

What Can We Do About It?

What We Can Do in School

When youngsters look for ways to solve our intercultural problems, a heartening number of them turn to greater understanding as the best solution. Members of both minority and majority groups call upon the schools to help them gain this understanding. With clearer vision, say the young people, will come the cooperation and ultimate harmony among mankind so badly needed in our world. Here are practical ways for meeting one of our toughest problems. Many of these suggestions could be put into effect in your school today. We hope you will consider them carefully.

—recognize the problem

WE THINK it is safe to say that practically every student has heard, or read, or seen propaganda warning us that "careless words cost lives," "rumors divide a country," etc.

But there is another type of sabotage that has been going on in our country for years and years. It is just as deadly—just as dangerous as any material sort of sabotage that has ever been wrought. And we're almost all guilty of it.

What is this menace? It is prejudice and intolerance—two elements that have caused much human misery and suffering. We find them at school—at work—everywhere.

MY IDEA for a better world is a world in which every man is as good as another, and treated that way. America is known all over the world as a free country, but how can it be free when a man can not get a job because he is a Negro or a Jew? This is known as "Racial Discrimination."

TODAY THE UNITED NATIONS are waging the greatest war in the history of mankind against the forces of oppression and intolerance. What a hollow mockery it would be for us to defeat these forces in Europe and Asia and continue to retain this same attitude of intolerance and oppression against our own minority groups, both racial and social.

THE INTERRACIAL YOUTH Committee [of a large city] has discussed the problem of negro discrimination, the economic, social and political aspects of the matter, and on the basis of this discussion has selected cer-

tain definite acts which we as students could do to better the conditions that now exist.

—get acquainted

The main conclusion we have reached is that discrimination and prejudice arise from ignorance. Therefore, we have decided that contact and associations between people of different groups are absolutely necessary for the overcoming of prejudice.

—social functions

We hold frequent meetings where students of all races and creeds meet to discuss the problem. Picnics and social gatherings are also held in an attempt to make contacts between racial and religious groups on a social basis. At these social gatherings we try to get to know each other and have fun together without making an issue of the problem.

—assemblies

A school Assembly committee has just been organized for the purpose of doing some systematic research in the history of minority groups. This will better prepare students who go to different schools during Assembly periods to discuss the problem with some definite factual background. The importance of Assembly programs lies in the fact that we, a small nucleus, thus reach a greater number of students, arouse their interest, and learn of their ideas and criticisms. We often recruit new members after such a program is over.

—radio

We believe also that the radio can be used much more extensively than it is at present for propaganda purposes. Our Assembly com-

Color is not the way to find quality.

mittee is preparing for an interview over one of the important local radio stations. Another idea for the use of the radio on which we are working is to have one-minute flashes between programs to promote better relations among the various groups of people.

—boycott

In our activities we have tried to make people realize the seriousness of the situation and to awaken their feeling of responsibility for doing something about it. We have, for instance, suggested boycotting roller-skating rinks which have discriminatory policies.

—petition

We have begun working on a petition to be sent to the big League baseball team organizations asking them to admit negroes to membership on the teams. In doing these things, we are working toward something definite, and at the same time, are bringing the problem to public attention. We have also considered using the method of petition and publicity campaigning in trying to get better housing and fairer treatment of minorities in regard to the acquiring of jobs. Petitions have been circulated in some private schools, stating that the students are willing to have negroes enrolled.

—work with other organizations

In our community, as in many others, there are adult civic organizations which are interested in the problem of discrimination. We have tried to cooperate with them in order to reach a greater number of people. The Interracial Youth Committee is ready to work with another organization, for instance, in support of a plan to introduce into the curriculum of schools a course concerned with the study of the contributions made by our various cultural groups.

—exchange views

THE OTHER DAY there was a program at our school where a protestant minister, a priest, and a Jew occupied the same platform. Their talks were not only interesting and enlightening but the idea of having them all

together on one program was in itself a step toward better understanding.

—educate our elders

IT IS REALLY the other people, the aliens and citizens, our mothers and fathers, friends and neighbors, who should hear more lectures and see more movies that help explain racial differences.

—precept

THERE ARE about 3,000 pupils in this school, and if each sets an example of fellowship for some one every week, and that person in turn set an example for someone every week, in about ten years race discrimination would be a thing of the past in the United States and soon the world would follow our example. So if the fellowships, clubs and other pupils set an example for our town, we may get the ball rolling and so help the whole world.

—films

YESTERDAY our Race Relations class saw the film of George Washington Carver. Before seeing this film I never gave much thought to Negroes aiding society. But after seeing this film I began to realize that Negroes are really no different than Whites. They have helped build America along with the white, and yellow or any other races. They have brains just as well as we have. This film did not only teach me a lesson but also was interesting.

*FSA Photo by Russell Lee
Negative in Library of Congress*





FSA Photo by Jack Delano
Negative in Library of Congress

—*inter-visitations*

WE HAD a lot of fun when we sang with the children from Baker School. A few other times we visited them and they visited us. The only thing I can see that is wrong with this is that we don't do it often enough. There may be white children who may not like the idea of having fun with Negro children, or there may be "grownups" who don't like the idea of eating with a Negro. If you ask me the people who are like this are just plain ignorant.

—*speakers*

OUR SCHOOL invited the principal of one of the Negro schools to speak. I ask the home room teacher, if he were not exception. I never had seen a Negro dress as he was. He used good English. He ate with the same manners as others. There are other boys and girls who did not know that Negroes had a professional group of people that look and act the same as white people. I think we would feel different if we did.

—*reading, writing, discussing*

TO WORK and make a living is one thing but to get along with your fellow co-workers is another and doubly-hard task. We, the younger generation, must learn how to grow up and work with peoples of different races, minority, or religious groups.

This isn't hard to learn if you're taught in the right way. The reading we have done has helped to lessen a great deal of the prejudices. Discussion on the topic has opened our eyes to the viewpoints of others. Our opinion in

the form of composition has let our teacher know what we'd like to discuss and settle. Roundtable discussion by radio, movie, newspaper, and magazine committees has let us know what the outside world thinks on the topic.

Everybody has seemed to enjoy this study as it is modern and presented in an enticing way. Teenagers who had never read and didn't intend to start for this topic have read more books than they had ever expected to.

ONE OF THE THINGS that our teachers and statesmen have been working and thinking about is a permanent peace. We have all been thinking about it and planning for it. Here at our school we have had panel discussions giving the students' plans and ideas about permanent peace.

—*investigation*

WE SHOULD FIND the attitudes and thoughts of the different races toward other races. And learn the facts and details of why different races dislike each other. Maybe we could change their attitudes. Probably if the President of the United States would take up the racial problem in a radio talk with the Nation and let the citizens exchange their thoughts, we would have a better understanding. Let the other races know we are human beings too, as well as they are and not like animals as we have been treated in some cases.

—*facts*

THE BEST WAY to achieve sympathy and understanding of other groups is through knowledge; knowledge of their backgrounds and history, of their habits, of their problems, be they social, economic or moral.

—*first-hand experience*

PERHAPS IF THOSE who are prejudiced are allowed to come in contact with those

¶ Our parents have already become set in their ways of thinking. Their prejudices are made and not easily broken. But we must keep our minds open and free from these silly prejudices. It is the only way to free our country of its race problems.

whom they are against (that is, contact with the definitely nicer part of the people), they will realize that no group is all bad or inferior, but that there are good and bad, superior and inferior in every race, and that therefore they should not allow themselves to be guided only by what is bad, or by the bad things they believe to be true, about any certain race.

—eliminate segregation

MY IDEA is that whether Negro-White-Spanish, German, English, Norwegian, French, or Polish(etc) they have a right to have class together. They all deserve the same treatment. Home Ec. is a great way to find out different ways of customs, different nationalities bring different kitchen habit. By working with other races, gives you new experiences, and might possibly give you new and better ways of home making.

—don't laugh at the serious

THE PEOPLE ALWAYS make fun of a person who are foreign descent, that's why we can't have an everlasting peace unless the people learn to get along with one and other. In fact I think that it is a swell thing to know how to speak different nationalities. Another thing is race, each should have more consideration.

THE EARLY STORIES written about this race [the Negro] were in the form of involved jokes revealing supposed negro ignorance or funny actions. At the present time due to the war and other reasons, true stories have been written about white soldiers standing up for the negro's rights and about the negro's struggle for equality. This type of story may improve public opinion about the negro.

—recognize ability

IN THE SCHOOLS we have student government. This student government cannot function if it does not have supporters—pupils who are truly interested in governing themselves. When we nominate officers for the school or classroom, clubs or plays, it should not be on the basis of whether the nominee is black or white, but on ability. When the time comes to cast your ballot, ask yourself the following questions: Am I selecting a person who has good character, good scholarship, executive ability, experi-

ence, and will this person strive to further the ideals that I believe in? Will he make this school a better place in which to live?

—include everyone

If they [Mexicans] were elected to office in the school, given places in our clubs and organizations, they wouldn't feel so left out. In order to improve relations we are going to have to accept them and let them know they are accepted. As long as I have been going to school here I do not remember a Mexican being elected to the Student Council. I believe we need the views of them on the council since they might differ from those of ours.

—take action

OFFER SUGGESTIONS to improve your school. Don't complain and then do nothing about it. Actions speak louder than words.

—immediate and long-range plans

HERE [in the school], through carefully planned instruction, designed to direct the open and receptive minds of children into the proper channels, we can equip the youngsters of today for their later adult life in society. But besides thus planning for the rather distant future, we must also turn our minds to the pressing problems of the immediate present.

—our teachers should help

I have thought and thought about what could be done to do away with these conditions. As a result I have come to these conclusions: That some teachers should take the just teachers' viewpoint, and realize that they are working for good citizens. They should develop a broader mind toward these offending and slow students, and try to overcome their racial prejudice and realize it is not just. Then the girls who are discriminated against racially should realize that they cannot act as they please and expect fair treatment. The wranglers should get rid of their inferiority complex and realize that they are wronging others, or they would not be wronged.

Nutshell Wisdom

The path of true Democracy leads right up to the school room.

If you say to me 'Helo, Dago' and smile, I don't mind, but if you get mad and say 'You dumb Wop,' it will start a fight."

Copyright © 1945 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.