



RIGHTS SITES NEWS

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN THE CLASSROOM

A Publication of The Advocates for Human Rights

Racial Discrimination in the U.S.

“How can you thank a man for giving you what’s already yours? How then can you thank him for giving you only part of what’s already yours? You haven’t even made progress, if what’s being given to you, you should have had already. That’s no progress.”

~ Malcolm X, 1964



Human rights are everyone’s birthright, regardless of race or any other distinction. The human right to freedom from discrimination is fundamental to each person’s ability to live in dignity — and to enjoy all their other human rights. Racism, which limits peoples’ access to rights based on their identity, is an attack on the very concept of human rights.

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) is the international human rights treaty that comprehensively addresses the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and supports positive actions to promote racial justice and equality. The United States ratified CERD in 1994. As a party to the treaty, the U.S. is obligated to condemn racial discrimination and pursue a policy of eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms. This includes safeguarding human rights in the political, economic, social, cultural, and other fields of public life so that human rights are ensured to everyone without racial discrimination.

As evidenced by the recent shootings of Trayvon Martin, John Crawford, and Michael Brown, however, racial discrimination in the U.S. is still a significant problem. Communities of color bear the brunt of our nation’s history of racism, slavery, and white supremacy. Even two generations after the end of legal discrimination, systematic oppression continues to marginalize people of color. Vast racial disparities still exist in wealth and income, education, employment, poverty, incarceration rates, and health.

Everyone can take responsibility for working to end racism, and related intolerance, and oppression. Schools play a crucial role in fighting discrimination and prejudice. Children develop an awareness of the similarities and differences between people from a very young age and pick up on value judgments by others about those differences. They are influenced by the behaviors and attitudes modeled by those around them throughout their childhood and develop their own values and beliefs based on these observations.

This issue of *Rights Sites News* is dedicated to helping teachers and schools assist students in recognizing, accepting, and respecting diversity as well as exploring ways in which prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination may be addressed.

RACIAL DISPARITY IN THE U.S.

INCOME DISPARITY: In 2010, the median family income of Black and Latino families was a mere 57 cents for every dollar of White median family income.

EDUCATION DISPARITY: Black adults were 60% as likely to have a college degree as White adults while Latino adults were only 42% as likely to have a college degree.

HEALTH DISPARITY: In 2010, health care coverage rates for Whites, Blacks, and Latinos were 86.3%, 78.3%, and 68.0% respectively.

EMPLOYMENT DISPARITY: As of December 2011, the unemployment rate was 15.8% for Blacks, 11.0% for Latinos, and 7.5% for Whites.

MASS INCARCERATION: Blacks are six times more likely to be in prison than Whites, and people of color as a whole make up over 65% of the prison population. These figures do not include the disproportionately Latino population being held in immigration detention centers.

Source: United For a Fair Economy, “State of the Dream: The Emerging Majority.” 2012.

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Lesson: Racial Disparities Jigsaw

Sources: Adapted from Teaching Tolerance. "Racial Disparities Jigsaw Mini-Unit." www.tolerance.org/lesson/racial-disparities-jigsaw-mini-unit.
UN Cyber School Bus. "Student Handout: Introduction to Race." www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/discrim/race_a_print.asp.

Goal: To investigate racial disparities and their underlying causes and to identify steps we should take to alleviate them.

Objectives:

- Students will understand racial discrimination as a human rights violation.
- Students will explore structural aspects of racism
- Students will connect historical racism with contemporary social problems.
- Students will gather and use information for research purposes and read and listen critically.

Grades: 9-12

Time Frame: 1-2 class periods

Essential Questions

- ? What are the underlying causes of racial disparity?
- ? What steps do individuals and society need to make to help relieve the disparity?

Materials:

- Resource material dealing with school resegregation, the achievement gap, the racial income gap, health care disparities, and disproportionate minority confinement.
- Shadow Reports on U.S. CERD compliance (www.ushrnetwork.org/resources-medial/cerd-shadow-reports)
- Handout: Racial Disparities Information Organizer for student groups (www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/documents/TT_BHM_racialdisparitiesorgani.pdf)
- Handout: "Race, Racism, and Human Rights" (see page 3)

Procedure:

- 1. Define.** Begin by asking students to define racism and to share examples of racism. It's likely that students will focus on interpersonal examples – calling someone the "n-word," for example. Next have students read the handout, "Race, Racism, and Human Rights." Let students know the class will be exploring racial discrimination and disparity in the United States.
- 2. Investigate.** Divide students into 5-person "jigsaw" groups. Be sure the groups are diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, and ability. Assign one student from each group to investigate one of the following racial disparity topics.
 - School resegregation
 - The "achievement gap"
 - Income gap
 - Health care disparities
 - Criminal justice system
- 3. Explain** that students will investigate their racial disparities topic along five lines of inquiry (see below) and provide time for students to review their assignments, locate resources, and investigate teacher-provided resources individually. Require students to reference at least one of the recent "shadow reports" on U.S. compliance with the **The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination** (CERD) that were submitted as part of the 2014 treaty monitoring process as mentioned in the handout, "Race, Racism, and Human Rights."
 1. What is the nature and scope of the disparity or problem?
 2. What impact does it have on communities of color?
 3. What historic and present-day factors help create the problem?
 4. What can individuals do to help address the problem?
 5. What changes does society need to make to help remedy the disparity?
- 6. Caucus.** Create "expert groups" that include students with the same topic from each of the small groups, e.g., all students who are investigating "school resegregation" should form an expert group, sharing what they learn in their individual investigations and working to create shared responses to the five investigative questions. Working together, the expert groups should create and rehearse presentations to make to their respective jigsaw groups.



7. **Teach.** Bring the students back into their jigsaw groups, and ask students to teach their topics to peers. Give each student a copy of the handout: Racial Disparities Information Organizer. As the “experts” teach the material, encourage students to complete the handout and ask questions for clarification.
8. **Debrief.** As a whole class, reflect on the information gathered in the handout and discuss the following questions:
- Some causes show up repeatedly, across the different kinds of disparities. Why might this be?
 - Was it easier to come up with individual or societal actions? Why?
 - How are societal and individual actions related? Can one occur without the other? Why?
 - Is one kind of action more effective than the other? Why?



RACE, RACISM, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

RACE refers to a group of people who share the same physical characteristics such as skin tone, hair texture, and facial features. Race is a significant social issue because people use racial differences as the basis for discrimination. Much of today’s racism can be traced to the era of colonialism that began in the 1400s. When Europeans began colonizing Africa and the Americas, the white settlers adopted the idea that they were superior to the other races they encountered. The false notion that Africans and Native Americans were inferior (along with the desire for economic power) justified the Europeans’ taking land and enslaving people. In this way, naturally-occurring racial differences became the basis for systems of exploitation and discrimination.

RACISM is the systematic practice of denying people access to rights, representation, or resources based on racial differences. As you will learn in this lesson, racism involves more than personal actions of individuals. It is a thorough system of discrimination that involves social institutions and affects virtually every aspect of society.

It’s important to remember that racism is neither natural nor inevitable. Through history, people of different racial groups have interacted and co-existed peacefully. During the Middle Ages, for example, Europeans looked up to the people of Africa and China, whose civilization and culture were considered to be more advanced.

The right to enjoy **HUMAN RIGHTS** without discrimination is one of the most fundamental principles of human rights law. Every human being is equal in dignity and worth and has the right not to be discriminated against. **The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination** (CERD) which the U.S. has signed and ratified, defines “racial discrimination” as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political,

economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.” When a state ratifies CERD it agrees to:

- not engage in any act or practice of racial discrimination against individuals, groups of persons or institutions, and to ensure that public authorities and institutions do likewise
- not sponsor, defend or support racial discrimination by any persons or organizations
- review national and local policies, and amend or repeal laws and regulations which create or perpetuate racial discrimination
- prohibit and put a stop to racial discrimination by persons, groups, and organizations
- prohibit organizations and propaganda that promote racial superiority, racial hatred, racial violence, or racial discrimination
- ensure effective protection and remedies for victims of racial discrimination
- take special measures, as necessary, to ensure that disadvantaged racial groups have full and equal access to human rights and fundamental freedoms, and
- combat the prejudices that lead to racial discrimination, and eliminate the barriers between races, through the use of education and information, and by encouraging integrationist or multiracial organizations and movements.

As a party to CERD, the U.S. must report periodically to the United Nations on its progress in upholding the human rights protected in this treaty. The most recent report is available here: www.state.gov/j/drl/r/s/cerd_report/210605.htm. As part of this evaluation, civil society organizations are also asked for their input. These “shadow reports” cross-cut various racial issues, highlight inequalities due to racial disparity, and provide a more comprehensive view of how institutional racism affects individuals in the United States. These reports can be found here: www.ushrnetwork.org/resources-media/cerd-shadow-reports.

FEATURED WEBSITE: TEACHING TOLERANCE



TEACHING TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

Founded in 1991 by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), Teaching Tolerance is dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations, and cultivating inclusive, nurturing school environments where “equality and justice are not just taught, but lived.” The Teaching Tolerance program has documentary films, books, lesson plans, and other materials that promote tolerance – free of charge. Their teaching materials have won two Oscars, an Emmy, and more than 20 honors from the Association of Educational Publishers, including two Golden Lamp Awards, the industry’s highest honor.

Their award-winning Teaching Tolerance magazine provides educators across the country with a forum to learn about and exchange ideas on teaching about diversity. The Teaching Diverse Students Initiative is an online project focused on improving instruction for racially and ethnically diverse students. Learn more at www.teachingtolerance.org.

FEATURED RESOURCE: SPEAK UP!



Speak up! Responding to Everyday Bigotry is a guidebook and initiative by Teaching Tolerance. When exposed to bigotry, people are often unsure how to respond. SPLC talked to Americans all over the country who told them what they did or didn’t say when confronted with bigotry, or in many cases, what they wished they did or didn’t say. The handbook provides information on how to respond to everyday bigotry, including racism, within your family, among friends, at your school, your workplace, and in

public. Available at: www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/speak_up_handbook.pdf.

They also offer the guide, **Speak Up at School**, created specifically for educators who want to develop the skills to speak up themselves and who want to help their students find the courage to speak up too. This guide is for the adults in the school. It offers advice about how to respond to remarks made by students and by other adults and gives guidance for helping students learn to speak up as well. Available at: www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/Speak_Up_at_School.pdf.



6 STEPS TO SPEAKING UP AGAINST BIGOTRY

1. **Be ready.** You know another moment like this will happen, so prepare yourself for it. Think of yourself as the one who will speak up. Promise yourself not to remain silent.
2. **Identify the behavior.** Sometimes, pointing out the behavior candidly helps someone hear what they’re really saying. When identifying behavior, however, avoid labeling, name-calling, or the use of loaded terms. Describe the behavior; don’t label the person.
3. **Appeal to principles.** If the speaker is someone you have a relationship with – a sister, friend, or co-worker, for example – call on their higher principles.
4. **Set limits.** You cannot control another person, but you can say, “Don’t tell racist jokes in my presence anymore.” Then follow through. The point is to draw the line.
5. **Find an ally/Be an ally.** When frustrated in your own campaign against everyday bigotry, seek out like-minded people and ask them to support you in whatever ways they can. And don’t forget to return the favor.
6. **Be vigilant.** Remember: Change happens slowly. People make small steps, typically, not large ones. Stay prepared, and keep speaking up. Don’t risk silence.

Source: Southern Poverty Law Center. *Speak Up: Responding to Everyday Bigotry*.

ANTI-RACISM TEACHING RESOURCES

All Different, All Equal education pack

coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Publications/Education_Pack_en.pdf

This resource provides ideas, methods, and activities for informal intercultural education with young people.

Amnesty International - Racial Discrimination

poster.amnesty.si/index.php/en/educational-materials

A series of workshops for youth that raise awareness about the different forms of racial discrimination, present key rights that protect us from racial discrimination, and encourage us to contemplate different ways of facing and fighting discrimination.

Anti-Defamation League (ADL)

archive.adl.org/main_education/default.html

ADL is a leading provider of anti-bias education and diversity training programs that help create and sustain inclusive home, school, community, and work environments.

Facing History and Ourselves - Racism Resources

facinghistory.org/for-educators/educator-resources

This site offers a wide variety of texts, videos, and lessons for teachers interested in the history of race and racism. Teachers will find resources that explore histories of immigration and belonging, race and civil rights, as well as connections to the Holocaust and human behavior.

The Leadership Conference

civilrights.org/publications/reports/talking_to_our_children/

A resource to help parents and children talk about diversity, racism, and other kinds of bigotry. It offers guidelines for discussing these difficult issues and includes examples of children's questions and concerns, and as a starting point, offers suggestions for answering them.

Museum of Tolerance

museumoftolerance.com/

A human rights educational center dedicated to raising awareness about the Holocaust in both historic and contemporary contexts and confronting all forms of prejudice and discrimination in our world.

Project Implicit

implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html

This site has tests that measure implicit biases regarding race, skin-tone, sexuality, and gender. Created by an international group of researchers investigating new ways of understanding attitudes, stereotypes, and hidden biases that influence perception, judgment, and action.

Race Bridges for Schools

racebridgesforschools.com/

This site offers educators classroom tools to engage their students in the passion and satisfaction of working for racial justice and safe and welcoming schools.

Racial Equity Tools

racialequitytools.org/

This site provides support to individuals and groups working to achieve racial equity with tools, research, tips, curricula, and ideas for people who want to increase their own understanding and to help those working toward justice at every level – in systems, organizations, communities and the culture at large.

Racism No Way

racismnoway.com.au/

This site tackles racism in schools by providing teachers, school students, and parents with games, research, and lessons plans.

Racism Revealed: A Manual for Educators

poster.amnesty.si/index.php/en/educational-materials/racism-revealed-a-manual-for-educators

This manual is for educators interested in using visual images to promote interactive discussion and critical thinking with youth about racism and discrimination.

Students Taking Action Against Racism (STAAR)

static.diversityteam.org/files/140/students-taking-action-against-racism-tool-kit.pdf?1271974433

This practical toolkit helps youth lead activities with their fellow students to raise awareness of racism and other forms of discrimination.

Teaching The Levees: A Curriculum for Democratic Dialogue and Civic Engagement

teachingthelevees.org/

A free teaching guide for the documentary film, *When the Levees Broke* that promotes dialogue about race and class issues in the United States.

Understanding Prejudice

understandingprejudice.org/teach/highact.htm

This site contains a variety of classroom activities that explore prejudice, discrimination, and social justice.

Zinn Education Project

zinnedproject.org/

This site introduces students to a more accurate, complex, and engaging understanding of U.S. history than is found in traditional textbooks. Includes multiple lessons on racism and racial identity.

HOW TO FIND MULTICULTURAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Source: "9 Resources for Finding Multicultural Books for Children" by Marsha Rakestraw, Institute for Humane Education

According to the latest figures from the National Center for Education Statistics, "black, Latino, Asian, and Native American students will together make up a narrow majority of the nation's public school students," yet the number of children's books that feature characters of color are shamefully sparse. Studies show that having multicultural literature in the classroom (and at home) benefits all children, and can cause harm when it is absent. Here are nine resources to help you find multicultural books for children and young adults.

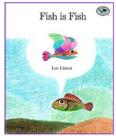
1. **We Need Diverse Books.** #WeNeedDiverseBooks is an official campaign on Tumblr that is working to counteract the lack of diversity in youth literature. The site includes book recommendations and posts about what people are doing to diversify "kidlit." See: weneeddiversebooks.tumblr.com/.
2. **Multicultural Books for Children: 40+ Book Lists.** Blogger Pragmatic Mom has compiled a list of lists that have recommendations for multicultural literature for children. See: pragmaticmom.com/multicultural-books-for-children/.
3. **Notable Books for a Global Society.** The Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association each year highlights children's and young adult books that enhance "student understanding of people and cultures throughout the world." See: clrsig.org/nbgs_books.php.
4. **The Center for Children's Books.** A collection of awards in youth literature, several of which focus on a multicultural theme. Look for awards such as the Pura Belpre Award, the Coretta Scott King Award, and the American Indian Youth Literature Award. See: ccb.lis.illinois.edu/awards.html.
5. **Lee & Low Books.** This independent book publisher promotes diversity and shared experiences of cultures that have been historically underrepresented or misrepresented in literature for children. See: leeandlow.com/.
6. **Teaching for Change Bookstore.** Although it has an actual storefront, Teaching for Change also has a vibrant online presence, including suggested titles for younger, middle, and older students on a variety of social justice and multicultural topics. See: bbpbooks.teachingforchange.org/.
7. **American Indians in Children's Literature.** Founded by Debbie Reese, a professor and Nambe Pueblo Indian, this blog offers a critical analysis of indigenous peoples in children's literature and elsewhere, as well as suggested titles that accurately reflect Native culture and experiences. See: americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/.
8. **Rich in Color.** This blog features reviews and discussions of young adult literature featuring and/or written by people of color. See: richincolor.com/.
9. **Diversity in YA.** This blog features young adult books dealing with "all kinds of diversity, from race to sexual orientation to gender identity and disability." See: diversityinya.tumblr.com/.

TIP! NOT ALL MULTICULTURAL BOOKS ARE CREATED EQUAL

It's important to note that just because a book features one or more characters of color doesn't mean that the book does not contain stereotypes and culturally inauthentic material, or misleading elements. For tips on selecting anti-bias children's books, see "An Updated Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children's Books" by Louise Derman-Sparks at <http://bbpbooks.teachingforchange.org/2013-guide-anti-bias-childrens-books>.



ANTI-RACISM BOOKS



Fish is a Fish
By Leo Lionni
ISBN: 978-0394827995
Ages 3-7



Bein' with You This Way
By W. Nikola-Lisa and M. Bryant
ISBN: 978-1880000267
Ages 5-9



The Skin I'm In
By Sharon Flake
ISBN: 978-142310385
Ages: 12-17



The Crayon Box that Talked
By Shane Derolf
ISBN: 978-0679886112
Ages 3-7



The Sneetches and Other Stories
By Dr. Seuss
ISBN: 978-0394800899
Ages 5-9



Black Like Me
By John Howard Griffin
ISBN: 978-0451234216
Ages: 14-17



Shades of People
By S. Rotner and S. Kelly
ISBN: 978-0823423057
Ages 3-7



Smoky Night
By Eve Bunting
ISBN: 978-0152018849
Ages: 10-12



Invisible Man
By Ralph Ellison
ISBN: 978-0679732761
Ages: 14-17



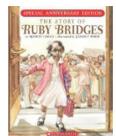
The Skin I'm In: A First Look at Racism
By Pat Thomas
ISBN: 978-0764124594
Ages 4-8



American Born Chinese
By EGene Luen Yang
ISBN: 978-0142417065
Ages: 12-17



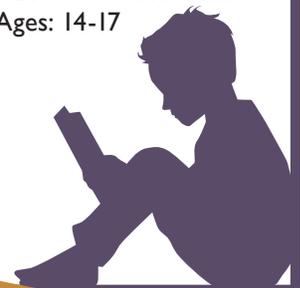
To Kill a Mockingbird
By Harper Lee
ISBN: 978-0446310789
Ages: 14-17



The Story of Ruby Bridges
By Robert Coles
ISBN: 978-0439472265
Ages 4-8



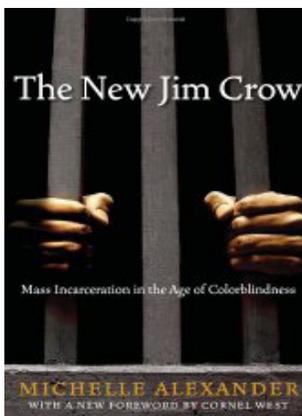
The House You Pass on the Way
By Jacqueline Woodson
ISBN: 978-0312384487
Ages: 12-17



READ A PLAY!

Penumbra Theatre Company of St. Paul, MN provides free study guides for numerous plays that tackle issues of racial discrimination such as *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Mountain Top*, and *The Ballad of Emmett Till*. Each guide includes a brief overview on the history of African American Theatre, a synopsis of the play, dramaturgical notes, contextual essays, interviews with the playwrights and directors, and tools for teaching. To view their study guide collection, visit penumbraetheatre.org/content/blogcategory/8/8/.

FEATURED BOOK: THE NEW JIM CROW



Once in a great while a book comes along that changes the way we see the world and helps to fuel a nationwide social movement. *The New Jim Crow* is such a book. Praised by Harvard Law professor Lani Guinier as "brave and bold," this book directly challenges the notion that the election of Barack Obama signals a new era of colorblindness. Legal scholar Michelle Alexander argues that "we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it." By targeting black men through the War on Drugs and decimating communities of color, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control—relegating millions to a permanent second-class status—even as it formally adheres to the principle of colorblindness. In the words of Benjamin Todd Jealous, president and CEO of the NAACP, "this book is a 'call to action' and a must-read for all people of conscience." For more information, please visit: thenewpress.com/books/new-jim-crow.

TEACHING ABOUT FERGUSON IN THE CLASSROOM

Source: District of Columbia Public Schools and adapted from TeachableMoment.org, a project of Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility.
<http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/Files/downloads/ABOUT%20DCPS/Press/Brown%20Discussion%20Teachers%20Guide.pdf>

“As a teacher, you carefully prepare for your students, plan your lessons, develop curriculum that will meet expectations of administrators, engage students, and build critical skills for academic success. And then, there are the news items – local or global – that capture students’ hearts and minds, and change the possibilities or environment of the classroom.”

~ Mary Hendra, Facing History and Ourselves

Recent events in Ferguson, Missouri involving the shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown have prompted a broad range of emotions across the United States. As some are reminded of the shootings of Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis, and others harken back to the tragic death of Emmett Till in 1955, social protests in Ferguson, Missouri have attracted national and international attention. These events are teachable moments in classrooms. Below is a list of ten suggestions for educators who want to help their students understand what happened in Ferguson, contextualize its place in our nation’s history, and empower young people to work for a more just, peaceful world.

- 1. CREATE A SAFE, RESPECTFUL, AND SUPPORTIVE TONE IN YOUR CLASSROOM.** Sometimes students don’t participate in discussions about sensitive issues because they worry that they will be teased, their opinions will be ridiculed, or strong feelings will arise because the topic hits close to home. To create a safe and supportive environment, make group agreements at the beginning of the year. These might include guidelines like, “no name-calling,” “no interrupting,” “listen without judgment,” “share to your level of comfort,” and “you have the right to pass.” Remind students that when they talk about groups of people, they should try to avoid speaking in absolutes; use the word “some,” not “all.” Hold community-building activities to create a positive and respectful classroom environment, and resolve conflicts proactively. Most importantly, model how to talk about sensitive and controversial topics by being honest and open yourself, respecting different points of view and accepting feelings.
- 2. PREPARE YOURSELF.** Before you delve into a difficult topic with your students, educate yourself with background knowledge. TeachableMoment.org has up-to-date lessons on many key issues that provide both background information and suggested activities. In addition, explore your own biases. Check out the article, “I Don’t Think I’m Biased,” by Pat Clark at www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-37-spring-2010/feature/i-don-t-think-i-m-biased. Next, articulate your own point of view on the topic for yourself so that when students ask for your opinion, you will be prepared. Though many teachers try to keep their own points of view out of the classroom, if it is appropriate to share yours, try to wait until the end of the discussion. Also, consider in advance the possible “triggers” for your students. For example, if you are discussing police brutality and the Michael Brown incident, remember that you will almost certainly have students who have been victims of racial profiling in your classroom. Some of these students may feel relieved to discuss a topic so relevant to their lives, while others may feel embarrassed. This doesn’t mean you should avoid potentially controversial topics, but you should be mindful not to highlight students who may wish to remain silent. Be aware that strong feelings could arise and plan in advance for how to handle them. Remind your students about the ground rules and explain that this issue may affect some students very personally. Depending on the topic, you may even want to speak in advance with those students, or their parents, who have a personal connection to it.

MORE TEACHING RESOURCES

- *The New Jim Crow* By Michelle Alexander (see page 9)
- #FergusonSyllabus via Storify curator @DrMChatelai
- “5 Ways to Teach About Michael Brown and Ferguson in the New School Year.” By Christopher Emdin, *Huffington Post*
- “How to Teach Kids About What’s Happening in Ferguson” By Marcia Chatelain, *The Atlantic*
- “Michael Brown” By Mary Hendra, Facing History and Ourselves
- “Teaching About Ferguson” By Julian Hipkins III, Teaching for Change
- Lesson: “What is Happening in Ferguson, MO,” Anti-Defamation League



3. FIND OUT WHAT STUDENTS ALREADY KNOW OR HAVE EXPERIENCED ABOUT THE TOPIC.

Start with what the students already know. You can assess their prior knowledge in a variety of ways: create a semantic web as a whole class and brainstorm associations with the topic; have them talk with a partner; or have them write in response to a prompt. If the topic is very delicate, you might ask them to write anonymously first, then use that writing to decide how to proceed in a later class. Make a list of all the questions they have, either publicly or for your own planning. These questions are an additional window into what students already know, or think they know, and what they don't know. Ask students to articulate where they got their information and opinions, and invite them to talk about how they know their sources are reliable. Remind them that, when learning about or discussing sensitive information, they should always ask, "What do I know and how do I know it?" While students should be pushed to corroborate information from multiple sources and consider perspective, be sure not to undermine the value of the students' life experiences as well.



4. COMPILE THE STUDENTS' QUESTIONS AND EXAMINE THEM TOGETHER.

After giving students basic information about your topic, elicit questions they still have. If they are focusing on content questions (who, what, where, why, when), expand their inquiry so they think beyond the basic facts and dig into deeper or "essential" questions. For example, if you are going to discuss the killing of Michael Brown, content questions might be: Who was Michael Brown? Where did he grow up? Why was he in Ferguson? These questions are important, but questions such as, "Why do you believe the police shot him?" and "How should communities react to this tragedy?" push students to make connections beyond one news story and lead to a more complex understanding of the situation. Another fruitful line of questioning might be asking how the issue affects their lives in their hometown and how it affects society at large.

5. MAKE CONNECTIONS.

Help students make connections between the topic at hand and their own lives. How does the issue affect them or their family, friends, or community? Why should they care? If they struggle, help them find connections. Often, starting with multimedia, whether photos, video, or infographics, can hook students. You might also help them make connections by thinking about what else they know about, in current news or in history, that shares some of the same details.

6. HAVE STUDENTS INVESTIGATE AND LEARN MORE.

It is critical that students have a chance to find answers to their questions, conduct research, talk to people, and learn more in a way that makes the topic meaningful for them. **First, however, make sure your students understand how to tell the difference between opinions and facts.** You might make a T-chart and use examples from a news article on a topic you are studying to demonstrate, then invite students to find and share their own examples from additional articles. For example, if you were engaging your class on the topic of Michael Brown or Trayvon Martin, students could read and compare information and opinion from sources such as the mainstream media and Twitter/Facebook. They might start with a news article for factual background information, then read an editorial to see how an opinion piece about the same topic is written. Students might then study a timeline about the events leading up to the incident or watch a video. Finally, they might learn about public perception of this incident by analyzing a Gallup poll which shows opinions on the topic broken down by race, geography, or other demographic groups. They might look for related news and opinions to prompt rich discussions and open up opportunities to hear other students' voices. Remember to point students to sources with contrasting political slants as well, including people who have strong opinions or special expertise on the topic. While students are gathering this information, emphasize that even "factual" information has a point of view. While they are researching, they should ask themselves: What is the point of view of this source? How reliable

is it, and why? Below is a list of articles and resources to support student inquiry into Michael Brown:

- “Why Is the N.Y.P.D. After Me?” by Nicholas K. Peart, *The New York Times*
- “Have You Ever Interacted with the Police?” by Holly Epstein Ojalvo, *The New York Times*
- “When The Media Treats White Suspects And Killers Better Than Black Victims” by Nick Wing, *Huffington Post*
- “How We’d Cover Ferguson if it Happened in Another Country” by Max Fisher, *Vox*
- “Tribute to Black Men Killed by Police” by Melissa Harris Perry, *Huffington Post*
- “12 Things White People Can Do Now Because Ferguson” by Janeé Woods, *Altnetnet*

7. EXPLORE STUDENTS’ OPINIONS AND PROMOTE DIALOGUE. After they have researched a topic thoroughly, students are ready to form and express their own points of view. It is important to encourage them to be open to different points of view. You might do an “opinion continuum” exercise where they show whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or are somewhere in between or not sure on a variety of topics. Help promote dialogue, as opposed to debate. Dialogue aims for understanding, an enlargement of view, complicating one’s thinking, and an openness to change. Provide opportunities for various kinds of group discussion where different perspectives get shared. These opportunities can be found in lessons available on TeachableMoment.org and include think-pair-share, conversation circles, group go-rounds, panels, micro-labs, and fishbowls.

8. BE RESPONSIVE TO FEELINGS AND VALUES. Even though you have set up ground rules at the outset and developed a respectful classroom environment, once a hot topic emerges you need to continue to monitor classroom tone. Remind students about the ground rules, especially if they are violated. Take the emotional “temperature” of the classroom periodically to find out how students are feeling, and encourage the discussion of feelings throughout. Build in different ways for students to participate, but also to opt out if a discussion is emotionally difficult. Give opportunities for students to write their thoughts, perhaps anonymously, instead of sharing verbally. Remind students that while you want them to participate, they always have the right to “pass” if they feel uncomfortable. Again, if you anticipate that a certain topic may elicit too many strong feelings for a particular student, talk with them in advance.

9. MAKE HOME CONNECTIONS. Use parents and other family members as primary sources by having students interview them as part of their research. Communicate with parents about your approach to discussing controversial issues. You can do this by sending a letter home in the beginning of the year and encouraging parents to let you know if there are any sensitive issues for their family so you will be prepared.

10. DO SOMETHING. If students are engaged in an issue discussed in class and feel strongly about it, they may want to do something about it. Your study should be an opportunity for taking informed action. This could involve learning more and doing more focused research. It could also involve helping students carry out a social action or community service project related to the issue. Students can learn more about how other young people did projects around recent issues in the news, such as starting a petition, organizing large student demonstrations, and speaking out on the topic. If the issue is a political one, they can engage in writing letters, speaking at public hearings, raising money, participating in demonstrations, or writing articles for a school or local newspaper.



MARCH 21 - INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

www.un.org/en/events/racialdiscriminationday/

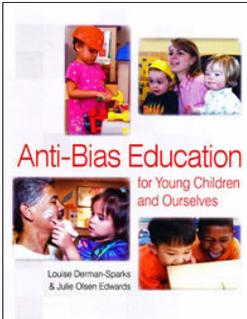
On this day, in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid “pass laws”. As a result, in 1966, the UN declared March 21st “International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,” and called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

NOVEMBER 16 - INTERNATIONAL DAY OF TOLERANCE

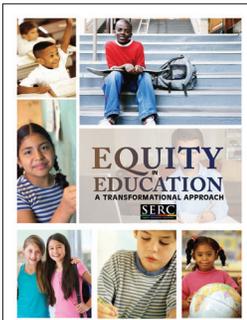
www.un.org/en/events/toleranceaday/

The United Nations’ annual International Day for Tolerance is a time for people to learn about respecting and recognizing the rights and beliefs of others. It is also a time of reflection and debate on the negative effects of intolerance. Many educators use the theme of this day to help students understand issues centered on tolerance, human rights, and non-violence.

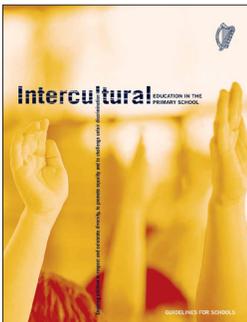
RESOURCES FOR CREATING EQUITY IN YOUR SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM

**Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves**

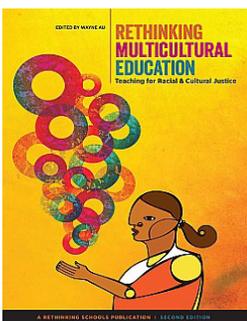
This best-selling publication by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) offers educators a framework for helping young children develop positive social identities and comfort and confidence with diversity, as well as to evolve caring human connections, an understanding of unfairness, and to become empowered to act against prejudice and discrimination. It provides an overview of anti-bias education and how to create a positive learning environment and then delves into more specific issues, such as culture, race, gender, economic class, family structures, different abilities, and holidays. Each chapter offers a brief analysis of the issue, as well as tips and strategies, activity ideas, case studies, and related essays. *Anti-Bias Education* is rich with insights and ideas for helping us and our students become citizens full of compassion and integrity for others. For more information, visit: www.naeyc.org/store/node/17122.

**Equity in Education: A Transformational Approach**

This resource, produced by the State Education Resource Center of Connecticut (SERC), looks at the achievement gaps in the CT school system and provides insight to anyone seeking equity in education. The publication examines racial achievement gaps and includes data showing racial disparities in student outcomes. The report also provides an overview of the problem of racial inequities in education and proposes potential solutions to eliminate disparities including changes that can be made in the area of leadership, professional capacity, school climate, school-family-community partnerships, and teaching and learning. The report also provides a reflection on SERC's own transformational approach to achieving equity from within. The full resource can be downloaded for free at <http://equity.ctserc.com/assets/equity-in-ed-SERC.pdf>.

**Intercultural Education in the Primary School**

This publication provides comprehensive guidelines on intercultural education and deals with a wide range of issues, including school planning, classroom planning, assessment, and the language environment. It is designed to be accessible to people approaching the curriculum from a range of different perspectives, including teachers, school managers, school support staff, and policy makers to support the development of more inclusive classroom environments. The guidelines also support whole-school planning and policy development within schools and the overall development of a school culture that is welcoming, respectful and sensitive to the needs of all children. Download the free publication here: www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/Intercultural.pdf.

**Rethinking Multicultural Education**

This new and expanded edition collects the best articles dealing with race and culture in the classroom that have appeared in the *Rethinking Schools* magazine. Moving beyond a simplistic focus on heroes and holidays, and foods and festivals, *Rethinking Multicultural Education* demonstrates a powerful vision of anti-racist, social justice education. Practical, rich in story, and analytically sharp, the publication reclaims multicultural education as part of a larger struggle for justice and against racism, colonization, and cultural oppression—in schools and society. For more information, visit: www.rethinkingschools.org/ProdDetails.asp?ID=9780942961539.



HUMAN RIGHTS CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

- 21 Peace Day - www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/
- 26 International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons - www.un.org/en/events/nuclearweaponeelimination/

OCTOBER

Bullying Prevention Awareness Month - www.stompoutbullying.org/index.php/campaigns/national-bullying-prevention-awareness-month/

- 1 International Day of Older Persons - www.un.org/en/events/olderpersonsday/
- 2 International Day of Non-Violence - www.un.org/en/events/nonviolenceday/index.shtml
- 5 World Teachers' Day - <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/world-teachers-day>
- 7 World Habitat Day - www.un.org/en/events/habitatday/
- 16 World Food Day - www.fao.org/world-food-day/home/en/
- 17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty - www.un.org/en/events/povertyday/

NOVEMBER

- 10 World Science Day for Peace and Development - www.un.org/en/events/scienceday/
- 16 International Day of Tolerance - www.un.org/en/events/toleranceday/
- 20 Universal Children's Day - www.un.org/en/events/childrenday/
- 25 International Day for the Prevention of Violence against Women - www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday/

RIGHTS SITES NEWS

Volume 10 Issue 2 Fall 2014

Rights Sites News is published quarterly by the The Advocates for Human Rights to promote human rights education in the classroom and support teachers. We welcome suggestions and comments.

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