

DIVERSE APPROACHES TO  
FAMILY & COMMUNITY

# VIOLENCE PREVENTION



A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

MARTHA JEAN ADAMS-HEGGINS • LAXLEY RODNEY • CASIMIR KOWALSKI

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## Diverse Approaches to Family & Community Violence Prevention: A National Perspective

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 QSR QSR 0 9 8 7

ISBN-13: 978-0-07-339431-2

ISBN-10: 0-07-339431-9

*Custom Publishing Specialist: James Doepke*

*Production Editor: Susan Culbertson*

*Cover Design: Fairfax Hutter*

*Cover Photo © George Doyle/Stockbyte/Getty Images*

*Printer/Binder: Quebecor World*

**A teacher affects eternity.  
He can never tell where his influence stops.”**

**- Henry Brooks Adams**

***Diverse Approaches to Family and Community Violence  
Prevention: A National Perspective***

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**TEACHING TOLERANCE:  
A PROJECT OF THE  
SOUTHERN POVERTY  
LAW CENTER**

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*The Southern Poverty Law Center was founded in 1971 as a small civil rights law firm. Today, the Center is internationally known for its tolerance education programs, its legal victories against white supremacists and tracking of hate groups. To combat the causes of hate, the Center established Teaching Tolerance, an educational program to help K-12 teachers foster respect and understanding in the classroom. Teaching Tolerance is a leading provider of anti-bias resources – both in print and online. The magazine is distributed free twice a year to over 630,000 educators, and its innovative multimedia kits are provided at no charge to thousands of schools and community groups.*

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) spent the last thirty years working to defend democratic ideals and meet the challenges presented by growing racial and cultural diversity. Founded in 1971 by Morris Dees and Joseph Levin, the Law Center became internationally known through a series of landmark legal victories against violent white supremacist groups and through its sponsorship of the Civil Rights Memorial.

In 1991, the SPLC, alarmed at the significant rise in hate crimes being committed by young people, launched the *Teaching Tolerance* project. Its mission is to make sure that every classroom in America is equipped with tools to help young people learn to live together in harmony.

Demographic studies show that although the student population in America continues to get more and more diverse (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2005), the teaching population is overwhelmingly white and middle-class. Fifty years after *Brown vs. Board of Education*, our schools are more segregated than ever (Clotfelter, 2004). Increasingly,

students have less of a chance to work together and learn about each other across racial and cultural lines.

Textbooks can be considered racial texts because they are notorious for presenting a watered-down version of history where race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are diluted at best, if represented at all. Moreover, Cochran-Smith (2004) suggests that teacher education programs can be “read” as “racial texts” themselves. All Americans are racialized beings because our knowledge of who we are, who we have been and who we will become is a text we constantly construct. Consequently, curriculum – that body of information that adults construct for dissemination to the young – is a racial text too. *Teaching Tolerance* seeks to promote equity and respect through a variety of anti-bias curriculum materials and offers all resources to educators for free.

In his book *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*, Paulo Freire states, “educating involves a passion to know that should engage us in a loving search for knowledge that is – to say the least – not an easy task” (Freire, 1998). He states that for this reason “that those wanting to teach must be able to dare, that is, to have the predisposition to fight for justice and to be lucid in defense of the need to create conditions conducive to pedagogy in schools; though this may be a joyful task, it must also be intellectually rigorous.” *Teaching Tolerance* seeks to inspire educators to look at their own personal biases, to dare to fight for justice in schools, and offers educators materials that are lucid, joyful, and intellectually rigorous.

*Teaching Tolerance* magazine provides a national forum for teachers to share techniques and explore new ideas in the areas of tolerance and diversity. It has been recognized as a leader in the movement to teach fairness, justice and equality to students of all ages.

*Teaching Tolerance* magazine typically has the following sections:

- A Grant Spotlight – The Teaching Tolerance Grants Program supports K-12 educators with funds to develop and implement innovative anti-bias projects in classrooms, schools and communities.
- Activity Exchange – These easy-to-use activities can be implemented directly or adapted for classroom needs. They contain a variety of grades, academic subjects, and topics.
- Parenting Column – Gives guardians guidance on discussing tough issues with children.
- Multiple feature articles tackling tough issues that often have accompanying lesson plan ideas and resources.

- Comprehensive lesson plans with web support on issues of diversity.
- Webworks – Must visit destinations on the Internet that deal with social justice.
- Teaching Tools - The best tolerance-related resources, from publishers large and small, recommended and reviewed by *Teaching Tolerance* staff.
- Story Corner – A children’s story that has an inherent lesson regarding respect and diversity.

*Teaching Tolerance’s* first video-and-text kit, *American’s Civil Rights Movement*, has been requested by more than 100,000 educators. The video component of the kit, *A Time for Justice*, won the Academy Award for best short documentary in 1995. The text *Free at Last* won the Silver Gavel Award from the American Bar Association in 1989. Re-released in 2004, the kit now includes a ten-lesson teacher’s guide that supports student learning and critical literacy and meets content standards in U. S. history, civics, and language arts.

In March 1995, *Teaching Tolerance* released its second kit titled *The Shadow of Hate*. This kit surveys the history of intolerance in America, contains a 40-minute film, teacher’s guide and the illustrated text *Us and Them*. The kit has been sent to over 80,000 schools across the U.S. and the video was nominated for an Academy Award.

An early-childhood teacher kit, entitled *Starting Small: Teaching Tolerance in Preschool and the Early Grades*, was released in September 1997. This curriculum kit provides P-3 educators with ideas and strategies for teaching the very young to honor and respect diversity.

Released in September 1999, *Responding to Hate at School* is a 64-page step-by-step guide to help administrators, counselors and teachers respond effectively whenever bias, prejudice or hate strikes. A companion guide, *Ten Ways to Fight Hate*, is also available to concerned citizens, law enforcement agencies and community organizations.

*A Place at the Table: Struggles for Equality in America* was released in November 2000 and is the third kit for middle and high school students. Narrated entirely by young people, this historical documentary tells the story of the United States’ struggle to ensure liberty and justice for all.

Also published in 2000 was *101 Tools for Tolerance* which describes 101 simple ways to celebrate diversity and foster equity – in the individual, the family, the school, the workplace and the community.

Released in Fall 2002, *Mighty Times: The Legacy of Rosa Parks* is *Teaching Tolerance’s* fourth curriculum package for grades 5 and up.

This resource presents the birth of the Civil Rights Movement as a model for young activists today. The film won an Emmy Award in 2005.

It was also in 2002 that *www.tolerance.org* was launched. This site is an online digest of tolerance related news, monthly lesson plans, interactive classroom activities, an educator forum, downloadable back issues of the magazine, and online news articles giving current event information and resources for educators and students. The site has won the Webby Award two years for “Best Activist Site on the Internet.”

*I Will Be Your Friend: Songs and Activities for Young Peacemakers!* Was released in January 2003 and includes a 26 song CD filled with music about America’s quest for unity and harmony. The 130-page activity songbook includes lyrics and musical notation for all 26 songs, along with classroom activities on a variety of equity and justice themes. This kit is recommended for grades 2-5.

In September 2003, *Teaching Tolerance* released *Ten Ways to Fight Hate on Campus: A Response Guide for College Activists*. It showcased five immediate response steps with five preventive steps that help fight bias incidents and hate crimes on college campuses.

Released in January 2005, *Mighty Times: The Children’s March* tells the heroic story of the young people of Birmingham, Alabama, who brought segregation to its knees. Again, like all of *Teaching Tolerance’s* curriculum kits, this kit is focused on telling an historical event with the purpose of inspiring today’s students to take action for social justice in their own communities. *The Children’s March* won the prestigious Academy Award in 2005.

In 2006 *Teaching Tolerance* partnered with HBO and The Gerda and Kurt Klein Foundation to promote their film *One Survivor Remembers*, which won both the Academy Award for Best Documentary Short Subject and an Emmy Award. *One Survivor Remembers* tells the story of Gerda Weissmann Klein’s six-year ordeal as a victim of Nazi cruelty. Klein describes her years in Nazi labor camps and months on a forced death march. It includes a comprehensive teacher’s guide, a resource book and a collection of primary documents drawn from Klein’s personal collection. It quickly became the most successful kit offered by *Teaching Tolerance*. In its first year, it went to over 100,000 schools and was estimated that 1 of every 4 middle and high school students in the nation had been exposed to it.

*Rhinos & Raspberries: Tolerance Tales for the Early Grades* was released in 2006. This children’s book contains 12 stories from around the world and is designed to promote both character education and literacy in PreK-6 classrooms. The hardcover book for teachers includes 12 fully illustrated stories, activity ideas, discussion questions

and 10 lesson plans. The kit also includes six copies each of two smaller, soft-cover books for student reading in small groups. The introduction is by Newbery Medal-winning author Lois Lowry.

*Teaching Tolerance* had its first nation-wide survey of attitudes about its anti-bias curriculum in 1999-2000. The survey polled 600 randomly selected subscribers to *Teaching Tolerance* magazine and, to provide a comparative analysis, it also asked 500 teachers who do not use the program's materials. Questions regarding the "state of U.S. schools" reinforced the need for the program's materials. A sampling of questions and results follow:

- How often do you hear these types of comments from your students? (Often, Very Often)

	Non-subscriber	Subscriber
Racist	14%	28%
Sexist	31%	41%
Anti-gay and lesbian	24%	34%
Biased against a religion	5%	12%

- Have you heard these types of comments from you colleagues in the past year? (Yes)

	Non-Subscriber	Subscriber
Racist	28%	42%
Sexist	37%	50%
Anti-gay and lesbian	31%	42%
Biased against a religion	15%	22%

- From whom have you received the most resistance or negative feedback about teaching diversity or tolerance in your classroom?

	Non-Subscriber	Subscriber
Students	12%	25%
Colleagues	19%	40%
Parents	45%	12%
Administration	7%	15%
Community	5%	3%
School Board	4%	0%
Other	8%	5%

Where do teachers turn to combat prejudice among peers and students? Most educators surveyed integrate articles from the popular media or multicultural textbooks, literature and videos as a first line of defense. Some also choose to engage in active dialogue with bigoted colleagues or students. Although a majority of teachers polled believe that there are an adequate number of anti-bias resources available, many feel that those materials are not relevant to their classrooms. As a tool for rectifying this problem, 77 percent of the subscribers surveyed rated *Teaching Tolerance* materials the best available or better than average. Respondents cited the broadness of the topics covered as a major strength.

The respondents also believed that *Teaching Tolerance* had room for improvement. Teaching Tolerance and other multicultural programs may well have overlooked an important player in the struggle for tolerance. When asked who or what posed the greatest challenge to anti-bias initiatives, a large portion of survey respondents said “parents.” In order to maximize effectiveness, these educators say, multicultural materials need to include a parental component. “Like it or not, teachers are in a position in which we have to educate families, too,” Thomas, an 8th grade history instructor, said. “If a teacher goes out on a limb with a topic, he or she runs the risk that a child will go home and say something to a parent. If you can’t get support from parents [or guardians], your lesson will fail.” *Teaching Tolerance* began a parenting column after this survey and published a parenting handbook in 2005.

The main complaint from subscribers, however, concerned infrequency of publication. Sixty-four percent of those polled echoed the sentiments of Mandy, an ESL instructor, who said simply: “I would like to see the magazine more often.”

In December 2004, *Teaching Tolerance* asked subscribers for their thoughts on the Fall 2004 issue. These findings were compiled from October 2004 e-surveys completed by magazine subscribers for whom Teaching Tolerance had e-mail addresses. The response rate was approximately 10%. Here is a sampling of findings.

- Overall, how would you rate the Fall 2004 issue of *Teaching Tolerance*?
  - 67% excellent
  - 30% good
  - 1% average
  - 0% below average
  - 0% poor

- Which of the following words would you use to describe the issue?
  - 67% practical
  - 73% insightful
  - 53% inspirational
  - 1% boring
  - 1% irrelevant
  - 10% other
- Did you share your copy of *Teaching Tolerance* (magazine) with other educators?
  - 72% yes
  - 28% no
- Would you recommend *Teaching Tolerance* (magazine) to other educators?
  - 99% yes
  - 1% no
- Which of the following topics would you like to see covered in future issues of *Teaching Tolerance* magazine?  
(Top Five Answers)
  - 84% name-calling/bullying/social ostracism
  - 75% conflict resolution
  - 66% socioeconomic issues
  - 58% race and ethnicity
  - 52% social activism and change

*Teaching Tolerance* also does on-going evaluation of its curriculum kits. For instance, in February 2005 it released its evaluation on one of the program's most popular kits, *American's Civil Rights Movement*. The kit had been re-released in the fall with the book, *Free At Last*, newly updated as well as a new standards-based teacher's guide. Nearly two-thirds of respondents said the kit increased students' awareness that they can be advocates for social justice, and 93% said the kit increased student understanding of civil rights history. Other results from the survey:

- 89% rated the kit as excellent
- 99.9% said they will use the kit again in the future
- 99% said they would recommend the kit to other educators
- 99.9% said that students reacted to the kit with enthusiasm or interest

George Wood (1993) wrote about the pathology that our society had regarding teachers, schooling and education in his now classic book

*Schools That Work: America's Most Innovative Public Education Programs.* If anything defines The Southern Poverty Law Center's *Teaching Tolerance* program, it is the deep and abiding respect that it has for educators. A goal of *Teaching Tolerance*, then, is the support of educators through high-quality products, articles and resources that – in Freire's words – “dared” educators to look at their own bias as they attempt to heal the divides of the macrocosm revealed in the microcosm of their classrooms.

The transformation of education will begin in the transformed hearts and minds of educators. Palmer (1998) explains this best: “The question we most commonly ask is the ‘what’ question – ‘What subjects shall we teach?’ When the conversation goes a bit deeper, we ask the ‘how’ question – ‘What methods and techniques are required to teach well?’ Occasionally, when it goes deeper still, we ask the ‘why’ question – ‘For what purposes and to what ends do we teach?’ But seldom, if ever, do we ask the ‘who’ question – ‘Who is the self that teaches? How do the quality of my selfhood form – or deform – the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleagues, my world? How can educational institutions sustain and deepen the selfhood from which good teaching comes?’”

*Teaching Tolerance* answers some questions while it asks others. It strives to answer the “what” of teaching by giving creative and academically rigorous anti-bias curriculum to educators. It attempts to ask the “how” question by creating lesson plans that engage learners through the use of a plethora of strategies. It delves into the “why” question by imbuing it's curriculum with critical literacy so that language is used to empower and liberate. Most of all, though, it asks educators to go with us on an inner journey to find our own personal biases, uncover them and actively work for social justice and equity as a model for the next generation.

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# DIVERSE APPROACHES TO FAMILY AND COMMUNITY VIOLENCE PREVENTION: A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Violence and shootings of innocent people, created unsafe schools and communities, and a demand for prevention programs dealing with violence and at-risk students. This publication provides clear and vivid strategies through authentic activities designed to empower students and their families who are at-risk for violence. Matching activities with students' needs to develop and embrace strong community, family, educational and social bonds is emphasized. Through the eighteen Family Life Centers highly challenging and meaningful prevention programs designed to meet the psychological, social, educational, cultural, and career needs of at-risk students and families are presented with successful cases. A variety of practical prevention models and solutions by many of the foremost authorities in the nation are the common threads that pervade the tapestry of experiences provided by the Family Life Centers.

## EDITORS



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ISBN-13: 978-0-07-339431-2  
ISBN-10: 0-07-339431-9



9 780073 394312