

Chapter 12

How Hate Harms Children

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ABSTRACT

Even as the pandemic seems to be lessening in some places, our violent actions are not. What causes such violence and hate? Why are there still children who do not have a safe place to live, enough food to eat, a loving caregiver, or the knowledge that they will not be killed in a school shooting? Given how we treat our children, the question about our attitude toward them is significant. Looking at issues of prejudice and “othering,” we can begin to understand that we really do not like children given the data about our treatment of them. When a group decides that their point of view is the only one that is worthy, then those who do not agree are the “others.” This othering provides ample opportunity for prejudice, discrimination, bullying, and hateful acts. Sadly, children are the recipients of these decisions by adults who then by their actions teach children to behave in exactly the same ways. In the meantime, children become the victims since they are in the most vulnerable group of humans. This chapter explores how hate harms children.

INTRODUCTION

Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. Be Kind. Always. Robin Williams

As we begin what appears to be a lessening of the Covid devastation in some parts of the world and we think about getting back to a more normal life, violence and death remain everyday factors for many. Many different analyses about why we are violent and why we hurt each other have been researched. The creation of the field of multicultural education was perhaps an attempt to help change our behaviors and learn to understand others. Over the years, the work of McGee Banks and Banks (1995) have advanced our understand of equity pedagogy which can be understood as a form of resistance to the dominant modes of schooling that repeat the oppressive behaviors that need to be examined. Attempt

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is perhaps the correct word as studying different ethnic groups has not been effective in ending our collective prejudices and hatreds. In this chapter we will explore the stages of prejudice leading to hate and examine a few possible ways to move beyond such deplorable situations. The goal of this chapter is to explicate how our biases and prejudices and ignorance allow our children to suffer.

Sparkes (1997) and others have attempted to represent the “absent other” using a technique called ethnographic fiction. This research mode rearranges facts, events and identities in order to draw the reader into the story in a way that enables deeper understandings (Tierney, 1993). We will use this process to hear what children might say about prejudice and hate recognizing that they are often the “absent other” in our academic rhetoric.

In 1975, Kenneth Keniston, then the Chairman and Executive Director of the Carnegie Council on Children asked this question; “Do we Americans really like children?” (Keniston, 1975). We will return to this question throughout this chapter, but first, we will introduce the reader to three young people who will be our “absent others” to help us explore this question. What are the voices of those at the bottom, those treated least well, who have rights but do not know that and who are kept from enacting those rights?

Call me Parker. Pleased to meet you. I’m going on 12 and I live in a small town in the south. Usually, I am in school at this time, but my mom had to work so I had to stay with the babies. I don’t mind because they are kind to me—not like my mean old teacher. She tells me every day that I’m worthless and won’t amount to anything, because my daddy is dead and my mom is a waitress.

It was so sad when my daddy died and a couple of months after that we had to move. I guess we didn’t have enough money to pay the landlord so he kicked us out. We had to live in our car until we could find a shelter. That was so hard because we had to leave our wonderful garden and our animals.

The people at the shelter are nice and they let me help out. I play school with the little kids all the time. Did I tell you that I want to be a teacher someday?

I started a group at school of other kids who have it hard too. We call ourselves the Helpers. Last year Mr. Jackson came to our school to meet with our parents but we were invited to stay. He was running to become a city council member and he gave a speech. He was really nice and gave all of the kids a candy bar before he left. But he surprised me! He said that everyone has rights, including children. I had never heard that before. He encouraged us to talk to each other and see if there were any problems we had that we wanted to fix. And he said that if he got elected, he would want to hear what we had to say.

The next day at lunch I asked a few of my friends if they wanted to try to get together. Mr. Jackson said that we should get organized so a few of us decided to try. We started meeting once a week at lunch to make a list of things that were bothering us. Boy, that list started getting really long. And we found out that we all had the same complaints!

For the moment, we will leave Parker and their friends and delve into this explanation of our treatment of children and our lack of support for The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN General Assembly, 1989). This document, created in 1989, is intended to give every child in the world exactly what Mr. Jackson is suggesting. Children have rights and adults are charged with providing them to children. If a group of children had the opportunity to get organized and to present their

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