

# THE TORCH

## CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

October 2008

Newsletter Editor: Brandon Baldwin

### Director's Note on the October Issue of *The Torch*



*So much to do, so much to see, so much to read.* Brandon Baldwin, the editor of *The Torch* has put together another incredible publication for faculty advisors and civil rights teams at every grade level. I was motivated to write this short piece to highlight some articles and to make sure that none are missed. In this issue alone you can learn about the Freedom Trail in Portland as well as upcoming events in Maine that are very relevant to the civil rights work of your teams. There is also the first in a three-part series discussing *Race in America* and an article about Dan Haskins, a Hall of Fame basketball coach who oversaw a very significant event in the racial history of our country when he coached the first NCAA Tournament winning basketball team that started five African-American student-athletes in 1962.

*Is your team looking for activities?* If so, they can read about Mix-It-Up Day, learn how to do a list poem team building activity and see what a group of energetic 4<sup>th</sup> graders accomplished at Coastal Ridge Elementary School in York by presenting a day long Civil Rights Education Program.

*Readers or lovers of books on your team?* Make sure not to miss an article about the books of Todd Parr who writes about different types of families to younger students using words and illustrations that make what some view as a complicated topic, both fun and understandable. The leadoff article is a thoughtful and important discussion about the critical need for classrooms and school libraries to have gay and lesbian themed literature available and visible for middle and high school students.

So, my advice to faculty advisors, don't miss a word of this issue (we know you never do) and share all that is relevant with your team and other school staff that might be addressing these issues in their classrooms. Happy reading and thanks Brandon.

Thom Harnett

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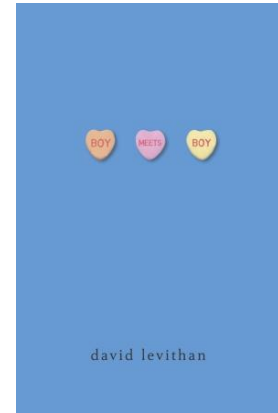
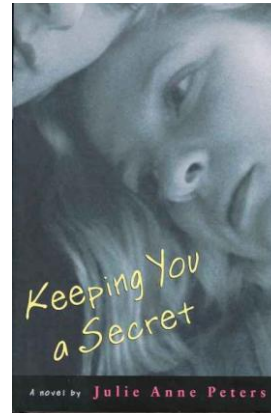
### The Adolescent Gender Gap in Reading Gay/Lesbian Literature

One of our goals for the new website we unveiled at the fall faculty advisor trainings was to have a greatly expanded resource guide. In the summer months I began tackling this project, trying to create a comprehensive list of young adult fiction about civil rights related topics. As I swamped myself in young adult literature, it was inevitable that I think back on my recent role as a junior high school literature teacher.

I always felt it important to provide current and relevant literature for all of my students. That meant promoting diversity and multiculturalism through my classroom library. I always made sure that I had books for everyone, and that included books on gay/lesbian topics.

Over time, several things became very clear to me. Books about lesbians flew off the shelves. Girls would read these books, recommend them to their friends, praise them, and sometimes not even return them. These books were popular with adolescent girls regardless of their sexuality. Books about young gay men, however, pretty much stayed on the shelves, untouched. Girls would sometimes pick up these books, but I can't remember one boy in almost nine years who even looked at one of these books.

What does this show us? Well... it may tell us something about gender. It's tempting to label females as more empathetic and respectful of people's differences. Perhaps



more accurately, though, this gender difference in reading selections shows us something about the climate in our schools. I'm sure that some male students have an interest in reading gay/lesbian-themed literature, but they ultimately choose not to. How come? Because they're afraid.

Why would adolescent boys be more afraid to read gay/lesbian themed books than adolescent females? Anyone who has spent any amount of time in any school probably knows the answer to this. It's dangerous for adolescent boys to be perceived as gay. They become subject to rumors, taunts, and aggression. There's a reason why *fag* is the word weapon of choice amongst adolescent males: questioning someone's sexuality is the worst insult they can imagine. Unfortunately, carrying around a book with obvious gay/lesbian themes makes adolescent males into targets, or at least that's what they fear.

(This is not meant to suggest that lesbian girls have it easy in school. It is merely an observation that adolescent male culture is particularly hostile towards gay males. As the recent GLSEN reports on school climate indicate, however, schools are typically a hostile environment for gay *and* lesbian students.)

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This is unfortunate on many levels. First off, it speaks volumes about the climate in our schools. Gay and questioning youth are sent clear messages that they must hide an important part of who they are. Other males are sent a clear message that they shouldn't even be sympathetic and understanding.

Perhaps the most damaging aspect of this phenomenon is the simple fact that these books aren't being read. It's too bad, because for many teens living in rural areas, like most of Maine, these books might be the only real exposure they get to gay/lesbian issues. They don't live in cities, which tend to have more visible gay/lesbian populations. There's a very good chance that they don't know one single person who is openly gay/lesbian. They may grow up feeling alien and alone, and it's important for them to know that there are others like them. In fact, one of the gay/lesbian short stories compilations I looked at is called *Not the Only One*, and it's important that our gay/lesbian students realize that they are not alone.

Obviously we want to move towards a world where anyone can carry around these books without inviting questions and stares from their peers. But even if no one ever checks out these books, they still serve a purpose. Their very presence in our schools is an important message on tolerance and acceptance. If students see gay/lesbian themed books on a shelf, they have some level of exposure to it. It sends out a clear message that these books belong, and if the books belong, then so do the gay/lesbian themes and the gay/lesbian characters that they're about. Ultimately, these books communicate the idea that gay/lesbian teens belong in the school, just like the books.

With this in mind, we issue you a challenge. Go to your school's library and ask what's available for gay/lesbian themed literature. See what's there. Ask about whether those books are promoted, or if they're simply tucked away in a corner somewhere. It also makes sense to visit your guidance department and see what they have available.

We have gay/lesbian students in our schools. It's important that our schools understand that the resources we provide in school may be the only resources available to these students. We encourage you to see what's available in your school.

For a list of recommended books featuring gay/lesbian characters and/or themes, check out the resources guide at our new website:

[www.civilrightsteams.org](http://www.civilrightsteams.org)

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## Using Our Moodle Website

If you weren't at the fall FA trainings, you will need to contact Brandon Baldwin to gain access to the site. He can be reached at 626-8548 or [brandon.baldwin@maine.gov](mailto:brandon.baldwin@maine.gov)

Expect a mailing in the next month giving tutorials for how to best use the website and its available resources. If you would like to schedule a one-on-one for a guided tour and how-to-use session, just contact me. We are very excited about the new site and want people to use it!

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### Coastal Ridge Elementary School Gets Everyone Involved in Civil Rights Education



Coastal Ridge students work together to create art out of a package of monochromatic shapes.

Fourth graders in York's Coastal Ridge Elementary got some civil rights education early this year. On September 17<sup>th</sup> they participated in the Fourth Grade Leadership Summit, rotating through nine different activities that highlighted the importance of leadership, diversity, respect, and togetherness. The day was put together and planned just weeks earlier by faculty advisor Kathy Welch and physical education teacher Eileen Brault. Student response was positive.

What made the day such a success? I had the opportunity to open the day's events with a brief talk and then rotate through the nine different activities myself. The first thing that was obvious was the great variety in activities. There was physical activity, team building, scenarios, video, music, art: all the famous Howard Gardiner learning styles were represented. Student feedback revealed no clear favorite activity: it all depended on the student.

The second thing that became clear to me as I took in the day's activities was how the level of commitment and buy-in from the participating teachers. All of the fourth grade teachers led an activity, as well as school principal Sean Murphy. They were enthusiastic and effective. Not only were all Coastal Ridge fourth graders engaged in civil rights education: so was the staff.

Kathy Welch plans on making the Fourth Grade Leadership Summit an annual event. The fourth graders are the de facto leaders of the school, and so it's a great way to begin the school year, putting the onus of responsibility for the school's climate and culture on their shoulders. The day's final activity reinforced this idea, as students strung a bead onto a string and made an individual pledge for something they would do to make their school a better place. The "promise bead" activity gives students a visual and concrete reminder of their individual commitment and responsibility to improving their school.



Students respond enthusiastically to the genius that is Dr. Seuss and *The Sneetches*.



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Blindfolded students struggle to work together and form the rope into a square.

Congratulations to FA Kathy Welch, Eileen Brault, Principal Murphy, and everyone who participated in the day's events. You set a positive tone for the 2008-2009 school year, and did everything to insure that everyone was engaged and involved in the day's events. Job well done!

Look for the activities from the Coastal Ridge Fourth Grade Leadership Summit on our website. You will find them in the "Lesson Plans" area, which we envision as one-stop shopping for organizing activities to use with your teams and your schools. As of now, we have the following activities from Coastal Ridge on our site:

- An art activity where students are challenged to create different things using just one shape and one color.
- A diversity graphing exercise where students recognize their group's diversity by creating bar graphs.
- A discussion guide for viewing Dr. Seuss's *The Sneetches*.
- A school climate survey and bullying scenarios.

The station activities from Coastal Ridge would work well with elementary and middle school students, and could be featured as part of a whole-school event or at your weekly civil rights team meeting. We encourage you to check out these activities and make any modifications as necessary. Ideas and suggestions are also welcome as we look to improve and expand the content on our site.



Students try to solve a puzzle.



Good-bye from Coastal Ridge!

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### Don Haskins and *Glory Road*



Hall of Fame basketball coach Don Haskins died on September 7<sup>th</sup> at age 78. He coached the Texas Western/UTEP Miners for 38 seasons, retiring with a lifetime record of 719-353.

Why are we devoting space to a college basketball coach in a civil rights newsletter? Because of what happened on the hardwood on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1966. Haskins' Texas Western squad defeated the heavily favored Kentucky Wildcats 72-65, but the historical significance of that game goes beyond the final score. The impact of that game was felt before the opening whistle, as the Miners took to the floor with an all-black starting lineup.

This was a first. In the thick of the civil rights movement, when many colleges ignored the talents of black players, this

qualified as a significant statement. Haskins, however, always the coach, downplayed the move, saying that he "was simply playing the best players [he] had."

While Haskins may not have been making a political or social stand with his coaching decisions, the nation responded as if he had. He received hate mail and even death threats for years following the 1966 season. On a more positive note, Haskins and the 1966 Texas Western team are credited with opening the eyes of coaches and programs across the country, who were then more willing to recruit and black players.

In a tribute entitled "Game Always Came First to Haskins" Alexander Wolff of *Sports Illustrated* remembered his last encounter with Haskins:

In his office he told me of growing up in Enid, Okla., and the story of Herman Carr -- and with it I got the closest thing to a social manifesto that Don Haskins would ever deliver.

Haskins was a stud in his day, good enough to draw a scholarship offer from coach Henry Iba at Oklahoma A&M. But throughout his high school career it nagged at him that he might not have been even the best player in town. He'd hook up with Carr, a 6-foot-2 black kid from the west side, for epic games of one-on-one in Government Springs Park. But come September, each headed off to a separate, segregated school. "Would have been nice to have played with Herman in high school," Haskins told me. "I remember just thinking

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how unfair it was that this guy couldn't play. Unfortunately there wasn't a little more equality back then."

For the "stand" he took in 1966, the Bear got 40,000 pieces of hate mail and a dozen death threats.

For this story he told on a December morning in 1997, he had an audience of one.

The path coursed its way through his life, consistent and true: To Haskins, from his early pinnacle to his largely anonymous twilight, the game always came first.

Wolff's piece serves as a nice reminder that it's not always the major stands we take in life that make a difference. The little things matter just as much.

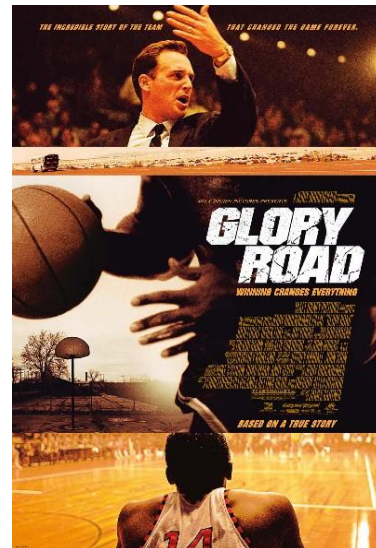
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Of course many of us know about Don Haskins and the Texas Western championship team because of the film *Glory Road*, which dramatizes their 1966 season. *Glory Road* is one of many recent underdog sports films, a genre that seems to be experiencing a revival of sorts.

A subset of these underdog sports films is civil rights related sports films. The drama of the hero's underdog status is taken beyond sports. Racial discrimination adds another element to the story: another obstacle to overcome. We love to cheer for the underdog: add the element of injustice and it creates indignation. Not only do you want the underdog to win: they *need* to win, or the world just doesn't seem right.

Recent films that fall into this sub-category of civil rights related sports films include *Glory Road*, *Pride*, *Ali*, *Remember the Titans*, and *The Great Debaters* (debate as sport). A film about Ernie Davis, the first black Heisman Trophy winner, hits theaters this fall.

Can a Jackie Robinson biopic be far away?



### Links:

UTEP's site honoring Coach Haskins and the 1966 championship team can be accessed at:

<http://ia.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=32231>

The official site for *Glory Road* is at:

<http://disney.go.com/disneyvideos/liveaction/gloryroad/>

The site for *The Express: The Ernie Davis Story* is at:

[www.theexpressmovie.com](http://www.theexpressmovie.com)

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### Polls “Measuring” Racism

*Editor’s Note: This is the first of a three part series examining difficult issues of race in America.*

A recent Associated Press/Yahoo poll made some big waves in America’s surprisingly low-key discussion of race and politics. The headlines boldly stated that 40 percent of white Americans hold negative views of blacks. Cause for concern, no doubt... but did anyone really take the time to study the poll results? And what do the results really say about race in America?

First off, a word on methodology. Measuring people’s opinions and attitudes is not a precise science. Results are hardly scientific in spite of the hard data that polling results provide. It’s even more difficult to measure people’s attitudes towards race. Poll subjects believe that there are acceptable and unacceptable views on the subject. There is a long-standing trend where people will modify their answers based on what is considered socially acceptable or the “right” answers.

A more cynical and simple version of this idea is that people lie. They know that their real beliefs and real answers to the poll questions are deemed unacceptable, and change their answers for approval and acceptance. There’s a clear example of this polling phenomenon in the AP/Yahoo poll. A whopping 72 percent of those polled said that they always or nearly always vote. The actual numbers for voter turnout in American elections dispute this claim, as political participation maxes out somewhere in the range of 50 percent of eligible voters actually casting a ballot, with non-

presidential elections bringing out even fewer voters.

This begs the obvious question: why did 72 percent of those polled say that they always or nearly always vote, when voter turnout records suggest otherwise? The answer is simple: American citizens know that they are supposed to vote. It is our civic duty to vote. A working democracy demands that we vote. People who don’t vote aren’t going to admit it.

The same goes with racism or racist attitudes. It’s hard to imagine a poll subject volunteering that he is racist. He may hold these attitudes, but it is highly unlikely that he would self-report it. Because of this, pollsters can’t ask simple questions like “Are you a racist?” or “Do you hold racist attitudes?” Those types of questions would inevitably produce conclusions that racism does not exist, because no one would admit to racism.

So how do polls try to measure racism and racist attitudes? This is where the AP/Yahoo poll gets a bit murky. The pollsters try to create questions that will subtly measure racism, but the questions can come off as ridiculous. Consider the first question from the AP/Yahoo poll that attempts to measure American attitudes towards race. The question is “How often have you felt sympathy for blacks?” The possible answers are: extremely often, very often, moderately often, rarely, and never.

Try to answer this question yourself. It’s silly. What does it even mean? If you feel sympathy for all people, does that count? Or is it only interested in when you feel sympathy for black people? Should sympathy for blacks only be counted



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because they are black? What about last weekend when I saw a little black girl drop her ice cream cone on the ground? Is that sympathy for blacks?

This is a problematic question, but the poll actually gets worse. The questions that led pollsters to the conclusion that a significant percentage of white Americans hold negative attitudes towards black Americans are flawed and even offensive. The poll asks subjects how well a list of words describes “most blacks.” The list of descriptive words includes: friendly, hard-working, intelligent at school, good neighbors, dependable, violent, lazy, and irresponsible, amongst others. Potential answers are limited to five options: extremely well, very well, moderately well, slightly well, and not at all.

Again, try to answer one of these questions. How well do you think the word “friendly” describes most blacks? Do you feel comfortable ascribing characteristics to a whole group of people? Doesn’t the simple asking of the question seem to suggest that blacks are some sort of monolith, behaving the same way in doing things that are apparently inherent to blackness? Isn’t this asking you to stereotype? Does this seem ridiculous?

It’s obvious what the AP/Yahoo poll is trying to measure, and quite frankly, it’s good that they are conducting a poll trying to measure attitudes towards race. The problem arises in their methodology. Many of their questions are inherently flawed.

Flawed methodology will inevitably lead to flawed results. It’s easy to disregard the results of the AP/Yahoo poll, then, but we shouldn’t be so quick to dismiss it. It’s hard

to reach real conclusions about what these poll results show, but it’s also hard not to be alarmed by some of the results. For instance, what do we make of the fact that about 40 percent of all respondents thought that the words *lazy* and *irresponsible* described most blacks at least moderately well?

It’s hard to say. The poll didn’t bother to ask respondents how these words describe other racial groups. It’s also worth noting that white attitudes were pretty much the same when compared to the attitudes of all respondents. A person’s race didn’t seem to influence their answers.

This is not meant to dismiss the potential conclusions of the poll and deny that racism exists in America. It is merely meant to point out that it’s not such an easy thing to measure.

Next month, we’ll look at another possibility for why racism might be underreported in poll data: perhaps poll respondents are unaware of their own racism and prejudice.

The AP/Yahoo poll results do show a sharp racial divide with some views. For a complete look at the AP/Yahoo poll results, go to:

[http://news.yahoo.com/page/election-2008-political-pulse-race-in-america;\\_ylt=Aiiimc2v\\_CmupbKpb.Bh96h2KY54](http://news.yahoo.com/page/election-2008-political-pulse-race-in-america;_ylt=Aiiimc2v_CmupbKpb.Bh96h2KY54)

Last month *The Torch* featured information on several articles from the quarterly publication *Greater Good* on anti-prejudice. One of the articles is especially relevant here: “Look Twice” suggests that prejudice is inherent in all of us, but can be overcome.

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### A Great Team Activity: Create a List Poem



*Editor's Note: We have a request. If you are interested in doing this activity with your team, please wait until after the fall team training sessions. We plan on using it then.*

Here's an old classic from my days as a teacher. It can be an exceptionally thoughtful and fun activity that will get your team working together to create something quickly. Observe your team doing this activity and you'll learn a lot about the individual personalities and team dynamics that you'll be working with.

You will need to provide each student with an index card and something to write with. (Does anyone else struggle with this simple idea: bring a pen or pencil to our meetings? It was a weekly issue for me... but let's focus on the activity.) Let your team know that they will be creating a poem. They need not worry if they are poetic or not. Each of them will only be responsible for a small part of the poem.

The poem will be a list poem. Each line of the poem will start the same way. Examples of great starting lines for your team's poem:

- Respect is...
- Diversity means...

- The perfect school is...
- On our civil rights team, we...

Of course you can create your own starting line. Notice how all of these are positive. (Negative poems about intolerance and bigotry might be an exercise for later, but we like to start positive.)

Now team members are going to write two lines using your starter. If you choose the "Respect is..." option, team members should write one line on each side of the index card. Make sure they include the words that start the line.

Encourage them to be creative. We aren't looking for a dictionary definition for the word. The poem will be much more interesting if they search for personal definitions and meanings, use metaphors, or draw on personal experiences. There really aren't any specific rules for what they need to do, but have them think it over for a little while before they write. (By giving fewer directions, you will get a greater diversity of responses, which will make for a more interesting poem later.)

After some time for reflection and thought, have them write. The writing shouldn't take too long, but don't hurry them. It's also important that they don't share what they're writing just yet. That comes later.

When the team is finished, tell them that it's now time to compile a poem. The poem will need to include each index card, but the team gets to choose which side of the card to use, and what order to put the cards in. The final touch should be a title.

When the team is finished with its poem, have someone record it. You may want to

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let the activity stand on its own, or have the team reflect on it. Some useful questions might include:

- Is this a good way to write a poem?
- How is the poem different from if you had written it on your own? How is it better? How is it worse?
- Is this an easy or difficult process? What made it easy? What made it difficult?

If this activity is successful, it could be one you use more than once. It's a great way to start meetings, as it gets your team thinking about civil rights concepts and working together as a team to create something. Don't hesitate to use it again.

### Mix It Up!



Get ready for Mix It Up at Lunch Day 2008 on Thursday, November 13<sup>th</sup>. This is a project that has really taken off over the years. Here's the promo from the Teaching Tolerance website:

Last year, an estimated 4 million students at 10,000 schools participated in Mix It Up at Lunch Day.

Mix It Up at Lunch Day is a simple call to action: take a new seat in the cafeteria. By making the move,

students can cross the lines of division, meet new people and make new friends.

You can learn all about Mix It Up Day at:

[www.tolerance.org/teach/mix\\_it\\_up/lunch.jsp](http://www.tolerance.org/teach/mix_it_up/lunch.jsp)

At the website you can get free posters, fliers, stickers, and activity ideas.

Our website will also feature a section on Mix It Up Day, including discussion forums where you can post your Mix It Up experiences and ideas.

We highly encourage you to participate in Mix It Up Day. It is a simple and effective early project for your team. Don't worry too much about the date, either: there's no rule that says that you have to do it on November 13<sup>th</sup>. It's a great activity any time of the year. In fact, some schools have enjoyed it so much that they do it several times during the school year, or even monthly.

Several suggestions for making Mix It Up Day successful:

- Sell it in advance. Students need to know *why* they're doing it.
- Make it voluntary. Forcing kids to mix it up creates resentment.
- Get the adults on board. Their participation sends a powerful message.
- Listen to your team. They know best how students will react to events like this. They'll tell you what will and won't work.
- Make it fun. It's important, but if it's not fun... why do it?
- Join the discussion on our website!

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### The Portland Freedom Trail



The first stop on the Portland Freedom Trail, at the Franklin Street Wharf.

Whenever I've told people about the Portland Freedom Trail, I've heard two different responses: (1) "Portland has a Freedom Trail?" or (2) "I should really check that out someday." These responses suggest that this wonderful effort to promote Portland's history and standing in the abolitionist movement are important.

We tend to think of history as happening elsewhere, the implication being that Maine is simply too small or remote to have its own important history. That goes double for African-American history, as Maine seems to lack visible diversity. The Portland Freedom Trail is trying to change the way we think, though. For instance, did you know that William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, and Susan B. Anthony visited Portland? Did you know that there were significant pro-slavery riots in Portland? And did you know that Portland is home to the third oldest African-American church still standing in the United States?

There is much to learn in walking the Portland Freedom Trail. There are currently sixteen handsome granite markers dotting the cityscape of Portland's South Side. The markers feature bronze plates with artwork from Daniel Minter and a description of each site. More description and detail are available in a downloadable online map for this self guided walking tour.

Unfortunately, the tour requires a good deal of imagination. Because of Portland's unfortunate history with fire and only a recent interest in preserving African-American history, many of the tour's sites no longer exist. There are many plaques on sidewalks facing the street and overlooking parking lots.



An example of one of the sixteen granite markers, featuring the work of local artist Daniel Pinter.

Some of the sites do still exist, though: the Abyssinian Church, the Eastern Cemetery, and the First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church. These three sites and the history that surrounds them make up for the lack of visual history along the Freedom Trail.

If you are interested in walking the Portland Freedom Trail with your civil rights team, be prepared to spend about one and half to two hours in the streets of Portland. Visit



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the Trail's website in advance and print enough copies of the map so that everyone has one. This is a wonderful way to spend some quality time together outside and see the city of Portland. More importantly, though, you'll be connecting Maine with the rich history of American slavery, the abolitionist movement, and African Americans' struggle to achieve the American Dream.

For more information on the Portland Freedom Trail, including a downloadable map, go to:

[www.portlandfreedomtrail.org](http://www.portlandfreedomtrail.org)



*Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of profiles of potential destinations for you and your civil rights teams. Future profiles will include:*

- *The Holocaust Human Rights Center's new Michael Klahr Center*
- *The Maine State Museum's future exhibit on Maine's ethnic heritage*
- *The Museum of African Culture*
- *The Abbe Museum of Maine's Native American Heritage*
- *The Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail*



The Abyssinian Church, built in 1829, has fallen on hard times. There are efforts to restore America's third oldest standing African American church.



The Eastern Cemetery, burial place of many of Portland's prominent abolitionists.



Looking up at the First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church, where many abolitionists spoke out against the evils of slavery.

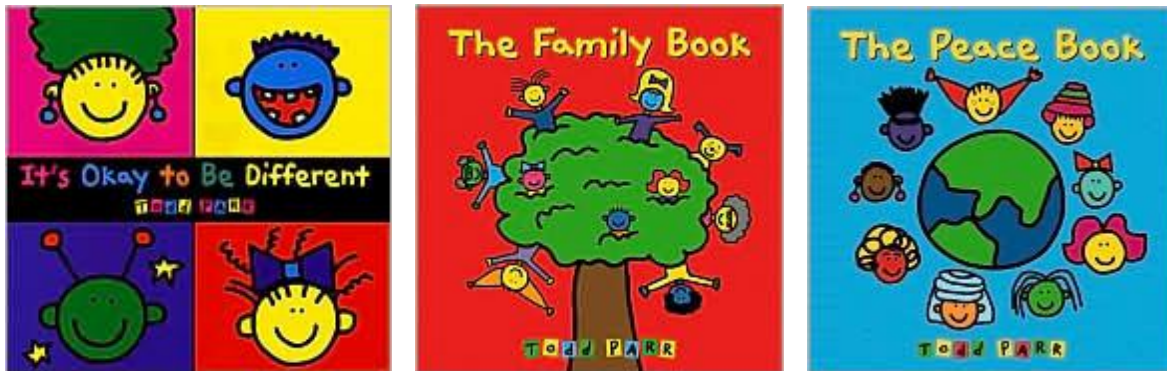
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### The Children's Books of Todd Parr



A challenge many of us face is how to appropriately discuss civil rights issues with younger kids. Recent years have seen a great increase in issue-based children's literature. Unfortunately, much of it is overly didactic and heavy-handed. It loses the most important element of children's literature: the fun.

Of course there are exceptions: none better than Todd Parr. His books take simple themes, many of them related to civil rights, and present them with bold color and a bit of silliness. The results are ideal for our youngest readers.

A great example of how Parr works his magic is *The Family Book*. In just 30 pages he effectively shows that there is no single family model: families come in all shapes and sizes. This is a wonderful way to get kids thinking about inter-racial relationships, adoption, divorce, and gay/lesbian parents. It may sound like a lot for young kids to digest, but it's done in such a simple, fun way that it works.

Here's an example. There are two pages that are indirectly about race. One page says "Some families are the same color" and

shows three skunks in front of a bright yellow background. The next page says "Some families are different colors" and shows five different color fish in some wonderfully purple water. That's as complicated as it needs to be. In fact, kids seem to readily accept these ideas. It's usually the adults who make things more complicated than they need to be. Other Todd Parr books with civil rights themes include:

- *It's Okay to Be Different*
- *The Peace Book*
- *The Mommy Book*
- *The Daddy Book*
- *We Belong Together: A Book about Adoption and Families*

Many of you might be thinking that these books aren't really for you because your civil rights teams have advanced past the age of picture books. That may be true, but the books could inspire your team to create their own children's books on diversity and acceptance. They could also help your team do presentations and work with younger kids in your district. This is a wonderful and under-utilized project for civil rights teams.

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Your students can become experts through teaching. Their message will strike a chord with younger audiences, who worship older students. This can also serve as a valuable recruitment tool, as it gives your civil rights team name recognition and an identity with potential future members.

Check out some of Todd Parr's work online. At [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) you can look through a few pages in most of his books. He also has his own website at:

[www.toddpar.com](http://www.toddpar.com)

Enjoy it!

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### Upcoming Events

We are always looking for upcoming events to promote! There's no worse feeling than hearing about some wonderful event that you just missed. If you know of any civil rights related events that are happening here in Maine, let us know about them so that we can spread the word!

#### **Portland Chinese-American Walking Trail**

Offered by Maine Historical Society  
Saturday, October 18, 10:30 am-12:30 pm

Historian Gary Libby will explore the history of Chinese-Americans in downtown Portland. While Portland has never had a "Chinatown," the area around Congress Street used to be home to a small but thriving Chinese community and many

Chinese-owned businesses including "deluxe" restaurants, laundries, groceries, and gambling dens. Gary Libby-who has been a leader in recent efforts to re-discover and document Maine's rich Chinese heritage-will give a brief talk at Maine Historical Society and lead a half-mile walking tour that points out and describes these key sites. Lunch at the Oriental Table restaurant on Exchange Street will follow the program (not included in program fee).

Registration required; call 207-7784-1822:  
\$15.00

#### **The Black Jew Dialogues**

Thursday, October 16, 7:00 pm at Maine Maritime Academy

Wednesday, October 29, 7:00 pm at Bates

Thursday, October 30, 7:00 pm at John Bapst Memorial High School Auditorium

What's so funny about two American minorities that have slavery, the KKK, and chicken livers in common? That's what you'll find out in this extraordinary two-actor play on the history and absurdity of prejudice and racism within the context of the American Black-Jew experience. The Black Jew Dialogues combines fast-paced sketches, improvisations, and multi-media to create a show that has gained praise across the U.S. and the U.K.

Appropriate for high school audiences.

[www.theblackjewdialogues.com](http://www.theblackjewdialogues.com)



# THE TORCH

## CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

October 2008

Newsletter Editor: Brandon Baldwin

### **A Gay History of Maine?**

Thursday, October 30, 7:00-9:00 pm  
University of Southern Maine

Howard M. Solomon, Professor Emeritus of History, Tufts University, will talk about capturing and telling Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender History in Maine. While Maine has been relatively progressive in providing equal rights and protections for its gay citizens, historians are only now beginning to look for, find, and record the historic experience of gay Mainers, a history marked in turns by progressive action, discrimination, and the normalcy of everyday life.

Free.

### **Daniel Bernard Roumain and PCA Great Performances**

Friday, February 6, 10:30 am  
Hannaford Hall, USM, Portland, Maine

Students celebrate Black History Month with this engaging concert that honors two of America's great civil rights leaders: US Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. and author Dr. Maya Angelou. Known collectively as A Civil Rights Reader, Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR)'s original compositions are the foundation for a spellbinding performance by this twenty-first century musical pioneer that includes the actual voices of these American giants in excerpts from their famous speeches and poems. Performing will be DBR along with his quartet, the SQ Unit on the violin, viola, and cello. Dedicated to creating socially and politically conscious music DBR blends funk, hip-hop, and classical music to create

a personal sonic vision that critics have described as "revolutionary." Rich with cultural references, his works range from classical scores and energetic chamber works to rock songs and electronica.

Why are we including this event so far in advance? Tickets for the student performance session may go fast. If you are interested in attending this event with your team, we suggest moving fast.

Open to grades 6–12, call 773-3150 for details: all tickets \$7

<http://pcagreatperformances.org/2008-09/dbr>

[www.dbrmusic.com](http://www.dbrmusic.com)



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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**  
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