

To the reader: All of the following statements were written by youngsters except those in italics. Any one statement may stand for hundreds we were unable to include here. Original spelling and grammar have been preserved. It is for you to read between the lines and make the interpretations we believe to be inherent. As an understanding teacher you will find the deep significance behind these words of children and will recognize the many implications for your work with youngsters.

The Problem

These Are Our Lives

A fleeting word, a smile, a dirty look—these may be momentous in the day of a child. In their wake come attitudes—some good, some bad. In a simple, straightforward manner, the youngsters write of both pleasant and unpleasant experiences. Mostly, these are little things, but their effect goes deep. Teachers are in a position to soften the blow to minority children of similar unfortunate incidents and to help all youngsters understand the tragic effect of a careless word or deed. Watch for these opportunities.

This Happens to Us

ONE DAY when I first moved on my block, two Catholic girls came up to me and asked me if I was Jewish. I told them that I was and they would not play with me. They always called me a dirty Jew and said that I killed their lord. Why do they say I killed their lord? Why do they blame it on me?

LOUISE AND I had always been the best, closest and dearest of friends, since the first day we entered kindergarten together. Nothing had been able to separate us. Neither of us thought or realized we were of a different creed, color, race or religion, until we reached second grade.

One day Louise and I decided to attend a movie after school. When we arrived at the ticket window, I was refused admittance, because I was a negro. Confused and hurt Louise and I both sat on the curb and cried. Neither of us saw that movie.

ONE DAY I was going to the library with Rose Marie. On the way we saw a white boy. He called us a bad name. Now we do not go that way to the library.

ONE SUMMER DAY at the seashore, my friends and I took a walk to the shuffle boards. As we waited for our turn, we started a conversation with a few boys and girls seated near us. In a little while we were laughing and talking together as if we were old friends.

We even made arrangements to meet the next day. After we had finished playing we all took a walk and discussed our schools, our friends, and the usual things in which boys and girls find pleasure. Then suddenly one of the boys impulsively said, "gee, we didn't think there'd be anyone down here besides Jews".

My friends and I were so astonished that we just stared at him. We recovered though, when another one of them said, "yes, that's all there are around this place—Jews!"

Since I had never experienced anything like this before, I was too shocked to tell them that I was Jewish. Instead I asked them what they had against the Jewish religion. They looked puzzled and rather surprised that I didn't agree with them immediately.

"Why, my father says Jews and Negroes are running America." At this remark I could no longer restrain my anger. Looking rather fierce, I asked them what we ever did to them. They looked at me in amazement, and I told them that we were Jewish. It took a few seconds for this to sink in. They thought, apparently, that all Jews were alike since they had come in contact with a few whom they didn't like, they assumed we were all that way. One girl, in fact, had nothing against us except the fact that her parents hated us; so, naturally, she must, too. My friends and I were so hurt and bewildered that we let them walk away without further talk. I still



FSA Photo

want to find out if all Christians in our democracy feel the same way towards us.

LAST SUMMER I went out to a certain park where they had a skating rink. I went to the place to buy a ticket, but the man said, "I'm sorry but Negroes aren't allowed in here." I certainly felt bad, seeing all the other kids skating and having so much fun. I didn't know where to go from there.

ARMISTICE DAY I went to the parade, and a group of white people made fun of the colored soldiers marching in the parade.

ONCE WHEN I was uptown I was with a lot of fellows, and we saw a Japanese man; and one of my companions said, "Oh! how I hate Japs; I could kill them." I told him to shut up because I did not like it.

I know it made the Japanese feel bad because some of them are good Americans. I am Spanish and I know how people feel when they are pointed out; people often call me "that Mexican," and I don't like it.

ONE DAY when I was sitting quietly in a church a white lady said to me, "Niggers are supposed to sit on the other side of the church." I smiled and said very nicely, "We all go to the same place when we die."

I WORK for the Western Union as a messenger. The other day I had to deliver a telegram to the City Auditorium. As I went through the door a policeman who was acting as guard motioned for me to take the telegram to him. After he saw whom it was addressed to, he told me to go around and deliver it backstage.

It was the first time I had ever been there, so I said, "How do I get backstage?"

The guard then answered me, "Don't tell

me you don't know where the side door is. You Mexicans are always trying to sneak in."

Maybe there are a lot of Spanish boys who try to sneak in, but there are also a lot of Anglo boys who try to do the same thing. I have never in my life tried to sneak in to any amusement place without paying. I did not feel good about what the policeman said. In the first place I am not a Mexican; I am Spanish-American; just as much American as that policeman and maybe more.

This Can Happen, Too

WHEN I MOVED on the street I now live on, there were hardly any Negroes in the block. So, I didn't have any one to play with. One day I was sitting on my front porch and some white children were playing, and asked me to play with them. We played together for a long time. We have been friends ever since. (*Negro boy*)

AS EVERYONE KNOWS, the Chinese and the Japanese are at war. I am a pure American and I live under the American flag. The Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights gave me freedom. Therefore, I am not afraid to say that I have chosen as my best friends, two Japanese girls. The war does not interfere with our friendship and I hope it never will. (*Chinese-American girl*)

ONCE WHEN I was on the street car a white lady sat down beside me. She started a conversation with me. I thought it was very nice of her. (*Negro girl*)

MY FATHER is of Irish and Indian descent and my mother is of German descent. But, living among Italians is to my advantage. They are wonderful people to know and to live among. I think they have a deeper friendship for people than other nationalities I have known. The Italian people never hesitate to help out when and where their needed. I like the Italian food and customs. They have taught me the meaning of fair play and real friendship and I'm very grateful to them for it.

I WOULD LIKE to tell of a white man who had the right idea. He was a white soldier, who had been in battle in the South

Pacific zone. He had been wounded in action, his life had been saved by a negro soldier.

One night he went to a club for men. While there he heard a white man talking about the negroes saying they should be kept in their place. The soldier took all he could take and then he got up, this is what he told them. "When we were on the battle field in the thickest of battle we didn't have time to judge a man by his color. When you were overseas like I was you would be glad to have a negro in your company." Then the negro hater said, "I still say, negroes should be kept in their places." The white soldier's face got red as a beet. Then he said, "It's people like you who don't want a better place to live in. Well the negroes do. That's why they are fighting alongside of us. I will leave you to think it over."

There was silence. Then the white soldier walked out.

The two men called him back and said "Maybe you are right after all, soldier".

I USED to go to school with a Chinaman. He was a swell guy.

I ONCE KNEW a negro that went to the same school as I did and was the friend of most of the white boys. He played all of the sports with the boys and even went swimming with them. He became friends with the boys because he took a shower every day and kept himself clean.

We Can Learn From Experience

IT WAS DURING the intermission of our senior prom. Bob and I were wandering around the floor, saying hello to my class mates and their dates. And during the course of the time, I introduced him to our vice-president and her escort. The boys seemed to like each other at the start, and began talking about the dance and the orchestra, and so forth—nothing serious at all, just party prattle. But now as I look back on it, I do remember that their handshake had been a really friendly one, more sincere than others that evening.

Later, I found out why. You see, Sally, our vice-president, is a negro, and Bob told me afterwards that that was the first time he had ever shaken hands with a negro, or had ever talked to one on an equal footing. He had

always thought of the colored person, if he had thought of him at all, as a maid or a cook or a porter, or at the most, as the beloved "Mammy" who was his mother's nurse when she was little.

After the prom, however, it's been different. Bob is coming to believe as I do: that, with a few exceptions, when you come to know a person, you'll come to like him, too, no matter whether his skin is a few shades darker or his hair a few degrees curlier than your own. And in the future, when the white man derides the "nigger," I know that along with the prejudices that may be in Bob's mind, there will be the recollection of that night at the prom, when he shook hands, not with a "nigger," but with another individual who may have had equal intelligence and talent and ability as he himself.

I HAVE LIVED in the South most of my life and I was brought up to have nothing to do socially with the Negro race. About three years ago, when I first moved to the West and started to school I was very shocked when I saw there were two colored students in my class. For the first few weeks that I went there I had nothing to do with them but soon after I showed a little friendliness to them I found that they were two of the nicest kids in the class. From that time on I have never thought of my colored friends as being any different from my white friends.

When I think back and remember how I used to feel about the Negro race, I am ashamed of myself.

America is a free country where everyone is to have equal rights and privileges. If we want to keep the United States a place where everyone white or dark can live and be treated the same, my old home, the South should start paying the Negro race the respect it is entitled to!

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