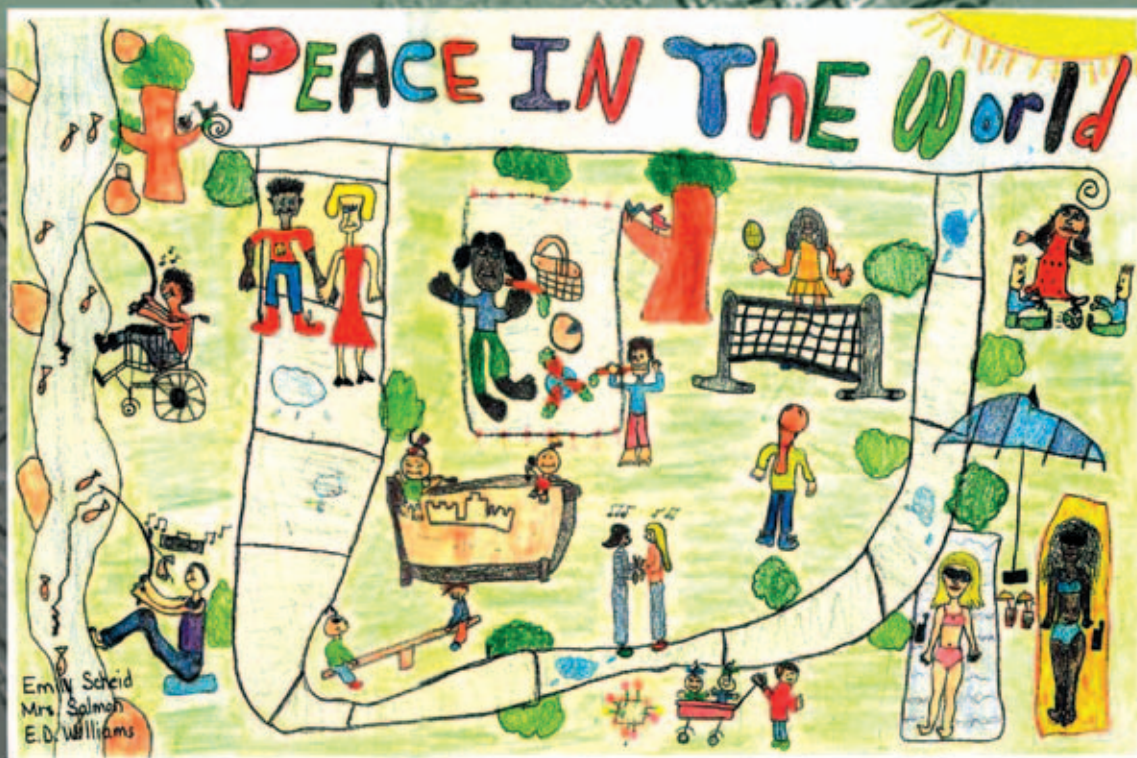


# CHILDREN WHO CARE

Educating Your Child About Human Rights



Emily Scheid, 1998

Shoreview Human Rights Commission  
City of Shoreview  
4600 North Victoria Street  
Shoreview, Minnesota 55126



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## Shoreview Human Rights Commission Mission Statement

The Shoreview Human Rights Commission advises and aids the City of Shoreview by establishing and promoting a community standard of equal opportunity and freedom from discrimination. We envision a community where all people are welcomed, valued, and respected; where each person feels at home.

# **CHILDREN WHO CARE**

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## **EDUCATING YOUR CHILD ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS**

**JULIE B. WILLIAMS**  
PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

**SHOREVIEW HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**  
AN ADVISORY COMMISSION TO THE  
MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF SHOREVIEW  
SHOREVIEW, MINNESOTA

# INTRODUCTION

Parenting in today's world is one of the toughest jobs around. Like parents of previous generations, contemporary parents are worried about their children's health, education, and future success. Despite humankind's advances in all fields, parents today have a whole host of new concerns that did not keep their parents up at night. Newspapers and television reports proclaim ever escalating levels of domestic and street violence. Surveys indicate that children are becoming sexually active at younger and younger ages, at a time when a deadly, sexually transmitted virus has emerged. Many schools are overcrowded and underfunded. More and more young people are experimenting with street drugs that are more damaging and addictive than ever before.

Although modern parents would like to have enormous influence on their children's thoughts, actions, opinions, and values, they indeed have less influence than parents of the past. Children of the primarily agricultural societies of yesterday spent the first five or six years of their lives exclusively with their parents, grandparents, and siblings. Most children today are influenced by a variety of other information sources, including peers, other caregivers, television, movies, contemporary music, and the Internet.

Some parents have approached this problem by trying desperately to turn off negative cultural influences around them. Usually this tactic is not particularly effective. Children tend to crave what is denied them, whether they are refused candy or access to the information superhighway. Often the best approach for parents in this situation is one of consciously and actively counteracting the cultural values with which they disagree, and at the same time, deliberately teaching the values they would like to see their children embrace.

There is also much disagreement as to who should teach children values, and which values, i.e., "whose values" are the "right" values to teach. Things were much simpler a couple of generations ago, when entire communities tended to ascribe to a commonly agreed upon set of values, and children had very few outside influences beyond the community. These communities also lacked diversity, with most members belonging to the same racial and religious groups. Children were exposed to the same values at home, at school, at church, at their after-school jobs, and at social events.

The world today is a far different environment, with even rural communities housing families from many different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. **Parents can no longer assume that someone else will teach their children the values they would like their children to learn.** Ultimately, it is now the decision of each child's parents as to what values are taught to that particular child. Public schools have found it difficult to teach even basic values, without experiencing criticism from one sector or another. If parents do not teach values to their children, it is very possible that no one will.

This brochure has been written for parents who would like their children to learn values that relate specifically to human rights and diversity—values that involve accepting and respecting others who are of the opposite sex, or are of a different race, background, lifestyle, religion, age, or culture than themselves.

# Why Should Children be Taught Human Rights Values?

When children are specifically taught to respect others, they grow up to be more sensitive to the situations faced by others, more caring about others' feelings, more tolerant of differences, and more loving in general. The overall result is a less aggressive, less violence-oriented child, who is committed to conflict resolution.

Such children are more apt to be well-liked and accepted by other children, which enhances the quality and the pleasures of their personal relationships. They are also more likely to befriend other children on the basis of neutral qualities, such as mutual interests or activities, rather than the potential friend's sex, race, religion, or social status. Having a diversified friendship circle adds spice to a child's life, providing him or her with easily learned lessons about different cultures and ethnic groups.

Children who learn to respect and care for others are more likely to learn to respect and care for themselves. Such children develop sufficient self-esteem and personal dignity to enjoy life and to give to others throughout their lifetimes. The process becomes a circular one of "what goes around, comes around." As children learn to appreciate their own individuality, they are more able to appreciate the uniqueness of others.

Children with a strong sense of who they are tend to be more self-satisfied in adult life, and are more productive and successful in their chosen endeavors and professions. People who respect themselves and respect others tend to approach life with passion, energy, and strong convictions. This allows them to be less fearful, more independent, and better able to assertively defend their beliefs and feelings.

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*“Freedom is not real to me when I have it and my brother does not, when my nation enjoys it and another does not, when my race has achieved it and others have not.”*

Hubert H. Humphrey  
US Vice President 1965-1969

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Molly Keiffer, 1998

Teaching children to respect the rights and feelings of others can enhance family life as well, by encouraging a more peaceful and harmonious household. A family committed to human rights values will eventually develop a family culture dedicated to that value system, with rituals and customs to reinforce those beliefs. A cohesive and respectful family allows family members to develop healthy levels of trust and interdependence. A sense that the family can be depended upon provides the foundation for children to develop into emotionally healthy adults.

Finally, children who develop strong human rights values will be better prepared for the reality of a truly global economy. The youth of today will find themselves in an adult world where contacts with people, from other countries, cultures, races, and religions, will more than likely be a daily occurrence. Their personal success will depend on their ability to relate to people who live and think differently than they do. Those who have developed these skills will be tomorrow's leaders and will be in the best position to potentially contribute to their communities and society in general.



# WHEN SHOULD HUMAN RIGHTS BE TAUGHT TO CHILDREN?

People often assume that having ethics and values is a human trait, something that is hard-wired into the human brain and psyche. Although there is evidence that some preferences, dislikes, skills, and talents have a basis in genetics, infants are born with no specific values in place. Values fall more into the category of opinions, and opinions are learned from others, or based on information gathered from others. Learning to be accepting and caring of others, as opposed to rejecting and hateful of others, is a value that needs to be nurtured and taught to children by the adults in their lives.

Educators and psychologists have known for years that children are more receptive than adults to learning anything new, including second languages, musical instruments, concepts, and opinions. It also has been established that children's values and opinions are fairly well formed by the time they reach age 12 or so.

New research, in the field of neurobiology, is backing up these observations. A small child's brain contains twice as many synapses (microscopic connections between nerve fibers in the brain) and consumes twice as much energy as the brain of a normal adult. Synapses, which allow the brain to learn new things, reach their highest density around age two, and then remain at that level until the age of 10 or 11. At around this age, atrophy of unused synapses begins, thus making some types of learning more difficult, but not impossible.

**The concepts related to valuing human rights need to be introduced as early as possible in a child's life.** By the age of six months, babies can distinguish racial differences. Studies by Dr. Phyllis Katz, at the Institute of Research on Social Problems in



Lauren Michels, 1997

Boulder, Colorado, demonstrated that babies stare longer at faces that are of a different race than they are. At 18 months, they begin to demonstrate "racial preference," preferring to play with dolls and figures of the same race as they are.

A study of three-year-olds demonstrated that racial prejudice was well-established by this age. White and black children were shown pictures of children of both races. When questioned, white children consistently picked the black child as the child who had probably done something wrong and the white child as the one who usually does things right. Even more distressing was the discovery that black children made the very same choices, choosing children of their own race as the probable culprits. This very important research demonstrated how societal prejudices are incorporated into the self-concepts of children of color at a very young age.

# WHAT VALUES SHOULD BE TAUGHT TO CHILDREN?

**The core group of values listed below are necessary for a child to respond, in an appropriate fashion, to people who are different than him or her.**

- **Kindness.** Being kind, considerate, and courteous to others needs to be established initially with children as the child's usual way of relating to everyone, child or adult, family or stranger, person or animal.
- **Fairness.** Children are instinctively interested in fairness, or a sense of equality, as it pertains to themselves. This value needs to be extended to others, particularly to those who are different from the child.
- **Tolerance.** Children should become accustomed to being in the presence of individuals different from themselves, even though being with people like themselves may feel more reassuring, less anxiety-producing, and consequently, "safer."
- **People are more alike than different.** Children need to learn that the traits or characteristics, upon which most prejudice is based, relate more to superficial differences than real differences. Human beings are ultimately very similar physically and strive for the same things, such as basic necessities, a sense of family, and enjoyment of life.
- **Respect.** Children need to accept that people show variation in their physical appearance, beliefs, feelings, interests, and customs. This value is best approached by teaching children that there are many "right" ways to look, think, and behave, not just the choices of the child's family.
- **Empathy.** Children can be taught the skill of identifying how another person might be feeling in a variety of situations. This is best learned by first identifying their own feelings in similar situations.
- **Absolutes can be questioned.** Children should be encouraged to think independently and to question what others may present as absolutes, particularly stereotypical and prejudicial statements.
- **Courage.** It takes courage to stand up for something, particularly if one is standing alone. Children learn courage when they are reinforced and praised for acts of bravery. Courage is necessary to be a supporter of human rights. Developing courage will also help children fend off unwanted peer pressure in other areas of their lives.
- **Diversity is exciting and interesting.** Rather than seeing diversity as threatening and anxiety-producing, children need to embrace the concept of diversity and the many doors it opens to new learning, interesting relationships, and exciting experiences.



# WHAT SHOULD CHILDREN LEARN ABOUT PREJUDICE AND STEREOTYPES?

## Who Experiences Human Rights Violations?

Children need to have an understanding of the various groups of people who are most likely to be affected by prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. The following lists can provide parents with a starting point in their efforts to educate children about human rights issues.

The traits listed on the left are so likely to result in discrimination that they are protected under many federal and state laws. The traits listed on the right are some examples of reasons people might experience discrimination that are not protected under law.

- |                             |                               |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| sex/gender                  | weight                        |
| color                       | height                        |
| race                        | culture                       |
| national origin             | educational level             |
| age                         | lifestyle                     |
| creed                       | appearance                    |
| religion                    | style of language/<br>dialect |
| marital status              | income                        |
| sexual orientation          | opinions                      |
| physical ability            | style of dress                |
| mental ability              | entertainment                 |
| health status               | preferences                   |
| public assistance<br>status | political beliefs             |
| military status             | athletic ability              |
|                             | occupation                    |

Children need to learn which groups within these various categories are more likely to experience discrimination in this culture, e.g., women more so than men (sex/gender); darker skinned people more so than lighter skinned people (color); people who are not Christian more so than Christians (religion), etc. However, it is also important for children to understand that reverse discrimination can occur in any of these classifications, e.g., a man may experience prejudice or discrimination from a woman. Children also should be taught that those who are in the minority of any group are more vulnerable to human rights violations than those who constitute the majority.



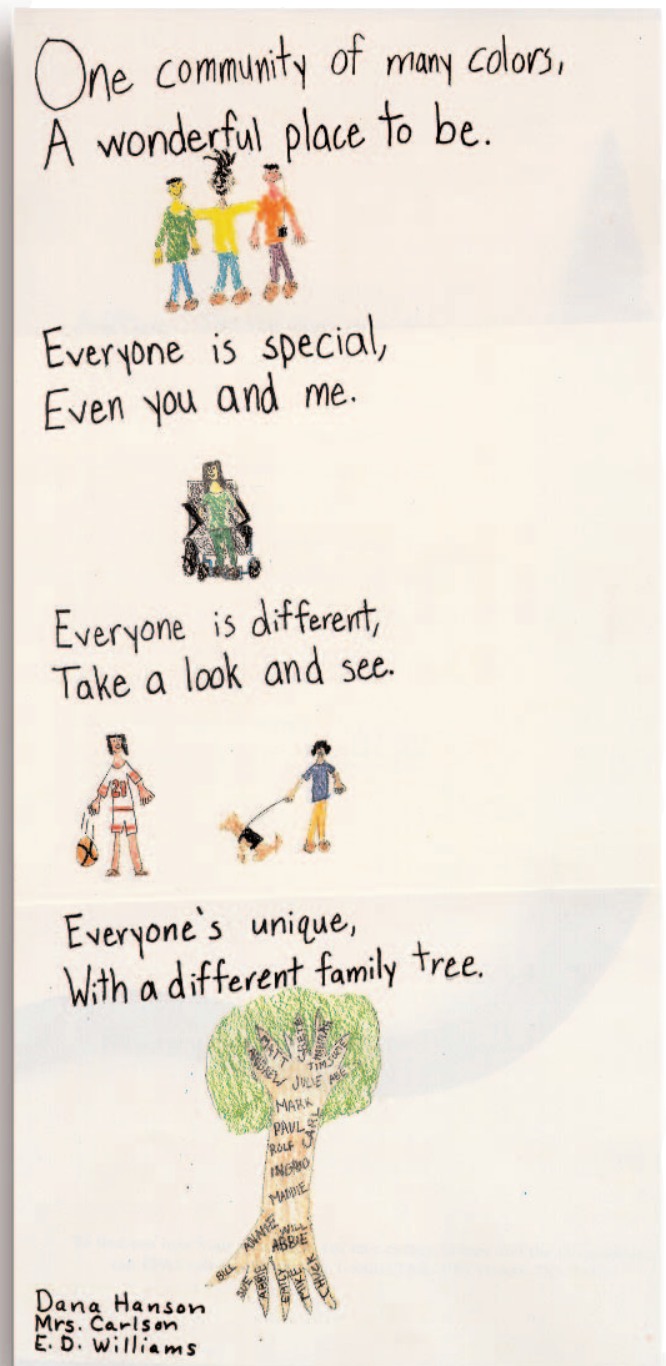
Abby Hays, 1998

## What Types of Human Rights Violations Occur?

It is important to teach children to recognize various types of human rights violations. The following “ABCs of Prejudice and Discrimination” were developed by the Anti-Defamation League and the National Parents and Teachers Association, and published in a 1997 pamphlet, “What to Tell Your Child About Prejudice and Discrimination.”

- **Prejudice:** Attitudes or opinions about a person or group simply because the person belongs to a specific religion, race, nationality, or other group. Prejudices involve strong feelings that are difficult to change. Prejudice is prejudging. A person who thinks, “I don’t want (name of group) living in my neighborhood,” is expressing a prejudice.
- **Stereotype:** Oversimplified generalization about a group of people. When people say that ALL members of a specific nationality, religion, race, or gender are “cheap,” “lazy,” “criminal,” or “dumb,” they are expressing stereotypes. All groups have both cheap and generous individuals. All groups have individuals who commit crimes. To label an entire group based on the actions of some is to engage in stereotyping. Even when a stereotype is positive, such as when people in one racial group are thought to be superior athletes, the consequences of stereotyping are negative.
- **Discrimination:** When people act on the basis of their prejudices or stereotypes, they are discriminating. Discrimination may mean putting other people down, not allowing them to participate in activities, restricting their access to work or to live in certain neighborhoods, or denying them something they are entitled to by right and law.

- **Scapegoating:** Blaming an individual or group when the fault actually lies elsewhere. Prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory acts can lead to scapegoating.



Dana Hanson, 1997

Children also should be told about the reality of “**hate crimes**” in our society. A “hate crime” is a crime motivated by a prejudice or a stereotype. Members of various groups have been attacked and beaten, simply because of their membership in those groups. Homes, places of worship, and cemeteries have been vandalized, based on the perpetrator’s prejudicial attitude. Under state and federal laws, “hate crimes” receive more severe punishments than the same crimes committed without a bias toward the victim’s status as a member of a protected class.

Another important concept to explain to children is **bigotry**, a term used to describe the personal philosophy of those who engage in prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, scapegoating, or hate crimes. A **bigot** is a person who is exclusively devoted to his or her own race, religion, organization, or opinion, and is intolerant of different races, religions, organizations, or opinions. Other words that children may ask adults to define include: **racism** (prejudice toward a specific race, often people of color); **sexism** (prejudice toward one particular sex, often women and girls); **ageism** (prejudice toward an age group, often seniors); **anti-Semitism** (prejudice toward Jewish people); and **homophobia** (fear of and prejudice toward gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people).

Children should have some familiarity with the various laws that protect human rights. Federal and state laws prohibit discrimination in the following areas:

1. Employment (Hiring, Firing, Wages, Advancement, Conditions of Employment)
2. Housing (House Sales, Apartment Rentals, Evictions)
3. Public accommodations (Hotels, Rest Rooms)
4. Credit (Loans, Mortgages, Credit Cards)
5. Public Services (Public Transportation, Government Services)
6. Educational Institutions (Schools, Colleges)
7. Business Transactions (Stores, Service Providers, Restaurants)

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*“We can help make the world safe for diversity.”*

John F. Kennedy  
US President 1961-1963

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Marie Jordan, 1994

Legislation does not protect anyone in one-to-one personal relationships that do not occur in one of the above settings. Children need to learn that discriminatory behavior in one's personal life, although not illegal, can be just as upsetting and damaging to the victim. Some of these behaviors include:

1. Calling people hateful names
2. Shunning
3. Not allowing some people to participate in an activity
4. Singling out individuals for ridicule
5. Accusing others based on irrational suspicions
6. Disdainful looks or gestures
7. Bullying
8. Threatening comments
9. Teasing
10. Offering unequal benefits or gifts

### **What Are the Adverse Effects of Prejudice and Discrimination?**

Initially, children will be able to comprehend the **negative impact on individuals, who are victims of prejudice**, long before they can understand the negative effects of prejudice on

communities and societies. All children have experienced some episode in which they personally felt unfairly treated. Such experiences can help them learn empathy toward others.

- Victims of prejudicial actions feel angry, hurt, helpless, insecure, vulnerable, and isolated.
- Repeated episodes of discrimination or bigotry tend to undermine the victim's self-esteem and confidence, which eventually will affect his or her potential and performance in a variety of arenas. The end result is a person who is less likely to become everything he or she was meant to be.
- Loss of one's potential, and the subsequent grief, can result in severe emotional problems such as depression, anxiety, and chronic fearfulness. Victims of discrimination do not feel safe and secure, sometimes even in their own homes.
- Over time, years of emotional distress can exacerbate a sense of alienation and plant seeds of revolt and retaliation. For example, individuals who explode into rages that culminate in mass shootings or destruction, often contend that they were teased or victimized for years prior to their aggressive outburst.

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*“It is how we use our lives that determines what kind of people we are.”*

Cesar Chavez  
United Union of Farmworkers

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As children grow older, they can better grasp the **effect on communities, societies, and countries** when various groups are consistently the victims of prejudice and discrimination.

- With legions of victimized people present in any society, the society’s problem-solving abilities and overall performance is affected by this loss of potential.
- A group that experiences discrimination tends to become isolated from the rest of the community. This occurs by “reluctant choice,” if the group decides that it simply is not worth trying to associate further with the greater community. Sometimes it is not by choice at all, even “reluctant choice.” When discrimination extends into the areas of employment and housing, it can impoverish subgroups and isolate them in ghettos. Ghettos drain the resources of communities, consuming valuable time, money, and energy directed toward the new problems they create.
- If an entire society (e.g., country, racial group, religious community) develops a prejudicial attitude toward another society, there is greater potential for war between these societies.
- A community or society that allows discrimination and prejudice to exist will eventually spawn various types of organized hate groups that have the capability of corrupting the thinking of others, particularly vulnerable young people.
- Disenfranchised groups of people, who are isolated and bitter, often rebel with criminal acts or acts of open revolt.
- A society divided into warring factions is a society that is vulnerable to internal collapse and to external threat.

# TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING HUMAN RIGHTS VALUES TO YOUR CHILDREN

- **Re-evaluate your own values.**

Before renewing your efforts to teach your children human rights values, it may be helpful to examine whether there are prejudices and stereotypes to which you currently subscribe and may be modeling to your children. Most people harbor some prejudices that were learned in their youth or are the result of unfortunate experiences with a member of a specific group. The most important step is to recognize these beliefs for what they are, and to make a commitment to work on changing them and to stop expressing them, particularly in the presence of vulnerable children.

- **Integrate human rights values into your family life.**

One of the best ways to teach healthy values related to human rights is to “live them” everyday in the way you interact with your spouse/partner and your children. Make a conscious effort to show respect for the beliefs, feelings, and interests of all family members, and to make compromises based on that respect. Although parents must lead the family in its various endeavors, the opinions and feelings of children can certainly be taken into account before firm decisions are made. Discourage the concept of “winning at all costs” and encourage mediation and compromise. Insist that everyone in the family strive toward being respectful to all other members.



Kate Palen, 1995



- **Learn the basics of child discipline.**

Children do not benefit from punishment for the sake of punishment. Yelling, spanking, and long “sentences” in corners and bedrooms have been shown to be ineffective in improving behavior. Children respond best to firm, but controlled, reprimands that also communicate that you care about the child and about how he or she behaves. If a punishment does seem warranted due to the severity of the offense, a “natural consequence” can encourage new learning. A “natural consequence” is one that would naturally follow and/or correct the offense in question. For example, if your child shoplifts, insisting that your child pay for the item, apologize to the merchant, and listen to the merchant’s distress will be more effective than taking away his or her television privileges. Bear in mind that rewards, praise, and other forms of positive reinforcement will have the most long-term impact on behavior. Even if a child has done something wrong, when he or she makes efforts to “right the wrong,” praise should be quickly forthcoming.

- **Take every available opportunity to teach your child how to be kind to other living things.**

One excellent way to begin this process is to acquire a family pet. Even toddlers can learn, “Be nice to the puppy or the kitty.” Acts of aggression toward pets need to result in quick consequences, perhaps a very short “time out” in the bedroom or a firm verbal reprimand. Take this opportunity to talk with your child about why it’s important to treat the pet gently and also to model the appropriate behavior. The child can then be given an opportunity to try a more gentle touch, resulting in praise for improvement. The same techniques can be used to teach older children how to handle their younger siblings with kindness.

- **Concentrate on building your child’s self-esteem.**

Children need consistent encouragement and praise, not only for good deeds and behavior, but also for the traits that make them unique and special. You cannot overdo this type of support, but too little of it will result in a child who is tentative about his or her self-worth. Children with good self-esteem are much less likely to engage in prejudicial thinking or behavior.

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*“Kids learn more from example than anything you say. I’m convinced they learn very early not to hear anything you say, but watch what you do.”*

Jane Pauley  
American journalist

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Lindsey McNichols, 1996

- **Teach the concept of fairness.**

This concept is relatively easy for children to understand. When a child's sibling appears to be benefiting more from a situation ("His piece of cake is bigger than mine"), you can demonstrate fairness by commenting that the situation is indeed unfair or unjust and by taking action to right the wrong. Once children learn the meaning of "fairness" (and it won't take long), the concept can then be applied to human rights violations. For example, if your child is engaging in taunting or shunning of another child, part of your efforts to stop this behavior could include the explanation that the behavior is "unfair" to the other child.

- **Introduce the concept of empathy.**

Using the example above (your child is taunting or shunning another child), you can continue the learning process by encouraging your child to experience empathy for the victim. Empathy involves being able to put yourself emotionally in another person's place. "How would you feel if you were being called names?" "How would you feel if someone made fun of your race, sex, disability, etc.?" "How would you feel if you were the one who was left out?" Once a child

experiences empathy, he or she is ready for a "natural consequence" of having to "make amends," e.g., apologizing to the other child, offering assistance to him or her, or trying to include the other child in play. All of your child's efforts in this regard should be enthusiastically praised.

- **Establish a family tradition of charity.**

Learning to give to others and care for others provides a basic foundation for understanding and supporting human rights issues. One of the best approaches to this lesson is to introduce your child to organized good deeds. For example, if the family takes part in a clothing or food drive, ask your children to help with the project as much as possible. Explain why others might need the gifts, and why it is important to help those who are less fortunate. If you choose to offer assistance to a friend or neighbor in some way, take your children along and let them help too. Reward your children for charitable acts, such as spontaneous sharing with their siblings or friends or including another child who is often left out. Start a dinner table ritual of having each family member think of one nice thing he or she did for someone else that day.



Julia Galkiewicz, 1994

- **Seek out and integrate diversity into your life and your child's life.**

Encourage your child to belong to organizations and teams that include children of different races and cultures. Look for positive role models for your children. Open your friendship circle to people who are different from yourself and introduce these friends to your children.

Becoming accustomed to the presence of a variety of people from different walks of life will help your child learn tolerance. These experiences will also teach your child that people are much more alike than different.

Accompany your children to events, celebrations, and presentations that offer a learning experience about a specific ethnic group or culture. Your child will remember more if new knowledge is accompanied by food, music, and a sense of excitement and fun. Watch movies or television shows that show people of different races or cultures interacting positively. Introduce your child to books and music that stimulate discussions about diversity. Find out if your place of worship or a community group is working on promoting human rights issues and join them in this endeavor. If you can't find such a group, consider starting one.

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*"I am only one; but still  
I am one. I cannot do  
everything, but still I  
can do something; I will  
not refuse to do the  
something I can do.*

Helen Keller  
US author & lecturer,  
blind & deaf from the age of two.

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- **Start working early on the issue of sexism.**

Studies indicate that girls start elementary school with the same level of confidence and self-esteem as their male counterparts. By the time they reach middle school, girls' self-esteem ratings and their general opinions about their sex have declined dramatically. Make it a priority to treat your sons and daughters in an egalitarian fashion and keep your expectations for both at the same level. Allow your children to pursue any reasonable interests they wish, even if your son is interested in something that has been traditionally considered feminine or your daughter wants to pursue a traditionally masculine interest. No psychological harm will come to a boy who cooks or a girl who plays hockey. Should your children, of either sex, engage in prejudicial comments about the opposite sex, deal with the situation with calm reprimands, discussion, and the assignment of a natural consequence such as an apology.

- **Teach by example.**

It is important for children to see and experience their parents behaving the way the parents wish the children to behave. When others around you make prejudicial remarks, tell bias-based jokes, or use racial slurs, take some action. Gently ask the other person to refrain from speaking that way around you and your children. Don't be afraid to indicate that it bothers you. If you hear a sexist or racist comment on television or the radio, make a comment to your child that you are uncomfortable hearing that sort of thing. Actively intervene on behalf of victims of bigotry and discrimination whenever you can. When you demonstrate courage, you are also teaching it to your children. Talk to your children about what they could say to their peers when they see or hear similar things happening at school or on the playground. It can be very helpful to role-play assertive responses, with your child and you switching between playing the role of the biased person and the role of the person who challenges that behavior.



Stacy Kern, 1998

- **Answer your children’s questions about human rights issues.**

The school yard is a place where children commonly experience bigotry or observe bigotry in action. Such experiences usually leave children confused and very distressed.

Encourage your children to think independently and give them permission to question stereotypical comments they may have heard about themselves or others. If your children are the victims, they may be asking you, “Why don’t they like us?” or blaming their family heritage, “Why aren’t we white?...Why aren’t we Christian?...Why do we talk funny?” It’s hard for parents in this situation not to react with rage toward the perpetrator, not only for hurting their

children, but also for attacking who they are. Try to calm your temper and explain to your child that the biased children probably do not know any better, because their parents have not taught them about different types of people. Take this opportunity to teach your children the definitions of “prejudice,” “stereotype,” “discrimination,” “scapegoating,” “hate crime,” and “bigotry.” Remember that when children have been emotionally hurt by a biased attack, they need to hear positive comments specifically about themselves, to repair the self-esteem erosion that such an episode causes.

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*“One evening in early December 1955 I was sitting in the front seat of the colored section of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. The white people were sitting in the white section. More white people got on, and they filled up all the seats in the white section. When that happened, we black people were supposed to give up our seats to the whites. But I didn’t move. The white driver said ‘Let me have those front seats.’ I didn’t get up. I was tired of giving in to white people.”*

Rosa Parks  
My Story

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Michael Schack, 1995

• **Tell your children about the history of various types of bigotry.** You may have to study yourself to get all of the facts straight, but no doubt you already know something about the following historical events or conflicts:

- Treatment of U.S. Native Americans by European settlers
- African slaves in the United States and the resulting U.S. Civil War, Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad
- The Holocaust, European extermination of Jews, Russians, Poles, gays, disabled people, and others
- Ireland's Protestant/Catholic civil war
- The Israeli/Palestinian conflict
- Cesar Chavez and the plight of the U.S. migrant worker
- History of the battles for women's rights throughout the world, including the U.S. struggle for the vote (Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton), and the later U.S. women's liberation movement of the 1960's (Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, etc.)
- Worldwide child labor violations
- U.S. Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's, desegregation of public facilities, the murder of freedom fighters, lynchings, battle for school integration, Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Julian Bond
- History of the treatment of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons, the New York City Stonewall Riots, assassination of San Francisco City Councilman, Harvey Milk
- Hate crimes (assaults, cross burnings, hate mail, death threats, vandalism)
- Historical treatment of persons with physical disabilities or with mental disorders, crusader Dorothea Lynde Dix

Your efforts to teach your children about these human rights "stories" can be supplemented with books, videos, and field trips to museums. Take advantage of the opportunity for discussion when you and your child happen to view a television program that touches on these topics.



- **Make learning about diversity fun.**

Children enjoy being read to and being told stories. They learn quickly from analogies. There are many excellent fairy tales, Bible stories, fables, and nursery rhymes that have helped children learn about compassion, courage, friendship, loyalty, and self-discipline. One of the best compilations of such stories is *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories*, edited by William J. Bennett. As an example, we offer here “The Lion and the Mouse,” one of Aesop’s fables which demonstrates the power of kindness and the concept of “what goes around, comes around.”

One day a great lion lay asleep in the sunshine. A little mouse ran across his paw and wakened him. The great lion was just going to eat him up when the little mouse cried, “Oh, please, let me go, sir. Some day I may help you.”

The lion laughed at the thought that the little mouse could be of any use to him. But he was a good-natured lion, and he set the mouse free.

Not long after, the lion was caught in a net. He tugged and pulled with all his might, but the ropes were too strong. Then he roared loudly. The little mouse heard him, and ran to the spot.

“Be still, dear Lion, and I will set you free. I will gnaw the ropes.”

With his sharp little teeth, the mouse cut the ropes, and the lion came out of the net.

“You laughed at me once,” said the mouse. “You thought I was too little to do you a good turn. But see, you owe your life to a poor little mouse.”

Other ways to make learning human rights values fun include:

- Seeking out children’s television programming and videos that are based on the concept of the “morality play.” Children of the 50’s and 60’s grew up watching this type of after-school television. The basic format will include heroes, often a mixed race team or a male and female team, who always get the bad guys and an ending in which justice prevails.
- Making up diversity-positive mottos and slogans and creating banners for the refrigerator door or your child’s bedroom.
- Helping your children re-enact historical events, using homemade costumes, that were significant in advancing human rights.
- Designing a trivia game, based on historical human rights leaders and human rights triumphs, in which children get points for correct answers.

# CONCLUSION

Hopefully, this booklet has provided some information and ideas that will be of assistance to you. Teaching children about human rights values is a difficult and complex task. Anticipate that your efforts will be temporarily disrupted by the efforts of others to teach your child their prejudicial attitudes. Remember that you cannot control all of the other influences upon your child's value system. Consistent rational rebuttal of unwanted attitudes is important, combined with a conscious effort to teach contrasting positive values. Lead by example. Your children are paying more attention to what you do, than what you say.

Anticipate that you will make mistakes. All parents do. Making amends for error is one of the most significant behaviors you can model to your children. Don't get discouraged by your mistakes. Learn from them and keep trying. Sustained knowledge, knowledge that lasts a lifetime, is learned from repetition and encountering the information in a variety of contexts. As long as you keep teaching the values discussed in this brochure, your children will eventually share them with you.



Angela Dayton, 1998

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*“We must weave a social fabric in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.”*

Margaret Mead  
US cultural anthropologist

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Pipher, Mary, Ph.D. *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1994.

*Prejudice: A Big Word for a Little Kid* (Television Report), Channel 5 Eye Witness News (KSTP TV), St. Paul, MN and World of Difference, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, New York, NY.

*What to tell Your Child About Prejudice and Discrimination* (Pamphlet). Chicago, IL: National PTA and New York, NY: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1997.



# CONTRIBUTORS

The Children of Shoreview, Minnesota. The illustrations throughout this booklet were drawn by fourth grade students, each of whom was a participant in one of five human rights poster contests. The contest is sponsored annually by the Shoreview Human Rights Commission to commemorate the anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birth date. Students are asked to create a poster which includes pictures of people of different races and cultures interacting positively together. The purpose of the contest is to encourage students to focus on improving race relations, increasing cultural awareness, reducing prejudice, valuing of our differences, and the importance of unity over uniformity.

Members of the Shoreview Human Rights Commission: Richard Bokovoy, Carol Keyes, Kevin Lile, Sonja Dunnwald Peterson, Arthur Stillman, Julie B. Williams, Connie Yantes; Laurie Elliott, staff liaison.

Staff of the White Bear Lake Area Community Counseling Center (Owned and Operated by the City of White Bear Lake, Minnesota), 1280 North Birch Lake Boulevard, White Bear Lake, Minnesota 55110. Available for consultation at 651-429-8544.

Zwirn, Heidi, Manager, Blockbuster Video, 1038 Meadowlands Drive, White Bear Township, Minnesota 55110.



Claudia Vincze-Turcean, 1998

# SUGGESTED READING

## (Adults)

Ball, Edward. *Slaves in the Family*. (Nonfiction. U.S. slavery. Study of one plantation family, white and black.) New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998.

Carnes, Jim, Project Director, Teaching Tolerance Project. *Starting Small: Teaching Tolerance in Preschool and the Early Grades*. (Group activities for the classroom or organization.) Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center, 1997.

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Dinkmeyer, Don Sr.; McKay, Gary D. & Dinkmeyer, Don Jr. *The Parent's Handbook*. (General parenting guidelines.) Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service, Inc., 1997.

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Duberman, Martin. *Stonewall*. (History of the gay liberation movement.) New York, NY: Dutton/Penguin Group, 1993.

Duke, Patty & Hochman, Gloria. *A Brilliant Madness: Living with Manic-Depressive Illness*. (Autobiographical. Coping with bipolar disorder.) New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1992.

Flowers, Nancy, Editor. *Human Rights Here and Now: Celebrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. (Information and education activities for learning about the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.) Minneapolis, MN: Human Rights Educators' Network of Amnesty International USA, Human Rights USA, and the Stanley Foundation, 1998.

Grandin, Temple. *Thinking in Pictures: And Other Reports from My Life with Autism*. (Autobiographical. Living with autism.) New York, NY: Doubleday, 1995.

Griffin, John Howard. *Black Like Me*. (Nonfiction. Journal of a white man's experience posing as a black man.) New York, NY: Signet/Penguin Group, 1996, originally published in 1960.

Grimes, Tony, Editor. *Not the Only One*. (21 short stories by individuals who dealt with gay/lesbian issues as teens.) Boston, MA: Alyson Publishers, 1994.

Halberstam, David. *The Children*. (Historical account of the 1960's civil rights movement.) New York, NY: Random House, 1998.

Hately, Barbara "BJ" & Schmidt, Warren H. *A Peacock in the Land of Penguins: A Tale of Diversity and Discovery*. (A story of differences.) San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1997.

Herrmann, Dorothy. *Helen Keller: A Life*. (Biography. Overcoming visual and auditory impairment.) New York, NY: Random House, 1998.

Marcus, Eric. *Is it a Choice? Answers to 300 of the Most Asked Questions About Gays and Lesbians*. (Information about gay and lesbian people.) San Francisco, CA: Harper-Collins, 1992.

Nasar, Sylvia. *A Beautiful Mind*. (Biography of John Nash, Nobel Prize winner and victim of schizophrenia.) New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1998.

Sherr, Lynn. *Failure is Impossible: Susan B. Anthony in Her Own Words*. (Biographical. Susan B. Anthony's efforts on behalf of women's rights.) New York, NY: Times Books/Random House, 1995.

Sutin, Jack and Rochelle. *Jack and Rochelle: A Holocaust Story of Love and Resistance*. (Autobiographical. Holocaust experience.) Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 1995.

Takaki, Ronald T. *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian-Americans*. (Historical information. Asian-Americans.) Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1989.

Yolen, Jane. *The Devil's Arithmetic*. (Fiction. Holocaust theme.) New York, NY: Viking Kestrel/Penguin Group, 1988.



# SUGGESTED READING (Children)

Bradley, Catherine. *What Do We Mean by Human Rights? Freedom of Movement*. New York, NY: Franklin Watts, 1998.

DeRuiz, Dana Catherine & Larios, Richard. *LaCausa: The Migrant Farmworkers' Story*. (A children's story about migrant farmworkers.) New York, NY: Steck-Vaughn Company, 1993.

Dwyer, Kathleen M. *What Do You Mean I Have a Learning Disability?* (A children's story about having a learning disability.) New York, NY: Walker and Company, 1991.

Garland, Sherry. *The Lotus Seed*. (A story of one Vietnamese family's flight to freedom.) Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1993.

Geisel, Theodor Seuss (Dr. Seuss). *The Sneetches and Other Stories*. (Children's fiction, ages 4-8. Acceptance/tolerance theme.) New York, NY: Random House, 1961, originally published in 1953.

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Hirst, Mike. *What Do We Mean by Human Rights? Freedom of Belief*. New York, NY: Franklin Watts, 1997.

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Igus, Toyomi. *Book of Black Heroes: Great Women in Struggle*. Orange, NJ: Just Us Book, Inc., 1991.

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Kindersley, Barnabas & Anabel. *Children Just Like Me*. (UNICEF children's book about children from different cultures and backgrounds.) New York, NY: DK Publishing, Inc., 1995.

Mochizuki, Ken. *Baseball Saved Us*. (A young Japanese boy, interned during WWII, tells of his father's efforts to lift morale by building a baseball field.) New York, NY: Lee & Low Books, 1993.

O'Connor, Maureen. *What Do We Mean by Human Rights? Equal Rights*. New York, NY: Franklin Watts, 1998.

Okimoto, Jean Davies. *A Place for Grace*. (Overcoming obstacles and helping the hearing-impaired with the help of Grace, a delightful little dog.) Seattle, WA: Sasquatch Books, 1993.

Prior, Katherine. *What Do We Mean by Human Rights? Workers' Rights*. New York, NY: Franklin Watts, 1997.

Sherrow, Victoria. *Freedom of Worship*. Brookfield, CT: The Millbrook Press, 1997.

Steele, Philip. *What Do We Mean by Human Rights? Freedom of Speech*. New York, NY: Franklin Watts, 1997.

Tombert, Ann. *Bamboo Hats and a Rice Cake*. (Adapted from Japanese folklore, the importance of kindness and faith are demonstrated as a penniless man tries to sell his wife's wedding kimono in order to buy rice cakes to celebrate the New Year.) Westminster, MD: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1993.

Whelan, Gloria. *Goodbye, Vietnam*. (Novel. Refugees flee Vietnam during the war and arrive in the United States determined to build a new life.) New York, NY: Knopf Publishing, 1992.

Wiener, Lori S.; Best, Aprille; & Pizzo, Phillie. *Be a Friend: Children Who Live with HIV Speak*. (A compilation of short stories and poems written by children with HIV.) Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company, 1994.

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*“America is a tune. It  
must be sung together.”*

Gerald Stanley Lee  
US Clergyman & writer

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# SUGGESTED VIEWING

The following list of movies and videos is offered to parents to increase their knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity to various groups who have experienced oppression and prejudice. Due to controversial subject matter and depiction of actual violence experienced, many of these films are rated “R” or “restricted to 17 years of age or older, unless accompanied by an adult.” Hence, most of these films are not recommended for viewing by young children. However, you may find them a helpful way of creating discussion with older adolescents. The movies that are marked “Not Rated” are older films that were produced before the existence of rating systems.

## AFRICAN AMERICAN/U.S. SLAVERY/SEGREGATION

- Amistad*, 1997 (R)
- Beloved*, 1998 (R)
- Glory*, 1989 (R)
- In the Heat of the Night*, 1967 (Not Rated)
- The Jesse Owens Story*, 1984 (Not Rated)
- To Kill a Mockingbird*, 1962 (Not Rated, Mature)
- Mississippi Burning*, 1988 (R)
- Roots, Television Mini-Series*, 1977 (TV-Mature)
- Rosewood*, 1997 (R)
- Separate but Equal*, 1991 (PG-13)

## NATIVE AMERICAN

- Dances with Wolves*, 1990 (PG-13)
- Jim Thorpe - All American*, 1951 (Not Rated)
- Little Big Man*, 1970 (PG)
- Thunderheart*, 1992 (R)

## LATINO

- Selena*, 1997 (PG)
- Stand and Deliver*, 1988 (PG)
- West Side Story*, 1961 (Not Rated)

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- G.I. Jane*, 1997 (R)

## PROTESTANT/CATHOLIC IRISH CONFLICT

- In the Name of the Father*, 1993 (R)
- Michael Collins*, 1996 (R)



Becky Lang, 1998

## HOLOCAUST

- Cabaret*, 1972 (PG)
- The Diary of Anne Frank*, 1959 (Not Rated)
- The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, 1970 (R)
- Schindler's List*, 1993 (R)

## GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

- The Celluloid Closet*, Documentary, 1996 (R)
- The Children's Hour*, 1961 (Not Rated)
- The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love*, 1995 (R)
- Maurice*, 1987 (R)
- Philadelphia*, 1993 (PG-13)

## EMOTIONAL/DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY

- One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, 1975 (R)
- Rain Man*, 1988 (R)
- Shine*, 1996 (PG-13)
- The Snake Pit*, 1948 (Not Rated)
- The Three Faces of Eve*, 1957 (Not Rated)
- What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, 1993 (PG-13)

## PHYSICAL DISABILITY

- Coming Home*, 1978 (R)
- The Elephant Man*, 1980 (PG)
- The Man Without a Face*, 1993 (PG-13)
- Mask*, 1985 (PG-13)
- The Miracle Worker*, 1962 (Not Rated)
- The Miracle Worker*, 1979 (TV-Mature)
- My Left Foot*, 1989 (R)

# THE SHOREVIEW HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Shoreview Human Rights Commission was re-established in 1992 to act in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights and the City Council to ensure and promote human rights within the City of Shoreview. The Commission is composed of seven to nine residents who are appointed by the City Council for three-year terms.

The Commission has been involved in developing, implementing and refining several projects within the community. These include:

- An annual Art Poster Contest for fourth graders commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, with the theme "One Community of Many Colors"
- An Essay Contest for seventh graders focusing on a current human rights issue
- A Human Rights Recognition Award, presented to individuals or businesses who promote human rights
- Development of the City's bias/hate crimes response plan

The activities of the Commission are directed toward developing educational programs and increasing awareness of human rights issues, coordinating efforts with other human rights commissions, advising and making recommendations to the City Council, and giving direction and encouragement to individuals and agencies working in the area of human rights. The Commission is also an active participant in the League of Minnesota Human Rights Commissions.

The Commission is dedicated to ensuring the citizens of Shoreview have equal opportunities and rights as defined by the Minnesota Human Rights Act, Chapter 363 of the Minnesota Statutes, and keeping the City of Shoreview a livable, welcoming community.

*The Shoreview Human Rights Commission would like to acknowledge and thank the Shoreview City Council for their support in making this project possible.*





Candice Bardeaux, 1996

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*“So I say to you, my friends, that even though we must face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed—we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”*

Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Civil Rights Leader & 1964 Nobel Peace Prize Recipient

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For additional copies of this brochure, contact the Shoreview Human Rights Commission at the City of Shoreview, 4600 North Victoria Street, Shoreview, MN 55126. Or call (651) 490-4600. Or e-mail us at [postmaster@shoreviewmn.com](mailto:postmaster@shoreviewmn.com)

# Additional Resources

Additional resources are not included in the original 1998 publication.

The following movies may present disturbing situations and stereotypes contrary to the message of the Human Rights Commission. Members felt that the historic value could generate conversation addressing cultural changes in our society and the climate of racism during the era that these movies were produced or the historical times that are represented.

## AFRICAN AMERICAN/U.S. SLAVERY/SEGREGATION

4 Little Girls, 1997 (NR)  
Ali, 2001 (R)  
Eyes on the Prize, PBS Mini-Series, (1987)  
Far From Heaven, 2002 (PG-13)  
Ghosts of Mississippi, 1996 (PG-13)  
The Green Mile, 1999 (R)  
The Long Walk Home, 1990 (PG)  
Malcolm X, 1992 (PG-13)  
The New Americans, PBS Mini-Series, 2004 (NR)  
Ray, 2004 (PG-13)  
Remember the Titans, 2000 (PG)  
Shawshank Redemption, 1994 (R)

## NATIVE AMERICAN

Crazy Horse, 1996 (TV, NR)  
Geronimo: An American Legend, 1993 (PG-13)  
Grey Owl, 1999 (PG-13)  
Lakota Woman: Siege at Wounded Knee,  
1994 (TV, NR)  
The Last of the Mohicans, 1992, (R)  
Pocahontas, Animated, 1995 (G)  
Pocahontas II: Journey to a New World,  
Animated, 1998 (G)  
Smoke Signals, 1998 (PG-13)

## NATIVE CULTURES WORLDWIDE

Lost Boys of Sudan, 2003 (NR)  
Whale Rider, 2002 (PG-13)  
Rabbit-Proof Fence, 2002 (PG)

## LATINO

And the Earth Did Not Swallow Him, 1995 (NR)  
La Ciudad, Documentary, 1998 (NR)  
My Family, 1995 (R)  
The New Americans, PBS Mini-Series, 2004 (NR)  
Real Women Have Curves, 2002 (PG-13)

## ASIAN CULTURES

Bend It Like Beckham, 2002 (PG-13)  
Himalaya, 1999 (NR)  
The Joy Luck Club, 1993 (R)  
The Killing Fields, 1984 (R)  
Mulan, Animated, 1998 (G)  
Oseam, Animated, 2003 (NR)  
Rhapsody in August, 1991 (PG)  
Roots and Branches, 2001 (NR)  
The Road Home, 1999 (PG)  
The Story of the Weeping Camel, 2004, (PG)  
Spirited Away, Animated, 2002 (PG)  
The Way Home, 2002 (PG)

## PROTESTANT/CATHOLIC IRISH CONFLICT

Some Mother's Son, 1996 (R)  
The Crying Game, 1992 (R)

## ARAB CULTURES

Afghan Stories, 2002 (NR)  
Aladdin, Animated, 1992 (G)  
The Color of Paradise, 1999 (PG)  
The Mirror, 1998 (NR)  
The New Americans, PBS Mini-Series, 2004 (NR)  
Osama, 2003 (PG-13)

## JEWISH CULTURE/ANTISEMITISM

Avalon, 1990 (PG)  
Focus, 2002 (PG-13)  
The Prince of Egypt, Animated, 1998 (PG)  
School Ties, 1992 (PG-13)

## HOLOCAUST

Anne Frank, 2001 (TV-14)  
Bent, 1997 (R)  
The Grey Zone, 2001 (R)  
Jakob the Liar, 1999 (PG-13)  
Life is Beautiful, 1998 (PG-13)  
The Pianist, 2002 (R)

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Bend It Like Beckham, 2002 (PG-13)  
Mulan, Animated, 1998 (G)

## GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

All Over the Guy, 2001 (R)  
Angels in America, HBO Mini-Series, 2003 (NR)  
As Good As It Gets, 1997 (PG-13)  
Bent, 1997 (R)  
Better than Chocolate, 1999 (R)  
Big Eden, 2000 (PG-13)  
The Birdcage, 1996 (R)  
Boys Don't Cry, 1999 (R)  
The Broken Hearts Club, 2000 (R)  
But I'm a Cheerleader, 1999 (R)

## GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

cont.

Chutney Popcorn, 1999 (NR)  
Common Ground, 2000 (R)  
The Crying Game, 1992 (R)  
Far From Heaven, 2002 (PG-13)  
Go Fish, 1994 (R)  
A Home at the End of the World, 2004 (R)  
The Laramie Project, HBO Movie, 2002 (NR)  
Kissing Jessica Stein, 2001 (R)  
Longtime Companion, 1990 (R)  
The Watermelon Woman, 1996 (NR)  
Wilde, 1997 (R)

## EMOTIONAL/DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY

A Beautiful Mind, 2001 (PG-13)  
Corrina, Corrina, 1994 (PG)  
As Good As It Gets, 1997 (PG-13)  
The Fisher King, 1991 (R)  
Forrest Gump, 1994 (PG-13)  
I Am Sam, 2001 (PG-13)  
The Other Sister, 1999 (PG-13)  
Pollock, 2000 (R)  
Radio, 2003 (PG)

## PHYSICAL DISABILITY

The Hunchback of Notre Dame,  
Animated, 1996 (G)  
Ray, 2004 (PG-13)  
Simon Birch, 1998 (PG)

## DIVERSITY/TOLERANCE THEMES

Corrina, Corrina, 1994 (PG)  
Edward Scissorhands, 1990 (PG-13)  
Elf, 2003 (PG)  
Gangs of New York, 2002 (R)  
Ice Age, Animated, 2002 (PG)  
The Lord of the Rings Trilogy, 2001-2003 (PG-13)  
Out of Ireland, Story of Emigration into America,  
1994 (NR)  
Shrek, Animated, 2001 (PG)  
Shrek 2, Animated, 2004 (PG)  
Snow Falling on Cedars, 1999 (PG-13)

## Classic Films Addressing Racism

A Patch of Blue, 1965 (NR)  
Driving Miss Daisy, 1989 (PG)  
Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, 1967 (NR)  
Imitation of Life, 1959 (NR)

Please refer to page 28 and visit the City of Shoreview's website at [www.ci.shoreview.mn.us](http://www.ci.shoreview.mn.us) to see an additional list of movies for viewing that also have themes related to human rights.

## WEBSITES

The World Wide Web is another great resource for parents to increase their knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity about Human Rights.

Minnesota Department of Human Rights  
[www.humanrights.state.mn.us](http://www.humanrights.state.mn.us)

Human Rights Resource Center  
[www.hrusa.org](http://www.hrusa.org)

Human Rights Center  
[www1.umn.edu/humanrts/hrcenter.htm](http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/hrcenter.htm)

Southern Poverty Law Center  
[www.splcenter.org](http://www.splcenter.org)

United Nations  
[www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

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