

## Youth Summit 2019

**Topic:** Race and Ethnicity

### **Main issues around this topic?**

(Adult scribes)

- Small school, 99% white, don't talk about diversity which is important for the 'real world.' School doesn't talk about it – know how to address those groups/areas.
- Important to understand as youth because ignorance is not excuse as an adult.
- Non-ethnic area – only exposure history class.
- Uncomfortable conversations in history with white-washed versions – need to understand where we truly came from. Goes back hundreds of years.
- Use of racist words in music has made it more prevalent.
- Want to say something but it's hard when you're not part of culture offended by this word or that word.
- I email teachers/administrator's to 'talk about it' – I've had many adversarial discussions/relations with teachers.
- Punishment becomes an issue – I got in trouble for telling another student to stop who used a homophobic slur. This scars students in the moment. Many students punished for speaking up.
- This issue keeps kids from wanting to go to class.
- Hard to understand these experiences without first-hand experience.

(Youth scribes)

- Teachers don't deal with racism.
- Want to speak out but get scared to be stereotyped.
- Treat it as, "It's just a joke."
- Others target people by race.
- People assume it's OK to target others based on race.
- Feel hurt because we still have to go through this talk.
- Peers look at you differently, uncomfortable.
- Stereotypes get worse and worse.
- People think it's normal to make racist jokes.
- Its parents and media that influence racism.
- Word-of-mouth travels faster now.
- Not very diverse schools; 99% white at my school.
- Don't understand how much it hurts others.
- Not just an issue in New Hampshire.
- "It's human nature to group people by race."
- Not enough time spent on race, segregation in history but six weeks spent on Holocaust.
- Friends think it's OK to use offensive words toward friends.
- Sometimes told we don't have the right to speak up or feel a certain way. Punished for speaking up against teachers or administration.
- Teachers not allowed to show their opinion because it might offend students; hard to confront teachers about issues without knowing.

## **Resources the students mention for getting help, both informal and formal around this topic.**

### (Adult scribes)

- Only focus on America – need to focus on politics in other countries.
- Could help to have frank discussions about diversity in school:
  - Start when kids are little
- Immersion in culturally diverse environment can inform future views and attitudes.
- One of my best friends gets called derogatory names all the time, but she doesn't feel like she can do anything; she doesn't want anything to get worse.
- We shouldn't sanitize the past.
- Don't identify race with murder in the media. White man kills black man, should just be man kills man.
- But it's also the facts. We also say first black man to become president.
- What your ethnicity is shouldn't matter.
- Race may have been a factor, but we need to figure out what the conflict is.
- If you're a colored person, you hear all these cops are racist.
- We need to promote what law enforcement can do.
- Parents and grandparents were raised in a very racist world. Have to tell parents they can't say that because it's offensive. They'll say it's just a joke.
- But you can't just do that.
- Mental health seems OK to talk about in some ethnicities but not in others. And I think we can't talk about race like we can talk about mental health.
- Mental illness goes untreated and people enter jobs, police military etc. hiding those issues so they can get a job.
- People are uncomfortable, feel unqualified, so they don't talk about it.
- People who are less privileged can have more drive.
- Underlying racism is really strong.
- We learn about slavery and everyone is going to be looking at the one black person in the class. That is an issue – I read about it in Michelle Obama's book. Identifying someone isn't racist – it's an identification.
- As a multi-ethnic person, it happens almost every day. Because I stand out, one of the things that works for me is to have people that aren't looking at me. Or be around people that I know are safe to be around. Somehow send a message to show me that you aren't rejecting me. I try to be their friend and help them. Give your friends spaces to let them be whomever they want to be.
- You students are the most tolerant ever. My generation was much worse. You should feel qualified. Gender is more understood.
- Be a safe person – I really like that.
- It's important to recognize that different races throughout history have been bad to one another. We should bring it back to the individual.
- Acknowledging that it is hard to talk about. Discomfort can turn into denial. Be OK that this is a hard topic.
- Food is another place that is a way to communicate across culture. A good safer way to break barriers. Don't make fun of how it looks, how it smells, or how it's packaged.
- History is important, but that's really important is what can we do now.
- Discrimination is happening now, it's here, it's real.

### (Youth scribes)

- Try to speak out.
- Schools should teach more about diverse history not just white history.

- Have a way for students to learn what is racist.
- Teach adults how to help.
- Teach kids at a younger age.
- Teach kids not to label based on race. Teach what is appropriate to say and how to speak out. Want to know how to address different cultures.
- Have to understand how things you say affect others. Everyone can say it or nobody can – only certain people allowed to give it power.
- Follow up on offenses in school (reporting teachers) – people in authority roles are not listening to what students say.

### **How they cope with this issue.**

(Adults scribes)

- Teacher used 'retarded.' I spoke up, got threatened with detention.
- Want more ways to feel they have back up – more groups, clubs; more conversations with students to recruit others who were offended.
- Encourage documentation, record things, especially with administration, teachers.
- Everyone needs to participate in stopping/calling out unacceptable behavior
- Need to recognize and celebrate cultural diversity.

(Youth scribes)

- Relaxing on their own without having to interact with people constantly looking at them.
- Let people talk to you.
- Tell people that you are not rejecting them.
- Food: communicating through being open to other culture's food.

### **What they wish it was like.**

(Adult scribes)

- Hard to truly understand "race" in New Hampshire in a "white" state. Need to expand our vision, find ways to grow and learn diversity.
- Need policies for using N word and other racist words. Professor used N word in historical speech – how do we follow up to get him to stop? Teachers use N word in prose because "it's powerful."
- How do you take words/phrases out of historic text? There's no reason to say it.
- Have to recognize differences in people so you don't take away their identity.
- Wish that racism didn't exist/wasn't an issue.
- Create effective diversity education.

(Youth scribes)

- Have a cultural day – dress up.
- Schools should teach more diverse lessons.
- Focus on minorities.
- Educate schools so they can educate students effectively.
- More diverse teachers.
- Teach the people teaching.
- Not promoting racist things on social media.

- Need to get people talking about the issue.
- Schools need to have open talks about racism – social studies, health (helps mental health).
- Start teaching kids younger – in elementary school.
- People should not be afraid to go out in public and be threatened by their race/ethnicity.
- Uncomfortable to talk to teachers about things that are offensive. Email works best so they can't say they haven't had the conversation.

### **Other feedback**

(Adult scribes)

- Sources of bias: nurture not nature, institutionalized attitudes and unfairly skewed education.
- Negative role of social media.
- Difficult to understand impact of words or actions when not the recipient.
- Hiding behind humor.
- Education relies on students' desire to participate and learn

(Youth scribes)

- They feel that New Hampshire isn't very diverse with race/ethnicity.
- Have to recognize people are different and have been through different things.
- "I don't see color" – marginalizing – not respectful
- Some feel as though the discrimination is becoming less prominent and trying to become more accepting.
- Some feel as though our country is still very divided and some people want to move forward to a more accepting society and others do not.
- Older generations were raised in a more racist society where our generation is more about diversity.