

# THE TORCH

## CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

November 2007

Newsletter Editor: Amy Homans

Welcome to the November issue of the Civil Rights Team Project's monthly newsletter, *The Torch*. In this issue, you will find information on the remaining regional trainings, a fascinating documentary film, an idea for educating your school community on religious diversity, two great books in the Book Corner, a Spotlight School, Team Builder of the Month, and much more.

### SOUTHERN MAINE TRAINING SCHEDULED AT LAST!

At long last, we have found a location for the Southern Maine regional student trainings. This training has traditionally been our largest, with nearly 600 students in attendance. We decided to break that training down into two separate trainings in order to make it easier to find a host location and to make the trainings smaller and more manageable. We think that this will make for a better experience for everyone.

The trainings will be held on December 11 and 12 at Keeley the Katerer, 178 Warren Avenue, Portland. (For those of you familiar with Portland, Warren Avenue is very close to old exit 8 off I-95 and is the street on which Joker's and Home Depot is located.) The registration forms have already been mailed out to schools. If you are able to attend on the date assigned to your school, you may bring up to 22 students to the training. If you would like to switch your date (not an option for elementary schools), please contact Debi Lettre ([debi.lettre@maine.gov](mailto:debi.lettre@maine.gov)) on or after November 26<sup>th</sup> to find out how many students you will be allowed to bring.

We are hopeful that this new location will work out well. We look forward to seeing lots of familiar and new faces at the December trainings.

### Make December Religious Diversity Month at Your School



December is the month in which many schools wrestle with the thorny issue of how to deal with the issue of religious holidays. Some schools forego the topic all together by banning religious decorations and celebrations while others have an anything goes policy.

From a Civil Rights Team perspective, the month of December presents a unique opportunity to educate students in your school about the different December holidays celebrated by Christians, Jews, Muslims, and African Americans. All four of these groups celebrate a significant holiday during the month of December, which makes it the perfect month in which to do an educational project focused on the religious diversity among us.

### HOLIDAY HALLS

A simple and effective educational project is to designate separate hallways in your building for Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and Eid al-Adha (the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice) and "decorate" them in ways

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that provide information to your school community.

Many people, young and old, know little about Hanukkah other than it lasts for eight days and involves the lighting of a menorah. Fewer understand the origin and meaning of Kwanzaa and fewer still know anything at all about Eid al-Adha. And in today's age of commercialization, we should not assume that everyone knows that Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ and that he was not born on December 25th.

Because different schools have different policies on the celebration or observance of religious holidays, teams wishing to "decorate" hallways with information about these holidays should present it to their school administrators to ensure that it is carried out in accordance with school policy.

In order to get you started, here is some information on each of these holidays as well as some additional resources.

**EID AL-ADHA:** Eid al-Adha, or the Feast of Sacrifice, commemorates the prophet Abraham's willingness to obey Allah by sacrificing his son Ishmael. According to the Qu'ran, just before Abraham sacrificed his son, Allah replaced Ishmael with a ram, thus sparing his life. One of the two most important Islamic festivals, Eid al-Adha begins on the 10th day of Dhu'l-Hijja, the last month of the Islamic calendar. Lasting for three days, it occurs at the conclusion of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, known as the Hajj. This year, Eid al-Adha begins on December 20<sup>th</sup> and ends on Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup>. The festival is celebrated by sacrificing a lamb or other animal and distributing the meat to relatives, friends, and the poor. The sacrifice symbolizes obedience to Allah and its distribution to others is an expression of generosity, one of the five pillars of Islam.

<http://islam.about.com/od/hajj/a/adha.htm>;

<http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/articles/holidays/eidaladha.htm>

**Kwanzaa:** Kwanzaa, which means "first fruits of the harvest" in Swahili, is a non-religious African-American holiday that celebrates family, community and culture. It was created in 1966 as a way for African Americans to reaffirm themselves, their ancestors and their culture. It is celebrated for seven days, from Dec. 26th – January 1st. Each day of Kwanzaa emphasizes one of the seven guiding principles: unity, self determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. There are also seven symbols of Kwanzaa, including fruits and nuts, a unity cup and even candles.

<http://www.tike.com/celeb-kw.htm>

<http://holidays.kaboose.com/kwanzaa-index.html> (ES)

<http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org/index.shtml>

**HANUKKAH:** Hanukkah, also known as the Festival of Lights, Festival of Rededication and Festival of the Maccabees, is an eight day Jewish holiday beginning on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Kislev, which may fall anytime between the end of November, and the end of December. This year Hanukkah is from December 4- 11. The holiday is observed in part by the nightly lighting of one candle for each day of Hanukkah. Hanukkah, which is not one of the most significant Jewish holidays, is the best known of the Jewish holidays because of its proximity to Christmas. This has

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resulted in it mistakenly being thought of as the Jewish Christmas. Elaborate gift giving is not a part of the traditional celebration of this holiday.

Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the holy Temple in Jerusalem after the Jews' 165 B.C.E. victory over the Hellenist Syrians. Antiochus, the Greek King of Syria, had outlawed Jewish rituals and ordered the Jews to worship Greek gods. In 168 B.C.E. the Jews' holy Temple was seized and dedicated to the worship of Zeus. While the fighting was taking place between the Greeks and the Jews, Judah Maccabee and his soldiers went to the holy Temple. They cleaned and repaired it and decided to have a dedication ceremony involving the lighting of the menorah. They had only enough oil to last for one day, but the oil burned for eight days, which gave them time to find more oil to keep the menorah burning. Today, the lighting of the menorah candles for eight days commemorates the eight-day miracle.

*Judaism*

*101:*

<http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday7.htm>

<http://www.holidays.net/chanukah/> (ES)

Jewish Outreach Institute:  
<http://www.joi.org/celebrate/hanuk/index.shtml>

**CHRISTMAS:** Christmas is an annual Christian holiday that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. Christmas festivities often combine the commemoration of his birth with various customs, including the display of nativity scenes, decorated trees, the exchange of gifts and cards, the singing of carols and the much anticipated visit by Santa Claus, Saint Nicholas or Father Christmas on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning. Popular Christmas themes

include the promotion of goodwill, compassion, and peace.

Christmas is celebrated in most places around the world on December 25<sup>th</sup>. However, the Armenian Apostolic Church celebrates Christmas on January 6 and some old style Eastern Orthodox Churches celebrate it on January 7, which is the date on the Gregorian calendar which corresponds to December 25 on the Julian Calendar. The date of December 25 is not widely considered to be the date of Jesus' birth, which is actually unknown. Many scholars theorize that December 25<sup>th</sup> was chosen as the commemorative date because it is very close to the date of the winter solstice on the ancient Julian calendar, which was widely celebrated by pagan worshippers. The Roman Catholic Church chose December 25 as the day for the Feast of the Nativity in order to give Christian meaning to existing pagan rituals.

Sixteenth century Germans used decorated fir trees as part of the Christmas celebration and it is believed that the Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, first introduced the use of lights on trees.

The current practice of gift giving did not begin to develop until the 19<sup>th</sup> century's industrial revolution, which flooded the market with available goods and created a large middle class that especially valued family and home life. What had been a largely public day of sometimes raucous celebration eventually became a holiday celebrated at home with friends and family. Although now considered by many to

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have become too commercialized, it still represents the ideal of peace, unity and community goodwill.

<http://www.history.com/minisites/christmas/viewPage?pageId=1252>

[http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761556859/Christmas.html](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761556859/Christmas.html)

<http://www.allthingschristmas.com/traditions.html>

For your Holiday Halls project, use the facts provided or dig into some of the websites for more information on these four holidays. Decorating your halls with fun facts on religious diversity can only enhance the holiday spirit in your school.



If you did, you were among the millions of students across the country who participated in national Mix It Up at Lunch Day on November 13<sup>th</sup>. Here is what Teaching Tolerance had to say about the resounding success of this year's big day:

Millions Mix It Up at Lunch

On Tuesday, an estimated four million students in 10,000 schools participated in the sixth annual Mix It Up at Lunch Day. Get a complete listing of [news coverage from around the nation!](#)

### Mix It Up Profiles

- [Central High School — Arkansas](#)
- [Washington Irving School #14 — Indiana](#)
- [Archie R. Cole Junior High School — Rhode Island](#)
- [Vivian Elementary — Colorado](#)
- [Floyd Elementary — Alabama](#)

### Share Your Mix Day Story!

We want to hear all about your experiences on Mix It Up at Lunch Day. Please take a moment to [share your story](#) with our online community!

You can also share your story and read others on our [NEW MySpace page](#).

### What You've Said So Far

*Jessica: "We had to share three things about ourselves, one which was false, then the rest of our table had to guess which one was false. It was a great thing to do in our school, and I hope we do it again really soon."*

*Galib: "I still felt left out and I was so mad. Kids were talking to their friends while 90 percent of the people at our table were quiet and bored. People in my school just don't like me. I don't think I belong there."*

*Marci: "Today was the first time our school, ABA, an IB World School, in Muscat, Oman, celebrated Mix It Up Day. During lunch, members [of the*

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*Students Against Prejudice club] went around the school distributing candy and stickers. Before long, students throughout the school were greeting each other with 'Happy Mix It Up Day!'"*

Stay in the Mix!

Keep the momentum going! Download a [free copy](#) of the Mix It Up Planner, with activities for use throughout the school year.

Have a great project idea to carry the themes of Mix It Up forward? [Apply](#) for a \$500 grant!

Organize follow-up Mix It Up at Lunch Days throughout the year! Download our [free promotional posters and fliers](#).

Still planning for your Mix It Up Day? Take advantage of these resources to help you make your day a memorable one for everyone in your school. In addition, you can also learn from the good experiences of other Civil Rights Teams. Here is what Thomaston Grammar School advisor Daniel Allan had to say about his team's successful day last year.

Last year, Thomaston Grammar School planned a Mix It Up Field Day along with our Mix It Up Lunch. We put all 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grade names in separate hats and drew numbers until all were gone. We wound up with teams of 12 students made up of the 4 grades. We had this outside and we had our CRT come up w/ the competitions. They ranged from Pictionary to carrying water in a sponge to fill a bucket race to

a soccer game, etc. We had 7 different events and each group spent 15 minutes at each.

It took a whole afternoon but it was worth it to see 5th and 8th graders working together. We will now make this a fall and spring event to promote team building

For more information, contact Daniel Allan at [dallan@msad50.org](mailto:dallan@msad50.org). In effect, Thomaston Grammar School used its Mix It Up Lunch to launch an entire afternoon of mix it up events with the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders. The field day concept is one of the best mix it up ideas we have heard about in a long time.

More great ideas came from Noble VI ("six") in Berwick. Last year, Noble VI combined its Mix It Up Day with a Mardi Gras celebration. First, it advertised its upcoming Mix It Up Lunch with fantastical mismatched creatures that students drew and placed around the hallways. It also invited the high school jazz band which came and played throughout the lunch periods on Mix It Up Day. The team sold Mardi Gras style bead necklaces and by the end of lunch, there was a conga line circling the



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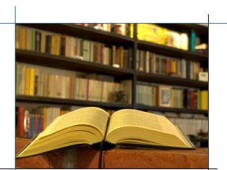
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lunchroom to the music from the band.

By creating a festive atmosphere that was different from other lunch days, it made it easier for students to break out of their old habits and open themselves up to a new experience. The team also raised several hundred dollars through the sale of the beads and sent the proceeds to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the parent organization of Teaching Tolerance.

However you organize your Mix It Up Day, take the time to learn from the successes (and mistakes!) of schools that have already had their Mix It Up Day and take advantage of all the free resources available to you from the folks at Teaching Tolerance:  
<http://www.tolerance.org/teens/lunch.js>  
p.



**In the Book Corner:**  
***My Secret Bully*, written by Trudy Ludwig and illustrated by Abigail Marble.**

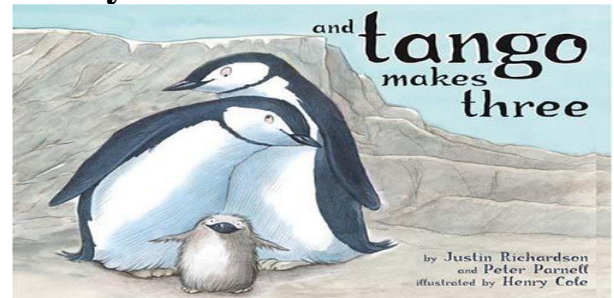
*My Secret Bully* was written to raise awareness of emotional bullying, the use of name-calling, humiliation and exclusion. It tells the story of Monica, who has a friendship outside of school with Kate, a girl who bullies her in the presence of others when they are at school. The

book highlights the despair and isolation that accompanies emotional bullying, particularly when the bully is a “part time friend.” With the help of a supportive mother, Monica learns to reclaim her power.

Maine’s own Stan Davis, author of *Schools Where Everyone Belongs: Practical Strategies for Reducing Bullying*, stated: “*My Secret Bully* captures the truth about bullying within friendships. I highly recommend this book for children and all who work with them.”

Recommended for ages 5-11, *My Secret Bully* includes tips, discussion questions and resources. This is a great book for a middle school classroom project or for any grade to take down to students in a lower grade.

Also in this month’s Book Corner is: *And Tango Makes Three*, written by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson and illustrated by Henry Cole.



*And Tango Makes Three* is a book based on the true story of Roy and Silo, two male Chinstrap penguins in

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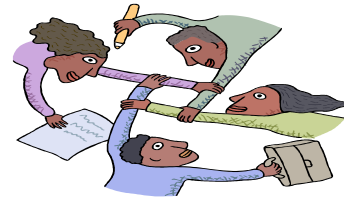
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New York's Central Park Zoo who formed a strong bond for a period of time. After attempting to try and hatch a rock that looked like an egg, Roy and Silo were given an egg from a penguin couple who had twice failed to hatch their egg. Roy and Silo successfully hatched the egg and parented the baby female penguin, named Tango by the zoo keepers.

***And Tango Makes Three*** is a wonderful book for introducing children to the concept of nontraditional families without the need to directly address the issue of sexual orientation. **The whole point of this book is that families come in all different forms and it's the love that really matters.** However, for those in need of a vehicle to address the fact that some kids at school have two mothers or two fathers, this book is a good jumping off spot.

This delightfully written and illustrated book has received several national book awards. In 2006, it was named an American Library Association Notable Children's Book. It received the ASPCA's Henry Bergh Award and the Gustavus Myer Outstanding Book Award and was named a Nick Jr. Family Magazine Best Book of the Year, a Bank Street Best Book of the Year, a Cooperative Children's Book Council Choice, and a CBC/NCSS Notable Social Studies Trade Book. *Tango* was also a finalist for the 2006 Lambda Literary Award.

**Editor's note:** In the interests of full disclosure, this book has been banned from some school districts, primarily in the South, as "promoting homosexuality." While everyone has their own opinion about the subject of sexual orientation, the fact of the matter is, this is a true story about *two penguins*. Enough said.



### TEAM BUILDER OF THE MONTH: FEAR IN A HAT

The objective of Fear in a Hat is to foster empathy and support the belief that it is normal to have fears and anxieties. This activity requires one hat, paper and pencils and takes approximately 15-20 minutes for a group of ten.

Begin by asking everyone in the group to finish the sentence "In school, I am most afraid that..." or "In school, the worst thing that could happen to me is....". Group members then write their answers on identical strips of paper. They should not write their name on the paper. Allow no more than five minutes for this part of the exercise. When everyone is done, collect the papers in the hat.

Have each group member draw a piece of paper from the hat and read about someone else's fear. One by one, each group member reads out the fear of another group member and elaborates on what he/she feels that person is

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most afraid of. The reader should try and explain what the fear is and why that fear would be a real one for a student in the school.

During the reading and explaining period, no one is to comment on what the person says. They are to listen only.

If the reader has difficulty elaborating on the fear, ask one or two questions. "Why would someone in this school be afraid of that?" "Have you seen or heard of that happening to someone else?" "How would someone feel if that fear came true?"

The facilitator should avoid expressing any opinion as to the fear being expressed, unless the person is being disrespectful or completely misunderstanding someone else's fear. If the reader does not elaborate after one or two questions, move on to the next reader.

When all the fears have been read, discuss as a group what the members felt and what they noticed as the fears were read and explained. Group members can acknowledge whether they share some of the same fears that were discussed and how they cope with or avoid those fears. If applicable, they can also share how they felt when those fears came true.

This exercise helps students to acknowledge that everyone, no matter how popular or how ordinary, have fears and anxieties that they carry with them every day. Learning about those fears and anxieties and building empathy for each other is an excellent tool for building your team as well.



### TORCH MANAGEMENT TIP

*The Torch* is intended to be a resource for teams and faculty advisors that can be referred to long after an issue is published. The electronic version of *The Torch* is the most useful, in that it has numerous clickable links in each issue. However, as most of you are aware, each issue takes up a fair amount of memory. So, if memory space is an issue for you, consider putting each issue of *The Torch* onto a memory stick.



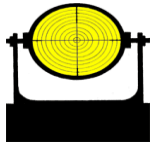
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Memory sticks are often free with the purchase of a package of blank disks or can be purchased separately at office supply stores for \$15 each. By transferring issues onto a memory stick, you will have back issues available for easy resource reference. It will also help to ensure that successor FAs will have access to back issues. Teams are encouraged to keep their hard copy of each issue in a three ring binder or folder in their Toolbox.



### SPOTLIGHT SCHOOL: Maranacook High School

**In a departure from tradition, this month's spotlight is on Maranacook High School's Gay/Straight Alliance. As the following excerpts from a Kennebec Journal article make clear, the Maranacook GSA exemplified positive, effective student leadership in response to a recent event in its school.**

**KENNEBEC JOURNAL** *Morning Sentinel*

By ELIZABETH COMEAU  
Staff Writer, 11/09/2007



KJ staff photo by Andy Molloy

**READFIELD** -- In mid-October, students with Maranacook Community High School's Gay/Straight Alliance hung a flag traditionally associated with gay pride inside the school's lobby.

Last week, students say, school officials removed the rainbow-striped diversity flag.

"They just took it down and didn't tell us why at first," said Hannah Mason, 17. "I've been in this district since kindergarten and always felt like I grew up in a place that prides itself on being diverse. Taking the flag down took that away."

On Thursday, students delivered a petition to Principal Carol Fritz signed by more than 250 staff, students and community members demanding the flag be rehung. Fritz, in turn, announced that administrators had developed a procedure for deciding what banners and flags would be allowed on school property. No such policy existed when the flag was first hung.

But there's no guarantee the new procedure will allow the flag to reappear. And that worries students.

"This school is generally seen as such a progressive and accepting school," said 17-year-old Hannah DeAngelis, a member of the school's Gay/Straight

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Alliance. "The actual removal of the flag was a symbol of intolerance rather than acceptance. It just didn't seem to be in tune with the school's values at all."

Students said the flag represented all students of any sexual orientation, gender, race, economic background and religion. The striped flag sporting six colored stripes of red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet was popularized as a symbol of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pride by San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker in 1978.

Fritz said the flag was removed because students did not get approval to post it. She said she did not receive any phone calls about the flag from concerned parents, but students and faculty said some parents have called the school saying the flag "promoted homosexuality."

Taking the flag down "had to do with a lack of procedures," Fritz said. "We had nothing in place and we were very worried about that, which is why we decided it had to come down. "We do value diversity here and different ideas and values -- it was not about that."

After the flag was removed, DeAngelis said, students took action. Monday, DeAngelis, student body vice president Jillian Blouin and student body president Sam Barnes presented a letter to the school's leadership team requesting the flag continue to be hung in Maranacook's halls.

"There have been and will be students and parents who feel the flag strongly symbolizes a sexual orientation that they fiercely oppose," DeAngelis says in the letter. "However, these objections can be seen as a way to generate conversation about the diversity of the student body that exists at Maranacook. By taking down the flag, we are creating a potentially unsafe

environment for those students who are questioning or just don't feel they fit in."

The letter continues: "Maranacook is an incredible school that has always fought harassment and taught tolerance. The diversity flag and its representation of all students is not meant to be a divisive symbol that promotes homosexuality; it is meant to be an inclusive flag that shows Maranacook is a school open to all students and is accepting of all differences."

On Tuesday, Maranacook staff members joined students by voting nearly unanimously to rehang the flag while a procedure was established.

"The students took action immediately," said English teacher Susan Melcher. "They took positive, open-minded action to the administration. I was very impressed and proud of them."

....

"We have worked through a very difficult week, but we did work together," Fritz said. "We sincerely believe that a caring community is essential and we strive to respect all individuals. We will continue our efforts to ensure that everyone feels physically and emotionally safe here."

After Fritz's announcement, about 25 students and 15 staff members walked arm in arm to the superintendent's office to thank the administration for listening to the students and working with them to resolve the issue.

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But the students' work will not be done until the flag is back on display, DeAngelis said. "I hope the administration will be supportive of us Tuesday," DeAngelis said. "Because this is something people are really fired up about and truly care about."

**The Maranacook GSA eloquently advocated for an important issue and, to its credit, school administrators listened and ultimately lent their support. A rainbow flag is a message of acceptance and tells all students that they are welcomed and valued. However, the message is only as strong as those who are entrusted to carry it out.**



### Documentary Film: *Rain in a Dry Land*

The Lewiston Public Library and the Somali Bantu Community Mutual Assistance Association are sponsoring a free public showing of the award-winning film, "Rain in a Dry Land" on Thursday evening, December 13 at 7 pm in the library's Callahan Hall. Following the film, Sheikh Mohamed and others will conduct a question and answer session with the audience.

*Rain in a Dry Land* was made by P.O.V., which stands for the cinematic term "point of view." P.O.V. is television's longest-running showcase for independent non-fiction films and has won every possible award for its films.

The PBS website contains the following description of this fascinating film about the lives of two Somali immigrant families. Excerpts of the description of this film are included in this issue of *The Torch* in hopes of piquing your interest about its content. If nothing else, this film artfully and grimly dispels the widely held belief that today's immigrants are the beneficiaries of endless handouts, public assistance and other benefits unavailable to U.S. citizens and that their lives are made easy by virtue of this mythical financial support. At the same time, it gives viewers a first hand look at the myriad of issues faced by new immigrants given six months to become financially independent in a culture 180 degrees different from their own.

"After more than a decade in a refugee camp in Kenya, to which they had fled to escape the civil wars tearing apart the Horn of Africa, two Somali Bantu families are stunned to learn in early 2004 that they will finally be allowed to immigrate to America. The resettlement plan began under Clinton in 1999, was interrupted by September 11th, and began again late in 2003. The families are, in a Somali Bantu expression, grateful recipients of *bish-bish*, which translates literally as "splash-

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splash," indicating the first rains after a long drought ("rain in a dry land") and, by extension, resettlement in America. In a world teeming with desperate refugees, where barren camps like the U.N.-supported Kakuma in Kenya become permanent rather than temporary fixtures on troubled borders, a ticket to the United States may be the ultimate *bish-bish*.

"Rain in a Dry Land" chronicles, in their own poetic words, the first 18 months of the American lives of Arbai Barre Abdi and her children and Aden Edow and Madina Ali Yunye and their children. Beginning with "cultural orientation" classes in Kenya, where they are introduced to such novelties as electric appliances and the prospect of living in high-rise apartment buildings, the film follows the Muslim families on divergent yet parallel paths as they learn that the streets in America are definitely not paved with gold, especially for poor immigrants. The families' sponsors — Jewish Family Services in Springfield, Massachusetts, and World Relief in Atlanta, have pledged six months of support, which gives the families a daunting learning curve to take themselves from the 19th century to the 21st.

The film measures the distance from an African refugee camp to an American city and asks what it means to be a refugee in today's "global village," providing answers in the stories of two families whose response to 21st-century culture shock presents an uncommon portrait of human

persistence in the face of social disorder and change.

...

The film's first view of Aden Edow and Madina Yunye and their seven children — Ali, Warsame, Aday, Abdulkadir, Hassan, Hindi and Hussein — in America, shivering in the winter cold of Springfield, marks the family's dramatic shift in reality. They are quickly facing other challenges as well. Crash courses in English have ill-prepared them to get along in America. And although the kids progress quickly at school, they are placed in regular classrooms too soon, without access to translations. They fall behind, growing demoralized. The adults struggle even more with translating the skills of pre-industrial farmers to the U.S. job market. The family is soon facing the end of their six months of support — and the prospect of losing the roof over their heads.

In Atlanta, meanwhile, Arbai Barre Abdi and her children Khadija, Sahara, Mainun and Said face a less severe climate but similar social challenges, including America's brand of racism. Though hardly alien to social bigotry — between Arab and African and Muslim and non-Muslim — which contributes to the disorders in their homeland, the families must decipher an American code that

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makes them triple minorities: immigrant, black and Muslim.

One response to these social confusions and barriers is to fall back more heavily on family and tradition, which Arbai struggles to do. But another response is embodied by Arbai's daughter, Sahara, who — with breathtaking rapidity — gravitates to the streets and pop culture, and is soon talking like a typical teenager with no use for her elders' opinions or authority.

Yet, through it all, the Bantu immigrants in "Rain in a Dry Land" reveal a remarkable buoyancy and determination in dealing with the demands of a journey whose speed and distance — both psychological and geographic — are astounding. That "Rain in a Dry Land" shows them to be people who will likely forge a way does not disguise the fact that, for all the generosity accorded them, immigrants such as these are not given longer-term support for the radical transitions demanded of them.

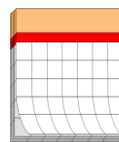
The film raises the question of whether such relocation programs, for all their good intents, are the best way to deal with the world's mounting refugee crises."

This film presents an excellent opportunity to help staff and students understand the lives of those who have recently immigrated to Maine from the African continent and from other refugee settlements around the world. It is also a

terrific film to use in conjunction with discussions about immigration and how the world is dealing with the issue of refugees on a global scale. Maine has experienced a relatively significant influx of immigrants, many of them refugees from Africa and Eastern Europe in the past decade and the topic of immigration is ripe for informed conversation.

A detailed lesson plan to be used in conjunction with a showing of *Rain in a Dry Land* is available on the PBS website at <http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2007/raininadryland/for.html>.

Because the film contains profanity inappropriate for a school wide showing, schools can request the "broadcast version" of the film from the P.O.V. lending library. **P.O.V. offers a [lending library of DVD's and VHS tapes](#) that you can borrow, at no charge, anytime during the school year. Please share the availability of this outstanding resource to others in your school community.**



UPCOMING EVENTS  
AND SIGNIFICANT DATES



# THE TORCH

## CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

November 2007

Newsletter Editor: Amy Homans

**November 17: LGBTQ Symposium 2007, Samoset Resort, Rockland.** This symposium, entitled, *Strengthening Community/Building Alliances*, is sponsored by the Maine Community Foundation-Equity Fund. For more information, go to <http://www.maineecf.org/lgbtq07.aspx>. *Ability to pay is not a barrier to attendance. The symposium fee will be waived for anyone wishing to attend who cannot pay the fee.*

**November 29: Regional Student Training, Presque Isle.**

**December 5: L.G.B.T.Q: The Sexual Alphabet Soup/Forging a Safe Place; 2:30 – 5:00, Saco City Hall Auditorium.** (Snow date: Thursday, December 6<sup>th</sup>) Please join a large coalition of public and private service organizations in sharing resources, strategies and personal stories for creating safe spaces for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth and their allies. The program includes Betsy Parsons from G.L.S.E.N. (Gay, Lesbian Student Education Network) and youth from a local Gay/Straight Alliance; a presentation of The Ugly Duckling Campaign of Hardy Girls Healthy Women; and Young Adults from the Maine SpeakOut Project. Please feel free to

print and distribute the flyer.



[GLBTQ Youth Forum Dec 5.doc](#)

**December 11 and 12: Regional Student Trainings, Portland.**

**January 21, 2008: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.**

**January 21-25, 2008: No Name Calling Week.** Go to [www.nonamecallingweek.org/cgi-bin/iowa/home.html](http://www.nonamecallingweek.org/cgi-bin/iowa/home.html) for information on how to bring this important event to your school.

**May 16, 2008: CRTP Statewide Conference, Augusta Civic Center.**



**“Extra, Extra, Read All About It!”**

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? If we don't hear about it, we can't share it with other teams. Send in a blurb to *The Torch* and we will include it in a future issue. Send your news to [amy@maine.rr.com](mailto:amy@maine.rr.com) with the subject heading: **Newsletter item.**

*If you are not receiving your issues of The Torch via e-mail, please contact Debi Lettre at [debi.lettre@maine.gov](mailto:debi.lettre@maine.gov) and provide her with your e-mail address.*

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*This newsletter is written and distributed by the Civil Rights Team Project, a state-wide 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 Lettre, Civil Rights Project Administrator**