International Day for Tolerance

The United Nations is committed to strengthening tolerance by fostering mutual understanding among cultures and peoples. As part of this commitment, in 1995 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared the International Day for Tolerance to generate public awareness of the dangers of intolerance. It is observed annually on November 16th.

In its *Declaration of Principles on Tolerance*, UNESCO expressed alarm about, "the rise in acts of intolerance, violence, terrorism, xenophobia, aggressive nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism, exclusion, marginalization and discrimination directed against national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, refugees, migrant workers, immigrants and vulnerable groups within societies, as well as acts of violence and intimidation committed against individuals exercising their freedom of opinion and expression - all of which threaten the consolidation of peace and democracy, both nationally and internationally, and are obstacles to development."

The Declaration also affirms that tolerance is neither indulgence nor indifference. The Declaration expresses tolerance as respect and appreciation of the rich variety of our world's cultures, forms of expression and ways of being human. Tolerance recognizes the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. For many of us, instead of the word tolerance, we might think of this more as acceptance. While we may not agree with others' opinions, beliefs or behavior, we acknowledge or "accept" their right to have these differences.

According to UNESCO's website there are five ways of fighting intolerace which include: **law, education, access to information, individual awareness** and **local solutions.**

To focus on just one of these, let's take a deeper look at combating intolerace with open access to information. Intolerance is most dangerous when it is exploited to fulfil the political and territorial ambitions of an individual or group. Hatemongers often begin by identifying the public's tolerance threshold. They then develop deceptive arguments, misrepresent statistics and try to influence public opinion with misinformation and prejudice. The most efficient way to limit the influence of this type of manipulation is to promote press freedom and press pluralism, in order to allow the public to discern the difference between facts and opinions.

To learn more about the International Day of Tolerance go to UNESCO's website at https://www. un.org/en/events/toleranceday/index.shtml To view a short video about learning to live together in peace through global citizenship education go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuKzq9EDt-0&feature=emb_title. Additional lesson plans on this topic can be found at tolerance.org.

Newspaper Activities:
- Look through the news for an example of tolerance in your community, state, nation or the world. What benefits are there from respecting and appreciating the differences of others? What steps or actions could be taken to increase these signs of tolerance?
- Look through the newspaper, in print or online, for news articles, illustrations or cartoons that point out stereotypes, racism, sexism, bullying or scapegoating of others. What is the author/publisher trying to express to the reader? Discuss what you find as a class.
- Research recent news articles for examples of conflicts between a minority and the majority. It can be political, ethnic or religious in nature and be occuring locally, regionally or globally. Brainstorm ways these two groups might work towards tolerance and peace?

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