

LESSON 6

Moving To Action

Lesson Overview: The final lesson explores opportunities for students to respond when problematic propaganda arises. Students learn by examining case studies of peer role models who identified problematic propaganda or hate messages in their community and were inspired to take action.

Learning Rationale: By examining case studies of peers in their age group who took on these challenges, students will feel empowered and motivated to take action to address problematic messages that circulate among their peers and within their community. This lesson moves students from critical thinking and evaluation of propaganda messages to empowerment to respond when dangerous or hateful messages threaten their community.

Time: 2 class periods

1 class period for *Examining Case Studies*

1 class period for *Moving to Action*

Materials:

6.1 Case study Handout—Introduction

6.2 Case Study Worksheet

6.3 Case study Handout—Follow-up

Part 1: Examining Case Studies

Procedure:

Before Class:

- 1) Make a class set of both Handouts 6.1 and 6.3
- 2) Make copies of the 6.2 Case Study Worksheet

In Class:

- 1) **Divide students into 4 groups to discuss case studies of young people who encountered hate propaganda or hate speech in their communities and took active steps to respond.**

- 2) Distribute 6.1 Handout- Introduction and the accompanying 6.2 Worksheet, making sure each group receives a copy of their assigned case study.
- 3) Each group together has a discussion about the case study and completes the associated worksheet after reading the information and media provided.
- 4) Prompt each group, after brainstorming possible responses by completing the worksheet, to vote on the best response and explain the rationale for their vote.
- 5) Have each group share a summary of their case study for the entire class, describe the possible responses generated and considerations related to each response, and the results of their vote.
- 6) Distribute 6.3 Handout- Follow-up of each case study which shares the actual actions taken by students featured in case studies. Give each group time to review the new information shared.
- 7) Each group presents the actual response that occurred in their case study to the entire class.
 - Point out to students that students used a combination of different forms of response such as:
 - **Media:** Social media, video, journalism/articles, artistic, musical, blog post
 - **Community engagement:** Education, programming, partnerships, dialogues
 - **Grass roots campaign:** Ground-level efforts to encourage individuals to change attitudes/behavior
 - **Model change:** What individual and collective changes can they make as individuals or as a group to become role models for the larger community?
- 8) Discuss students' reactions to the actions taken by the students.
 - Do they think it is realistic for young people to take these types of actions?
 - What would they need in order to take similar steps in a similar situation?
 - What are the consequences of inaction?

Part 2: Moving to Action

Procedure:

- 1) Ask students to generate a list of examples of problematic propaganda or hate messages they experience in their own community. (You may choose to use examples students shared during Lesson 5).
- 2) Have the class determine which issue to take on as a class project.

Questions to consider:

- Who might be affected by the issue presented in this scenario?

- What could be the consequences for individuals and the community if no action is taken?
- Why is some form of action critical at this moment in time?
- Around which issue does the class feel they can bring about the most effective response?

3) As a class, walk through, step-by-step, how to go about identifying the best mode of action using the same questions they examined in their case studies:

- Who else might you want to notify/involve?
- What support would be needed?
- What factors will you have to weigh in determining the best response?
- What might be the impact on students, the school, and the community at large, for each potential response strategy?
- Out of those possibilities, which do you think would be most effective and why?

4) Determine action plan and timeline for turning strategy into reality.

Possible ideas for action:

Questions to consider:

- When/how will they begin? What is the first step they will take?
- Whose support will be required? What groups might naturally be recruited to support this effort?
- What are the benchmarks and milestones they hope to attain as they take on this effort?
- What are the goals they hope to achieve? How will they know if their effort has been effective?

5) Share your project with the Museum at SBooth@ushmm.org

State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda

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6.1 Case Study Handout - Introduction

State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda

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6.1 Case Study Handout—Introduction

Case Study 1: Rebecca Gillette

Case Study 2: Hudson Taylor

Case Study 3: Soeren Palumbo

Case Study 4: Martha Heinemann Bixby

Part One: Rebecca Gillette



Rebecca Gillette was a senior at Harvard University and the student president of Hillel, the Jewish student association. In September 2009, Rebecca saw an advertisement in her school newspaper, the *Harvard Crimson*. The ad was produced and paid for by Bradley R. Smith from the *Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust* a known Holocaust denial group. The advertisement challenged readers to “provide, with proof, the name of one person killed in a gas chamber at Auschwitz.”

This was not the first advertisement of its kind. In the United States, Bradley Smith is known for using this tactic to promote doubt about the Holocaust within intellectual communities, including universities. He has placed newspaper advertisements questioning whether the Holocaust happened in many college campus newspapers. From 1992 to 2001, his ads appeared in more than 350 student papers.

Copy of Advertisement Posted in Harvard Crimson in September of 2009:

Paid Advertisement

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

Eisenhower published his *Crusade in Europe* in 1948. In 582 pages General Eisenhower did not mention the German gas chambers in which it was claimed that millions of Jews and others were exterminated.

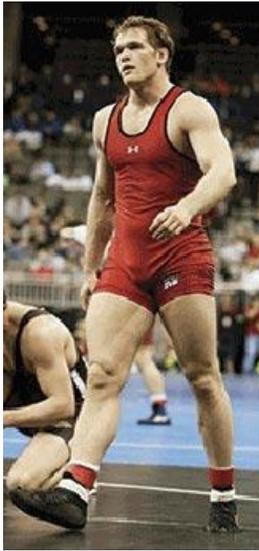
WHY NOT?

Are you a student? Why do you think Dwight D. Eisenhower, the man who directed World War II against the Germans on the Western front, the future President of the United States, would write a history of that war and not mention the greatest WMD (gas chambers) ever known to man? Do you think maybe it just slipped his mind?

Are you a professor? At the close of WWII it was claimed that four million victims were exterminated at Auschwitz alone. Keeping in mind that Eisenhower did not mention gas chambers in his *Crusade in Europe*, **can you provide, with proof, the name of one person killed in a gas chamber at Auschwitz?** Do you believe it immoral to ask this question? Tell me why. I can be reached at bradley1930@yahoo.com

Bradley Smith, Founder
Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust www.codoh.com

Part One: Hudson Taylor



Hudson Taylor was subjected to homophobic taunts as a straight member of the nation's top-ranked high school wrestling team. When he missed practice to participate in theater at Blair Academy in New Jersey, teammates asked if he was training for the "gay Olympics" and the word "Fag" was thrown around the locker room.

Soon after enrolling at the University of Maryland, he befriended LGBTQ students in his theater classes and became increasingly aware of the pain caused by homophobic speech and behavior. In a later interview Hudson said "Seeing the juxtaposition between the open and accepting theater department and the homophobic language of the locker room really made me realize that I could do something as an athlete."

Spring 2010 was Hudson's final season as an NCAA All-American and he was the team captain. He felt that he was in a powerful position in which he could confront the marginalization of LGBTQ individuals in the sports world. "I could no longer watch from the sidelines as this culture isolated and segregated LGBT athletes and fans and betrayed the integrity and diversity at the heart of athletics."

Hudson Taylor's Wrestling Profile at University of Maryland:

Hudson Taylor

PROFILE

- ▶ **Class:** RS Senior
- ▶ **Position:** 197 pounds
- ▶ **Hometown:** Pennington, N.J.
- ▶ **High School:** Blair Academy

Source: http://www.umterps.com/ViewArticle.dbml?SPID=120708&DB_OEM_ID=29700&ATCLID=208123402

Part One: Soeren Palumbo



Soeren Palumbo's younger sister Olivia has an intellectual disability. In high school, he witnessed the pain the "r-word" could cause for people with intellectual disabilities, their families, and their friends.

One day, when he was in the hallway passing by the front door of his school, he heard two girls near him talking about a boy washing the windows. One girl said to the other, pointing to the boy's back, "Oh my god! I think it is so cute that our school brings in retards from around the district to wash our windows." The other girl called out to the window washer, easily loud enough for him to hear, "Hey retard! You missed a spot!"

After this experience, and other similar ones, Soeren wanted to do something to stop people from using the r-word at his high school. He wanted people to think about how using the word hurts people with intellectual disabilities and those who love them.

Part One: Martha Heinemann Bixby



In the summer of 2004, Georgetown University senior Martha Heinemann found herself confronted with the reality of genocide in Darfur, Sudan.

In 2003, the government of Sudan responded to rebel uprisings by unleashing Sudanese forces and militias, systematically attacking hundreds of civilians in villages throughout Darfur. In the ongoing genocide, African farmers and others in Darfur were displaced and murdered at the hands of the militia. Over 2 million people—a third of the population—were displaced.

Martha first learned about the situation in Darfur in 2001 when she attended a lecture at Georgetown University presented by a Catholic Bishop of the Diocese in Sudan. She later participated in a conference about Darfur for Washington, DC students at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2004. Martha was joined by fellow Georgetown students who were determined to do their part to end the violence in Darfur.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Press Release

September 7, 2004

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM CALLS STUDENT LEADERS TO ACTION ON SUDANESE GENOCIDE

WASHINGTON, DC — The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Committee on Conscience will host student leaders from DC-area universities to assist them in developing student-led initiatives to address the ongoing genocide in Darfur. The students will be briefed at the Museum on Tuesday, September 14 at 8:00 p.m. about the situation in Sudan and begin creating action plans to mobilize students on college campuses to bring greater attention to the crisis.

“It’s vital to involve society’s future leaders in our effort to halt the genocide in Darfur,” says Committee on Conscience staff director Jerry Fowler. “By engaging students now, we hope to bring further attention to the crisis and show young people that they can make a difference.”

Holocaust Survivor Manya Friedman will share her testimony and explain why the situation in Darfur is of urgent importance. Devon Chaffee, a Georgetown Law student, will speak about her August trip to refugee camps in Chad where she interviewed more than 50 Darfurian refugees. Jerry Fowler will also give a presentation about his trip to refugee camps in Chad last May.

Following the program, students will begin developing ways to promote awareness of the genocide and encourage student action to address it. The Museum will provide materials to aid student organizers including information on online Darfur resources, strategies for mobilizing students on campus, fact sheets about the crisis, and photos from the region.

The Committee on Conscience has been closely monitoring the situation in Darfur. In May Committee Staff Director Jerry Fowler visited Sudanese refugee camps in Chad. In July the Committee issued its first ever “Genocide Emergency,” meaning that genocide in Darfur is imminent or actually occurring. A special display on Darfur is in the Museum’s Wexner Learning Center. More information can be found on the Museum’s continuously updated Web site, www.ushmm.org.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/press/archives/detail.php?category=03-coc&content=2004-09-07>

State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda

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6.2 Case Study Worksheet

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6.2 Case Study Worksheet

Directions: Complete the following worksheet with your group as you examine your assigned student case study.

Post- Visit: Moving to Action

Name of student in your case study _____

Questions:

1. Who might be affected by the issue presented in this scenario? What might be the consequences for individuals and the community if no action is taken?
2. Why is some form of action critical at this moment in time?
3. Considering the information presented in your case study, list possible ways the student can respond to the issue at hand.
4. Who else might he/she want to notify/involve? What support would be needed?
5. What factors would he/she have to weigh in determining the best response? What might be the impact on him/her, and the community at large, for each potential response strategy?
6. Out of the possibilities on your list, which action do you think would be most effective and why?

State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda

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6.3 Case Study Handout- Follow-Up

State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda

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6.3 Case Study—Follow-Up

Case Study 1: Rebecca Gillette

Case Study 2: Hudson Taylor

Case Study 3: Soeren Palumbo

Case Study 4: Martha Heinemann Bixby

Part Two: Rebecca Gillette

Rebecca immediately contacted the newspaper's editor requesting that the advertisement be pulled from any future issues and that a formal apology be printed. In response to Rebecca and other students' outrage, the newspaper published a statement the next day saying the advertisement was printed as a result of "miscommunication and failed oversight."

Rebecca felt that this incident needed to be addressed further and saw it as an opportunity to bring together a diverse group of students for a productive conversation. Rebecca then reached out to student leaders from political, religious, and cultural groups on campus, as well as the Dean of Student Life. She organized a discussion about Holocaust denial led by Dr. Deborah E. Lipstadt, a renowned expert on the topic. The program and Rebecca's actions set a new precedent for bringing together leaders from diverse groups on campus to deal with difficult issues.

When interviewed by the Harvard Crimson about the program she said, "This event should be a motivator and model for similar kinds of conversations about other things...This is a good way to start relationships between groups." As a direct result of the discussion Rebecca organized, other organizations like the South Asian Men's Collective planned their own cross-cultural events.

After pulling the advertisement, The Harvard Crimson Staff wrote this collective letter to readers:



Obligations of the Press

Why publishing Tuesday's advertisement was inappropriate

By THE CRIMSON STAFF

September 9, 2009

In Tuesday's Crimson, an advertisement was published that questioned the occurrence of the Holocaust. Understandably, the advertisement offended large segments of the campus.

While the damage has most certainly been done, and hopefully minimized, it should be said that The Crimson did not intend to run the advertisement and that its appearance was nothing more than a communication mistake. We appreciate Crimson President Maxwell L. Child '10's [letter](#) to our readership in yesterday's paper. May his words make clear that the advertisement in no way reflects the views of The Crimson Staff. And moreover, that we believe this item should never be found in the pages of a college newspaper.

Although newspapers command the right to publish whatever they see fit—a right that should not be infringed upon—it remains a journalistic responsibility to carefully evaluate what is actually appropriate

to print. Officially, a college newspaper such as ours retains the legal right to print whatever it so chooses, with the understanding, of course, that anyone might be sued for defamation. But whether incendiary material of this sort should actually appear in print is a different question altogether, albeit with a simple answer in this case. Can The Crimson publish an advertisement like Tuesday's?

Absolutely. But should it? Absolutely not.

The reason that an advertisement promoting Holocaust denial was inappropriate is not merely that it offended many on campus but rather that it contradicted our values in serving a diverse and welcoming university community. After all, content that some find offensive is often acceptable, and the angry reader is an inevitable element in the production and consumption of journalism. As a newspaper devoted to the highest standards of journalistic integrity, The Crimson does not often shy away from offending readers who take umbrage at its content. But Tuesday's advertisement was a different story. It was more than just "offensive" to some readers—it was wrong.

Instead of simply offending, Holocaust denial has much graver effects. It promotes hate and could actually jeopardize the psychological and emotional well being of others in the Harvard community.

While Holocaust survivors are often traumatized for life as a result of the horrors they have endured, it is a well-known fact that their children and even their grandchildren also frequently suffer bouts of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression. Denial of the Holocaust can trigger such terrible episodes in those who must deal with its memory on a daily basis. Tuesday's advertisement, though the result of a mistake, was inappropriate for its potential to reopen the wounds of the past for the victims of the present.

We hope to see The Crimson and other college newspapers refrain from printing similar content going forward.

Source: <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2009/9/9/obligations-of-the-press-in-tuesdays/>

Harvard Crimson article on Rebecca's event with Dr. Deborah E. Lipstadt:



Hillel Speaker Talks About Holocaust Denial

By JESSIE J. JIANG, CRIMSON STAFF WRITER
November 2, 2009

Harvard Hillel invited guest speaker Dr. Deborah E. Lipstadt, a prominent opponent of Holocaust deniers, to join a discussion about the realities of Holocaust denial last Friday.

The conversation was spurred by The Harvard Crimson's publication of a controversial advertisement in early September that suggested the Holocaust did not occur. The Crimson issued a statement the following day, explaining that the publication of the advertisement had been a result of miscommunication and failed oversight.

Hillel undergraduate president Rebecca D. Gillette '10 told the audience that the advertisement “served as a reminder of the persisting and troubling reality of Holocaust denial.” She added that she hoped the conversation would increase awareness of the existence of Holocaust denial.

The discussion was led by Lipstadt, a Jewish studies scholar who successfully fought libel charges from a Holocaust denier in England. Speaking candidly to a diverse audience—which included Dean of Student Life Suzy M. Nelson, as well as student leaders from political, religious, and cultural groups on campus—Lipstadt argued that there should be no debate about whether the Holocaust happened or not.

“Deniers are not a point of view,” she said. “They are liars and falsifiers of history. Deniers take the data and twist it and turn and distort it.”

Lipstadt also discussed what she called “soft-core Holocaust denial,” a new form of denial in which the Holocaust “gets mixed up with other things” and is “used as a misrepresentation.” As an example, she cited the comparison of George W. Bush to Hitler, which she said suggested an implicit denial of the Holocaust.

“To compare [Bush] to Hitler is to turn history on its head,” said Lipstadt.

After Lipstadt’s presentation, members of the audience took part in an intimate discussion about the Holocaust, often sharing stories from their personal experiences.

“I didn’t know what to expect,” said Jason Y. Shah '11, chair of South Asian Men’s Collective. “I was impressed by the level of candidness [with which] everybody spoke, given our different ethnic backgrounds. It was uniquely productive and very anecdotal.”

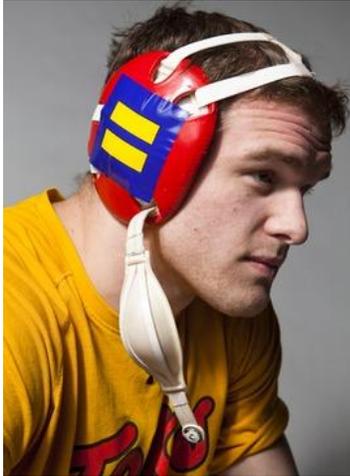
Gillette said that the diversity of the group was “remarkable,” adding that these individuals are not often brought together to have meaningful discussions.

“This event should be a motivator and model for similar kinds of conversations about other things,” she said. “This is a good way to start relationship between groups.”

As a direct result of this discussion, the South Asian Men’s Collective is currently planning a dinner with Hillel.

Source: <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2009/11/2/nbsp-holocaust-denial-lipstadt/>

Part Two: Hudson Taylor



Hudson began questioning his teammates about their use of derogatory language and challenged stereotypes in the locker room. However, these discussions were not having the impact Hudson desired. When the Human Rights Campaign came to his campus, Hudson became involved. Then he made the choice to wear the equality sticker from the Human Rights Campaign on his wrestling headgear. He faced some backlash from his peers who felt he was bringing politics onto the mat, but his actions garnered massive media attention. *Outsports*, an online sports newspaper, wrote about Hudson's experiences and the prevalence of homophobia in collegiate sports. After the article was published, Hudson received hundreds of emails from closeted athletes and coaches.

After graduating from the University of Maryland, Hudson founded the non-profit organization Athlete Ally. Athlete Ally began with a pledge which asked athletes to evaluate their own actions and behaviors. Athlete Ally now works across the country, and most recently with NBA rookies, "to educate, encourage, and empower athlete allies to combat homophobia and transphobia in sports." Hudson is currently the wrestling coach at Columbia University and tours the country speaking to athletic departments and training teams.



AthleteAlly
Victory Through Unity.

Video Introduction to Athlete Ally:



Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsjMV51AXk4&list=UUXeTW6if98azL1F1YHltZLA&feature=player_detailpage

Athlete Ally Pledge:

Take The Athlete Ally Pledge

Become an Ally for your athletic community, sign the pledge.

The Athlete Ally Pledge:

I pledge to lead my athletic community to respect and welcome all persons, regardless of their perceived or actual sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Beginning right now, I will do my part to promote the best of athletics by making all players feel respected on and off the field.

Sign the Pledge

email

first name last name

zip code (US only, optional)

SIGN NOW

The image shows a sign-up form for the Athlete Ally Pledge. On the left, there is a video player showing a group of athletes in a rowing boat. The text of the pledge is overlaid on the video. On the right, there is a black sign-up form with white text and input fields. The form includes fields for email, first name, last name, and zip code (US only, optional). A prominent white button with the text 'SIGN NOW' is at the bottom of the form.

 116

 169

 63

9.7K SIGNED

From Hudson Taylor, Founder of Athlete Ally:

"My philosophy is simple. I believe that athletes are worthy of the greatest respect, not because they win games or matches, but because they are in positions to stand up for the dignity of all and represent something bigger than themselves.

As a NCAA Division I coach, I want to emphasize what it means to be a leader in sports and ensure that all athletes, coaches and fans – no matter how they identify or who they are attracted to – feel respected and welcomed.

I started the Athlete Ally pledge to help the sports community lead a better tomorrow by taking small steps based on simple ideas – like respect, diversity and leadership. The Athlete Ally pledge is a commitment to that vision so we all can help make sports everything we know it can be.

Please join me and thousands of athletes, coaches and fans who have already taken the pledge. Together, we can make sports a safe and inclusive place for all."

Source: <http://www.athleteally.org/action/athlete-ally-pledge/>

Part Two: Soeren Palumbo

In 2007, Soeren, then a senior in high school, gave a speech to his classmates about the use of the word “retard.” His passionate speech was posted to YouTube and went viral, catching the attention of the Special Olympics. Special Olympics is the world's largest sports organization for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, providing year-round training and competitions to more than 4 million athletes in 170 countries. That summer the Special Olympics offered him an internship, which is where he met Tim Shriver Jr. Tim was a Special Olympics unified athlete and became a coach in high school, honoring the legacy of his grandmother, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who founded Special Olympics.

In 2009, Soeren partnered with Tim to change their college campuses’ cultures around the r-word. In a podcast Tim said “We decided there wasn’t enough going on at Special Olympics directed at younger people...especially college students.”



The duo, in partnership with the Special Olympics and Best Buddies, founded a college engagement program to bring Special Olympics and its effort to eradicate the use of the word “retard” to university campuses worldwide. The program was named Special Olympics College. Out of this engagement program, Soeren and Tim created the “Spread the Word to End the Word” campaign which is an ongoing effort to “raise the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the r-word

and encourage people to pledge to stop using the r-word.” “We wanted a day of awareness centered on the r-word, with different events on different college campuses all at the same time,” Palumbo said.

Each year, during the first week of March, thousands of students sign a pledge to reflect on their language and end their derogatory use of the “r-word.” “Our biggest goal is to make ourselves irrelevant—we know that we’re done when it’s no longer an issue,” Soeren says. “We hope one day that we won’t need to do anything about the r-word.”

Soeren's Speech to his high school:



Source: http://www.specialolympics.org/video_soeren.aspx

Transcript of speech

I want to tell you a quick story before I start. I was walking through hallways, not minding my own business, listening to the conversations around me. As I passed the front door on my way to my English classroom, I heard the dialogue between two friends nearby. For reasons of privacy, I would rather not give away their race or gender. So the one girl leans to the other, pointing to the back of a young man washing the glass panes of the front door, and says, "Oh my gaw! I think it is so cute that our school brings in the black kids from around the district to wash our windows!" The other girl looked up, widened her slanted Asian eyes and called to the window washer, easily loud enough for him to hear, "Hey, Negro! You missed a spot!" The young man did not turn around. The first girl smiled a bland smile that all white girls - hell, all white people - have and walked on. A group of Mexicans stood by and laughed that high pitch laugh that all of them have.

So now it's your turn. What do you think the black window washer did? What would you do in that situation? Do you think he turned and calmly explained the fallacies of racism and showed the girls the error of their way? That's the one thing that makes racism, or any discrimination, less powerful in my mind. No matter how biased or bigoted a comment or action may be, the guy can turn around and explain why racism is wrong and, if worse comes to worst, punch 'em in the face. Discrimination against those who can defend themselves, obviously, cannot survive. What would be far worse is if we discriminated against those who cannot defend themselves.

What then, could be worse than racism? Look around you and thank God that we don't live in a world that discriminates and despises those who cannot defend themselves. Thank God that every one of us in this room, in this school hates racism and sexism and by that logic discrimination in general. Thank God that everyone in this institution is dedicated to the ideal of mutual respect and love for our fellow human beings. Then pinch yourself for living in a dream. Then pinch the hypocrites sitting next to you. Then pinch the hypocrite that is you. Pinch yourself once for each time you have looked at one of your

fellow human beings with a mental handicap and laughed. Pinch yourself for each and every time you denounced discrimination only to turn and hate those around you without the ability to defend themselves, the only ones around you without the ability to defend themselves. Pinch yourself for each time you have called someone else a "retard".

If you have been wondering about my opening story, I'll tell you that it didn't happen, not as I described it. Can you guess what I changed? No, it wasn't the focused hate on one person, and no it wasn't the slanted Asian eyes or cookie cutter features white people have or that shrill Hispanic hyena laugh (yeah, it hurts when people make assumptions about your person and use them against you doesn't it?). The girl didn't say "hey Negro." There was no black person. It was a mentally handicapped boy washing the windows. It was "Hey retard." I removed the word retard. I removed the word that destroys the dignity of our most innocent. I removed the single most hateful word in the entire English language.

I don't understand why we use the word; I don't think I ever will. In such an era of political correctness, why is it that retard is still ok? Why do we allow it? Why don't we stop using the word? Maybe students can't handle stopping- I hope that offends you students, it was meant to - but I don't think the adults, here can either. Students, look at your teacher, look at every member of this faculty. I am willing to bet that every one of them would throw a fit if they heard the word faggot or nigger - hell the word Negro - used in their classroom. But how many of them would raise a finger against the word retard? How many of them have? Teachers, feel free to raise your hand or call attention to yourself through some other means if you have. That's what I thought. Clearly, this obviously isn't a problem contained within our age group.

So why am I doing this? Why do I risk being misunderstood and resented by this school's student body and staff? Because I know how much you can learn from people, all people, even - no, not even, especially - the mentally handicapped. I know this because every morning I wake up and I come downstairs and I sit across from my sister, quietly eating her cheerio's. And as I sit down she sets her spoon down on the table and she looks at me, her strawberry blonde hair hanging over her freckled face almost completely hides the question mark shaped scar above her ear from her brain surgery two Christmases ago. She looks at me and she smiles. She has a beautiful smile; it lights up her face. Her two front teeth are faintly stained from the years of intense epilepsy medication but I don't notice that anymore. I lean over to her and say, "Good morning, Olivia." She stares at me for a moment and says quickly, "Good morning, Soeren," and goes back to her Cheerios. I sit there for a minute, thinking about what to say. "What are you going to do at school today, Olivia?" She looks up again. "Gonna see Mista Bee!" she replies loudly, hugging herself slightly and looking up. Mr. B. is her gym teacher and perhaps her favorite man outside of our family on the entire planet and Olivia is thoroughly convinced that she will be having gym class every day of the week. I like to view it as wishful thinking. She finishes her Cheerios and grabs her favorite blue backpack and waits for her bus driver, Miss Debbie, who, like clockwork, arrives at our house at exactly 7 o'clock each morning. She gives me a quick hug goodbye and runs excitedly to the bus, ecstatic for another day of school.

And I watch the bus disappear around the turn and I can't help but remember the jokes. The short bus.

The retard rocket. No matter what she does, no matter how much she loves those around her, she will always be the butt of some immature kid's joke. She will always be the butt of some "adult's" joke. By no fault of her own, she will spend her entire life being stared at and judged. Despite the fact that she will never hate, never judge, never make fun of, never hurt, she will never be accepted. That's why I'm doing this. I'm doing this because I don't think you understand how much you hurt others when you hate. And maybe you don't realize that you hate. But that's what is; your pre-emptive dismissal of them, your dehumanization of them, your mockery of them, it's nothing but another form of hate. It's more hateful than racism, more hateful than sexism, more hateful than anything. I'm doing this so that each and every one of you, student or teacher, thinks before the next time you use the word "retard", before the next time you shrug off someone else's use of the word "retard". Think of the people you hurt, both the mentally handicapped and those who love them. If you have to, think of my sister. Think about how she can find more happiness in the blowing of a bubble and watching it float away than most of will in our entire lives. Think about how she will always love everyone unconditionally. Think about how she will never hate. Then think about which one of you is "retarded".

Maybe this has become more of an issue today because society is changing, slowly, to be sure, but changing nonetheless. The mentally handicapped aren't being locked in their family's basement anymore. The mentally handicapped aren't rotting like criminals in institutions. Our fellow human beings are walking among us, attending school with us, entering the work force with us, asking for nothing but acceptance, giving nothing but love. As we become more accepting and less hateful, more and more handicapped individuals will finally be able to participate in the society that has shunned them for so long. You will see more of them working in places you go, at Dominicks, at Jewel, at Wal-Mart. Someday, I hope more than anything, one of these people that you see will be my sister. I want to leave you with one last thought. I didn't ask to have a mentally handicapped sister. She didn't choose to be mentally handicapped. But I wouldn't trade it for anything. I have learned infinitely more from her simple words and love than I have from any classroom of "higher education". I only hope that, one-day, each of you will open your hearts enough to experience true unconditional love, because that is all any of them want to give. I hope that, someday, someone will love you as much as Olivia loves me. I hope that, someday, you will love somebody as much as I love her. I love you, Olivia.

Soeren and Tim Announcing Spread The Word Event 2012:



Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=RveismA85OE

News Article About The First Annual End the Word Campaign Pledge Day:



Palumbo and Shriver: Spread the word to end the word

BY SOEREN PALUMBO AND TIM SHRIVER
GUEST COLUMNIST, GUEST COLUMNIST
Wednesday, March 3, 2010

Today, thousands of college students on hundreds of campuses, joined by students of all ages, are trying to jog the consciousness of a nation. We are sensitizing Americans to a subtle but pernicious prejudice reflected in our language — in the common use of the slur “retard.” Everyone can join this human rights movement. It’s as simple as changing the way we speak.

But are we fighting something that even exists? We say yes.

We come to this movement from different backgrounds. Tim grew up coaching in Special Olympics, while Soeren grew up with his younger sister Olivia, who has an intellectual disability. We’ve both witnessed the pain this slur causes.

Recently, Soeren took Olivia shopping. With a slew of children’s books under her arm, Olivia bounded down an aisle, her brother in tow. As she pointed at something that caught her interest, her laugh nearly drowned out a taunting voice from behind: “Who let the retard in? Look guys, I can run like the retard!” The boy and his posse ran by, pointing. She did not turn around. Nor did her brother; Olivia’s intellectual disability has attracted negative attention for years.

Retard, like other slurs, does more than hurt feelings. These words crystallize discrimination and encapsulate marginalizing stereotypes. When used pejoratively against people with intellectual disabilities, “retard” does what ni—, ki— or fa— do when used against other minorities. Society has made slurs like these reprehensible. So it should be with “retard.” Olivia, her friends, her family and all those with intellectual disabilities deserve as much.

But the word often appears in a subtler and, ultimately, more dangerous form. We've all heard it before: A sports fan disparages an official, "Ref, are you a retard!?" A comedian accuses a celebrity of being "retarded." A politician refers to his colleagues as "f—ing retarded."

In these examples, "retard[ed]" seems to mean something close to "stupid," "incapable" or "undesirable." And it seems like harmless fun. After all, if no one like Olivia is being made fun of, what's the problem? Here's the problem. Through the use of "mental retardation" as a diagnostic term, "retard[ed]" became inextricably tied to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. When "retard[ed]" is used, these people are invoked by this connection. When society warps "retard[ed]" to mean something close to "worthless," or "undesirable," it bleeds into the image of those with intellectual disabilities. They then are associated with this negativity.

The bigotry is subtle but very real. Every pejorative use of the slur "retard(ed)" reinforces the stereotype of worthlessness. Olivia is neither incapable nor undesirable. She is an incredible person with a wealth to contribute to the world. Unfortunately, she lives in a society that, through its language, demonstrates and perpetuates its belief to the contrary. The words we use blind us to the abilities and worth of people with intellectual disabilities, ultimately robbing us of the invaluable contribution they offer.

Is this not enough for us to reconsider our language?

Today, March 3, 2010, thousands of students are rallying their peers to challenge their language and pledge to end their pejorative use of the "r-word." Our intentions are not to ban a word or censor society but rather to awaken others to the harmful effects of this label.

Yet we ask for more than a single day of activism and a pledge. As many critics have pointed out, language is dynamic; if "retard" fades away, new words will rise as replacements. For this reason, our movement calls for a change of not only our language but also our actions and attitudes. We must go beyond words and embrace those oft-ignored members of society whose talents and personalities go forgotten and neglected. Volunteer for Special Olympics or Best Buddies, support legislation that promotes access to health care and education and encourage employers to hire those with intellectual disabilities.

By recognizing these people as valuable citizens, we chip away at the wall of intolerance and exclusion that has plagued our society for too long. The first step is to change society's language. Today, we challenge you to change yours. Take your pledge to end this word.

Change the conversation. Spread the word to end the "r-word."

Soeren Palumbo is a junior at the University of Notre Dame. Tim Shriver is a junior in Ezra Stiles College. They are the co-founders of Spread the Word to End the Word.

Source:<http://yaledailynews.com/blog/2010/03/03/palumbo-and-shriver-spread-the-word-to-end-the-word/>

Part 2: Martha Heinemann Bixby



Martha and her fellow Georgetown students founded STAND, which is an acronym for "Students Taking Action Now: Darfur." It was a completely student-run organization that worked to bring exposure to the violence taking place in Darfur. After its creation at Georgetown, STAND partnered with the Genocide Intervention Network and expanded exponentially with approximately 700 chapters at schools around the globe. It has also expanded its mission to address all cases of genocide. STAND chapters actively organize to prevent and stop genocide wherever and whenever it

may occur. Student-led chapters organize fundraising events, rallies, professor panels, and work to bring speakers to campus. STAND's long-term goal is to train future leaders and establish a permanent anti-genocide constituency that holds elected officials accountable for doing all that they can to prevent and end genocide.

Martha and STAND have worked to both energize students and to make the public at large aware of the horrors of Darfur. "If the students [in the anti-genocide coalition] STAND and George Clooney never went down there to bring it up to the public, it would have been worse," said Emmanuel Jal, who worked with George Clooney to create the "We Want Peace" campaign. "They made a lot of noise and put pressure on [then] President George Bush, and he announced that there was a genocide [in Darfur]."

Introduction to STAND



Link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=qpTwsKGC4IE