



United States Mission to the OSCE

OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism

Speaking Notes for Stephen H. Hoffman
President & CEO, United Jewish Communities
Workshop on Diversity Training and Holocaust Education
Berlin, April 28, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I. Research repeatedly finds that the following help to reduce prejudicial attitudes:

- *Creating Cooperative Learning Opportunities:* Numerous research studies have shown that learners of all ages when organized into culturally heterogeneous teams and achieving success at the completion of a task or activity, experience significant decreases in inter-group tension, noted by both observers and participants
- *Empathy Development:* Effective practices which are aimed at developing understanding, positive regard and pro-social behavior (empathy) have proven to foster more positive inter-group relations.
- *Developing Critical Thinking Skills:* Activities which assist students in the ability to identify and challenge faulty thinking or common fallacies, which are often associated with prejudice and bias, have proven to reduce prejudice in some subjects by revealing that it is not logically supported.
- *Developing High Self-Esteem:* Probably the most widely-proven link is between developing a positive self-regard and having a positive regard for those who are culturally different from oneself. Individuals who feel good about themselves and their identity are less likely to be prejudiced and biased towards others.

II. Studies have also shown that a high correlation exists among educators' sensitivity (attitudes, beliefs and behaviors toward students of other cultures), knowledge and application of cultural awareness information, and minority students' successful academic performance.

III. School-based anti-bias education programs, such as the ADL's A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute, have been designed using this research and focus both directly on the students as well as providing extensive professional development for educators. The following statistics indicate the positive results:

After completing Peer Training Program, surveys of U.S. based high schools students indicate:

- 86% reported greater awareness of their own biases.

- 86% reported a better understanding of the prejudice and discrimination in their schools and communities.
- 80% reported greater skills to confront racial and bias issues in their schools and/or workplace.
- 75% reported that they would now take active steps to confront bias in their schools.
- In Germany, an independent evaluation of the ADL's in A CLASSROOM OF DIFFERENCE™ program report similar positive changes for participating students:
- 100% indicated an increased awareness of their own biases and how this influences their behavior towards others.
- 83% feel more able to voice their opinion on and confront bias-related issues.
- 70% indicate that the attitudes and behaviors of their fellow students' became more responsible and considerate to others as a result of participation in the program.

IV. Promising Practices in anti-Bias Education

A. Active Teacher Training Programs

- **Germany** – the “A CLASSROOM OF DIFFERENCE” Program has been integrated into the Teacher Training Institutes of eleven German Laender, reaching over 15,000 students. Through the generosity of the Bertelsmann Foundation and in coordination with the Bertelsmann Group on Policy Research at the Center for Advanced Policy Research, University of Munich, German adaptations of A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute training materials and curriculum were published.
- **Belgium, France, Italy and the Netherlands** – with the cooperation of the Centre Européen Juif d' Information (CEJI), with the support of the COMENIUS Program of the European Commission Programs are coordinated through National Coordinators in each of these countries.

B. Active Peer Training Programs

Begun in 1996, the European Peer Training Program educates youth leaders:

- To discuss issues related to prejudice and discrimination;
- To lead workshops that challenge stereotypes and biases;
- To become activists against bigotry within their youth organizations and schools.

With the support of the European Commission's Youth for Europe Program, over 50 youth leaders from 11 European countries (**Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Austria and the United Kingdom**) have become

peer trainers, resulting in an impact on hundreds of youth throughout Europe. This Peer Training Program has been developed in cooperation with and organized by CEJI. In addition, Israel has a peer training program with materials in Hebrew and Arabic.

V. The Impact of Holocaust Education Specifically

- The Holocaust is the ultimate expression of anti-Semitism
- Just after WWII, Holocaust education was focused on memorial type programs (Warsaw Ghetto, concentration camp liberation, Anne Frank story, the Nuremberg trials) which were primarily aimed at the Jewish community
- Holocaust education has evolved and has become more universal in its message and audience
- The lessons of the Holocaust go well beyond its impact on world Jewry. It has become the benchmark for man's inhumanity to man.
- Much of the information regarding the impact of Holocaust education is anecdotal and can be seen in the myriad of programs that have been designed over the past sixty years to teach about the Holocaust and its lessons. This information indicates that such programs make a considerable difference in helping citizens understand the dangers of stereotyping and hate left unchecked
- Holocaust education programs indicate a reduction in the prejudicial attitudes of young people towards others different from themselves and an increase in one's sense of personal accountability and responsibility for intervening in the face of bias of all forms
- Such attitudes and beliefs are crucial to a democratic society and provide the foundation for an engaged, just and socially conscious citizenry.

VI. Promising Practices in Holocaust Education

- In Europe and the United States, Holocaust education is included in the curriculum of public schools as well as universities utilizing age appropriate curricula, books, films and programs.
- In the U.S. twenty-five states now have explicit standards in regard to the content of Holocaust education although to date, only 21 states have formally enacted Holocaust education legislation.
- The impact and effectiveness of Holocaust education is most often seen anecdotally through programs that are designed to deliver the message of the Holocaust to both Jews and non-Jews

- Examples of these are the recently concluded “March of the Living” and the “March of Hope and Remembrance”. Both programs bring large numbers of young men and women to witness the horrors of the Holocaust first hand through a visit to Poland and the concentration camps of Auschwitz, Birkenau and Maidanek.
- Students from the German city of Dinslaken toured Canada in November of 2002 and spoke at high schools and universities about what the Holocaust means to today’s German youth.
- Departments of Holocaust Education and chairs in Holocaust studies are now commonplace in many colleges and universities throughout the United States
- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which recently celebrated its 10th anniversary, has been a source of education for both Jews and non-Jews and daily hosts thousands of visitors who want to learn about the Holocaust. For many it is their first opportunity to witness the atrocities that were perpetuated against some 11 million people
- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is about to embark on a broad based outreach to assess the impact of Holocaust education with several groups including law enforcement, the military, community leaders, church groups and elected officials. A national survey of teachers is also being created that will measure the impact of the Holocaust in classroom education
- Programs for law enforcement professionals are designed to increase understanding of the relationship between police and the people they serve and their role as protectors of individual rights. Workshop attendees learn how by examining the Holocaust, they gain a perspective on the critical and unique role they play within our democracy, as well as a deeper understanding of the values and code of ethics of their profession. This program is offered in conjunction with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
- ADL’s *Bearing Witness* program is an intensive professional development workshop for Catholic school educators held in Washington, DC and other communities that focuses on the history of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, addressing issues of diversity, prejudice and bigotry in contemporary society and teaching these topics in a Catholic school setting. *Bearing Witness* is co-sponsored by ADL, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Archdiocese of Washington in cooperation with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Holocaust education must be an ongoing endeavor; an ongoing battle against those who deny that the Holocaust ever happened

VII. Conclusion

- The resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe is a marker that indicates that there are still lessons to be taught. Each succeeding post-war generation will view the Holocaust from its own unique perspective. Only through education one can hope to change attitudes and ultimately behavior that will lead to a more harmonious and accepting society.

Thank you.