

THE TORCH

CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

April/May 2006

Newsletter Editor: Amy Homans



Register NOW for the May 8th Statewide Conference !

You have all received your registration packets for the May 8th Statewide Conference in Augusta. There are many workshops for both students and faculty advisors and registration is on a first come, first served basis. Translation: If you wait until the week before the conference to register your team, many of the workshops will already be full and your team members will stand a very good chance of being assigned to workshops that they did not sign up for. While it is inevitable that some workshops will fill up faster than others, you can increase the chances of your team members attending the workshops of their choice by getting your registration in as soon as possible. **All registration materials must be received no later Friday, April 28th.**

Elementary schools: As you will note from your registration materials, you are not required to sign up for your workshops. You will rotate to three different workshops over the course of the morning session.

This year's line up of workshops includes *About Girls: Images of Girls and Women in the Media*; *Improvising Understanding: Developing Interactive Theater*; *Being Gay or Lesbian in High School: Reports From the Front Lines*; *How to Build a Successful Civil Rights Team*; *Voice of a Nazi Holocaust Survivor*; *The Psychology of Prejudice: True Confessions*; *Living in Two Cultures*; *The Case of the Amazing Shrinking Life*; *Beyond Helen Keller and Stevie Wonder*; *Bang, Bang, You're Dead*; *Learning Through Native American*

Storytelling and many more. The afternoon arts and entertainment lineup includes The Little Eagles, a group of young Passamaquoddy dancers from Indian Township, Maine who will be providing entertainment throughout lunch. They will be followed by an hour long program made possible by the Center for Cultural Exchange in Portland.

In the fall of 2005, The Center for Cultural Exchange unveiled *The Middle East Suitcase Project*, a multi-media resource for teachers and others concerned with understanding the religion, culture and politics of this complex region. In conjunction with the release of the *Suitcase*, the Center also developed a touring performance of Middle Eastern dancing and music. We are privileged to have that performance at this year's statewide conference for the Civil Rights Team Project. The program features *oud* virtuoso Alan Shavarsh Bardezbanian, *doubek/tabla* player Eric LePurna and *raqs sharqi* dancer Jamileh. Their presentation is both educational and entertaining and we look forward to a highly interactive workshop suitable for all students attending the conference



A Guide to Planning Your Diversity Day Program

A number of teams around the state organize a day long program of multi-cultural presenters and musicians that is attended by their entire school community. Whether you showcase it as "Imagine Equality Day" (Falmouth MS), "Culturefest" (Wiscasset

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HS) or “Diversity Day,” (Deering HS; Sanford HS), the goal is the same: to bring your school community together for a single day to celebrate the cultural diversity that exists in our communities. This is an ambitious project that takes a lot of advance planning and the full cooperation of your school administration. However, the results of these efforts can be a spectacular day that exposes your student body to people they might otherwise never have an opportunity to hear or to interact with.

A typical Diversity Day program involves speakers who address issues relating to religion, gender, a variety of ethnic cultures and music, mental and physical disabilities, and sexual orientation. A terrific example of this type of program is Wiscasset High School’s Culturefest. Led by advisor Cynthia Turcotte, the Wiscasset team has organized its Culturefest program,” a day of interesting speakers and musicians with an appeal to young people, annually for the past seven years. According to Cynthia, calls to potential presenters begin in January, but “ideas are scavenged all year. Their sign up sheet with the description of their wide variety of Culturefest offerings is reprinted at the end of this article.

The first step in planning your Diversity Day program is obtaining permission from your school administration to host the event for the entire student body. This program is most effective when every student in your school attends the workshops and events. Putting together a quality program will help insure the enthusiasm of both staff and students for this event in future years.

Select a date well in advance in order to give your team adequate time to line up speakers and presenters. Having a firm date before

you approach your potential presenters will allow them to commit to your event early. If any of your presenters will be paid for their appearance at your event, payment in advance will help to insure that you don’t have a last minute cancellation and no place to put the 50 kids who signed up for that presenter.

For ideas on presenters, sit down with your team and look at some of the Diversity Day programs that other teams have put together in past years. Your Toolbox has information on Diversity Day programs by Caribou Middle School and Middle School of the Kennebunks in the Long Term Projects folder. The Wiscasset High School sign up sheet at the end of this article also has some great ideas for presenters. Brainstorm on what resources are already available to you in your own community and surrounding area. Check out past issues of *The Torch* for information on speakers on issues of gender, race and bullying. Remember, you don’t need a lot of big name headliners in order to have a successful program.

Decide how you want to organize your day before you start contacting potential presenters. Use the Caribou, Kennebunk, and Wiscasset schedules for ideas on what type of format you would like for your day. Do you want to have each grade or class rotate to different workshops and presenters or is your school too large for that format? Do you want to have many choices of presenters and allow students to sign up for the ones that interest them? Once you make that decision and have an idea of how many presenters you will need and whether some presenters will repeat their workshops over the course of the day, you can begin to contact the individuals and groups you have identified as desirable for your program.

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Wiscasset advisor Cynthia Turcotte recommends that staff take on the job of contacting presenters and negotiating any fees that will need to be paid. She has found that this type of communication is difficult for students, who are not used to playing phone tag and doing this type of negotiating.

After you have your line up of presenters, if students will be signing up for different sessions, you will need to create a sign up sheet with brief descriptions of each workshop or presenter. Ideally, the sign up sheet should include the start time for each program and the room in which it will be held. Circulate sign up sheets to all of the students in your school with instructions to make their choices for each time slot. If some of the programs are for only a limited number of students per time slot, ask students to indicate a second choice for that time slot.

After the sign up sheets are completed and collected, make up a master sheet listing who has signed up to attend each of the workshops and presentations. Post the master sheet in each home room so students can see whether they were assigned to their first or second choices in some time slots.

Even if you will not be using the sign up sheet format for your program, circulating brief written descriptions of each workshop and presenter will help to create enthusiasm for your Diversity Day. Team members can also create posters and publicize the event through whatever means are available in your school.

A Diversity Day event is also a great way to get some positive exposure for your team. Have team members kick off the day long

program with a short school-wide presentation that precedes the first workshop. Begin the presentation with an introduction of the Civil Rights Team and an explanation of its mission and role within your school. Team members can explain how the Diversity Day program will proceed, the purpose of this event, and what they hope everyone will take away with them at the end of the day. Have team members create evaluation sheets and distribute them to students at the end of the day. Student evaluations will help the team assess how the day went, who the most popular presenters were, and what changes might need to be done next year to improve upon the event.

During the day, assign team members to host individual presenters to insure that the presenters locate their rooms, know where the restrooms are, and have all the audio visual aids that their presentation requires. Be sure and give the presenters an opportunity to provide their feedback at the end of the day as well.

Diversity Day programs are a lot of work, but a well-planned day can reap rewards well beyond the effort it took to pull it off.

On an entrepreneurial note, Diversity Days are a good opportunity for your team members to sell things and raise money for your team. Buttons, pins, stickers, pencils and t-shirts with messages of equality, multiculturalism, and acceptance are all great products to sell to your student body during this day long program.

Wiscasset HS Culturefest '06 Sign Up Sheet

Name _____ Grade _____
Advisor _____

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Learning by listening to different voices/issues (choose at least three)

_____ Tom Sturtevant from the Veterans for Peace organization will lead: "Do you Know The Other Side of the Story? Facts & Promises of Military Recruiting, Enlistment and Service" (rm 6)

_____ Outright: Teens and young adults from the Portland chapter of Outright will lead a discussion about what it is like to be an openly gay/lesbian/bisexual person in Maine. You will have a chance to hear speakers and ask questions. Due to the sensitivity of the topic we ask that only students with a serious interest in the topic sign up. If your parents would not allow you to attend this workshop, please do not sign up.

_____ Relationship violence: New Hope for Women will lead a workshop which will cover dating violence and ways to be aware of dangerous relationships around us. It will also discuss how we can avoid repeating patterns of violence in our lives.

_____ Mae Ames: A Native American woman shares her perspective on living in Maine. She will teach about many aspects of her native culture. Mrs. Ames is a kind and warm person with a real desire to help answer questions you may ask.

_____ What about the Boys? Time machines and force fields are woven into Chris Wright's narrative as he challenges society's myths about boys. Over the last fifteen years, Chris has listened for hundreds of hours as boys and men have told the stories of their lives. Drawing on these stories, as well as his own experience of growing up on tough New York City streets, Chris reveals how the myths of masculinity create a force field around each boy, radically interfering with his freedom to be himself.

_____ Rabbi Amita Jarmon: "A Taste of the Passover Seder": Diversity Day falls on the first day of Passover this year. Rabbi Jarmon will offer a brief run-through of what goes on at a Passover meal with plenty of time for questions about Passover and Judaism. This workshop will be offered three times.

_____ Peace Corps: From Maine to Mozambique, Wicasset to the Western Steppe of Mongolia, Mainers leave every month to go serve in one of 75 countries around the globe as Peace Corps volunteers. Christopher Lins, Maine Peace Corps recruiter and Paraguay returned volunteer, will share his experience of leaving the comforts of home for life and work in a village 9,000 miles away. Some volunteers live in palm frond huts in the Pacific Islands and wake up to the calls of rare tropical birds, some live high in the Andes Mountains in adobe brick house, others live in Soviet era apartment buildings in Eastern Europe; all learn new languages, eat strange new foods and become a part of a culture that the rest of the world only reads about. Come and watch a video, hear stories, ask questions. Peace Corps is the largest volunteer agency in the world - find out how you can serve your country in the cause of world peace and friendship.

_____ Teens around the world: Claudia Canalas, Hitomi Kasai, and Evangaline Tegerero will be joined by Bill Speed and Lindsey James to talk about experiencing high school in a different culture. The students will talk about differences in daily life for teens and people in general as they compare the cultures of the U.S. with Japan, Peru, the Philippines, and Sweden. This workshop will be offered twice.

_____ Overcoming Setbacks and Struggles: Zane Capen will speak with his long-jumping dog, Buddy, the "Dynamic Duo". Zane is a seventeen year old man who will give a motivational talk about never giving up and reaching for your goals. Zane has struggled through his youth, moving in and out of group homes but retains a positive outlook on life.

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_____ Community Inclusion Team: The Central Maine Inclusion Team will provide a panel of speakers to discuss ways that people with disabilities can be included in and contribute to life in Maine once people learn to look beyond disabilities. They will also discuss discrimination based upon weight which is faced by many in Maine.

_____ Mrs. Engelhardt will speak about her travels and work around the world. Her talk will include photos and compare life in the U.S. with life in Britain and life in Zambia. You will be able to ask questions.

Learning through Music, Activity, or Movement (choose at least three)

_____ Native American Music: Hawk will be returning to share his music and philosophy. Hawk is a talented and engaging speaker who makes flutes and other instruments and has recorded a music CD. (rm 205)

_____ Vincent and Sally Thibeault with Justin Ericson will be demonstrating an eclectic blend of martial arts. This demonstration will show various levels and degrees of self defense. We will reveal some joint lock and pressure point techniques and a technique used to increase hand speed and help discipline the use of one's Chi. They will also demonstrate elevated self defense.

_____ Rhythm workshop with Shamou. Shamou is a high energy percussion performer who tours the United States leading workshops on percussion and rhythm. Through a hands-on exploration of various percussion instruments, body rhythms, and vocal sounds, Shamou will discuss the heritage behind the music he performs. Shamou will also answer questions you may have about being an Iranian man living in the United States. All students will also get to see Shamou at lunch in the gym.

_____ kOkO Experience. kOkO Experience combines a variety of ethnic flavors to demonstrate cultural harmony. Participants will explore concepts and theories in traditional poly-rhythmic percussion music and movement in a modern setting. Join us in celebrating Maine's emerging, new and exciting Culture. Facilitated by; Dalziel Lewis, from Maine; Brigitte Nyada, from Cameroon, West Africa; and Kwabena Owusu, from Ghana, West Africa.

_____ Tai Chi: Sean Maguire has been teaching Tai Chi for fourteen years now in the Yang style (brought from mainland China in the 1960's by Master Hsu Fun Yuen). He and two of his students will lead a workshop on Tai Chi, the ancient Asian meditative martial Arts-based exercise. Students will watch demonstrations and participate in breathing exercises.

_____ Yoga: Ms. Sutter and Ms. Taylor will lead yoga sessions that focus on body awareness and relaxation through balance, stretching, strength, and resting poses. Students will have the opportunity to participate fully and should come in comfortable clothes that allow for movement.

_____ Henna : Mary Schmaling will conduct an interactive presentation that explains the history of henna, where it comes from, what is it, what it has been used for historically in different cultures, and how it has come to this country. She will show how henna paste is mixed and provide samples of different designs which originate in different cultures and their meanings. Each student will leave the workshop with their own henna design and students who choose can also practice drawing a henna design on a partner.

_____ Traditional fiddle and Contra Dance: John Pranio and Toki Oshima will join with caller Phil McIntire to lead a workshop focused on the Traditional New England music and steps that make up a Contradance. Students will be included in the dance.

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[Questions about the Culturefest '06 presenters? Contact Cynthia Turcotte at cturcotte@wiscasset.k12.me.us]



Hate on the Internet: The Southern Poverty Law Center exposes the truth behind the propaganda on four hate groups' websites.

Maine is fortunate not to be a haven for active, organized hate groups. However, a Kansas-based hate group recently threatened to travel to Maine to interrupt the funeral services of two young soldiers who were killed in Iraq. The group, known as the Westboro Baptist Church, professes to believe that troop deaths in Iraq are the result of God's wrath against the United States for failing to condemn homosexuality. Its members protest at funeral services of fallen soldiers in order to gain attention for their views. Fortunately, the group did not make good on its threat to disrupt either Maine funeral.

The fact that Maine is not home to groups like this does not isolate us from their reach. Many of these groups maintain websites through which they promote their messages of hate. While the groups differ in name, their underlying message is similar: the superiority of white, heterosexual, Anglo-Saxon Christians and an intense prejudice towards Blacks, Jews, and homosexuals.

The Southern Poverty Law Center has developed a tutorial that allows the examination of the homepages of four active hate groups, without actually visiting the websites. This tutorial, entitled *Hate on the Internet*, can be reached by clicking on

www.tolerance.org/parents/guide.jsp?p=0¤tCategory=Upper+Grades&ar=216.

This tutorial was designed for use by parents with their children, but it is well-suited for a team exercise. **It is not appropriate for children under 13.** As you visit each page, there is information provided by the Southern Poverty Law Center that explains the significance of the symbols used, the truth behind the group's motives, and debunks the myths it promotes. For example, one group promotes the myth of "The Kosher Food Tax." Extremists claim that the cost to food manufacturers of obtaining certification by rabbis that certain foods are kosher is astronomical and is passed on to consumers, thereby constituting a substantial tax on non-Jews to support Judaism. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, Heinz foods reports that the cost of rabbinical certification is so small as to be incalculable. Other widely circulated myths debunked in this tutorial includes the myth that Jews control the news and entertainment media.

This exercise can help your team learn more about hate groups through these controlled "visits" to the four featured homepages. This exercise helps students to understand the propaganda tactics used by hate groups and provides insight into the perpetuation of Blacks, Jews and homosexuals as victims of hate crimes.



A Guide to Videos on Prejudice and Stereotyping

We frequently get requests for relatively short videos with themes that address issues

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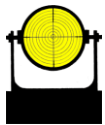
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relating to prejudice and discrimination that can be shown at team meetings or in small group settings. A terrific resource for films that fit that description is *A Guide to Videos on Prejudice and Stereotyping*. This resource can be found online at www.holocaust-trc.org/video_res.htm and is made possible by the Holocaust Resource Center and Archive at Queensborough Community College, City University of New York. The guide lists more than seventy videos and includes a brief description of the content of each video and the ages for which it is appropriate. There are many videos on this list that would be an appropriate follow up to the tutorial exercise described in the preceding article.

Ed. Note: Although the site states that the listed videos are available on loan from the Holocaust Resource Center and Archive for the cost of shipping and handling, I was unable to confirm by press time that this offer is still outstanding. However, many, if not all, of these videos are available through the inter-library loan system and can be obtained through a loan request at your local or school library. They are also available to purchase through the vendors listed at the end of A Guide to Videos on Prejudice and Stereotyping.



Spot Light On Schools: King Middle School

King Middle School in Portland is the most racially, ethnically and culturally diverse middle school in the State of Maine. (The only school in the state that is more diverse is Portland High School.) The King Middle School team is led by long time advisors

Kelley McDaniel, the school's librarian, and Eleanor Mavodones, a school social worker. The King team is always an incredibly productive team and this year has been no exception.

The team began its year with a day long team meeting in the school library. The agenda for the day included introductions of team members, six different team building activities, a session with author Maria Testa which included work on a graffiti art project, and selection of a team slogan.

Kelley began the year with training for her team members. She initially helped her team members to identify their own prejudices with two separate exercises. The first exercise was a viewing and discussion of the video: *Prejudice: The Monster Within*. She followed that up with an exercise that allowed students to consider their own prejudices based on the categories protected under the Maine Civil Rights Act. The second activity also helped to that each team member understood who the groups are who are protected by Maine's civil rights law. As part of their training, Kelley also showed the team clips from the movie *Philadelphia*.

At one of its first meetings, the team drew up its "full value contract" which each member agreed to honor for the year. To create the full value contract, each team member stated what he or she needed from the team and what he or she promised to give to the team. On a paper cutout of his or her hand, each team member wrote their need on one side of the hand and their promise on the other side. The team's "hands" were then laminated in a circle and posted on the wall of their meeting room. During discussion periods, the team

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frequently goes back to the contract to remind team members of their respective commitments to the team and to remind them of what each member needs from the team.

For its first project, the team selected The Silhouette Project. Team members created 15 full size silhouettes of their bodies and inside each silhouette, they placed the summary of a civil rights case brought in the State of Maine. In order to do their summaries, the team members obtained the court documents for 15 cases from Thom Harnett, reviewed the documents and then wrote their own summary of each case. Once the silhouettes were completed, the team members took them around to different classrooms and did 45 minute presentations about the Maine Civil Rights Act in small groups to each homeroom.

As part of their Silhouettes presentation, team members gave each student a handout with an explanation of the Civil Rights Act on one side and, on the other side, a worksheet to be filled out after the silhouettes were presented. The worksheets required students to answer, with respect to each silhouette, whether hate language was involved, how the victim felt, why the perpetrator was harassing the victim, whether anyone else saw or heard the incident and what the adults involved in the situation did. The worksheet also asked the students to describe how they felt and what they thought as they read the 15 true stories.

The Silhouettes presentations also included a brainstorming session on how to create an environment where the types of things that occurred in the cases do not happen at King Middle School. The ideas generated in the brainstorming sessions were then used to

create a giant banner for each House within the school.

The team's next project was a full-scale Black History Month Trivia Bee. Initially, each team member was required to research and submit 10 facts to be used in the Bee. Each team member then took ten facts (not their own) and did extensive fact checking to insure that each fact was accurate. Then the team used their facts to create a series of posters which they put up around the school for several weeks prior to the Bee. The Bee was held in each homeroom and the winner from each homeroom was feted at a party held in the library. The party was by written invitation and included an impressive spread of food on white table clothes, readings by team members from selected Black authors, and a certificate for each winner handed out by Thom Harnett.

The King Middle School team, which meets two mornings a week, works very hard to educate itself and its entire school community. The extraordinary commitment of Kelley McDaniel, Eleanor Mavodones and the King team members is evident in the projects that they undertake and execute for the benefit of Maine's most diverse middle school community. Keep up the great work King Middle School! *[Kelley will be a presenter at the Statewide Conference on May 8th. Any faculty advisor wishing to hear more about the projects that Kelley has done with her team this year is welcome to sign up for the Middle School Faculty Advisor Workshop.]*

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One World Poster Set and Teacher's Guide

Teaching Tolerance is currently offering a free set of ten full color *One World* posters and an accompanying teacher's guide designed to help students think about their responsibilities to one another. The guide is standards based with lesson plans for every grade level. According to Teaching Tolerance, "When students 'zone out,' their gaze falls upon whatever hangs on the walls. Research shows students absorb what they see. As both conscious and unconscious teaching tools, posters make a difference." To order your *One World* poster set and teacher's guide, fill out the order form at http://www.tolerance.org/pdf/tt_materials_order_form.pdf. (Scroll down to page 2 for the order form.)



Portland Outright Closes Its Doors; PRYSM is Born

For twenty years, Portland area GLBTQ (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning) youths found acceptance and support at the headquarters of Outright, an organization born in the basement of what was then the Preble Street Chapel. Outright was a ground breaking organization that provided the first safe and affirming refuge for southern Maine GLBTQ youths. Effective March 3, the Portland Outright chapter closed its doors, primarily due to

funding issues. However, the Community Counseling Center stepped in to fill the void that Outright's departure would otherwise have left. Community Counseling Center has developed a new program called PRYSM, which stands for Proud Rainbow Youth of Southern Maine, which will provide a range of services to GLBTQ youth in southern Maine. Community Counseling Center is located at 343 Forest Avenue, Portland 04103 and its contact info is: www.commcc.org; (207) 874-1030.

The doors are still open at the Outright chapter in Lewiston. It hosts a weekly drop in session for youths ages 22 and under and offers information on resources, activities, and programs through its website at www.outrightla.org. (Much of this site is currently under construction at the moment, but there is still content available.) E-mail seeking help and support can be directed to helpme@outrightla.org and general information can be obtained through a message to info@outrightla.org. The telephone number is (207) 795-8596.

There is also a very active chapter in Portsmouth, NH called Seacoast Outright whose outreach area includes Southern Maine. Seacoast Outright has support group meetings every Tuesday and Friday night from 7-9 at the Portsmouth Community Campus. It also sponsors TYNE, Trans Youth New England, a support and activism group for transgender youth and young adults ages 21 and under. TYNE meets every first and third Wednesday at the OSMA office at the University of New Hampshire, Durham. For more information on Seacoast Outright and/or TYNE, contact www.seacoastoutright.org or call (603) 431-1013.

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2006-2007 School Trainings

Has your faculty, staff and administration ever had a civil rights training? The contract that your school entered into with the Attorney General's Office when your civil rights team was approved requires your school to have a civil rights training for its faculty and staff. In order to help you to comply with this requirement, the Civil Rights Team Project provides a free in-service training for your faculty, staff and administration upon request. The training is conducted by an assistant attorney general and a trainer and lasts two and a half hours. If your school has not had this training or you would like another one for your current faculty members, please contact Debi Gray at 626-8856 or debi.gray@maine.gov to schedule a training during the 2006-2007 school year.



UPCOMING EVENTS AND SIGNIFICANT DATES

April 28, 2006 - Registration deadline for the Statewide Conference at the Augusta Civic Center.

May 8, 2006 - Civil Rights Team Statewide Conference at the Augusta Civic Center. A day of multicultural workshops, speakers, and entertainment for the more than 2,000 students who participate on school civil rights teams across the state.

June 25-26 - Maine Youth Summit, Hebron Academy, Hebron, Maine. The annual Youth Summit is an opportunity for GLBTQ and allied youth to participate in a two day conference that will address common issues, including: healthy relationship choices, HIV

risk reduction, youth empowerment, life skills building and tools for understanding class, race, gender and oppression. For more information on this program, click on http://www.outright.org/youth_summit.html.



“Extra, Extra, Read All About It!”

Would you like the Spotlight to be on your school? Has your team just completed a successful project, read a great book, had a good fundraiser, listened to an inspiring speaker, seen a compelling video, or done something that was just plain fun that you would like to share with other teams? Send in a blurb to *The Torch* and we will include it in a future issue in a column dedicated to what's happening around the State. Send your news to amy@maine.rr.com with the subject heading: Newsletter item.



If you are planning on attending the Statewide Conference, don't forget to bring a 3' x 2' banner with the name of your school on it to hang inside the Augusta Civic Center!

This newsletter is written and distributed by the Civil Rights Team Project, a statewide program under the auspices of the Maine Office of the Attorney General. The mission of the Civil Rights Team Project is to increase the safety of high school, middle school and elementary school students and to reduce the incidence of bias-motivated harassment and violence in schools.

G. Steven Rowe --- Attorney General
Thomas A. Harnett—Director, Civil Rights
Education & Enforcement Unit
Debi Gray, Civil Rights Project Administrator