



## **National Urban Alliance for Effective Education**

# **Human Rights, Education & Democracy**

## **Eric Cooper**

"Do not wait for leaders. Do it alone. Person to person."  
-- Mother Teresa

If anyone ever needed a further reminder of the importance of the mission and work of those who strive to support education reform through individual and collective efforts, the "Islamic Anti-Semitism" NYTimes, Saturday, October 18, editorial should further promote and cement in our minds the reasons why.

The work of our organization and many others is focused on advocacy for "all" children and youth. We, in conjunction with district-based partners attempt to eliminate obstacles which deny access to deep learning by students. We use strategies based on cognitive and effective school research to deepen the life-skills of students. A goal is to help these strategies become skills in use by the learner when applied to real-world situations, e.g., collaborative community problem-solving and decision-making, collaborative work toward promotion of social movements which may help to eliminate racism, sexism and anti-Semitism -- all derived through a deeper understanding of what happens when stereotype threats and negative social engineering are at-play in our systems.

As we all know, racism and anti-Semitism is derived from ignorance. It is used often by those who seek power and influence. It emerges from a sense of me-ism -- driven by emerging beliefs that those who are blessed (either by God or intellectually) become ever more rich and powerful -- triggered by a misperception that the intellectually and



socially deficient will continue to find it harder and harder to cope.

Sadly this sense of entitlement can lead to frustration and misguided social policies. More often than not it provides opportunities for emergent leaders to fill a void created by negative policies and practices. For an example, Hitler was known to boast that "thank God mankind does not think because it allows leaders such as me to rule."

I shuddered reading the Times editorial yesterday. To read about the "hatred of Jews by the Malaysian prime minister at an Islamic summit meeting this week or the unanimous applause it engendered from the kings, presidents and emirs in the audience..." was stunningly frightening. Yet it reinforced in me and I suspect in many readers, the reasons and potential reaction of those who "...feel sidelined or marginalized...[by] by...competing group[s]..." Scapegoating can become rampant and pervasive when national and international policies do not deal with causality.

The question we have to ask in America is what we as a nation are doing to further the goal of: "...human rights, education and democracy..." throughout this nation and ultimately the world. The question we have to ask of ourselves as educators, policy-makers and stakeholders, is what are we doing to proactively make the connections between education reform and social leadership? For what purposes do we intervene in our communities, schools and classrooms?

Displays of racism and anti-Semitism must not be met with, as the Times reports, "...Inexcusable nonchalance." Neither can we afford to allow those in power avoid the connections among national, state and local policies, which may affect attitudes and conditions throughout our communities and this world. As educators we have a responsibility to lead, as educators we have a responsibility to work tirelessly as advocates for those who may not have a community voice, as educators we have a responsibility to further the dissemination of knowledge which may more people gain the tools for life-long learning and for broader social engagements on behalf of all.

So when you stand with a group to improve educational equity and opportunity, know this, in that classroom, in that audience, in that meeting are individuals who can affect change for the good. Appeal to fairness and



tolerance -- the foundation blocks of a democracy. Always teach, always lead with that in mind. Please lead to change the world for the betterment of all!

Thank you for all that you do and the tireless hours that you work on behalf of students.

Eric Cooper

