

Early Childhood Education Assembly Response to the Orlando Shootings and the Anniversary of the Mother Emmanuel Church Murders

Join Early Childhood Educators Across the Country To Affect Change in Schools Now!

On June 12, 2016, 49 people were murdered and over 50 wounded in a nightclub in Orlando, Florida. One year earlier, on June 17, 2015, nine people were murdered in Mother Emmanuel Church in Charleston, South Carolina. One killer targeted members of the LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, Queer, Intersex, Asexual) community, many of them Latina/o. The other targeted African Americans. Both were acts of terrorism. Because the Orlando shooter was Muslim, much vitriol was directed toward the entire Muslim community. The Charleston shooter, a professed Christian, prompted no massive discrimination against Christians. Nurtured by anti-LGBTQIA bias and racism, these hate crimes are not anomalies. These acts and the Islamophobic vitriol that followed the Orlando shooting represent a vivid history of violence and hatred directed against LGBTQIA, Latina/o, African American, and Muslim people within and beyond the United States.

The Early Childhood Education Assembly (ECEA) believes that it is long past time for schools to take a visible and vocal stand against the beliefs that breed these atrocities as well as the more insidious cruelties that occur in our schools every day: the psychological anguish children experience when they feel they must hide their two moms or two dads, their sexual orientation, their explorations of gender identification, their faith, home culture, and languages. This anguish builds when children see no normalized validation of themselves or their families and heritage in school curriculum and materials and as they see their families and communities dismissed, degraded and dehumanized in hallway talk, playground slurs, and uninterrupted discriminatory practices. This is exacerbated when the curriculum has no foundation in teaching children to identify injustices and learn strategies for speaking back to them.

This is indeed a life and death matter. Children take their own lives or die emotionally and psychologically every day when they feel persecuted in these ways. As educators, we can choose to directly teach against such discrimination or be complicit in its continuance because of our apathy or deflection (“They are too young,” “But we DO teach about bullying,” “But parents won’t be on board.”). **NO MORE EXCUSES.** Either you’re teaching specifically against anti-LGBTQIA, Latino/a, Muslim Bias and Racism or you are condoning it through your silence, timidity, and fear. **Remember, we are the people who help raise generations of future adults who will feel safe in who they are and know how to stand up for others and challenge injustices in their places of work, education, worship, neighborhoods, and communities – or not.**

Toward this end, the ECEA urges teachers, family members, and community members

TODAY to *get on the phone or send an email to school leaders in your community* – principals, superintendents, district curriculum leaders. Ask:

- **How will you plan for and directly teach children in your school to recognize and fight against LGBTQIA, racial and cultural bias when school begins this fall?**
- **How will you ensure that every child exploring gender identification or who has two moms or two dads or whose family is Muslim or Latino/a or African American feels safe, validated, and normalized in your classrooms and your curriculum?**
- **How will teachers, administrators, and families work systematically and regularly together to build the knowledge, strength, and courage to bring these changes about?**

The ECEA offers RESOURCES (see examples below and on the following page) to support this effort. As you utilize these resources and generate transformative practices, **we invite you to post stories of your experiences on the ECEA's Facebook site** - <https://www.facebook.com/eceassembly?fref=ts> so we can **share the work, GIVE COURAGE TO EACH OTHER, and engage in discussions across the country.**

In closing, the ECEA believes strongly that this is a responsibility we signed on for when we became teachers - to safeguard our students and teach them how to live, love, stand up for others, and affect change as they grow into the world around them. Others share this responsibility, but an enormous “buck” stops here.

A FEW RESOURCES TO GET YOU STARTED (below and on the following page):

Federal Government Urges Schools to Fight Discrimination:

- <https://www.scribd.com/doc/294591935/Federal-officials-urge-schools-to-fight-discrimination>

Call to Action: Teacher-to-Teacher

(This is a teacher of older students, however the message matters as much if not more for all of us in ECE. Please don't see this as an issue only for teachers of older students; the resources on these pages will help you build confidence and ability!)

- <http://www.tolerance.org/blog/please-talk-about-orlando-letter-nervous-educator>

Anti-Bias Teaching In Practice:

- http://www.earlychildhoodeducationassembly.com/uploads/1/6/6/2/16621498/anti-bias_teaching_in_practice_.pdf
- [http://www.earlychildhoodeducationassembly.com/uploads/1/6/6/2/16621498/unders_tanding_bias_\(1\).pdf](http://www.earlychildhoodeducationassembly.com/uploads/1/6/6/2/16621498/unders_tanding_bias_(1).pdf)

Combatting LGBTQIA Bias:

- <http://welcomingschools.org>
- <http://www.tolerance.org/lgbt-best-practices>
- <http://www.earlychildhoodeducationassembly.com/uploads/1/6/6/2/16621498/lgbtqi.pdf>
- http://www.groundspark.org/download/IE_Guide_08_Final.pdf
- <http://www.en.schoolrainbow.org/resources/>
- <http://www.welcomingschools.org/pages/childrens-books-two-moms-two-dads-marriage-equality>

Countering Anti-Muslim Bias:

- <http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-39-spring-2011/feature/combating-anti-muslim-bias>
- <http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/debunking-stereotypes-about-muslims-and-islam>
- <http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/debunking-misconceptions-about-muslims-and-islam>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/12/16/how-should-schools-respond-to-anti-muslim-actions-against-students/>
- <http://zinnedproject.org/2014/04/a-peoples-history-of-muslims-in-the-united-states/>
- http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jessica-winegar/four-ways-schools-safer-muslim-students_b_8975164.html

Addressing Racism:

- http://www.earlychildhoodeducationassembly.com/uploads/1/6/6/2/16621498/in_support_of_conversations_about_race_for_adults_1.pdf
- http://www.earlychildhoodeducationassembly.com/uploads/1/6/6/2/16621498/race_talk_in_the_early_childhood_classroom_1.pdf
- http://www.earlychildhoodeducationassembly.com/uploads/1/6/6/2/16621498/racism_and_educational_institutions.pdf
- <http://www.anisfield-wolf.org/2016/02/professor-michelle-martin-offers-african-americans-children-literature-as-a-genre-of-resistance/>
- CONSULTANTS TO SUPPORT YOU! - <http://www.earlychildhoodeducationassembly.com/anti-racism-educational-consultants-network.html>

Countering Latino/a Discrimination:

- <http://www.ithaca.edu/wise/latino/>
- <http://latino.cornell.edu/outreach/for-teachers.cfm>
- <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/mexican-americans/>
- <http://www.pbs.org/latino-americans/en/education/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hi32RBheMbY>
- <http://zinnedproject.org/materials/harvest-of-empire-a-history-of-latinos-in-america/>