



2017 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Art, Writing, & Multimedia Contest

My Part

It seems like you can't turn on the television news or go on the internet nowadays without seeing some form of hatred and intolerance towards our fellow man. Be it images from acts of terrorism and war overseas or images of senseless shooting in the Fort Lauderdale airport, hatred and intolerance seem to be everywhere. Since Cain killed Abel in the book of Genesis, mankind has known hatred and intolerance. It sometimes seems as if violence and hatred are the only language we speak to one another around the world. But we have to learn to speak with love in our hearts if the world is ever to become a more peaceful place.

As kids, we see intolerance towards others a lot of times on the playground. There is a group of kids in every class who think they're the cool kids—the ones who make the rules at recess. They decide who can play in a game or who can't. They pick sides for who can play on which team. These kids kind of run the show. These kids often make fun of their fellow classmates who aren't as talented as they are athletically. They use hurtful names to make a kid feel bad about himself for not being as good at sports as they are. I've seen this type of behaviors throughout my years.

Unfortunately, this bullying sometimes results in suicide. I have seen a number of stories over the past couple of years where a young boy or girl ended their life over the horrible bullying they have endured at school or through social media. Bullying, whether being done in person or anonymously through social media, is an example of hatred and intolerance.

As the internet serves a vehicle to spread hate, some individuals take this an extreme level. This past summer my family went on vacation at DisneyWorld in Orlando, Florida. Shortly before we went on our trip, there was a mass shooting at a night-club in Orlando. One of the reasons for the shooting was the shooter had a hatred of gay people, and he let this hatred cause him to commit one of the worst mass shooting in our nation's history. I remember watching this on television this summer with my family and what impressed me about this horrible act was the killer's intolerance actually brought forth an outpouring of tolerance for the people of that community. His hatred had the opposite effect than he intended. Thousands of people came out and donated blood. They held rallies to show they were stronger than this madman. Tolerance and love beat intolerance and hatred.

Another story recently in the news, was the trial of Dylan Roof. He was the white young man who killed nine African American in a church in Charleston, South Carolina. He was just convicted of these murders. His act was supposed to cause hatred between the races in this community. The opposite actually happened. The African American members of that church immediately forgave the killer and did not respond with violent acts of their own. The entire community came together and rejected hate.

Although things have happened before I was born, I'm aware of other acts of hatred shown by one group people towards another group. There was the Holocaust, where Hitler and his countrymen tried to exterminate the Jews, killing nearly six million of them. I'm aware of our own nation's history of racism, going back to our use of slavery when our country was founded. I'm aware of this country's treatment of its Native American citizens, which was a form of genocide. And, come to think of it, our nation hasn't been treating immigrants, Mexicans, or Muslims well recently either, as was seen in the recent Presidential campaign.

While I can't control what people do, I can make a difference as little as it may be. In my life what I've done to drive out hate is to first of all not hate anyone. If I don't hate anyone then I likely won't act in a hateful way to another person. I try to treat everyone I'm around with respect and act in a kind way towards them.

When I see someone getting picked on at school, I try to say a kind word to that person to let them know things will be okay, and not to let a jerk get them down. I also tell the person bullying someone to stop and leave the other person alone. When I see someone who looks like they're having a bad day, I try to say something nice to them to cheer them up.

Another way I've done to not be an intolerant person is to accept people for who they are. It doesn't matter to me if someone is from a different race, or believes in a different faith. I just like people who are nice and treat me well. I guess I try to live my life by the Golden Rule: treat others the way you would like to be treated. It's not that hard to do. We hear these lessons of how to treat others all the time in mass and in school and from our moms and dads and our teachers.

Another way that I've tried to stop hatred and intolerance from spreading is to pray for peace and justice. In addition to praying, I could organize peaceful protests so my peers and I could come together to protest hateful behavior in our community. When people protest, they become powerful and can cause behaviors to change for the better.

In history, there has always been hatred and intolerance towards people. You read about it in history books, and you see it in the Bible. All we can do is do our best to not be a hateful person, to treat all those we meet in our lives with the love, respect, and decency they deserve, and to forgive those who hurt us and not hold onto hate ourselves. Just as Dr. Martin Luther King instructed us over a half-century ago, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Michael Watters
7th Grade Writing Winner
St. Michael School, Canton

Amy Krajeck, Teacher
Claire Gatti, Principal



Driving out Hate

