustice does not

still exist, that all-black classrooms, all-Latino classrooms, all-white classrooms are not created, and that kids aren't noticing this and coming to their own conclusions. I think our job as a society and the job of educators is to have these conversations, to give students the language to understand their world and the context to understand their world. But teachers need to have that context in order to do it, and I just don't think enough teachers place a priority on that. ♦

*Lindberg is a writer and associate editor for Teaching Tolerance.*

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## Desegregation and Integration Aren't the Same

Nikole Hannah-Jones explains the difference between school desegregation and school integration.

“Desegregation is largely what happened in many communities, which meant you no longer had all-white schools or all-black schools. You would have some level of racial mixing, but it wouldn't be integrated, meaning it wouldn't reflect the racial makeup of a town.

“Integration to me means that you have schools that reflect the metropolitan area racially, and where there's power-sharing in that school and where even the classrooms are racially mixed ... [and offer] equal access to the same types of courses and instruction.”

# Students Speak

**AFTER DONALD TRUMP WON** the 2016 election, we posed a question to students via their teachers: What advice would you give to the new president? Students took this question very seriously; their answers made it clear that they are listening closely to the president-elect and that they care deeply about what the next four years will mean for the United States, for the people who live here and for the rest of the world. Some responses arrived formatted as essays and letters; others came in as drawings and cartoons and even an acrostic poem.

As we looked through the hundreds of submissions, some themes rose to the top. *Think before you speak. Make good choices. Don't be prejudiced. Keep us safe.* Many students had words of encouragement for Donald Trump, telling him, "We know you can do it." One of the most frequently mentioned themes? "Don't build a wall between the United States and Mexico."

Here is a small sampling of the responses. Read them all at [t-t.site/studentsspeak-photos](http://t-t.site/studentsspeak-photos).



**I advise Donald Trump to choose wisely what words come out of his mouth. By doing so, our country could become less divided, and more united. All of this division was caused by words—a powerful weapon that can be used for good or bad.**

Use the power of your role in this nation to better it and to eliminate the sense of separation in the world. To create a country where we can really say we are free. After all, your slogan is to “Make America Great Again.” And I believe many people would love to see that happen.



**Please make America a place where girls can walk around not afraid.**



My advice would be to not have your actions only be based on how you live your life but how everyone else lives theirs. You have to put yourself in someone else's shoes. You have to realize that every one of your actions can affect so many people's lives in a major way.

**Please let Mexicans stay here because they may be our parents.**



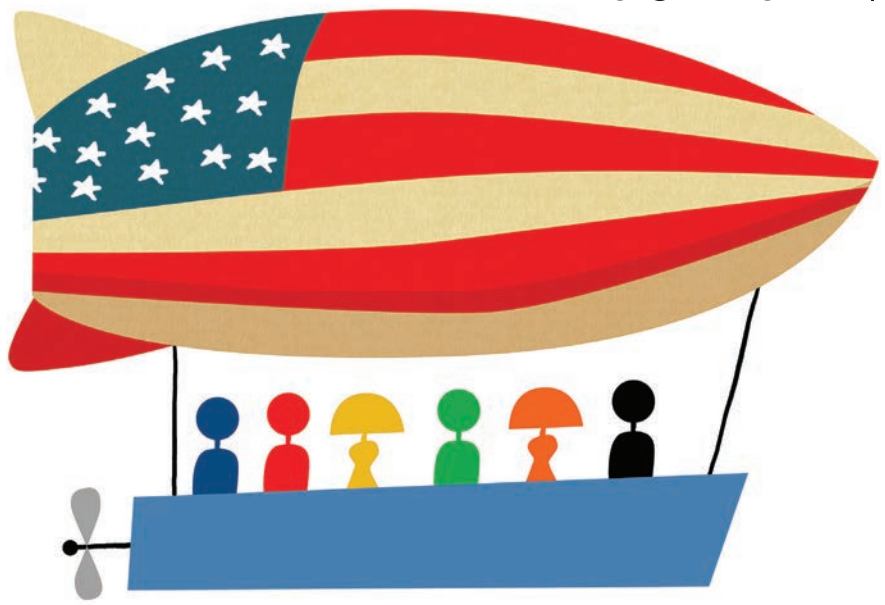
Could we please have no more wars because it's tremendously harmful to the human population and the Earth. It also costs a lot of money we could be using to clean the Earth. Let's keep this world clean and healthy for the future people who live here.







TRY TO BE  
EVERYONE'S  
PRESIDENT.



Over 1,000 Students Speak submissions were printed and mailed to the president-elect prior to the inauguration. See the original submissions at [t-t.site/studentsspeak-photos](http://t-t.site/studentsspeak-photos).



# WHAT DID PILGRIMS LOOK LIKE?

## WHY CRITICAL HISTORICAL THINKING IS A MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCY

BY COURTNEY C. BENTLEY AND SCOTT M. WARING

**ALL YOU NEED TO DO** is scroll through your students' Twitter, Facebook or YikYak newsfeeds to see they are talking about topics many teachers hesitate to discuss in the classroom. Hashtags enable youth to quickly cross reference stories, blogs, pictures, memes and other digital media with ease, exposing them to a universe of social justice issues (interpreted from a variety of perspectives) that may or may not directly influence their lives.

Many of the issues at the core of these social media conversations (and sometime battles) are strongly

connected to civic competencies. So why don't more teachers engage students around the very topics that keep them tethered to their mobile devices?

One reason: Because with all its potency as an originator, disseminator and connector of knowledge and information, social media also serves as a polarizing force. Users block information they don't agree with or, worse, participate in snarky exchanges that do nothing more than entrench camps and increase hostility.

Teachers are not immune to this reality. Many have largely remained

"users" who unfollow or ignore discussions about racism, sexism, heterosexism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia and institutional oppressions when they appear on social media. There are good reasons to do this; if a post is intended to antagonize, unfollowing it might be an act of self care. But there is also rich dialogue to be found when users pursue more meaningful conversations on social media.

As researchers, we have asked why educators choose not to address contemporary social justice topics as an opportunity to foster

critical historical thinking in their students, and we've consistently stumbled over the same response: Teachers are afraid of where the conversation might go and feel ill-equipped to scaffold it constructively.

This invites a secondary question: How can we better prepare teachers to connect historical thinking to contemporary thinking and ground both in an understanding of how identity influences interpretation?

### Critical Historical Thinking

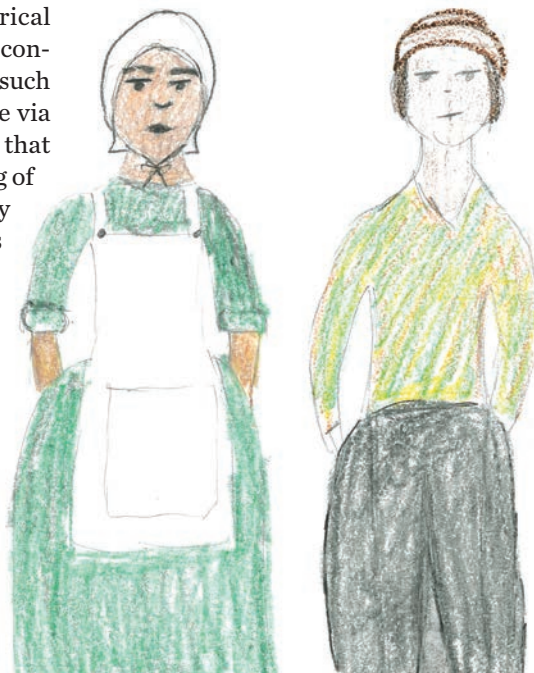
To examine this question, it helps to go back to research on how to build critical historical thinking. Critical historical thinking is a dynamic, reflective process that asks thinkers to interpret and understand persistent historical themes. They do so by drawing on connections to contemporary events (such as one might be invited to engage via social media) and acknowledging that interpretation and understanding of the past and the present is shaped by privileged or marginalized aspects of their identities.

We did this by studying how the identities of the participants influenced their interpretations of historical themes, people and events. We found that their interpretations were not neutral, but were, in fact, rendered through the lenses and identities of the individuals.

Our original research methodology, adapted from the article "Picturing the Past:

Gender Differences in the Depiction of Historical Figures" by Janice Fournier and Samuel Wineburg, can be used in history classrooms to support students' understanding of how their historical thinking is shaped by their multiple identities.

In their original study, Fournier and Wineburg asked elementary school children to draw the following historical figures: pilgrim, hippie and western settler. The drawings were analyzed to determine whether kids gendered the pictures to align with their own gender identity. They found that the drawings of pilgrims and hippies matched the artists' gender identities, but that girls tended not to draw western settlers as female.



Their work made us ask: To what extent does race shape historical thinking? What other historical figures support dominant cultural narratives around gender and race?

We decided the best way to find out was to provide additional drawing prompts and a comprehensive assortment of crayons to see what colors participants chose or didn't choose. We retained pilgrim and western settler, removed hippie, and added immigrant and activist as prompts. And we decided to do this with a focus group of pre-service social science teachers.

The drawings revealed some interesting patterns. Men tended to draw men, but women didn't always draw women, even though women could clearly represent the prompt. Activists were consistently drawn as people of color, by men and women of all races. Immigrants were also drawn as people of color, specifically people emigrating from Mexico.

Once the drawings were complete, the focus group analyzed their choices, allowing the experience to serve as an opportunity for critical dialogue, growth and awareness.

### A Multicultural Competency

The study made it clear that historical figures that should be considered "neutral" in terms of gender and race are perceived in decidedly non-neutral

*These drawings of a pilgrim (left) and an immigrant (right) were done by pre-service social science teachers as part of a study on critical historical thinking.*

## TO OVERLOOK CRITICAL HISTORICAL THINKING IS TO UNDERMINE A FUNDAMENTAL TENET OF SOCIAL JUSTICE TEACHING: WHO WE ARE INFLUENCES HOW WE SEE OTHERS.

ways. To us, these findings support the argument that teacher education programs must view critical historical thinking as a multicultural competence with contemporary applications. To overlook it is to undermine a fundamental tenet of social justice teaching: Who we are influences how we see others.

At the conclusion of the study, we decided that—in the hands of a skilled teacher—this activity could make a great instructional strategy for fostering critical historical thinking and critical thinking about contemporary social justice issues. (It is imperative that teachers have a firm understanding of their own identities before leading students to engage their own. It is also important that teachers provide a framework for discussion and have fostered a supportive climate in which to have difficult conversations prior to embarking on this activity.)

For high-schoolers, the activity could look something like this:

1. Give each student blank paper and crayons in a wide assortment of colors.

2. Without providing any context, ask students to draw the following: pilgrim, western settler, immigrant and activist. Students should draw their pictures independently from their classmates.

3. After everyone completes the drawing, collect them and break the class into four groups. Ask each group to analyze their drawings and discuss their answers to the following questions:

- Did everyone draw the prompt with the same gender expression?
- If yes, what gender expression did everyone select?
- If no, which figures were drawn in a gender different from the artist's gender expression?

➤ Did everyone draw the prompt as the same race?

➤ If no, how did you determine that the races were different?

➤ If yes, how did you determine that the races were the same?

➤ Is the race represented similarly to or differently from that of the artist?

4. Ask each group to present a summary of their answers. Students can compare their group's drawings and summaries to the drawings and summaries of other assigned groups.

5. Lead the whole class in a critical discussion about how current perceptions of race and gender influence our perceptions of history.

➤ How is power related to perceptions of race? Gender?

➤ What is a social construct?

➤ How are race and gender socially constructed?

➤ How has race served to oppress some and privilege others?

➤ How has gender served to oppress some and privilege others?

➤ How do privilege and oppression influence the way we engage historical texts?

➤ What is a narrative?

➤ How can critical historical thinking help us to understand how power influences political, social and historical narratives?

Consider following up this activity with another critical discussion that ties in their experiences with social media.

➤ How do privilege and oppression influence the way we engage social media?

➤ How do political, social and historical narratives inform how we value and make meaning of the world we live in today?

➤ How do political, social and historical

narratives inform our engagement with social media?

➤ How can critical historical thinking help us to interpret our online interactions?

By engaging these questions, students can deepen their understanding of how our identities shape the way we view historical people and events and how we perceive contemporary social justice issues. They will also deepen their understanding of race and gender as social and political constructs. By adding more prompts and questions over time, teachers can also help students examine the ways ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, religion and other identity characteristics influence their experience of daily life—whether online or not.

As the United States becomes increasingly diverse and social media dramatically changes the ways we relate to one another, it is imperative that we provide learning opportunities that develop the kinds of multicultural civic competencies this activity fosters. By having these conversations in the classroom, educators can provide the critical literacy skills and multicultural competencies students need to navigate and filter through hashtags, propaganda and polemics. We need critical historical thinking in schools if we want to support social justice in an expansive world encountered largely as blog posts, soundbites and memes. Retreating from, unfollowing or blocking conversations we don't agree with or that don't seem immediately relevant to our lives removes us from experiences we can share with our students. By staying engaged, we can help them become wiser consumers of social media and find spaces where our voices *can* help move the conversation forward. ♦

*Bentley is an associate professor of teacher leadership at the University of Montevallo. Waring is a professor of social science education at the University of Central Florida.*



# PINK

BY JEREMY KNOLL ILLUSTRATION BY MATT SAUNDERS

## MOST TEACHERS WANT TO ILLUMINATE PREJUDICES AND SHOW STUDENTS HOW TO OVERCOME BIASED THINKING. I COUNT MYSELF AMONG THAT GROUP.

Still, when my 9-year-old son recently said he wanted to play the flute in the school band, a flood of childhood memories swept over me, painful experiences that shaped my thinking about gender and sexual orientation. “The flute is a girl’s instrument,” I was shocked to hear my mind say. And then, perhaps even more troubling, “It’s a gay instrument.”

I recently shared this experience with my students because I wanted them to see the way my biases took me by surprise, how they had been formed by my childhood, and how I am trying to remove them from my thinking. Why? Because, to me, it is important to be honest about the fact that we all hold biases, and that we all must fight to overcome them. Being a teacher gives me an opportunity to be transparent about both of these difficult processes.

We exhibit and teach biases even when we don’t mean to.

As I also told my students, the flute conversation was not the first time my

son exposed my perceptions about gender norms. When he got his first “big-boy” bed, my wife and I told him we would paint it any color he wanted. He did not hesitate for a single second. “Pink!” he said this with a huge grin, and the unbridled enthusiasm of a little kid being given the freedom to make a decision all his own.

When I told my students this story, they laughed. Their laughter indicated that gender bias already lurks within them.

“Pink is his favorite color,” I explained. I went on to say how shocked I am at the number of people who feel they need to weigh in on this preference. Friends and family members, people I believe to be intelligent and open-minded, roll their eyes and crack jokes. “I make a habit of challenging anyone who raises an eyebrow,” I told my class. “What do you think this is, the 1950s?” I say. “It is a color. He likes the way it looks.”

My students nod. Yeah, their eyes say, that is messed up.

This is where the lesson begins. They think this is a story about my being a better person than that. They think it is a story about an enlightened father blazing the trail for his son to safely embrace who he is. But it’s not. Because then I confess what I told him: “Any color other than pink.”

In that moment, my better self—a man who strives to battle stereotypes, who does laundry and irons clothes, who took tap dancing lessons as a kid—was nowhere to be found.

Rather than standing up against a stereotype, I embraced it. In my attempt to protect my son, I became the one who belittled him. Despite my intentions, I was the person telling him that what he naturally liked was wrong. I was teaching him bias.

### **Why is it so hard to shed our biases?**

I was not good at sports when I was young, but I could knock out a solid triple-time step in tap shoes. I spent my

## IN THAT MOMENT, MY BETTER SELF—A MAN WHO STRIVES TO BATTLE STEREOTYPES, WHO DOES LAUNDRY AND IRONS CLOTHES, WHO TOOK TAP DANCING LESSONS AS A KID—WAS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND.

summers at theater camp. I did not feel like I fit in with the rest of the boys, who were choosing activities more aligned with society's gender norms. I got labeled a "faggot" when I started junior high. I remember sitting in class as a kid poked my butt with a ruler. "You like that, faggot?" he hissed.

It is important my students hear that story. That bad experience shaped my beliefs about fairness and individuality. But, clearly, I still harbor prejudices about the color pink and about certain activities. That revelation is sad and shocking to me. It's also a perfect opportunity to seize upon a teachable moment for all of us.

The little-kid version of myself keeps popping up to protect my son from the experiences I had. I ask my students why I would do this. They say that biases are rooted in fear. "All Muslims being labeled terrorists," one student volunteers when I ask for examples. "Black people being seen as criminals," says another.

Now we've arrived at the *actual* lesson: Unless we stand up to the systems that allow these fears to persist, biases keep us laboring under false, harmful assumptions. They limit us and they cause us to hurt the people around us. And they keep us afraid.

**Let students see us combat our biases.** Although I struggled with the urge to encourage my son to choose another instrument, I told him the flute was great. I told him it was a beautiful instrument. I wished him luck at tryouts.

When he came home and told me he wanted to play the trombone instead, I had mixed feelings. He had tried the flute. "I hated it," he said, and then he ran off to play with his brother.

I was relieved, but also a little disappointed.

I was relieved that he would be less of a target for the type of kids who'd gone after me when I was little and insecure. And I was relieved that he decided against the flute because he didn't like it, not because I sent him the message that his interest made him less of a boy. But I was disappointed he would not have the opportunity to help redefine the flute as an instrument anyone could play.

Still, I use my role as a classroom teacher to help disrupt gender norms whenever I can. I tell my students about how I enjoy arranging flowers in a vase for our kitchen table, and that I am every bit the home decorator my wife is. I tell them I love listening to Taylor Swift and Beyoncé as much as watching ice hockey matches and baseball games. I tell them that I shower my

kids with hugs. Those are not things women like or things men like. They are things their teacher likes.

Recently, while I was coloring with my son, he told me kids at school were teasing him. When I asked him why, he said it was because he likes the color pink. "Well, that's silly," I said, reaching for the pink crayon. "Pink is red mixed with white. I like red. I like white. I can't like them mixed together because I am a boy? That makes no sense." He laughed.

"Cool pink monster," he said. Damn right.

I tell my students this story as well. Not as many smile or laugh this time. ♦

*Knoll is a writer and public school educator in New Jersey. He also blogs for Teaching Tolerance.*





SCHOOL  
CROSSING



# EXPELLING ISLAMOPHOBIA

District leaders across the country are recognizing that religious literacy not only counters anti-Muslim bias—it makes schools safer for everyone.

BY SEAN MCCOLLUM ILLUSTRATION BY GRACIA LAM

**IN 2010, HANIF MOHEBI** approached the San Diego Unified School District, concerned about reports his office was receiving about the bullying of American Muslim students. The executive director of the San Diego chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), Mohebi was puzzled at first when the district found few reports of anti-Muslim bias or harassment among its data. But it did not take long for him to realize that the lack of data wasn't due to a lack of bullying; Muslim kids weren't reporting the abuse.

Over the course of the next six years, the California offices of CAIR launched a campaign to support kids and parents in reporting incidents of anti-Muslim bullying and bias to school administrators. They created a kid-friendly pocket guide

to help students identify various forms of bullying and how to report them. They even surveyed more than 600 students, ages 11–18, publishing their findings in 2015. The findings included:

- 55 percent of Muslim students surveyed reported experiencing some form of bullying related to their religious identity;
- 29 percent of girls who wear a hijab—the traditional Muslim head scarf—said they had been offensively touched by another student;
- 20 percent of Muslim students said they had experienced discrimination by school staff.

One student responding to the survey said, “Telling any school faculty would have worsened the situation for me because they mostly have the same opinion of Muslims [as the bullying students].”

With these facts in hand, CAIR returned to the district—and the district listened. On July 26, 2016, the school board met to consider a resolution to address Islamophobia in San Diego's public schools. The auditorium was filled with more than 200 members and supporters of the local Muslim community, some holding small green signs that read “Protect Our Kids.” Students from elementary through high school lined up at the microphone to tell how they'd been called “terrorists,” had their hijabs yanked, and been threatened and physically assaulted.

“I'd heard it all before, but I was in tears,” Mohebi says. Board Vice President Richard Barrera told the students, “You're actually leading us. The young people who spoke here tonight, you're right now making our

society better, and making our school system better.”

When the board then voted unanimously to create a plan to address Islamophobia and the bullying of Muslim students, the audience broke into applause.

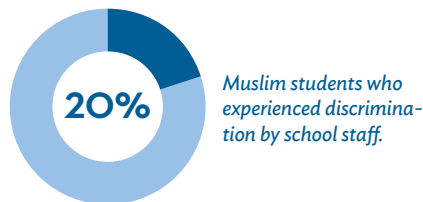
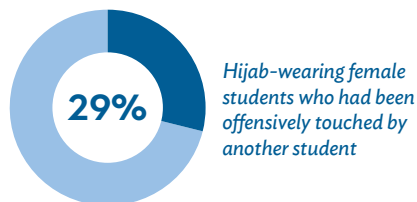
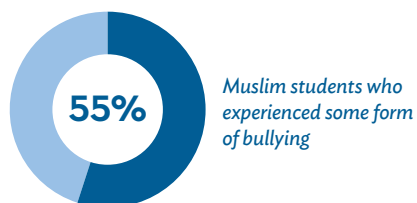
### Who’s Vulnerable?

CAIR’s California surveys and other studies like it make it abundantly clear that Muslim students are under threat from their peers, not the other way around. Fifty-five percent of Muslim K–12 students surveyed say they experienced identity-based bullying. (Nationally, about 22 percent of all students report being bullied.) Individuals perceived to be Muslim—including Sikhs, Hindus and people of Middle Eastern and South Asian descent who are not Muslim—are often targets for abuse as well.

Many district officials are only beginning to understand the bias their Muslim students encounter. “Unless a school has a specific policy in place to deal with these kinds of bias, bias incidents against these groups will only become exacerbated over time,” says Mariam Durrani, an anthropologist and postdoctoral fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Durrani and other scholars who study Islamophobia in the United States contend that the most effective school-based approaches address anti-Muslim bias specifically and emphasize religious literacy. This means training staff members to recognize forms of anti-Muslim bias in schools, updating the curriculum and upgrading school policies to ensure all religious groups feel respected and supported.

“In my experience, many non-Muslim teachers have questions about Islam but they don’t know how to ask them,” says Christine Sleeter, a curriculum specialist and professor emerita at California State University, Monterey Bay. “But they must educate themselves.



Source: 2015 survey by the California offices of CAIR

Otherwise they will be afraid to address anything regarding religion.”

### Integrating Islam

One of the most comprehensive efforts to address Islamophobia can be found in the Montgomery County Public School District (MCPS) in Maryland. MCPS is the largest and most diverse district in the state. According to Farhana N. Shah, an MCPS English-language content specialist, some two-dozen languages are spoken in the district. Shah is also a member of the Working Group Education Subcommittee of the interfaith Montgomery County Faith Committee. The group collaborates with the district on curriculum, school policy and school climate.

The administration has also encouraged more integrated curricula. Last year Chris Murray, a social studies teacher at Walter Johnson High School in Bethesda, Maryland, revamped the Islam unit of his world religions class (an elective available to juniors and seniors) to tackle some of the most daunting issues related to anti-Muslim attitudes.

“We look at Islam from three different perspectives: history, violent extremism

and Islamophobia,” says Murray, who serves with Shah on the interfaith education committee. The history of Islam acts as the introduction, he explains, helping students get a handle on vocabulary and context. The course then pivots to violent extremism—who and where such groups are, their motivations, and how they compare to extremists in other major religions, including Christianity. Finally, students examine how the public’s views of Islam are shaped by popular media. They learn to identify the agendas of the “Islamophobia industry”: commentators, politicians and media outlets that profit by stoking fears about Muslims.

Teachers of younger students or those who teach subjects other than social studies and history can also play a part in developing religious and cultural literacy that includes Islam, adds Murray. Math teachers can share the formative role of Islamic scholars in the development of algebra, for example, while art instructors can compare and contrast the design elements in religious art and architecture among different faiths.

Efforts to promote religious literacy can have a positive influence beyond the classroom. Christine Zaccardi, a media specialist at Fox Road Magnet Elementary in Raleigh, North Carolina, has seen firsthand the value of diversifying the school’s library to include books about Islam. She recalls the time a kindergartener—an immigrant from Iraq—came to her clutching *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors* to her chest. “This is about my religion!” she told Zaccardi. The next day, the girl’s older sister stopped by and asked if there were other books about Islam, and later helped create a book display in honor of Arab American Heritage Month. Soon their mother was volunteering in the library.

### Policy and Climate

In its 13-page booklet *Guidelines for Respecting Religious Diversity*, Montgomery County Public Schools

outlines clear explanations of what in-school religious expression can and cannot look like. Topics range from “Distributing Religious Informational Materials” to “Religion-related Dietary Restrictions and Fasting.” The booklet features a Frequently Asked Questions section that explains what religious accommodations are available and acceptable, including in-school prayer.

As in most U.S. districts, Montgomery County’s code of conduct specifically articulates that bullying based on religion is grounds for disciplinary action. For teachers, the nuts and bolts of identifying and constructively dealing with bullying related to religious identity is now a topic the district addresses in its professional development programming. Montgomery County also has an online system where students can report incidents anonymously. The school culture and the PD facilitators encourage teachers to communicate with students about these incidents before they evolve into ongoing problems.

“I always have our speakers speak about issues in the classroom that they see and know of and how those acts manifest,” says Murray, who is active in planning PDs related to religious literacy. “Today in [PD] class I had two Sikh men speak about their own experiences and what kids today are facing. Last night, the Hindu American Foundation shared their report on bullying with our 30 teachers. We will have two days on Islam, both addressing acts of bullying and why they exist.”

Such policies and programs, paired with a more inclusive curriculum, can positively influence school safety and promote respect in the school community. School climate is formed by thousands of formal and informal interactions that occur every day. Even seemingly insignificant exchanges feed into it, especially for vulnerable groups such as Muslims. “A teacher pronouncing a student’s name correctly can be an important moment,” says Durrani.

Religious literacy also helps protect teachers from bias incidents. “If the school has a no-hats-in-school policy, but I know the student is wearing a yarmulke, I know not to say anything,” says Shah. “If I know the religious piece of it, then I’m not going to embarrass or offend the student.”

Senior Matthew Aghili, 18, has been a target of anti-Muslim harassment in other settings, and has seen Muslim friends insulted and assaulted. But he says he sees less of it at Walter Johnson High School. “The curriculum helps by encouraging understanding about others’ beliefs and not judging those beliefs or what students wear to school,” he says. He also credits teachers like Murray, who communicate in direct and indirect ways that they are allies of all students and are ready to offer support.

### Religious Literacy vs. Islamophobia

According to the Pew Research Center, nearly half of Americans report not knowing anyone Muslim. Exposure to the lived experiences of American Muslims is an important step in stimulating religious understanding among staff members and students. Exposure can take the form of guest speakers,

interfaith panels and a growing number of quality multimedia resources. In many communities, Muslims and interfaith activists are doing their part, as more mosques, universities and interfaith organizations now offer outreach programs to help educators explore their own questions about Islam and feel more confident with Islam-related content.

The goal is to remove the label of “other” from Muslims by helping people recognize all they have in common with their Muslim neighbors, colleagues and classmates. “Whether it’s students or teachers, there is nothing more powerful than actually experiencing communication, in this case between the Muslim community and people with little experience with Muslims,” says Mohebi.

Advocates seeking to counter anti-Muslim bias widely attest to the value of educating educators when it comes to religious literacy, Islam and Islamophobia. Says Mohebi, “When I do teacher trainings, the most common remark I get afterward is, ‘I wish I’d had this information before.’” ♦

*McCollum is a freelance writer who specializes in education and social justice topics.*

## Resources for Teaching Religious Literacy

*Religious Diversity in the Classroom*, a free webinar series produced by Teaching Tolerance and the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, examines how teaching about religion across grade levels and subject areas can help meet academic standards.

[tolerance.org/religious-diversity-classroom](http://tolerance.org/religious-diversity-classroom)

Unity Productions Foundation offers films and accompanying educational materials “aimed at increasing understanding ... especially among Muslims and other faiths.”

[upf.tv/teachers](http://upf.tv/teachers)

The Bridge Initiative offers a wealth of research about the forces that perpetuate Islamophobia and practical suggestions for how to counter them.

[bridge.georgetown.edu](http://bridge.georgetown.edu)

“Dismantling Islamophobia,” an article published by Harvard Graduate School of Education’s online resource Usable Knowledge, offers six concrete ways to combat anti-Muslim bullying in schools.

[t-t.site/dismantling-islamophobia](http://t-t.site/dismantling-islamophobia)





DOES YOUR SCHOOL TREAT STUDENTS DIFFERENTLY BASED ON THEIR IDENTITY CHARACTERISTICS? IF SO, IT'S TIME FOR A POLICY MAKEOVER.

# Controlling THE Student Body

BY ALICE PETTWAY ILLUSTRATION BY REBECCA CLARKE

An elementary student is sent home from her Texas school for wearing her hair in Afro puffs. • A Louisiana senior is forbidden to wear her tux to prom. • Three students in Pennsylvania are told they can't use the bathrooms that match their gender identities. • An Illinois school releases a dress code flier that features two young women, one labeled "distracting" and "revealing," the other "ladylike."

These are not isolated incidents. Similar stories have been reported in K-12 schools across the United States, and more unfold every day. Nor are they unrelated. Each situation was the result of a policy that treats students differently based on their identities.

These policies may be based on good intentions and rely on aspirational words like "respectable," "safe" or "appropriate." But when, for example, a hair policy disproportionately affects black students, it reveals a harmful bias: the perception that natural black hair is none of those things.

"[W]hile I teach my daughter that her natural beauty is perfect, this assistant principal is giving my daughter the message that her natural beauty is not good enough!" lamented the mother of the Texas student in an April 2016 Facebook post.

Gender-based dress codes and regulations

preventing students from using gender-aligned facilities send a similar message to students: "Your identity is a problem."

## A Culture of Respect

Thomas Aberli, former principal at Atherton High School in Kentucky, says it's important for school communities to consider what it *really* means—on a practical level—to respect someone whose identity is different from yours. Making sure school policies are inclusive is a reflection of "how we should treat one another in society," he says.

In 2014, a freshman student at Atherton High School approached the teacher sponsor of the school's gay-straight alliance looking for help telling the administration that she was transitioning. Under Aberli's leadership, Atherton High School assessed how to make its bathroom, locker room and dress

code policies more inclusive—a process that drew some criticism from the wider school community.

Opposition to the policy changes was more philosophical than practical, says Aberli. He recalls a conversation with one parent who said, “My daughter will not see a penis until her wedding night!” Aberli says he responded, “You know what, I have no control over that, but I will tell you that this policy is not going to permit your child to see sexual organs of any child of any gender in the restroom. That’s not what the intent of this is, and if that becomes an issue, then we can deal with that from a disciplinary standpoint.”

“By the end of a 15- to 20-minute conversation like this,” says Aberli, “most parents were like, ‘You know what? Not only do I respect the decision that you’re making, I feel like this makes our school safer for every child in the building.’”

Fear of the unfamiliar or threatening is often at the heart of policies that target traditionally black hairstyles as well. Attorney Anna-Lisa F. Macon, who has written about racialized hairstyle prohibitions, says educators may not be consciously targeting black students with their hair policies, but they need to stop and consider *why* a certain hairstyle

seems disruptive or inappropriate. Is it truly disruptive, or is it just different? If the answer is different, says Macon, then “educators should adjust their perception of what is appropriate rather than requiring students to fundamentally alter their bodies and identities.”

### Putting Policies in Context

School policies reflect the culture of a particular school and community, but they also—often inadvertently—reflect both the good and the bad aspects of our larger society.

Macon says problems arise when appropriateness is judged by schools in a way that favors certain ethnicities and races. “Race in America is about more than just skin color. It extends to certain traits and stereotypes that become inescapably intertwined with how we view certain groups,” she says. “Afros, dreadlocks, Afro puffs, cornrows, et cetera, are correlated with prototypical ‘blackness,’ and any associated negative connotations. In banning black hairstyles because of those subconscious associations, educators implicitly devalue black students.”

The impact of these policies goes beyond individual students. Denigrating

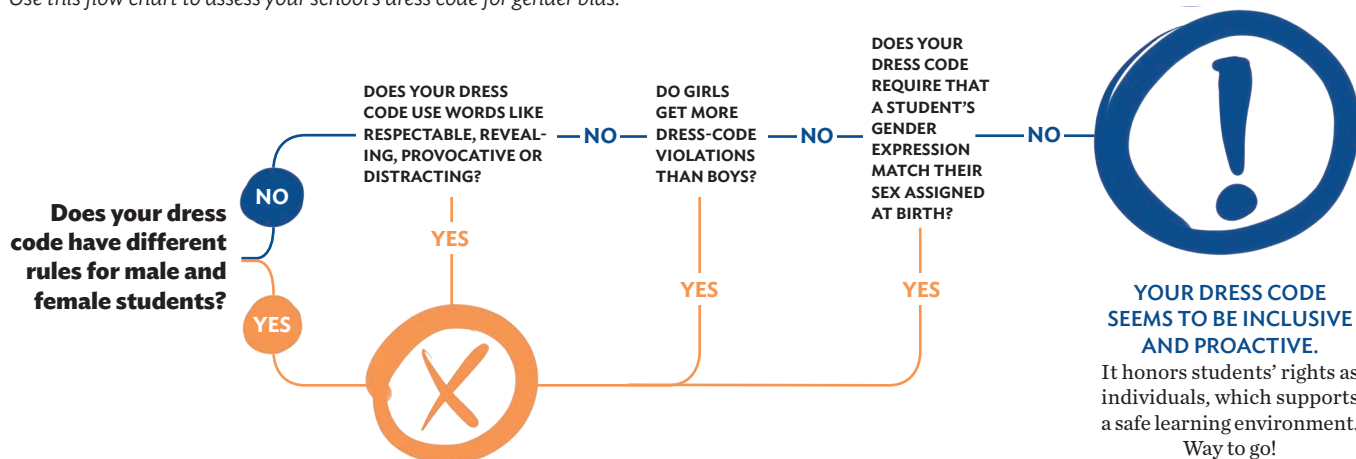
hairstyles connected historically with marginalized groups sends the message that it’s OK for institutions to decide whose bodies are acceptable and whose aren’t.

Joel Baum, senior director of professional development at the nonprofit advocacy group Gender Spectrum, says the same principle applies when students aren’t allowed to use bathrooms and locker rooms that align with their gender identities. These restrictions can amount to an endorsement of discrimination by schools. “If the institution specifically says you don’t get to use the spaces that the other boys and girls get to use ... [i]t’s not just saying you’re stigmatized,” says Baum. “It’s saying, ‘We not only think you’re different—we think you’re dangerous. We think you’re a problem. We can’t expose the other students to you.’”

Baum finds gender-biased dress codes equally harmful, particularly if they imply that a student’s body is shameful or if they focus on preventing sexual arousal in boys. “Some kids have vulvas and some kids have penises. It’s OK to see one person’s belly button, but not the other’s?” he says. “And what are we saying to our girls? It further objectifies them, further sexualizes them.”

## IS MY SCHOOL DRESS CODE GENDER-INCLUSIVE?

*Gendered dress codes can harm students in a variety of ways. Use this flow chart to assess your school’s dress code for gender bias.*



Your dress code may seem to be targeting clothing, but it may actually be targeting students’ identities. Students—regardless of gender identity or gender expression—need a clear, agreed-upon set of guidelines for how everyone should dress in a school environment. Gendered guidelines can humiliate students and even rob them of instructional time.

It is easy to get caught up in the intentions or conventions underpinning a given policy; taking a step back and thinking more broadly, say Baum and other experts, allows a school to evaluate whether its policies demand that students conform their bodies to a dominant-culture expectation. Such policies undermine the school's obligation to support all students and guide them toward becoming adults able to function in and appreciate a diverse society.

As Baum says, "We end up putting the onus on a kid wearing [certain] clothes, or trying to use the bathroom, or being trans, or wearing a particular hairstyle or wearing the hijab—or whatever it might be—that is 'inflammatory' for other people. Whose issue is it? ... If you are not creating—[with] *direct* behavior and not just [with] your existence—a problem for another person, then why is it anyone's business?"

Changing policies isn't easy, but making both administrative and cultural shifts toward being more inclusive *is* possible. Aberli says, in the end, the Atherton High School decision-making council voted to change the school's policies to be more inclusive; they've had no further opposition since the policy was implemented. The mother of the little girl with Afro puffs put several follow-up posts on Facebook thanking those who had helped further the discussion. She reported that her daughter's school apologized and would be revising its dress code.

Aberli says he's proud that Atherton embraced the idea that respecting individual differences is a strength rather than a weakness.

"When you feel and see that a variety of different life views provides a strength in a community as opposed to a divisiveness, then you're better able to embrace dealing with change and dealing with how to manage a situation in which you have to address how we are different from each other." ♦

*Pettway lives and writes in Bogotá, Colombia.*



## But It's Distracting!

It's not uncommon to hear aspects of a student's appearance or behavior dismissed as *distracting* and *inappropriate*. Because these assertions are so vague, they can be difficult to rebut. Try these suggested responses.

### **COMPLAINT** Cornrows glorify "street" culture.

**RESPONSE** This coded language associates a traditionally black hairstyle with criminal behavior. Remind the speaker that hair doesn't "do" anything, and that the associations we have with hairstyles are contextual; if we don't examine these associations, we run the risk of communicating our biases to students. If a student is engaging in criminal behavior, address the behavior. Being overly controlling about a student's self-expression is counterproductive when it comes to helping them feel valued and invested in school.

### **COMPLAINT** That outfit isn't "ladylike."

**RESPONSE** School communities have a right to agree on and enforce dress codes—just not dress codes that have different requirements for some kids than for others. Encourage self-reflection. Ask, "Do our clothing policies differ based on gender?" "What do they imply about our society's gender norms?" "Do our policies objectify young women by sending them the message that their bodies are inherently sexy?" "Do they reinforce rape culture by implying that young men are unable to control themselves?"

### **COMPLAINT** I'm uncomfortable being in the bathroom with a student who is transgender.

**RESPONSE** Point out the difference between accommodation and discrimination. If someone is uncomfortable being in a shared space—for whatever reason—give them the option of a more private facility. Just remember that their discomfort isn't justifiable cause to force another student to use a different bathroom or locker room.



#### TOOLKIT

Do your school's policies make some students feel unwelcome? These resources can help. VISIT » [tolerance.org/student-body](https://tolerance.org/student-body)

BOOK EXCERPT

WHAT  
LEARNING ABOUT  
SLAVERY  
CAN  
TEACH US  
ABOUT OURSELVES

BY JAMES W. LOEWEN



This is an adapted excerpt from the first chapter of *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery* titled “Methods for Teaching Slavery to High School Students and College Undergraduates in the United States.”

**ALTHOUGH THERE ARE** problems in teaching slavery, there are bigger problems in *not* teaching slavery. Some teachers let their worries about teaching the subject deter them from giving slavery the attention it deserves. When they do, as the filmmaker Ken Burns notes, they participate in making “the great rift” between blacks and whites deeper and wider. Moreover, it’s bad history. Surely slavery, which caused and underlies this rift, was the most pervasive single issue in our past. Consider: contention about slavery forced the Whig Party to collapse; caused the main Protestant churches to separate, North and South; and prompted the Republican Party to form. Until the end of the nineteenth century, cotton—planted, cultivated, harvested, and ginned by slaves and then by ex-slaves—was by far our most important export. Our graceful antebellum homes, northern as well as southern, were mostly built by slaves or from profits derived from the slave and cotton trades. Slavery prompted secession; the resulting Civil War killed about as many Americans as died in all our other wars combined. Black-white relations were the main theme of Reconstruction after the Civil War; America’s failure to let African Americans have equal rights then led inexorably to the struggle for civil rights a century later.

Slavery also deeply influenced our popular culture. From the 1850s through the 1930s (except, perhaps, during the Civil War and Reconstruction), the dominant form of popular entertainment in America was minstrel shows, which derived in a perverse way from plantation slavery. Two novels have been by far our most popular—both by white women, both about slavery. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* dominated the nineteenth century, *Gone*

*with the Wind* the twentieth. During the nineteenth century, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was also by far our most popular play, with thousands of productions; during the twentieth, *Gone with the Wind* was by far our most popular movie (in constant dollars). The most popular television miniseries ever was *Roots*, the saga of an enslaved family; it changed our culture by setting off an explosion of interest in genealogy, ethnic backgrounds, and slavery. In music, slavery gave rise to spirituals and work songs, which in turn led to gospel music and the blues. Slavery influenced the adoption and some of the language of our Constitution. It affected our foreign policy, sometimes in ways that were contrary to our national interests.

Most important of all, slavery caused racism. In the United States, as a legal and social system, slavery ended between 1863 and 1865, depending upon where one lived. Unfortunately, racism, slavery’s handmaiden, did not. In turn, white supremacy, the ideology that slavery begot, caused the Democratic Party to label itself the “white man’s party” for almost a century, into the 1920s. Also during the 1920s, white supremacy led to the “science” of eugenics (human breeding), IQ and SAT testing, and restrictions on the immigration of “inferior races” from southern and eastern Europe as well as Asia and Africa.

Obviously, then, because of its impact throughout our past and in our present, we must teach about slavery. The question is how.

## Relevance to the Present

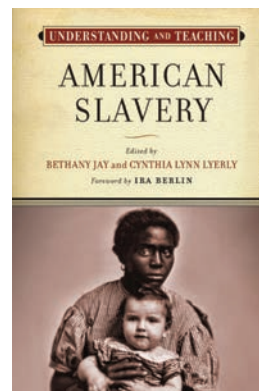
The first step in introducing a unit on slavery is to help students see slavery’s relevance to the present. If not for slavery, people from Africa would not have been identified as a race in the first place, let alone stigmatized as an inferior race. Race as a social concept, along with the claim that the white race is superior to other groups, came about as a rationale for slavery. As Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas famously put it in 1968, racism is a vestige of “slavery unwilling to die.” This is terribly important for students to grasp, because otherwise many of them (and not just black students) imagine that racism is innate, at least among white folks.

As racism grew, owing to slavery, Europeans began to think of themselves as a group—“whites”—and classified others as “nonwhites.”

Slavery still influences how people think, where they live, how much money they have, and even who gets chosen to model in a catalog. Students should leave this discussion able to form useful ideas about slavery’s impact on our past and present in response to the question “Why must we learn about slavery?”

## Slavery Led to Racism

The next step is to hold a conversation about racism. Many students of all races—in both high school and college—are unsophisticated as to what racism is and where it comes from. In the past few years, racism has come to



*Understanding and Teaching American Slavery* was edited by Bethany Jay and Cynthia Lynn Lyerly and published by The University of Wisconsin Press.

**No one is born with the notion that the human race is subdivided by skin color, let alone that one group should be dominant over others. Racism is a product of history, particularly of the history of slavery.**

be considered socially unacceptable, at least in interracial settings. That's a welcome development, because it is both unfair to individuals and bad for our nation to treat people unfairly on the basis of their racial group membership.

Many Americans think people are "naturally" racist or that at least *white* people are. I have heard college professors, social scientists, and lawyers say that whites are racist by nature—that is, genetically. Nonsense. No one is born with the notion that the human race is subdivided by skin color, let alone that one group should be dominant over others. Racism is a product of history, particularly of the history of slavery. Racism was an *historical* invention.

Racism is thus neither innate nor inevitable. Students must never be allowed to say that it is without being contradicted—preferably by other students. Of course, showing how racism developed to rationalize slavery does not mean that whites adopted the idea consciously and hypocritically to defend the otherwise indefensible unfairness of slavery. Whites sincerely believed in racial differences. Indeed, between 1855 and 1865, white supremacy in turn prompted the white South to mount a fierce defense of slavery. During the Nadir of race relations—that terrible period from 1890 to about 1940, when the United States was more racist in its thinking than at any other point—whites used racism to justify the otherwise indefensible unfairness of removing blacks from citizenship.

Slavery was not always caught up with race. Europeans have enslaved each other for centuries. The word itself derives from "Slav," the people most

often enslaved by their neighbors before 1400 because they had not organized into nation-states and could not defend themselves adequately. Native Americans and Africans likewise enslaved their neighbors long before Europeans arrived. Ethnocentrism—the notion that our culture is better than theirs—has long existed among human groups. Perhaps all societies have been ethnocentric. Saying "we're better than they" can rationalize enslaving "them." But then the enslaved grow more like us, intermarry with us, have children, and speak our language. Now ethnocentrism can no longer rationalize enslaving them.

One way to show the development of racism is through Shakespeare's play *Othello*. Shakespeare wrote the play in 1604, but it derives from a story written down in 1565 by Giovanni Battista Giraldi but that probably dates back still further. Giraldi and Shakespeare considered Othello's blackness exotic but not bad. European nations, beginning with Portugal in the middle of the 1400s, had already begun to enslave Africans. Eric Kimball explains in his essay in this volume that Europeans at this time stopped enslaving Slavs and instead picked on African villages, avoiding those Africans who had organized into nation-states or enlisting them as allies. Black slaves came to be seen as better than white slaves, who could more easily run away. By 1600 most slaves in Europe were black and most blacks in Europe were enslaved, so slavery began to be seen as racial. Since their color still identified them as slaves even after they had acculturated to "white" society, it seemed appropriate to keep Africans' children enslaved.

Racism increased as this "new"

slavery intensified. By 1700, white slave traders were carrying thousands of Africans every year to Brazil, the Caribbean, and the southern United States, where they and their children would work, unrecompensed, forever.

### Historiography and Slavery

After clearing the air about race and racism, professors and teachers might continue their discussion of slavery in America by asking students to evaluate their textbook. What are the main things we need to know about slavery? Students can work in pairs to draw up the important questions. The teacher might seed some questions:

- How many slaves came to the British colonies and later the United States?
- From where?
- Where within the United States did they wind up? Why did slavery die out in the North but intensify in the South? (Be careful; other chapters in this book show it's not as simple as "climate," "crops," or "topography.")
- How did slavery affect US foreign policy?
- What were slaves lives like? How did people respond to enslavement?
- Why were there fewer slave revolts in the United States than in Haiti, Jamaica, Brazil, and elsewhere in the Americas?
- Was slavery ending by 1860?
- How did the monetary value of slaves compare to other investments in the United States?

After generating an overall question list, students can examine their textbook to see how it measures up. If they feel it answers their questions, wonderful! Let them work together to uncover the answers. I suspect they will find that it doesn't. In that case, teachers must help them to go beyond the textbook and learn more about slavery and its impact on their own. ♦

*Loewen is a sociologist and historian and the author of several books including Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong.*



KNOW A STUDENT YOU THINK WOULD MAKE A GREAT LEADER OR SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVIST? Cut out this letter and share it with them. Let them know you think they have the potential to become an agent of change—and that you're willing to help.



# Dear Future Leader,

**CHANGING THE WORLD** isn't just about changing people's ideas when it comes to race, gender and sexual orientation. It is about changing the way we approach bias and how we educate ourselves and others. Starting a club or group at school can be a great way to empower yourself and your peers, educate the school community and address identity-based bullying. I've noticed that you care about social issues, and I think you've got what it takes to be an effective leader.

By launching a gay-straight alliance, an anti-racism club or any kind of social justice group you might choose, you can spur productive conversations between students, teachers and administrators. This type of dialogue supports an environment where everyone is comfortable and free to learn—and it's necessary for making real change.

Are you up for the challenge? Here are some suggestions for getting started.

**1. GET A TEACHER TO SPONSOR THE GROUP.** It is important to gain the help and support of a teacher or other faculty member in starting your group. A supportive teacher can help to bridge the gap between generations and cut through bureaucratic red tape. Additionally, this teacher can help get other educators and community members involved. A few supportive adults can access resources younger people may not be able to access alone. The key is fostering a forum for youth to create change; find an adult who is willing to nurture, not lead.



**2. CALL A MEETING.** The next step will be to set up your first meeting. Main questions are: What is a meeting? What will we talk about at the meeting?

Plan to make your initial meeting something more than another boring after-school gathering. Many times, groups will get together for a first meeting and find themselves staring into each other's faces with nothing to talk about. Plan a mixer with refreshments, music and movies. Make it interesting.

Your first meeting should be very casual and consist of the founding members establishing priorities. This initial meeting will really serve as a preview for the first large-group meeting, which will be open to everyone who's interested and wants to get involved.

Think of ways to expand your group. How can you creatively launch the new group and recruit members from the larger school community?

**3. PLAN ACTIVITIES TO HELP PEOPLE GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER.** Start thinking of ideas for breaking the ice at the first large-group meeting. Remember, if people don't have fun and feel comfortable, they will not come to the next meeting. What will you talk about? How will you make sure everyone feels welcome?

Think simply. Provide a clear impression of what types of issues the group plans to address. And remember to keep things light.

Plan a game that gets everyone acquainted; introduce yourselves to each other and share why you felt it was important to get involved.

**4. SET GOALS FOR YOUR GROUP.** Once you have started your group and have a few core people attending your meetings, the group should set goals.

These goals should include everything from fundraising to attracting new members. Identify key issues not only in your school, but also in your community. Be creative and realistic. Additionally, your group should look at ways to use its influence as a school-sanctioned organization.

Think about sponsoring events and speakers. If you set a goal to have a great speaker talk to the whole school about an issue like race, history, gender or culture, ask the speaker to address interested members of the community that evening, too. Use the school or a local events center to host the event.

Try to include self-education in your group meetings. Create a reading list. Strive to keep learning about new issues.

**5. SCHEDULE EVENTS THAT ARE FUN.** Plan activities that entice people to come—not because they are necessarily interested in the cause, but because the events sound fun.

Consider events like concerts, dances and presentations. Imagine an after-school event where the local high school punk band plays a show with the local hip-hop act and the whole thing is hosted by a DJ. That would be cool, right?

Introduce the group's goals and ideas at the events. Use informational tables and fliers or an art display created by students and inspired by a recent event, a historical event or even a single word representing a theme, like *unity* or *upstander*.

People who are interested in activism and justice sometimes forget that not everyone is as passionate about their ideas as we are. Many people who are “on our side,” or *could be* on our side, might be uncomfortable about activism or standing up for a cause. Be creative, understanding and gentle in your approach, and be sure to include celebration and socialization as part of the group's activism and organizing.

This may feel like a lot, but just remember: Young people *can* change the world, and you have adults around you who are willing to help. Thank you for your courage. I can't wait to hear your ideas.

**Sincerely,**

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# What We're Reading

Teaching Tolerance loves to read! Check out a few of our favorite diverse books for diverse readers and educators.

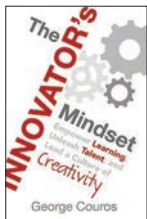


Nine-year-old Maddy wants to be a hero, but her strength has never been tested like it is the summer she spends on the bayou with her mysterious grandmother. Jewell Parker Rhodes' *Bayou Magic* tells the story of Maddy's first adventure away from her family in the big city of New Orleans. As she learns more about her bayou family and community, Maddy gains the opportunity to become the hero she's always known she could be. In the process, she expands her hopes and dreams and learns to cherish the environment.

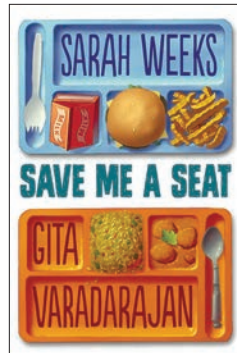
UPPER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

*"A magical celebration of community, imagination, friendship and nature."*

-Monita K. Bell



**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**  
*The Innovator's Mindset: Empower Learning, Unleash Talent, and Lead a Culture of Creativity* by George Couros



*Save Me A Seat* by Sarah Weeks and Gita Varadarajan is about two kids trying to make the best of a bad situation. Ravi recently moved to the United States from India and is having a hard time adjusting and making new friends. Joe is a U.S. native who is being bullied by the popular kids. Their experiences are different but related in ways that matter to both boys. This book illustrates a profound truth: Be ready to listen to others because you never know how a situation affects someone else.

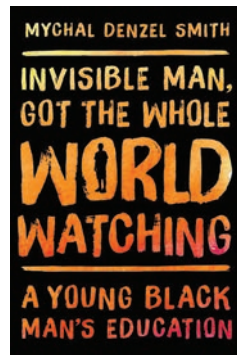
MIDDLE SCHOOL

*"A good reminder to see things from more than your own point of view."*

-Cecile Jones



**MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL**  
*Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* by Matthew Desmond



With the backdrop of social media and the internet as the great unifier, Mychal Denzel Smith's *Invisible Man, Got the Whole World Watching: A Young Black Man's Education* highlights the struggle of a generation to change the world. His central argument: The more we focus only on the most "respectable" black Americans, the more we make others invisible. The more we celebrate representation without systemic change, the more deeply we reinforce white supremacy.

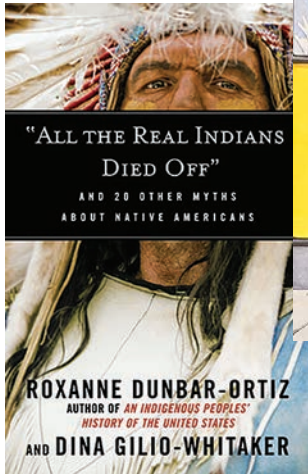
HIGH SCHOOL

*"A raw look at the disparate influences high-profile African Americans have on millennials at a time when many young people fear for their lives."*

-D. Scott McDaniel

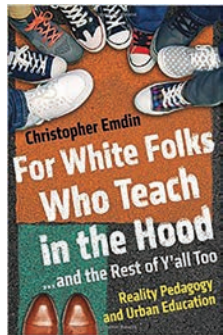


**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**  
*Ira's Shakespeare Dream* by Glenda Armand, illustrated by Floyd Cooper



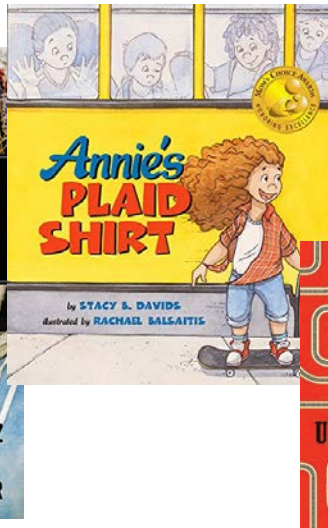
**“An important and necessary book that sets the record straight.”**

—Lauryn Mascareñaz



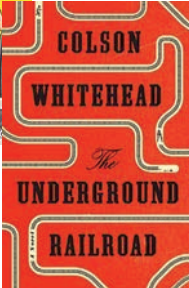
**“Indispensable guidance for those teaching youth who are part of traditionally oppressed groups—urban or not.”**

—Hoyt J. Phillips III



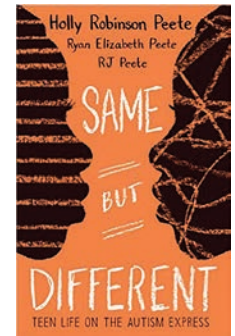
**“Encourages students to think about—and possibly rethink—personal expression and gender norms.”**

—Jarah Botello



**“A must-read for those seeking to deepen their understanding of American slavery.”**

—Kate Shuster



**“An honest, funny and uplifting story of a family’s journey with autism.”**

—Steffany Moyer

Myths surrounding American Indian history abound, from “Thanksgiving proves the Indians welcomed the Pilgrims” to “Columbus discovered America.” In **“All the Real Indians Died Off”: And 20 Other Myths About Native Americans**, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Dina Gilio-Whitaker tackle and disprove commonly held, inaccurate and limited understandings of indigenous peoples. In the process, they expose the origins of these myths and examine the broader landscape of Native people in our country—past and present.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Many young readers will relate to Annie in **Annie’s Plaid Shirt** by Stacy B. Davids, illustrated by Rachael Balsaitis. Annie loves her plaid shirt and doesn’t want to wear anything else. When she has to dress up for her uncle’s wedding, Annie and her mom go toe to toe about what she should wear—until Annie has a brilliant solution. Will her mom agree?

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**Same But Different** tells the story of 15-year-old twins: Charlie, who is on the autism spectrum, and Callie, who isn’t. Shifting back and forth between the twins’ perspectives, this novel lends humor, heart, courage and honesty to its disparate depictions of everyday experiences—meals and shopping

trips, vacations and movie dates. The book is loosely based on the real-life experiences of twins RJ and Ryan Elizabeth Peete, who coauthored it with their mother, actress Holly Robinson Peete.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Colson Whitehead’s novel **The Underground Railroad** offers a piercing look at the lived experience of slavery. It’s written from the perspective of Cora, a young woman whose escape from a Georgia plantation takes her through different states, where she (and the reader) get different points of view on “the peculiar institution” and its effects.

Whitehead’s fierce and unflinching prose draws readers into Cora’s world, which—although imaginary—holds important lessons.

HIGH SCHOOL

In **For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Y’all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education**, Christopher Emdin reframes today’s urban youth as “neoindigenous,” kids with a shared history of being silenced. As the title implies, Emdin’s book challenges educators to forge new paths to reach and teach their students and, through his reality pedagogy lens, outlines transformative practices that have the potential to spark a revolution of empowerment and learning.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## What We're Watching

Dim the lights and get ready to learn with these TT-approved films!

***Our Family: A Film About Family Diversity***, a project of Not In Our Town and Our Family Coalition, features elementary students' insights about what makes a family. It's hard not to smile as young people—and their family members—explain how their families are unique. Interspersed between testimonials are scenes of teachers engaging students in lessons about families. An extensive K–5 instructional guide accompanies the film, providing ready-to-use materials, such as discussion outlines and lesson plans. Nathan, a student, summarizes the importance of ***Our Family*** when he notes that acknowledging the diversity of families helps “you know how to reach out and embrace everybody.” (8 min.)

[niot.org/nios-video/our-family](http://niot.org/nios-video/our-family)  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

In ***Audrie & Daisy***, directors Bonni Cohen and Jon Shenk employ powerful visuals to tell the true stories of two girls, ages 14 and 15, who were raped by classmates and, after reporting the incidents, tormented in-person and via social media. One teen survives her ordeal; the other does not. Educators can learn a lot from this documentary, including the critical importance of teaching about consent and digital citizenship. ***Audrie & Daisy*** also

highlights how finding the strength to speak out can help change the trajectory of an assault survivor's life and how social media can be a healing tool, not just an instrument for bullying. (95 min.)\*

[audrieanddaisy.com](http://audrieanddaisy.com)  
HIGH SCHOOL AND PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

Ava DuVernay's ***13th*** explores how, although the 13th Amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude (except as punishment for a crime), systemic racial oppression lives on today. ***13th*** specifically looks at how the evolution of racist laws and policies led to mass incarceration, a practice that disproportionately affects people of color—black males in particular. The film documents a century and a half of history, using archival footage, statistics and interviews to contextualize the origins of the prison-industrial complex and to expose the forces that sustain it. DuVernay also examines different avenues through which individuals and groups have organized for racial justice, including the Black Lives Matter movement. (100 min.)\*

[netflix.com/title/80091741](https://netflix.com/title/80091741)  
HIGH SCHOOL AND PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

***Our Mockingbird***, a documentary by Sandra Jaffe, follows students from two Alabama high schools—one largely white and one largely black—as they come together in 2013 to perform the play adaption of *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Peppered with interviews of civil rights leaders, Harper Lee experts and actors from the original film adaption, ***Our Mockingbird*** shows that theater and Lee's timeless story can bring students together in a magical way. ***Our Mockingbird*** juxtaposes past and present civil rights issues and is a great resource for students and teachers who are interested in the performing arts, literature and social justice. A 37-minute classroom version is also available. (65 min.)

[bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/omockt.html](http://bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/omockt.html)  
Use this URL to access a discounted rate.  
MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

\*This film contains content that students may find disturbing. TT recommends that educators preview the film before deciding to show it to students.



## *The First 100 Days*

BY JARAH BOTELLO

**“OK, CLASS, YOUR VOTES ARE IN.”**

As Ms. Allen counted the final ballots, I laid my head on my desk, my heart pounding like a bass drum in my ears. I had never cared about class elections before, but this year was different. My best friend, Alexis, was running for class president, and I was her campaign manager.

“It was a close call, but our new class president is ... Danielle Evans!” Ms. Allen announced.

My heart dropped into my belly and everything froze. “Danielle Evans? She can’t be serious!” I screamed inside. Danielle didn’t take anything seriously, especially this campaign. I wanted to cry. I wanted to run over and hug Alexis. I wanted to spit at Danielle and her friends as they gave each other high

fives and fist bumps. Instead, I just sank down in my chair.

The next morning before class, Ms. Allen was in the hallway greeting students. Inside the classroom, Danielle and her friends bounced around, still celebrating their win and chanting, “Danielle! Danielle!”

Danielle stood in front of the class. “As your president, I declare this day National Nacho Day. Everyone needs to buy me, your new president, some nachos. Sorry, Alexis!” Taylor, Danielle’s campaign manager, made the letter “L” with his thumb and forefinger and stuck it in Alexis’ face. “Loser!” he hissed.

I couldn’t help myself, “Shut up, Taylor! Just because your side won doesn’t mean you have to be a jerk about it!”

The room exploded in chaos.

“Ooooh! They’re mad now.”

“Who wants nachos, anyway? Alexis was going to help us get an aquarium for our classroom!”

“There’s no way Alexis could have done that!”

“You want to fight about it?!”

“Sore losers!”

Ms. Allen rushed into the classroom. “Class, class, class! Everyone take your seats, now!”

She was using her “I-mean-business” voice, so everyone sat. But I was still mad.

“Listen, I know many of you put a lot of hard work into the campaign,” Ms. Allen said. “Some of you are happy about the outcome, and some of you are disappointed. It’s OK to feel happy or bad or concerned about





what's next, but in this classroom, we *will* respect each other. Is that understood?"

A few of us nodded and others said, "Yes, ma'am." It felt good for her to notice how I felt and to mention the hard work I had done.

"I have an idea!" Ms. Allen grabbed a marker and wrote "First 100 Days" on the board in big letters. Ms. Allen always comes up with crazy ideas. I wondered what this was all about.

"Every time we elect a new president, they come up with a plan for their first 100 days in office. This way, people know what to expect from that person. Today we are going to make a 100-day plan for our classroom, a plan for how we will treat each other. Does anyone have ideas?"

I wanted to raise my hand and say, "No being a jerk, Taylor," but I knew that

would start another fight and then we would be fighting all year. Instead, when Ms. Allen called on me, I said, "We should treat each other like friends even though we want different things."

"We can do nice stuff for people in town like visiting the nursing home or planting trees," Alexis offered.

"Yeah, and we help each other in class too. My mom always says it's nice to hold the door open for people."

"And let's only use our names when we talk to each other. No mean words."

"I have an idea," Danielle said. "If people really want the aquarium, we

### Questions for Readers

#### RIGHT THERE (IN THE TEXT)

Why is the narrator disappointed about the results of the election?

#### THINK AND SEARCH (IN THE TEXT)

What was the purpose of the First 100 Days exercise?

#### AUTHOR AND ME (IN MY HEAD)

What did Ms. Allen do to help her classroom? Describe a time a teacher helped you resolve a conflict.

#### ON MY OWN (IN MY HEAD)

Describe a time you were upset when something didn't go your way. How did you handle it?

could still try to do that." Alexis smiled at that, and that made me smile too.

The class continued to buzz with ideas, and Ms. Allen wrote them on the board. We made a poster that stayed in our room the rest of the year and we tried our best to stick to the 100-day plan.

Things weren't perfect, but our plan gave us good things to expect from ourselves and our classmates. It was a way to remind each other what we wanted our classroom to be: a place where we respect one another even though we want different things. ♦



### TOOLKIT

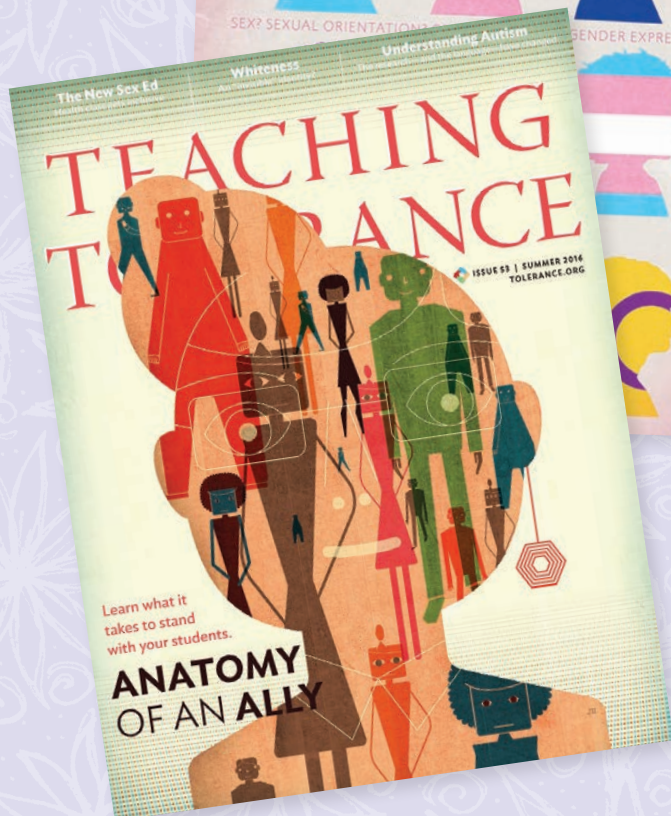
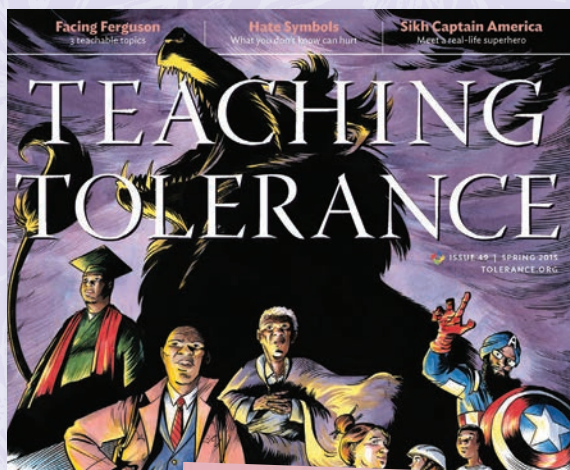
Inspired by the First 100 Days plan Ms. Allen made with her class? Create one with your own students! VISIT » [tolerance.org/hundred-days](http://tolerance.org/hundred-days)



This quote is widely attributed to gay-rights activist **Harvey Milk (1930-1978)**. Milk was the first openly gay person to be elected to public office in California and one of the first to be elected nationally.



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A NEW FILM KIT AND VIEWER'S GUIDE FROM TEACHING TOLERANCE

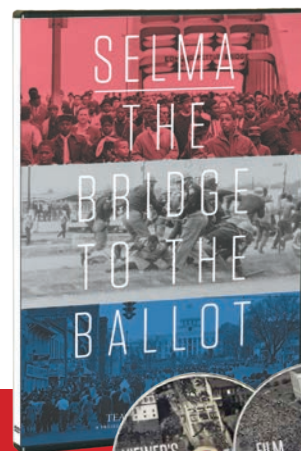
# SELMA: THE BRIDGE TO THE BALLOT

## THE TRUE STORY OF THE FORGOTTEN HEROES — SELMA'S STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

This film tells the story of a courageous group of students and teachers who, along with other activists, fought a nonviolent battle to win voting rights for African Americans in the South. By organizing and marching bravely in the face of intimidation, violence, arrest and even murder, these change-makers achieved one of the most significant victories of the civil rights era.

### KIT INCLUDES

- ➔ 40-minute film on DVD
- ➔ A viewer's guide to help you plan how you'll teach about the Selma-to-Montgomery marches, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and voting issues today
- ➔ A timeline of activities and events leading up to and following the marches
- ➔ An illustrated map with locations significant to the voting rights struggle



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