



The California Three Rs Project

Rights, Responsibility, and Respect

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BULLETIN

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To stop the madness, put a face to faith

Charles C. Haynes
Director, Religious Freedom Education Project

No quick fix — diplomatic or military — will dissolve the centuries of distrust and rivalry that fuel the brutal sectarian conflict in Syria, where Alawites and Shiites are pitted against Sunnis with Christians caught in the crossfire.

The same can be said of the many other religious and ethnic wars raging around the globe.

Over the course of just one week last fall, Buddhist nationalists burned Muslim-owned shops and homes in Burma, an angry mob stormed a Coptic church in Egypt, and radical Sunni Muslims attacked minority Shiite Muslims in central Pakistan.

Americans may be tempted to see religious violence as someone else's problem, living as we do in country blessedly free of holy wars for much of our history

(thanks, in large measure, to the religious liberty principles of the First Amendment).

But our angry culture wars, while rarely violent, are warning signs that no society is immune from the pernicious effects of religious division and intolerance. Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, hate crimes motivated by religious bias are all found in the United States today.

Humanity faces many daunting challenges in the 21st century. But none is greater — or more urgent — than the challenge of negotiating new ways to live with our religious and ethnic differences.

That brings me to the good news. While the world debates how to respond to the latest atrocity in Syria, some 800 schools in 20 countries are taking the long

view by preparing the next generation to do better.

These schools, including more than 100 in the United States, are part of an initiative called “Face to Faith” offered free to schools by the Tony Blair Faith Foundation. Participating schools are provided free facilitated videoconferencing, secure and monitored online community, and

(See “Face to faith,” Page 2)

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The California Three Rs Project co-sponsored by Constitutional Rights Foundation, California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, and the Religious Freedom Education Project at Newseum



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM EDUCATION PROJECT
AT THE NEWSEUM

Humanity faces many daunting challenges in the 21st century. But none is greater – or more urgent – than the challenge of negotiating new ways to live with our religious and ethnic differences.

Face to faith (cont'd)

a menu of teaching modules on global issues such as wealth, poverty and charity, the environment and the art of expression. Each module exposes students to the ways in which the major religious traditions of the world understand global issues. All of the modules use state-of-the-art cooperative learning strategies and provide civic engagement opportunities tied to the social justice issues raised in the modules.

Face to Faith is a simple, but profound, approach to dispelling stereotypes and creating understanding across religious differences. Through videoconferencing and secure online community, students engage one another directly in civil, but robust, dialogue about issues of faith and belief that matter to

them.

It works.

Students in Indian schools, for example, are now connecting to students in Pakistani schools — an extraordinary development in a region long plagued by inter-religious animosity and violence.

Through direct engagement, students are able to put a human face on the “other” and build bridges of understanding across religious and cultural divides.

As one high school student in Utah put it, “the opportunity to participate in this program has blown all the misconceptions that I had out of the water and caused me to try harder to understand people from all places and circumstances.”

In a world torn by sectarian violence and hate, the success of Face to Faith is a reminder that we can — and must — do much more to help young people experience our common humanity.

“Even though religions don’t have the same laws, beliefs and concepts,” said a student from New York, “Face to Faith has taught me that people hundreds of miles away are going through the same experiences as me.”

Reading and math are important. But even more important are the kinds of human beings that read the books and do the math. Learning to respect one another across our deepest differences is the real work of education.

The Face to Faith program is for students age 12 to 17 and is appropriate for use in both public and private schools. It is most often integrated into the social studies curriculum, but it may also be used in other courses or as a school club.

To learn more about Face to Faith, visit

www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org. To get involved, register your interest on that web site and the Face to Faith team will contact you. For information about upcoming Face to Faith events and workshops in California, contact Simmi Kher, West Coast Coordinator for Face to Faith at Simmi.Kher@tonyblairfaithfoundation.org.

Schools, t-shirts, and the limits of free expression

Damon Huss

Director, California Three Rs Project

Few social conflicts are more disheartening than racial and ethnic antagonism in our schools.

When students express ideas that pose a risk of disruption, schools may be well within their authority to curtail that speech.

Schools must make harder calls, however, when students express ideas through symbolic speech, which often finds itself on t-shirts without any provocative words at all.

School officials at Live Oak High School in San Jose, California, made such a judgment call a few years ago, and according to the recent unanimous Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision in [Dariano v. Morgan Hill Unified School District](#), the officials “did not act unconstitutionally” in doing so.

The facts are as follows. On Cinco de Mayo in 2010, a small group of white students wore t-shirts depicting American flags. The students admitted to an assistant principal that they were aware that their clothing might provoke violence. One year before, several white and Latino students exchanged threats and profanities over competing displays of Mexican and

American flags on Cinco de Mayo.

To prevent disruption, school officials asked the students with the American flag shirts to turn the shirts inside out or go home with an excused absence. Two students elected to go home, and none were disciplined.

The students and their parents sued the school district and school officials, claiming that the school, as a state actor, infringed upon the students’ First Amendment right to free expression by censoring their t-shirts.

The court analyzed the school’s actions under the standard of *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969), the landmark case regarding free expression in schools. In that case, students who wore black armbands to protest the Vietnam War had the right to do so because they did not “materially and substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school....”

The *Tinker* students’ “pure speech” evidently posed no threat of disruption to the school environ-

ment. At Live Oak, however, “there was evidence of nascent and escalating violence.”

The *Dariano* court noted other factors in the school’s favor. The school did not punish the students with the t-shirts. “School officials,” the court explained, “have greater constitutional latitude to suppress student speech than to punish it.” The school also did not attempt to ban flag-themed clothing.

The *Dariano* decision has prompted controversy. In an op-ed at [Jurist.org](#), Ashutosh Bhagwat at UC Davis School of Law criticized the decision, saying it gives a heckler’s veto to anyone offended by an image on a t-shirt, even when that image is, in itself, not lewd or disruptive. Eugene Volokh echoes this opinion at the [Washington Post](#).

As long as racial or ethnic antagonisms persist in our society, schools will continue to be potential staging grounds for conflict. Schools can nonetheless play a critical role in defusing and ultimately resolving those conflicts so that all students

CA3Rs New

Publications

by

Dr. Margaret “Peg” Hill

Religious Holidays

in the Public Schools:

Passover and Easter

(information and resource guide for schools)



Find this and other resources on

religious holidays at

[http://ca3rsproject.org/
pages/
resource.html#holiday](http://ca3rsproject.org/pages/resource.html#holiday)

may have a safe learning environment.

(Please see “A 3Rs Approach to Cinco de Mayo” on Page 4 of this *Bulletin*.)

Damon Huss, M.Ed., JD

Director, California Three Rs Project
 Constitutional Rights Foundation
 601 S. Kingsley Dr.
 Los Angeles, CA 90005
 Phone: 213-316-2117
 E-mail: damon@crf-usa.org

Dr. Margaret Hill

Co-Director, California Three Rs Project
 College of Education-ELC (retired)
 California State University, San Bernardino
 5500 University Pkwy.
 San Bernardino, CA 92407
 Phone: 909-946-9035
 E-mail: mhill@csusb.edu

For information on teaching world religions:

Dr. Bruce Grelle

Director, Religion and Public Education Resource Center
 Department of Religious Studies
 California State University, Chico
 239 Trinity Hall
 Chico, CA 95929-0740
 Phone: 530-898-4739
 E-mail: bgrelle@chico.edu

For information on First Amendment religious liberty:

Dr. Charles C. Haynes

Director, Religious Freedom Education Project
 555 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
 Washington, DC 20001
 Phone: 202-292-6288
 E-mail: chaynes@freedomforum.org

The California Three Rs Project (CA3Rs) is a program for finding common ground on issues related to religious liberty and the First Amendment in public schools. The CA3Rs' approach is based on the principles of American democracy and citizenship, reflected in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights and applied in a public school setting.

For over a decade, the CA3Rs has provided online resources, professional development, and leadership training for teachers and education professionals in order to disseminate essential information about religious liberty and the history of religion in America.

Common Ground Resources

Haynes, Charles C., and Oliver Thomas. *Finding Common Ground: A Guide to Religious Liberty in the Public Schools*. Nashville: First Amendment Center, 2007. Print. <<http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/madison/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/FCGcomplete.pdf>>

Religious Freedom Education Project at the Newseum.
 <<http://religiousfreedomeducation.org>>

A 3Rs Approach to Cinco de Mayo

Peg Hill

Co-Director, California Three Rs Project

In a democratic republic such as ours, people don't have to agree with each other. In fact, our system is designed to protect rights in order for people to register their disagreements.

Schools in a democratic society need to teach students how to express their ideas and at the same time respect the rights of others to express disagreement or conflicting ideas. This is what the First Amendment is about.

Perhaps the best way is for schools to allow students to come up with a framework for free expression on campus. Students need to be engaged in learning about and understanding what lawful protest is. They should come up with time, place, and manner parameters for such expression.

With regard to the important cultural celebration of Cinco de Mayo, it might be a good time for faculty and administra-

tors to challenge student thinking with questions, such as:

- What does Cinco de Mayo commemorate?
- Why is this commemoration important to many people?
- Are there other American holidays supported by some ethnic or cultural groups but opposed by others? (Think St. Patrick's Day, Thanksgiving, etc.)
- Do the holidays above create the same conflicts among students in your school? Why or why not?

• Can the trigger issue for conflict be addressed through a mutually satisfying compromise?

• How can students take responsibility for reducing hostility without suppressing expression?

Diversity is today's reality. We will never all be the same, but we do have some civic agreements protecting the expression of these differences. These are our national articles of peace in the Constitution.