Curing Racial Intolerance in Homogeneous Communities
By Kristine Perez

If you ask anyone around you which country is the best, what would they say? More often than not, you can expect "'Merica, of course" to flutter from their tongue. Americans pride themselves in being part of a nation that is so innovative, opportunistic and driven. The idea that the U.S. is a "melting pot" is more likely the number one reason citizens will use to explain why America is a paragon. People of different cultures and ethnicities will be welcomed and can all be united as one. Unfortunately, for myself and many others, this term was kept foreign to me in my daily life growing up; the only familiarity I had with it was in the form of printed ink in my history textbooks.

Growing up in the small town of Hudson, I was constantly surrounded by a population that was predominantly white. The town itself is a great place to raise a family - it's safe, the school system is one of the best in the country, and there's a myriad of activities to do in the downtown area. I loved growing up in Hudson and thought it was quintessential, but as I grew older, something seemed to make me uncomfortable. It wasn't until late middle school and high school that I noticed problems with the homogeneity of my community, disadvantaged by lack of diversity.

Minorities quickly became a target for bullying and ostracism. Name-calling and racial slurs became commonplace at school. Because they were part of the majority, it was very easy for my white peers to make jokes and tease others. They knew that hardly anyone would stop them and they were sure to get a laugh. Racism and prejudice was not only present in school but in the general public as well. I can recall a time when an African American friend of mine, who worked at an ice cream parlor, came crying to me about how customers have refused to have her serve them on more than one occasion. It's a shame that such a nice community has its flaws in terms of race, especially in a country that has made advances in reaching equality and was built on the principle of cultural tolerance and diversity.

Although it's nice to live in a community where you won't feel like an outsider because everyone is like you, cities like Hudson can benefit from cultural diversity. It teaches a great deal of tolerance and acceptance, both of which are valuable characteristics one should have in order to be successful in the labor force. Cultural diversity encourages new prospective and ideas, allows people to learn about themselves as they reach out to others, and encourages cross-cultural collaboration which will further accelerate our advances in a global economic world.

In order to achieve this, we must centralize our efforts in the younger generations of these communities, the generations of tomorrow. The easiest way to promote and teach cultural tolerance is through the education system. This approach should be emphasized in middle school and high school, where teenagers are notorious for speaking their mind without regard for others. One of the biggest problems with current issues today is that people are simply not educated on the subject. Therefore one option is to implement having a course that strictly teaches about the evolution of race in America. The material would consist of the history of slavery, immigration, civil rights, etc. In addition, to the historical aspect of the class, present day race-based issues are introduced and discussed, allowing students to debate the topic and provide their own opinion on the subject, learn from the opinions of others, and attempt to identify and find solutions to the problem. The main purpose of making a class like this available and/or mandatory is to inform the students to widen their cultural horizons.

Another solution to solve racial intolerance in schools is to create an organization or club that promotes anti-bullying and tolerance which will be active within the school, providing an outlet for students who are victims. Two years ago, my friend and I founded the **Mosaics Club** at my high school, the name deriving from the idea that **several pieces that vary in size, shape, and color can come together to create something beautiful.** Through our club's efforts, we have had several speakers cone to our school to teach the student body about tolerance and acceptance. No matter how reluctant the students were in going to an assembly, each and every one walked out the presentation inspired and encouraged to do the right thing.

Many race-based bullying among students occur in the classroom, so an effective solution would be to educate and train the teachers and staff on how to handle such a situation through a series of seminars or a class. It would be beneficial for schools to put this in place because teachers should know how to settle issues between students as it is, but when race is involved, it puts them in an awkward position and leaves them unsure of what to do. I have seen instances where teachers refuse to try and expunge the situation and simply hope it blows over so they can continue teaching, but that just indoctrinates their students, who look up to them as a role model , to turn a blind eye and ignore it, even though it's wrong to let it go unnoticed.

Most schools have clubs for the different languages offered. For instance, my school offers Spanish, French, German and Mandarin Chinese. Each language has a club, and for the past 2 years, my school has held "**World Culture Day**", where each club presents their culture through foods, activities, and exhibits. A large majority of the student body attends this event and enjoys it, and they walk out having learned something new about a different culture. Having an event like this in schools is a great idea, but bringing it to the entire city reaches more people. My town has an event called the "Taste of Hudson", where businesses can bring their services from a tiny shop to the entire town, enriching the community and the youth. I think having a similar event for different cultures would be beneficial for Hudson and other similar communities. We often refer to our town as the "Hudson Bubble", where the population is confined to a safe, sheltered area that isn't very educated on what's happening in the outside world. As our young adults move away into the "real world" and pop their bubble, they are faced with challenges such as culture shock and tend to carry their tolerances and naivety learned from inside the bubble with them.

Diversity adds richness to life by providing different flavors and tastes from a variety of cultures to the melting pot. But with differentiation in a population comes the opportunity of discrimination due to clashes between culture and race. It' s difficult to teach racial tolerance in a community deprived of any cultural opportunity, but by educating and bringing culture from the outside in, is one of the most effective solutions to solving this predicament. It is inevitable that there will be people who are not open minded, but taking measures towards the curing racial intolerance is a huge stepping stone to the common desire across the globe- *peaceful coexistence*.