

THE TORCH

CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

November 2008

Newsletter Editor: Brandon Baldwin

Etna-Dixmont Takes a Stand

There was something different about the Etna-Dixmont School on Monday, October 20th. It was something you could feel. Perhaps it was the fact that it was one of those rare school occasions where all the students, pre-kindergarten through grade eight, would be attending an assembly. Perhaps it was the conspicuous red signs boldly stating “NOT IN OUR SCHOOL” posted in every room. Perhaps it was the enthusiasm with which the school’s civil rights teams put on their bright red “NOT IN OUR SCHOOL” shirts that morning. One thing was certain: something was going on, and the school’s students were eager to find out what it was.

So what was it? The excitement and energy in the air at the Etna-Dixmont School was the feeling that something was about to change. Working together, administration, faculty and staff, civil rights teams, and students were making a commitment to bettering their school’s climate. Working in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General, the K-8 school is serving as a pilot school in launching the “NOT IN OUR SCHOOL” campaign, an ongoing program aimed at reducing name-calling and hate speech in schools.

The program takes a comprehensive approach that is both behavioral and educational. Both components are important. GLSEN’s “A How-To Guide for Ending Name-Calling in Schools” highlights this idea:

Faculty and staff need to adopt a “zero indifference” response to name-calling:



An example of a “NOT IN OUR SCHOOL” sign that can be seen everywhere in the Etna-Dixmont School.



Members of the civil rights team sporting their nice, new “NOT IN OUR SCHOOL” t-shirt.

that means never letting it go by as though nothing has happened. Consistent intervention is key to establishing a school environment where all students feel safe and respected.

- a. There is no one right way to intervene in name-calling, and only three things that you as an educator should never do:**

- Ignore the incident
- Excuse it

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- **Allow yourself to be immobilized by fear or uncertainty**
- b. An effective intervention consists of two steps:**
 - **First, stopping the behavior**
 - **And then educating those involved**

We agree with GLSEN, but the unfortunate reality is that faculty and staff aren't always equipped or able to offer the educational component of the intervention. Sometimes there isn't time. Sometimes they may not know exactly what to say.

Four words can make a big difference, though. At Etna-Dixmont, every adult knows exactly what to say when they overhear name-calling or hate speech, and it only takes a moment: "NOT IN OUR SCHOOL." These four simple words effectively empower faculty and staff intervention.



Principal Cynthia Alexander thanks the school's civil rights team for its involvement in the assemblies.

The October 20th assemblies were the educational arm of the program. Students reflected on the hurtful impact of name-calling and hate speech in an effort to show why it has no place in school. This was more than a simple "one and done" assembly, though: the program's purpose is to create a visible and active presence in the school. Bright red "NOT IN OUR SCHOOL" signs went up the week before the assemblies in an effort to create buzz, but the long-term effect of those signs is more important. The signs are posted in every classroom, but also in the hallways, bathrooms, and cafeteria/gym, serving as constant reminders to everyone that name-calling and hate speech will not be tolerated at Etna-Dixmont no matter where they are. The "NOT IN OUR SCHOOL" intervention will serve as a similar reminder and provide a consistency in the school's approach to addressing the issue.

While the campaign saw its official launch on the 20th, there had been much advance work and preparation. The school's civil rights teams, led by faculty advisors Karen Lavoie, Becky Wetherbee, and Grace Sawyer, are an instrumental part of this campaign. The teams helped create the signs and wrote a "NOT IN OUR SCHOOL" pledge which they presented at the assemblies. The pledge asks students to do their part in eliminating name-calling and hate speech in their school and serves as a way for students to empower themselves in enacting positive change. Signature of the pledge was strictly voluntary, emphasizing the idea that it's the students themselves who can make the difference and change the climate of their school. The teams also showed their support by sporting their bright red "NOT IN OUR SCHOOL" t-shirts at Monday's assemblies.

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The overall aim of the program, then, is to create a consensus within the school. School principal Cynthia Alexander and guidance counselor Kim Raymond have been integral parts of the planning process. The school's faculty and staff received training before the launching of the program, and are well-equipped to provide consistent interventions. Students will get constant reminders, visual and vocal, about the program, and have the opportunity to become a part of the initiative themselves.

It appears that the consensus is building. An impressive 270 of the school's 275 students have signed the pledge. That's an incredible 98% of the student body. They signed individual copies and later added their names to a large banner for all to see.

The civil rights teams and our office will be active in creating activities to support and reinforce the program in the future. We look forward to a long-term relationship with the Etna-Dixmont School, and hope to replicate this program in other schools in the future. Expect more information on the program and its availability to you and your school at our website.

For now, congratulations are in order to the Etna-Dixmont School and their efforts to improve their school's climate.

To see the local news coverage of the campaign, go to:

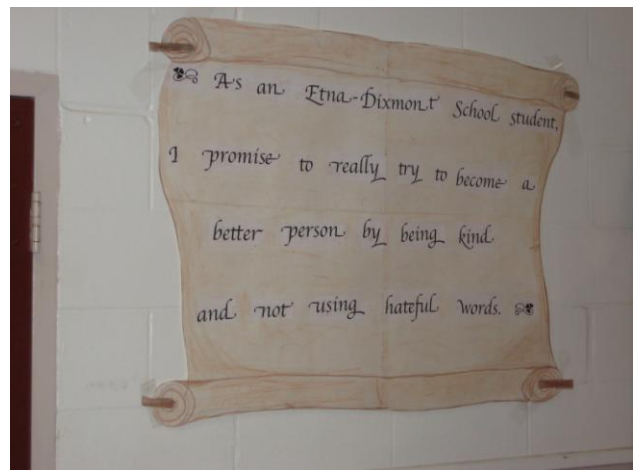
www.wcsh6.com/video/default.aspx?mid=897112087



Students enthusiastically show their support for the pledge to eliminate name-calling and hate speech.



The Etna-Dixmont School's civil rights team posing with the now ubiquitous signs.



A copy of the pledge greets everyone entering the Etna-Dixmont School.

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The “New Racism”

Editor’s Note: This is the second installment of a three part series on issues of race in America.

Last month in *The Torch* we cast a critical eye on a recent AP/Yahoo poll on race and the inherent difficulties in measuring attitudes towards race and racism. One such difficulty is the socially unacceptable status of racism. Even if people hold racist attitudes and ideas, they are unlikely to self-report them.

There is another even more pervasive and possibly insidious problem in measuring people’s attitudes towards race, though: they may not be aware of their own prejudices. There is a popular line of thinking that assumes that America is somehow “over” the issue of race: that enough progress was made with the Civil Rights Movement that we have advanced to a “post-racial” state of enlightenment.

While it may be true that the days of burning crosses, lynchings, and segregationist policies have passed, that does not necessarily translate to a lack of racism in American society. Racism is rarely open and explicit, but still infects our society. This “new racism” isn’t so obvious, but it’s just as damaging: perhaps even more so, because people tend to disregard it completely. It has many names: benevolent racism, microracism, and subconscious or unconscious racism. But how do we measure something that we are barely aware of?

This leads us to the Implicit Assumptions Test. The IAT was created at Harvard

University as a way to effectively measure our deeply rooted and hidden prejudices. It does not rely on polls. It seeks to probe into our subconscious and measure our attitudes before our conscious mind has the opportunity to filter our thoughts. The results of the IAT have consistently demonstrated that people of all races harbor deep-seeded prejudices that they are unaware of themselves.

How does the IAT measure this? It’s a simple test using pictures and words. Test subjects are asked to associate certain words with certain pictures. The process is then reversed. The test measures how quickly you are able to make certain associations.

I have left the description intentionally vague in case you are interested in taking the Implicit Assumptions Test. Be warned: it is a powerful and eye-opening experience. It forces you to confront your own potential prejudices, and you may not like the results.

An important part of promoting anti-prejudice, however, is confronting it. To effectively confront it, we must acknowledge and be aware of it, and we must accept the idea that we *all* have our own prejudices.

I highly recommend taking the Implicit Assumptions Test. To take it, go to:

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

(Click on “Demonstration”, go through two more screens, and you’ll have a wide range of tests you can choose from. I suggest scrolling down the Race IAT button. Click on it and take the time to read and really understand the instructions. The test will take about ten minutes.)

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Malcolm Gladwell Dares to Go Where Others Won't



I first learned about the Implicit Assumption Test by reading Malcolm Gladwell's fascinating book *Blink*, where he examines the impact of our subconscious thinking. There is no more thoughtful writer today than Malcolm Gladwell. He has written two *New York Times* best-sellers, *Blink* and *The Tipping Point*, and in 2005 he was named one of the world's 100 most influential people by *Time* magazine. What makes him so thoughtful and influential? Gladwell is willing to ask difficult questions and challenge conventional wisdom. He gets his readers to think about tough subjects in a way that is intellectually and emotionally engaging. His best work gets you to rethink the assumptions you have about the world and examine social taboos.

Gladwell's body of work illuminates another important aspect of addressing new racism: we need to be willing to ask the difficult

questions. To fully understand ourselves and our society, we have go certain places, even when they are uncomfortable.

Gladwell has long been a writer for the *New Yorker*, which routinely features his in-depth and lengthy articles. Lucky for us, all of these articles are archived on his website, www.gladwell.com. His work on the topic of race is particularly noteworthy, as he tackles topics most writers wouldn't touch.

I have provided links to three of Gladwell's articles that relate to race. Behind each of the articles is a thought-provoking question that may seem controversial, something you're not even allowed to ask in today's society. Gladwell's willingness to ask the tough questions, though, leads to some illuminating conclusions. I highly encourage you to read these thought-provoking articles.

In "None of the Above" he asks the question of why black and white Americans score differently on I.Q. tests:

www.gladwell.com/2007/2007_12_17_c_iq.html

In "The Sports Taboo" he asks why blacks and whites perform differently in athletics:

www.gladwell.com/1997/1997_05_19_a_sports.htm

In "Black Like Them" he asks why West Indian and Caribbean immigrants seem to experience more success in mainstream American than other black Americans:

www.gladwell.com/1996/1996_04_29_a_black.htm

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The Holocaust & Human Rights Center: Turning History into Hope



The recently opened Michael Klahr Center at UMA.

There are three great challenges in Holocaust education. How do you effectively honor the memory of both victims and survivors? How do you extract meaning out of something so vast and incomprehensible? And how do you make the Holocaust relevant?

The Holocaust and Human Rights Center's (HHRC) recently completed Michael Klahr Center in Augusta effectively addresses these challenges, proving not just a valuable resource in furthering Holocaust education, but holding great promise for civil rights education as well.

Any faculty advisors who attended our fall trainings know that Executive Director Dr. Robert Bernheim and the HHRC are interested in the collecting and telling of stories. These stories will honor the victims and survivors and preserve their memories for generations to come. These stories will offer points of reflection, but also points of connection. These stories serve as a bridge



Michael Klahr as a young boy.

between the past and the present, Europe and Maine.

Visitors to the Michael Klahr Center are greeted with one such story, the story of the man who gave the Center its name. An embedded flat panel television screen tells the story of Michael Klahr, a Jewish boy who survived the Holocaust and later immigrated to the United States, where he spent more than 50 years of his life. He had a special connection to Maine through his wife, Phyllis Jalbert, a native of Fort Kent. *Michael's Story* is just twelve minutes long, but it effectively extracts meaning and relevance from the incomprehensible vastness of the Holocaust through its focus on Klahr's story.

After completing the short film, your attention shifts to a display case featuring documents and artifacts from Klahr's life. The exhibit holds great meaning because of Klahr's story, which takes on significance beyond words. The mere presence of these

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Visitors view learn about Michael's Story through this flat panel display at the entrance of the Center.



The photographs of Judy Glickman.

artifacts makes his story seem more immediate and tangible: it becomes more real.

From Michael's story you move on to a pair of touch screens featuring three portraits. A simple touch begins a powerful story: there are three more stories featured in this multimedia "Children of the Holocaust" exhibit. The exhibit takes you beyond Michael Klahr's individual story. His was not an isolated story, but a point of entry. The scope gradually widens with the telling of each story.

Next are a series of photographs from Judy Glickman entitled *The Presence of the Past*. The black and white photos feature contemporary views of Holocaust sites. The title is telling: the starkness of the black and white and the abandoned settings helps to create a long shadow on the present. The images breathe history and make you wonder what stories they tell.

The final segment in this experience is the multimedia exhibit *Were the House Still Standing: Maine Survivors and Liberators Remember the Holocaust*. The HHRC offers this description of the exhibit:

This multimedia installation includes four synchronized video streams projected onto three wall-mounted screens, and a sculptural ramp located at an inclined angle on the floor of the exhibit space. In addition to narrative testimony from Holocaust survivors, soundscape and music provide a key role in drawing visitors into the installation's space and its message. The sound design takes advantage of sixteen channels of audio, which can be assigned to any one of sixteen loudspeakers, mounted in the wall and ceiling of the exhibit hall. Finally, the exhibit includes Jack Montgomery's fifteen large-format photographic portraits of the Maine survivors. They are illuminated at various points during the presentation...

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The view inside the Dorothy Levine Alfond Exhibit Center, currently showing *Were the House Still Standing*, a multimedia exhibit.

This “complex and innovative approach to digital storytelling” constructs a narrative of the Holocaust. It honors and preserves the memories of the survivors and makes a compelling argument for why it is so important that their stories be told. Their testimonies serve as a powerful reminder of what happens when hate and prejudice are allowed to go unchecked. We must learn from our past.

Robert Bernheim agrees. He sees the Center not as an educational end destination, but an entry point. In the future, the Center hopes to collect other stories of hate and prejudice and serve as inspiration for individuals and groups to get active and involved. By making the past come alive and connecting it with the present, the Center is forward-looking in envisioning a better future. As the Holocaust and Human Rights Center’s tag line says, they are “turning history into hope.”

The Michael Klahr Center is an ideal destination for civil rights teams. We envision middle and high school students benefitting from a visit. The multimedia installation *Were the House Still Standing* is

more appropriate for advanced middle school and high school audiences. The experience lasts about 45 minutes without this final exhibit and two hours with it included. There are classroom-sized rooms available for alternative activities.

To maximize your students’ experience, we recommend advanced preparation and education. The Center can serve as an introduction to the Holocaust, but is more effective as enrichment: some advanced knowledge will improve the overall experience.

The educational outreach arm of the HHRC offers an opportunity for advance education. *Lost and Found: Lessons and Legacies of the Holocaust* is an experiential, hands-on approach to Holocaust education. *Lost and Found* is a journey of discovery: students unload an old, wooden steamer trunk filled with artifacts. These artifacts inspire questions and engage students in piecing together a story.

The Michael Klahr Center is located on the University of Maine at Augusta campus. It is open Monday through Friday. To arrange a visit, call 621-3530.

You can also e-mail Dr. Robert Bernheim or Jacqueline Littlefield, the Education Outreach Coordinator, at:

robert.bernheim@maine.edu
jmlittlefield@maine.edu

We have found the people at the HHRC eager and easy to work with. We highly recommend getting in touch with them for ideas about Holocaust and civil rights education and to arrange a visit to the Michael Klahr Center.

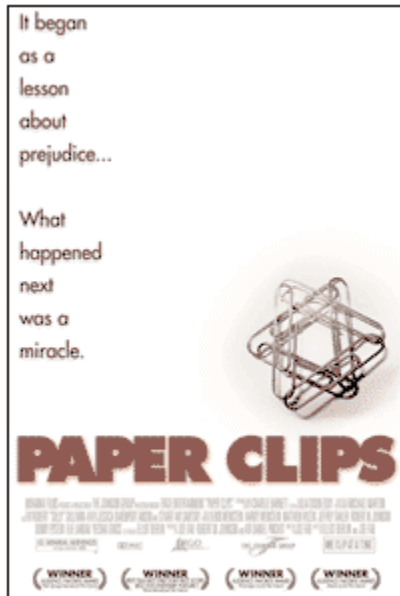
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Paper Clips



Whereas the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine seeks meaning in the almost incomprehensible enormity of the tragedy of the Holocaust by focusing on individual stories, a recent project at Tennessee's Whitwell Middle School takes an opposite approach. Students participating in the school's Holocaust education program try to grasp the enormity of the tragedy through understanding just how many victims perished as a result of the Holocaust. The idea for this approach was an innocent question asked by a student: just how big is six million?

In an effort to bring meaning to this abstract number, students began collecting paper clips, a Norwegian symbol of solidarity against Nazi Germany. The idea was simple: by collecting six million paper clips, students could gain some understanding of just how great a number that is, and through

this, a greater understanding of the incredible loss and tragedy of the Holocaust. The documentary film *Paper Clips* follows Whitwell Middle School's quest to collect six million paper clips, but ultimately becomes something more. What starts as a somewhat innocent experiment progresses to student engagement and then involvement. The project extends beyond what anyone could have predicted, culminating in the dedication of a Holocaust memorial on the school's grounds. This simple and straightforward story is an important reminder that students are capable of achieving the incredible when given the right opportunities.

Paper Clips is less about the Holocaust than it is about *learning* about the Holocaust and memorializing those who lost their lives. It is rated G, and appropriate for audiences of almost any age. We recommend using it in conjunction with a trip to the HHRC's Michael Klahr Center in Augusta. These two resources could begin important discussions about why it's important to learn about the Holocaust, what lessons it can teach us today, and how to properly memorialize such a great tragedy. The film's official website:

www.paperclipsmovie.com

There is also a book about the school's project, called *Six Million Paper Clips: The Making of a Children's Holocaust Memorial*, by Peter W. Schroeder and Dagmar Schroeder-Hildebrand. The book is intended for middle school readers.

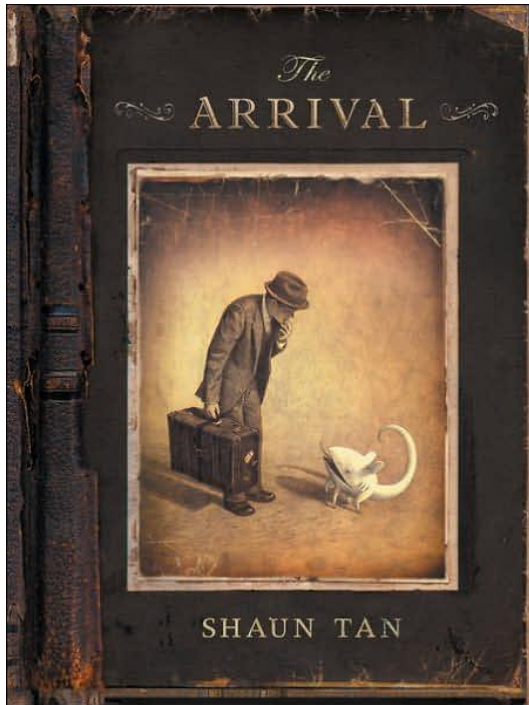
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The Arrival, by Shaun Tan



It is only so often that you sit down with a book and see something unlike anything you've ever seen before, but that was the exact experience I had last month with Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*. The concept behind the book is interesting: it's a wordless graphic novel that tells the story of a city's immigrants. The idea is interesting: the execution is inspired. This book is elegant in its simplicity. Don't confuse simplicity with simplistic, though: the pictures effectively convey the emotional journey immigrants experience in uprooting themselves from home and traveling to strange and distant lands.

There is an initial barrier in connecting with *The Arrival*, as the lack of text is something most readers are unfamiliar with. Therein lies the genius of Tan's work, as he is capturing the language barrier most

immigrants experience, but also the feelings of alienation, loneliness, and confusion associated with a new place. After the initial shock of the wordless novel passes, you will be drawn into the strange world Tan created for his book. The setting is simultaneously nostalgic and futuristic: the past and the future meld together in a fictional and fantastic indeterminate city.

This helps emphasize the universal nature of the immigrant experience. It doesn't so much matter when or where the story takes place: it is every immigrant's story. The inside cover of the book highlights this idea, showing passport photo-sized images of immigrants of various racial, ethnic, and religious identities. Tan makes it clear from the beginning that this isn't so much the story of one immigrant but the story of immigration itself.

Here Shaun Tan writes about his inspiration for writing the book, taken from his Artist's Note at the end of the book:

Much of this book was inspired by anecdotal stories told by migrants of many different countries and historical periods, including my father, who came to Western Australia from Malaysia in 1960. Two important references were *The Immigrants* by Wendy Lowenstein and Morag Loh, and *Tales from a Suitcase* by Will Davies and Andrea Dal Bosco – many thanks to all those who described their journeys and impressions in these books. The drawing of migrants on a ship pays homage to a painting by Tom Roberts, *Going South*, 1886, at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Other visual references

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and inspirations include a 1912 photograph of a newsboy announcing the *Titanic* sinking, picture postcards of New York from the turn of the century, photographs of street scenes from post-war Europe, Vittorio De Sica's 1948 film *The Bicycle Thief*, and Gustave Dore's engraving *Over London by Rail* circa 1870. Several drawings of immigrant processing, passport pictures, and the "arrival hall" are based on photographs taken at Ellis Island, New York, from 1892 to 1954, many of which can be found in the new collection of the Ellis Island Immigration Museum.

Since the book is written without language, there is an almost universal appeal to *The Arrival*. This is a wonderful book for immigrant populations who may or may not speak English. It is also a valuable book for English speaking "natives" interested in learning about the immigrant experience. While wordless, the book is complex enough that it will bear multiple readings and reward high level readers, but also simple enough so that it remains accessible for middle school readers.



Preview this amazing book at:

www.shauntan.net/books.html

* * *

The immigrant experiences in *The Arrival* closely mirror the experiences of many American immigrants, past and present. Many American immigrants first experienced America at Ellis Island, which from 1892 to 1954 processed over 12 million immigrant steamship passengers. In 1990 the restored main building was opened as a museum. The Ellis Island Immigration Museum has an impressive web presence highlighting American immigrant history and experiences. Check it out at:

www.ellisland.org

* * *

Of course Maine has its own immigrant history. The Maine State Museum is working hard to reflect this immigrant history in their exhibits, including the upcoming At Home in Maine, which will show 400 years of Maine home life. Kate McBrien, the museum's curator of historical collections, says that the exhibit will feature French-Canadian, Slovak, Chinese, Syrian, Russian, Scottish, and Swedish immigrant experiences.

The At Home in Maine exhibit opens on November 22nd. Expect a full profile in the next issue of *The Torch*.

For museum information go to:

www.maine.gov/museum/

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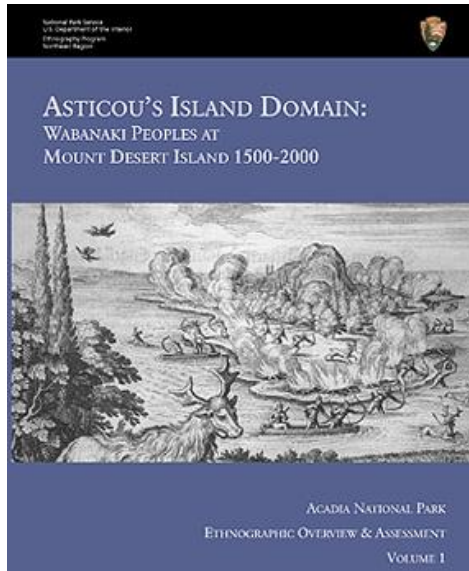
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Loads of Great New Resources Available!

Resources on Maine's Wabanaki Indian Population Available



The National Park Service at Acadia National Park has made their first-ever maritime cultural history of Wabanaki Indians in the Gulf of Maine available online. Researched and written by Dr. Herald Prins and Bunny McBride, *Asticou's Island Domain: Wabanaki Peoples at Mount Desert Island 1500-2000* was commissioned by the park, in cooperation with the Abbe Museum and Maine's four Wabanaki Indian nations. For more information and a free electronic copy of the book, go to:

<http://www.nps.gov/acad/historyculture/ethnography.htm>

The Maine Department of Education's social studies website has been updated to include new resources for Wabanaki Studies. Go to:

www.maine.gov/education/lres/ss/studies.html

Also, expect a profile of the Abbe Museum in an upcoming issue of *The Torch*.

* * *

Bridging the Political Divide

Teaching Tolerance has created an interesting lesson for use after Election Day. Voter turnout and political participation promise to be high this year. People feel passionately about their candidates: go online and look at any political discussion forum or reader comments in response to news articles and you'll see how this passion can easily become conflict.

Teaching Tolerance anticipates some divided classrooms on November 5th based on election results. Some students will be jubilant, some dejected, and some indifferent. This is a perfect educational opportunity to show that in spite of these divisions, there is much that unifies us. Check out Teaching Tolerance's impressive lesson plan, which they have also tied in with the upcoming Mix It Up at Lunch Day.

www.tolerance.org/teach/activities/activity.jsp?ar=980

* * *

Taking Aim at "That's So Gay"

The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network is working with the Ad Council in launching a campaign to address the use of anti-gay language among teens. The ThinkB4YouSpeak campaign takes dead aim at the ubiquitous teen expression

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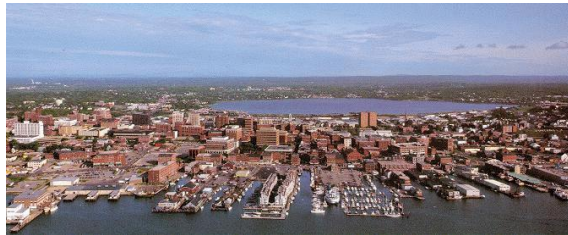
“That’s so gay.” This is an expression students report hearing in every school we visit. Students frequently use it without thought, and may be unaware of its unintended offensiveness.

The campaign includes three public service announcements that we have included on our website with the other short films. To learn more about the campaign, go to:

www.thinkb4youspeak.com

* * *

Portland’s Great Ethnic Food Options



Finally, not wanting to get left behind, we have created an exciting new lesson highlighting Portland’s ethnic diversity by exploring the city’s food options. Maine has a reputation as being a homogeneous state that lacks diversity, but Portland is an exception. Many students in Maine may be unaware of this diversity, though. By exploring Portland’s food options, students can gain some awareness of Portland’s under-appreciated diversity. Food is a wonderful way for students to arrive at the understanding, as most of them probably eat and enjoy some ethnic foods. Of course ethnic foods and restaurants usually follow ethnic populations, and so studying the food is both engaging and educational.



To access this lesson, go to our website and look in the “What’s New” section. We have also paired it with a music video from the Beastie Boys celebrating New York’s diversity. That can be found in the music resources under “An Open Letter to NYC”.

Bon appétit!



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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
Brandon Baldwin, Schools/Curriculum Coordinator