

Creating a Caring Community



PHOTO COURTESY THE MITCHELLVILLE SCHOOL

Students from the Mitchellville School in Prince George's County attended a rally at the capitol in Washington, D.C., to show their support for the six Louisiana teenagers known as the Jena 6.

INSIDE

6 Caring and
the Jena Six

10 Dear
Jena

12 Noose Display
'Hate Crime'

14 For Safety's
Sake

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

A Word About Creating a Caring Community

The news peg: Newport Mill Middle School, opened in 2002 in Kensington, Md., is recipient of one of ten 2007 National Schools of Character awards. Their principal, Nelson McLeod, 2006 Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award recipient for Montgomery County, states, "Character Education is a wonderful opportunity to support student achievement and to develop a positive and rewarding school culture."

We asked Newport Mill and the Character Education Partnership to assist us in preparing this guide. Creating a caring environment requires staff committed to every student's success and well being ("You can do it" and "I won't give up on you"), training, responsiveness and a program built "around the ever-changing strengths and needs of our students and community." Ellen Turverey, school counselor, and Beth Shevitz, seventh grade World Studies teacher, share a lesson they developed that demonstrates how a news story can be the starting point to discuss social issues, traits that lead to a better society and how bad situations might be improved.

Also in this guide you will find a student assessment guide, KidsPost article on the school safety patrol, *Washington Post* opinion essays and news article, and print and Web resources.

The online guides provided by The Washington Post NIE program suggest activities to use with *Post* articles and the reproducibles that we have created for you. Many of the suggested activities work together to create interdisciplinary segments of a larger project. Select the ones that are appropriate for the age of your students, time available and curriculum fit.

Lesson: A caring environment is a precursor to a nonviolent society, tolerance of differences is a necessary component of a caring environment, and a caring environment reacts to a community problem.

Level: Low to high

Subjects: Social Studies, English Language Arts

Related Activity: Art, Mathematics

NIE Online Guide

Editor — Carol Lange

Art Editor — Carol Porter

Contributing to this guide: Ellen Turverey, school counselor, and Beth Shevitz, seventh grade World Studies teacher, at Newport Mill Middle School



in Montgomery County, Maryland. Newport Mill Middle School was one of nine schools to receive

the Character Education Partnership's 2007 National Schools of Character award. For more information: montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/newportmillms and www.character.org.

Send comments about this guide to:

Margaret Kaplow, Educational Services Manager, kaplowm@washpost.com

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

Creating a Caring Community

Use a Case Study

Seventh grade students at Newport Mill Middle School in Montgomery County, Md., used newspaper, newsmagazine, Web and radio sources to learn about an incident and its aftermath in Jena, La. "Caring and the Jena Six," the lesson developed by Ellen Turverey, school counselor, and Beth Shevitz, their World Studies teacher, is an example of how a news story found in the daily newspaper can be used to talk about creating a caring school environment.

In addition to their lesson, this guide provides "Caring — Bridging the Gap Between Blacks and Whites at Jena High School," which may be used as a student handout or an overhead transparency. "Dear Jena," on page 10 of this guide shares some of the Newport Mill student notes and illustrations to individuals in Jena.

Teachers are provided with "Sequence of Events — Becoming the 'Jena 6'" for use with a timeline activity. If students and you have read different accounts of the time period from August 2006 to June 2007, you will find that not all sources agree on events or details. For example, some say two nooses and others say three nooses were hung on the tree at Jena H.S. All agree more than one noose was hung and that school officials had removed them before most students arrived at the high school. The chronology of events provided in this exercise are key ones for which there is documentation.

If you prefer not to use the Jena 6 lesson, find a current situation that is in the news. Have students collect print, TV and podcast coverage of the situation. Create a

timeline. Identify the problem and caring strategies and principles that might be used to ameliorate the situation.

Find the Facts

Some of the citizens, school officials and local media of Jena view much of outside media coverage as inaccurate and misrepresenting their community and events at the school. Discuss with students how interested people can know the truth. What are reliable sources? How does one access these reliable sources?

One reporter for a Jena, La., newspaper says the three students who put the nooses on the tree were playing a prank on some fellow white students. They were re-enacting a scene from *Lonesome Dove*; they were unaware of the racial symbolism and history of the nooses. Can students find a scene in this novel that might have been reenacted?

The Jena Times staff has compiled a chronological order of events concerning the "Jena Six" in a PDF format. This extensive compilation can be downloaded at the newspaper's Web site (www.thejenatimes.net/home_page_graphics/home.html). Teachers could use this source as well as news articles from *The Washington Post* and other publications to compile their own time line and to compare and contrast the details.

Consider the Implications

How often do students get disciplined at your school? Do other students know when someone has detention? Is suspended? Has been expelled? Is there speculation about

On the Web

www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/linkset/2007/10/02/LI2007100200702.html

Continuing Coverage Jena Six

Washington Post articles that update the Jena Six story

www.thejenatimes.net/home_page_graphics/home.html

The Jena Times

Local newspaper Web site, provides detailed chronology of events

<http://www.cnn.com/CNN/Programs/siu/the.noose/>

The Noose: An American Nightmare

Print and video from the CNN special investigations unit

www.tolerance.org/teach/activities/activity.jsp?ar=867

Six Lessons from Jena

Southern Poverty Law Center provides lessons — what every school and educator can learn from the events in Jena

www.jenasix.org

Jena Six

Articles, timeline, and pro-Jena Six defense information

www.aclu.org/racialjustice/edu/31801prs20070914.html

Treatment of Jena Six Raises Questions of Racial Injustice

American Civil Liberties Union press release on possibility of racially-motivated unequal treatment. Under the ACLU Racial Justice Program concerns. See site for other symbolic and hate speech cases.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

what caused the disciplinary action? When does the student body need to know why someone has been disciplined?

After considering what happens at their school, students could consider whether the noose incident at Jena should have remained a school's matter to handle. When did the incident become a state and national concern? Read "Drive Time for the 'Jena 6'" and discuss the role of media in conveying the story.

In the reprint from the Post/Newsweek opinion piece, "On Faith: The Jena 6 and Iraq," the writer indicates that the Jena Six story has international implications. Whether the three students who hung the nooses meant it or not, they conveyed a message of hate. Whether the arrests were directly related to the "white tree" incident or later actions, the world is looking at justice in the American democracy.

Follow-up a Story

Some news stories require additional coverage. The follow-up story may elaborate on one aspect of the original report, clarify information or provide additional facts. The main figures involved in the original news may be involved in other actions that may or may not be related to the first actions, but remain newsworthy. Court and legal proceedings, public announcements, and repercussions of the original action or statements are also reasons to write a follow-up story.

The Washington Post sometimes groups follow-up stores when there is national implication or extensive local interest. Review the Jena Six Continuing Coverage (www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/linkset/2007/10/02/

LI2007100200702.html) as an example.

Read the newspaper for a week and clip articles that are a follow-up to an earlier story. For example: Did a team win or fail to win a championship? What happens to the players and coaches? Did a major fire take place? Was anyone harmed or someone arrested for setting the fire?

Assess Attitudes and Actions

Finding out how students perceive your school environment provides one means of knowing what your students witness and expect during their time at school. "Do We Have a Caring School Community?" is provided as an assessment tool. The sections and items listed are based on those used for Principle #4 in "Character Education Quality Standards," the self-assessment instruments of the Character Education Partnership (www.character.org).

When students have completed their answers and written their suggestions for improving their school community, tally the responses. You might form three groups. Each group totals its number of 0, 1, 2, 3 and 4 scores for each question. Each group should work together to calculate the average score per question. Group One collects the average scores from the other two groups for the first group of questions (Adults and Students Relate to Each Other); Group Two collects the average scores for the second grouping and Group Three collects the average scores for the five questions in the third grouping. Ask each of the three groups to analyze the scores in their group of questions. They might consider the following:

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Read About It

Rhinos & Raspberries

Tales for the early grades that teach respect and consideration of others. Free copy available at www.teachingtolerance.org/rhinos

Birdseye, Tom

Just Call Me Stupid

Fifth-grader Patrick has difficulty reading — learn why and who makes a difference

Blume, Judy

Blubber

Fifth graders nickname an overweight classmate; one of the bullies eventually questions this behavior

Crew, Linda

Children of the River

A Cambodian teen questions her heritage as she attends an Oregon high school

Gorman, Carol

Games: A Tale of Two Bullies

The principal requires two rivals to play board games with each other daily

Vigna, Judith

Black Like Kyra, White Like Me

A black family moves into an all-white neighborhood

Wojciechowski, Susan

Beany and the Meany

What happens when a student has to work on a major science project with the class "meany"?

Wyeth, Sharon Dennis

The World of Daughter McGuire

A class project provides a child of mixed heritage insight into her background

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

- Which question consistently receives the highest average score?
- Which question consistently receives the lowest average score?
- Does any question have a big difference in average score given by each group?
- For their area of emphasis, which action or attitude requires more attention in their school?
- In which area is the school rated most successful?

Have each group share their evaluations. Write on the board the three areas that students' ratings indicate need the most improvement. Ask students if any of their suggestions for creating a more caring school community addresses one of these. Share suggestions.

If time allows, each group could write a report of their evaluation of the scores within their group and the class. They should end the report with praise for the area(s) where the most success is indicated and with a suggestion for addressing an area of weakness.

Thank Student Patrols

Read "For Safety's Sake," an Oct. 10, 2007, KidsPost article. Discuss the important role that students on the safety patrol play in keeping the school a safe environment. How does their job create a caring environment?

If a member of your class is now or was a safety patrol, ask him or her to share the training that is given and the different responsibilities.

Teachers could get the names and homeroom numbers of the school's safety patrol members. Ask students to write a note of appreciation and to draw an illustration.

Talk About Bullies

Helping students deal with bullies and bullies to improve their behavior is one aspect of creating a caring school community. *Bullies: Do Something About Them*, a March 2007 Washington Post NIE online guide (www.washpost.com/nie, Select Lesson Plans) provides activities, a lesson based on a Supreme Court case, a survey, *Post* articles and resources.

Write a Letter to the Editor

People in a caring community acknowledge when someone has done well, has shown respect for another, has taken time to listen to someone else share concerns, and has helped someone else. Does someone in your school community deserve public recognition? Write a letter to the editor of your school newspaper in which you tell why this person deserves appreciation from your school.

Read the Letters to the Editor in the A section of *The Washington Post* for a week. How many of the letters are finding fault or addressing an issue that needs attention? How many are recognizing a community member who should be applauded?

ANSWERS

"Sequence of Events — Becoming the 'Jena 6'"

- | | |
|-------|-------------------------------------|
| A. 11 | F. 8 (on Dec. 4)
(June 28, 2007) |
| B. 5 | G. 2 |
| C. 6 | H. 7 (on Dec. 2) |
| D. 9 | I. 3 |
| E. 1 | J. 10 |
| | K. 4 |

Answers will vary for the short answer question.

Past Post Guides

Previous Washington Post INSIDE program online guides focus on other aspects of creating a caring environment. These guides are available to download at www.washpost.com/nie. Select Lesson Plans.

How Clean Is Your School?

Students explore the smallest microbes, cleaning methods, and their treatment of their schools' custodial staff in this guide. Students are provided Post articles about the Redskins locker room, a local high school's football player, care of wind instruments and a hotel's response to norovirus. The KidsPost reprint is about bacteria. January 2007



How Clean Is Your School?

Bullies

Bullies are a safety and health threat to more than three million school children annually. This guide's activities and resources address ways to confront bullies, stop bullies and communicate the facts about bullying. March 2005



Do Something About Them

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

Caring and the Jena Six

This lesson was developed by Ellen Turverey, school counselor, and Beth Shevitz, 7th grade World Studies teacher, at Newport Mill Middle School in Montgomery County, Maryland. They presented the lesson to a seventh grade World Studies class on October 8, 2007. Newport Mill Middle School was one of nine schools to receive the Character Education Partnership's 2007 National Schools of Character award.

Objective: To help students understand: 1. that a caring environment is a precursor to a nonviolent society, 2. that tolerance of differences is a necessary component of a caring environment, and 3. how a caring environment could react to a community problem.

Materials: Poster of new vocabulary words, Jena 6 timeline student handout, "Sequence of Events" student worksheet, "Bridging the Gap," pictures of the Jena story, 5x8 index cards, pens, colored pencils and markers. It is suggested that one or two news articles on the Jena incident be read before teaching this lesson to provide background for students' many questions.

Time: 60 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

Activate Prior Knowledge

- Ask students as a whole class to write down three things they care about most. Examples might be family, friends, school, the environment, and a pet.
- Ask for volunteers to share what they have written and write on board the student responses. Re-iterate that *"these are the things we care about."*
- Ask the following questions or something similar depending on the student responses:
 1. How do you feel when others care about the things you care about or respect the things you care about?
 2. What if people in your community didn't care about your family or how they or you or your pet were treated?
 3. What would the world be like if there was no caring? (Example: What would it be like if someone started attacking you in the street and the people who walked by didn't care that you were getting hurt because they didn't know you?)
- Concluding Remark: *"So we can say that caring about others, including people we don't know, is important for our own well being as well as for a peaceful world."*

Conduct Developmental Activity

- Introduce video: *"Now we are going to see a short video and hear what happened in a town called Jena. Here people didn't show caring when an offensive incident occurred to some of its community members. This story is true and it is still going on at this time."*
- Use a map to show students where Jena, Louisiana, is located.
- Review vocabulary words on poster: bail, noose, scuffled, taunt (noun and verb).
- Connect computer to TV so students can see the YouTube video on the larger screen. On the Web site you will find a four-minute video produced by Collateral News: The Jena 6 (http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=jena+6&search=Search). Before showing this video explain that they will see people hanging from nooses, but this did not happen in this story. It is a picture of hangings that used to take place in the South.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

- Ask (after viewing video): *Why do you think the sight of nooses makes black people feel angry/scared?*
- Optional: Listen to “Is Jena Getting a Bad Rap?” on the NPR Web site (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14214976>). Tell students, “We are now going to listen to what some other members of the community are saying about Jena. They feel the people who live in Jena are unfairly getting a bad reputation.” (Only need to listen to about four minutes to get the flavor of the interview.) Using the radio interview may help students get another view of the incident.

Present Guided Activity

- Provide students with a Jena 6 timeline. Students can take turns reading events.
- Show transparencies of correlative people and places (i.e., the tree, Justin Barker and family, and the Jena Six boys) while reading the timeline.
- Allow students to partner and give each pair a “Sequence of Events” student worksheet. Explain that they should take the 11 events and put numbers 1, 2, 3 ... next to each event in the order of how it happened.
- Review the correct order of events. (See page 5 in this guide for answers.)
- Update students on events in Jena that followed the national news coverage. These would include:
 - On Sept. 20, 2007, thousands of people, from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, from all over the country came to Jena to march, protesting the way the boys were treated.
 - Many gave money for Mychal Bell’s bail so he could be released from jail.
 - All of the boys are still waiting for their trials in juvenile court. The charge will be aggravated battery, but no one knows at this point if they will be sentenced to prison or to probation.
 - Lawyers have agreed to take their case without pay, so the boys will be well defended in court.

Ask students, “*What can happen when people care about others?*”

- Conclude: “*This event in Jena calls on us to explore what divides us and whether caring can unite us?*”
- Discuss the following questions as a whole class. Use “Caring — Bridging the Gap Between Blacks and Whites at Jena High School,” as a handout or a transparency, to answer question 2.
 1. At what point in the story would you say that caring about others did not appear to be a core value in Jena? (The class may come to the conclusion that there was no caring from the beginning if the school had a “white only” tree.)
 2. What could the school have done to promote “caring” among the students at Jena High School? (Ask students to think about things you do at your school to promote caring among students. Or ask students what they wish took place at your school to promote more caring among students.)

Complete Closure Activity

- Hand out 5x8 index cards. Tell students to think of these as post cards that might be mailed to the school in Jena.
- Have students draw a picture of “caring.” It can be a picture about the Jena incident or it can just be a general picture of caring, such as feeding a pet, helping a peer in some way, or doing something to help the environment.
- On the other side of the index card, students are to write a letter to someone at Jena High School (a student, principal, counselor) and give a suggestion of how that individual could promote caring in his or her school.

New Words

Bail: Money paid to temporarily get out of jail

Noose: A rope looped in such a way as to be able to hang someone

Scuffle: A disorderly struggle, a fight

Taunt: to tease in a mean way to harass many times over (verb)

Name _____

Date _____

Caring — Bridging the Gap Between Blacks and Whites at Jena High School

How To Promote Caring Before the Noose Incident

By Community Leaders

By School Leaders

By Students

How Caring Could Have Been Promoted After the Noose Incident

By Community Leaders

By School Leaders

By Students



The main idea that students at Jena High School should know:

Name _____

Date _____

Sequence of Events — Becoming the ‘Jena 6’

Events are listed in random order of when they took place. Number the events in chronological order with “1” being the earliest event.

- _____ A. Four out of the five boys who were still in jail were released on bail and are still awaiting trial. One of the boys, Mychal Bell, 16, was tried as an adult and convicted of battery and was kept in prison.
 - _____ B. Robert Bailey, 17, a black student, was turned away from a private party by white students who attacked him with beer bottles. Black and white students attended the party that had been organized by a mother for her daughter.
 - _____ C. Justin Barker, a white student, taunted Robert Bailey and some other black students during school.
 - _____ D. All six black boys were arrested and charged with attempted murder and were put in jail.
 - _____ E. A black student asks the school’s principal at an all-male assembly on August 30, 2006, if he could sit under a tree where white boys sit. Traditionally, only white boys sat under this tree. The principal said he could sit anywhere he wanted. Later, black students with some friends sat under the tree.
 - _____ F. Six black students jumped Justin Barker, knocked him unconscious, kicked him and hit him. He was taken to the hospital for treatment. He was released that night.
 - _____ G. Nooses were hung from the tree that was located in the center of the square located in the center of the campus.
 - _____ H. At a convenience store, Robert Bailey and two friends scuffled with one of the white boys who had attacked him the night before. The white boy pulled a gun, and the three black boys wrestled it away from him.
 - _____ I. The principal recommended expulsion of the three white students who hung the nooses, but the Superintendent stepped in and said they should only have three-day suspensions. The expulsion committee suspended the students for nine days at an alternative facility and gave them two weeks of in-school suspension and Saturday detentions.
 - _____ J. In December, after the fights, an arson fire at the school and arrests, residents prayed at all of the schools and approximately 600 Jena residents filled the Guy Campbell Memorial Football Stadium for a Wednesday night community-wide prayer and unity service sponsored by Jena area pastors of various denominations and ethnic memberships.
 - _____ K. Black students gathered around the tree as a political protest and the principal said that it was time to put the noose incident behind them.
-

What information would you like to know about the events that began at the beginning of the 2006-07 school year?

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

Dear Jena

10-8-07

Dear Principal of Jenna H.S.,

I am a student at NMMS & I noticed that your school lacks a community that is caring. Here at Newport we have the "word of wisdom" on the morning announcements. They are quotes from people that say something important about ethics, values, responsibility, helping others, & caring. ALSO we have "take a stand tuesday" about standing up for People being taunted or teased. ALSO Counsolors come to talk all about something having to do with the "word of the month" this months word for October is "effort" yours could be caring. ALSO couldn't your security gaurds stop people from hanging nooses. this could have stopped this whole epidemic.

Sincerely,
Alexandra H.

Dear Students of Jena HS

You shouldn't fight over who sits under trees. Sit down and think white people are people just a different color from black or black is a different color than white. Were people that are friends not enemys so chill, think, and make a difference. People shouldn't be fighting they should be Friend get to know eachother better, black and Whites African Americans or Americans be smart and make the right choice.

Sincerely
Henry V.

Dear Principle of Jena high school

Over the past few years, caring has been missing from the school. Here are a few ways to promote caring: 1. have a character trait system 2. take away all racist words and items 3. Made everyone get along and become friends 4. have lessons on each race to learn more about them and 5. get people from different races to work together on different assignments.

Sincerely,
Michael M.

Dear McChal Bell,

Based on the events that happened at your school, it seems to me that your school is NOT caring. Here are some things that you guys could do to be more Caring is try to be friends, or be Cool with the boys that were kinda showing racism. Another thing that you could do is Just try talking 2 them ask them why did they lie, and why they did what they did.

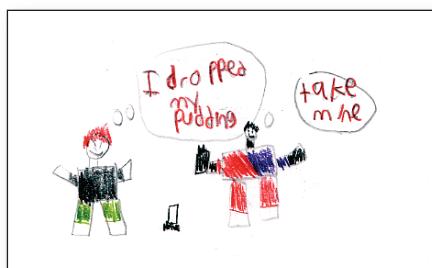
Peace out —
Jessica R.



Jessica R.



Priscilla M.



Sean L.



Lydia T.

Dear Superintendent,

Seing all the events that has happened with in the last year I think caring is seriously lacking in Jena. Here are some suggestions to improve the amount of caring. In our school we have announcements on character building. We also have videos by the teachers that demonstrate good character. You can also band the hanging of noose. Another idea I have is you should of held a meeting with the 6 boys and the other white boys in a room together to see both sides of the story. Well I am glad I got to share my opinon on the lack of caring.

Yours Truly,
Lydia T.

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Drive Time for the 'Jena 6'

By Eugene Robinson

•Originally published
September 21, 2007

How did thousands of African Americans come to descend on the town of Jena, La., yesterday for a march and rally that brought to mind the heady days of the civil rights movement? The answer says as much about what has changed over the past half-century as it says about what hasn't.

Most people know the outlines of the story by now, but here's a synopsis: Black students at the local high school sat under a tree that everyone knew was a place where white students usually congregated. White students reacted by hanging three nooses in the tree. Racial tensions escalated from there, including fights in which both black and white students got roughed up, but no one was seriously injured. Local officials, who are white, handled the white offenders with a "boys will be boys" attitude — a few brief school suspensions, basically. Black offenders were expelled from school, arrested and charged as adults with felony offenses, including attempted murder.

These events happened in 2006. For months, they utterly failed to penetrate the national consciousness. We still might not know about what was happening in Jena if the case hadn't been noticed by bloggers, who sounded the alarm. And I'm quite sure there would have been no busloads of protesters descending on Jena if the cause hadn't been taken up by a radio personality best known for R-rated banter about sex and relationships.

Michael Baisden, whose afternoon drive-time show "Love, Lust & Lies"

is heard in urban markets across the country, launched a crusade on behalf of the "Jena 6" — a group of black students, ages 15 to 17 when they allegedly beat up a white schoolmate and who still face adult charges of aggravated battery that could send them to prison for up to 20 years. The hours that Baisden normally would have spent in risque repartee with "grown and sexy" callers about romance or infidelity were devoted instead to the Jena case.

The obvious issue was one of equal justice: Either treat the whole series of incidents as a mere disciplinary problem for the high school to handle, or treat it as a criminal matter. Just don't have one standard of justice for whites and another, much harsher standard for blacks.

The cause was then taken up by other black radio hosts — Tom Joyner, whose morning drive-time show has enormous reach; Steve Harvey, the comedian whose morning show usually covers the same "Does he really love me?" territory as does Baisden's; the Rev. Al Sharpton, whose show, as you might expect, was already heavy on politics and activism.

Yesterday morning, as the throng descended on Jena, both the Joyner and Harvey shows featured live updates from the scene. Baisden and Sharpton were in Jena, helping lead the demonstrations. It's fair to say that without black radio, the case of the Jena 6 probably never would have become a significant national story — and certainly never would have sparked one of the biggest civil rights protests in decades.

Why is this interesting? Because black America is increasingly complicated and diverse, riven by fault lines that didn't exist back when the great civil

rights heroes were marching in Selma. We're not forced by law to live in the same neighborhoods or to go to the same schools anymore. A generation has reached adulthood without ever experiencing the in-your-face racism of the Jim Crow era. There are black families that have had multigenerational middle-class success, and black families trapped in multigenerational poverty and dysfunction.

Black radio is one of the places where all the varied segments of black America still come together. It's a true community medium, even if what we still call "the black community" is, for most purposes, best thought of as plural.

But yesterday's protest needed more than the right medium, it needed the right message. When a local prosecutor in a small Southern town is confronted with a racial clash and he gives the whites a slap on the wrist while trying his best to send the blacks to prison, there aren't many black Americans who feel they can enjoy the luxury of indifference.

We don't see that many instances of overt, unapologetic, separate-and-unequal racial discrimination these days, thank goodness. Let's hope we never see another. Because when something like Jena happens, we're reminded, as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in his letter from the Birmingham jail, that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." And we're reminded that however diverse we are, to some people we all look alike.

Mr. Robinson may be reached at eugenerobinson@washpost.com.

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

U.S. Attorney Calls Noose Display ‘Hate Crime,’ Explains Lack of Charges

By DARRYL FEARS

Washington Post Staff Writer

• Originally published
October 17, 2007; A07

Under a barrage of questions from House Judiciary Committee members, a federal prosecutor said yesterday that the hanging of nooses at a high school in Jena, La., constituted a hate crime but that charges were not brought because the students allegedly responsible were juveniles.

The explanation by Donald Washington, the U.S. attorney for the Western District of Louisiana, came early in an emotionally charged hearing. It was the first congressional session to address year-long racial tension in the rural town that led to fistfights and other interracial confrontations, the prosecution of six black high school students in the beating of a white student and a large civil rights march on the defendants’ behalf.

Washington, who is black, faced sharp questioning from black committee members about why he did not intervene as racial strife in the small town grew after the nooses, a historic symbol of racial lynching, were hung in a tree outside the high school, and why he did not engage the white prosecutor who charged the black juveniles as adults.

One student, Mychal Bell, was convicted of aggravated battery by an all-white jury and faced as much as 22 years in prison. A state appeals court dismissed the verdict, ruling that Bell should not have been tried in an adult court. Bell was released from prison after nine months but was recently reincarcerated on a probation violation.



AP PHOTO/LAWRENCE JACKSON

Protesters walk outside the U.S. Justice Department to demand all charges be dropped against the Jena Six in Washington, Tuesday, Oct. 2, 2007.

The white students who hung the nooses were suspended and forced to attend disciplinary courses. Jena High School’s principal, who is white, sought to expel them, but was overruled by the school superintendent, who is also white and called the nooses a schoolboy prank.

Thousands of people marched in Jena last month to protest what they called the overzealous prosecution of the six black students, who originally were charged with attempted murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

Washington told the committee he could not stop the LaSalle Parish prosecutor, Reed Walters, from proceeding with the charges because the federal government’s authority in

the case is limited. “I want to assure this committee that the Department of Justice was engaged,” he said.

Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-Tex.) criticized that response. “I want you to tell me why you, the first black [Western District of Louisiana] U.S. district attorney, did not do more, and I want to know what you’re going to do to get Mychal Bell out of jail!”

“I did intervene,” Washington said. “I will tell you that, just like you were offended [by the charges], I was offended.”

Washington said for the first time publicly that the department is gathering evidence to determine whether there are racial disparities in Louisiana’s judicial system and in its application of justice.

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

On Faith *A conversation on religion with Jon Meacham and Sally Quinn*

washingtonpost.com News Opinions Religion **Newsweek** Newsweek Home Health Science

On Faith  Main Page | About On Faith | By Religion | All On Faith Panelists | XML RSS Feed

A CONVERSATION ON RELIGION WITH JON MEACHAM AND SALLY QUINN

EBOO PATEL

THE FAITH DIVIDE

Eboo Patel is founder and executive director of the [Interfaith Youth Core](#), a Chicago-based international nonprofit that promotes interfaith cooperation. His blog, *The Faith Divide*, explores what drives faiths apart and what brings them together. [more »](#)

[Faith Divide](#) | [Eboo Patel Archives](#) | [On Faith Archives](#) | [Interfaith Youth Core](#)

The Jena 6 and Iraq

Imagine you are an Iraqi who knows something of American history, and admires it.

You have read John Winthrop's famous *City on a Hill* speech, about America as a community where people labor, suffer and rejoice together. You are familiar with the bold statements about human equality and the guarantees of due process in the *Declaration of Independence* and the *United States Constitution*. You have heard about Susan B. Anthony, Jane Addams, Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King Jr. and others who fought to extend the American promise to all people regardless of background.

You believe America is a place where people from the four corners of the world live in equal dignity and mutual loyalty. And America — although she makes mistakes, and sometimes acts narrowly and selfishly — can help other places build democracy and pluralism as well.

Now imagine that you are watching and reading recent news reports of the Jena 6 (this is assuming, of course, that your electricity is working).

You must be asking yourself: What is a “white tree”? Aren’t nooses the ugliest symbols of a past that America is proud to be beyond? What of excessive criminal charges based on race? Aren’t American prosecutors and American judges impartial?

AMAZING GRACES

Naming Rites

 **Alex Remington** | My name doesn't identify me by the food I eat, the jokes I like, the place I want to be on Friday night, the God I worship.

POSTED NOVEMBER 3, 2007 2:08 PM | [0](#) COMMENTS

GUEST VOICE

Michael Gerson | [Danger of Strict Secularism](#)

[About Michael Gerson](#)

THE FAITH DIVIDE

*Eboo Patel is founder and executive director of the Interfaith Youth Core, a Chicago-based international nonprofit that promotes interfaith cooperation. His blog, *The Faith Divide*, explores what drives faiths apart and what brings them together.*

The Jena 6 and Iraq

Imagine you are an Iraqi who knows something of American history, and admires it.

You have read John Winthrop's famous *City on a Hill* speech, about America as a community where people labor, suffer and rejoice together. You are familiar with the bold statements about human equality and the guarantees of due process in the *Declaration of Independence* and the *United States Constitution*. You have heard about Susan B. Anthony, Jane Addams, Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King Jr. and others who fought to extend the American promise to all people regardless of background.

You believe America is a place where people from the four corners of the world live in equal dignity and mutual loyalty. And America — although she makes mistakes, and sometimes acts narrowly and selfishly — can help other places build democracy and pluralism as well.

Now imagine that you are watching and reading recent news reports of the Jena 6 (this is assuming, of course, that your electricity is working).

You must be asking yourself: What is a “white tree”? Aren’t nooses the ugliest symbols of a past that America is proud to be beyond? What of excessive criminal charges based on race? Aren’t American prosecutors and American judges impartial?

You see leaders from the Civil Rights era marching in support of the Jena 6, but you remember that part of what made the Civil Rights Movement great was that people responded peacefully to police dogs and water cannons. Didn’t these six kids from Jena stomp another kid unconscious?

You start to watch the various videos on YouTube related to this incident: the Neo-Nazis organizing and threatening, whites and blacks calling each other vile names, the promises of violence and the plots of revenge.

You think about Iraq. There are roving bands of young men from both sides looking for people to stomp (and worse). There are police and prosecutors and judges who are so partial that people from a different community don’t even hope for fair treatment. There are Sunni and Shia neighborhoods.

You wonder if there are Sunni and Shia trees.

“Isn’t America trying to build pluralism in Iraq?” somebody asked me hopefully at a talk I gave at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs last week.

What might our imaginary Iraqi think of such a question? Perhaps he would suggest that we build pluralism at home.

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

C14 WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2007 M2



KidsPost

THE WASHINGTON POST

For Safety's Sake



Leo Wackler, left, and Nathaniel Remez, behind the pole, raise the flag outside Janney Elementary.

Kids on the safety patrol at Janney Elementary School in Northwest Washington are role models. They arrive at school early and stay late to help keep other students safe.

This is a big job. In the mornings, Albemarle Street outside Janney is busy with cars, bikes and strollers.

"I like [patrol] because I know that I'm saving people's lives," fifth-grader Leander Trotter said one recent morning as he watched for the walk light to change at the corner. "I know someone might get hit by a car if [we] weren't directing traffic well enough."

Nathaniel Remez is one of Janney's two safety-patrol captains. He wanted to be on the patrol because his older sister had been. "I like it because you're helping people," he said.

Leo Wackler is the other captain. "I like to get up here early," he said. "I also like getting to walk around when other people are going to class, and [I] make sure people are not running."

Nathaniel and Leo are friends, and the sixth-graders work well together. That morning the boys were assigned to raise the American flag outside the school. Nathaniel pulled the rope on the flagpole. Leo unfolded the flag. Teamwork!

Patrol members at Janney come to school a couple of days in the summer to learn their responsibilities. They help students cross the street and get in and out of cars safely. In a larger sense, though, it's their job to set good examples for other kids — especially the younger ones.

Sophia Okorn set such a good exam-

Student Patrols Play an Important Role



Fourth-grader Sam Guenther, left, helps direct pedestrians at Albemarle and 42nd streets before school.

ple last year that she was named Patroller of the Year by AAA Mid-Atlantic, a group that helps motorists and other travelers.

After a student was hit by a car at her school, Crestwood Elementary in Springfield, Sophia started the Cross-Age Safety Teaching Program. She prepared presentations for different grade levels and wrote a

**Sophia Okorn of Springfield
was Patroller of the Year.**

song to the kids' tune "Bingo." She called it "Look Right and Then Look Left."

Sophia, who is now in seventh grade, says that being a good role model and leader is about respecting everyone. "The best way

to get somebody to do something is not scream and yell," she said, but to "approach them nicely and tell them what they're doing wrong."

"It's a lot nicer and a lot easier way to get people to do what you want them to do."

— Moira E. McLaughlin



FAMILY PHOTO



Former presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton were safety patrollers as boys.

PHOTOS BY JOE BEDDICK — AAA MID-ATLANTIC FOUNDATION FOR SAFETY & EDUCATION

Safety in Numbers

The School Safety Patrol program began in 1920. Since then, millions of kids around the world have worn the brightly colored belts and badges of patrol members.

If your school doesn't have a safety patrol and would like to join the program, ask an adult to contact Joe Beddick of the AAA Mid-Atlantic Foundation for Safety & Education at 703-222-4126 or e-mail him at jbeddick@aaamidatlantic.com.

The patrol program is for fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders.

Who are your school's safety patrol members?

Name _____

Date _____

Do We Have a Caring School Community?

You spend many hours each day at school. It is the place where you learn new skills and gain information to help you today and in your future. Here you make friends, play and work together, and practice interacting in a positive way. Read the following statements and decide on a 0 to 4 scale how these actions are put in practice at your school.

Here is what the numbers mean.

- 0 Poor.** You don't see it happening or it is not expected.
- 1 Weak.** You see it happening occasionally
- 2 Good.** You see evidence of it.
- 3 Very Good.** You see this often and with desire to make it better at your school
- 4 Exceptional.** Our school is an example of what should be happening.

Adults and Students Relate to Each Other

- 0 1 2 3 4 1. The staff cares about students.
0 1 2 3 4 2. Teachers and administrators attend school events.
0 1 2 3 4 3. Students can get extra help from teachers on academic work.
0 1 2 3 4 4. When teachers see that students have problems, they try to help them.

The School Encourages Students to Care About Each Other

- 0 1 2 3 4 1. Respect for and kindness towards each other is expected.
0 1 2 3 4 2. Student safety and belonging are as important as academic success.
0 1 2 3 4 3. Students mentor students in other grades.
0 1 2 3 4 4. Teachers and students give compliments to those who show care and respect for others.
0 1 2 3 4 5. If unkind remarks are made, they are not ignored. They are noted and corrected.

Peer Cruelty and Violence Are Not Tolerated

- 0 1 2 3 4 1. Students from different classrooms and grade levels interact with each other in positive ways.
0 1 2 3 4 2. When peer abuse (put-downs, racial slurs, insensitive gender remarks, or comments about appearance, economic or social status) takes place, the staff of the school help students understand why this action is wrong and express their dismay at the behavior (not at the student).
0 1 2 3 4 3. We have learned constructive ways to respond to bullies and know why bullying is wrong.
0 1 2 3 4 4. We are expected to show manners and respect towards each other as well as toward adults.
0 1 2 3 4 5. The staff tries to prevent peer cruelty and violence and deals with it effectively when it takes place.

Give one suggestion for creating a more caring environment at your school. Use back of this sheet for your answer.

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

Academic Content Standards

This lesson addresses academic content standards of Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia.

Maryland

World Studies: Students will understand the diversity and commonality, human interdependence, and global cooperation of the people of Maryland, the United States, and the World through a multicultural and a historic perspective. (Grade 7, Standard 2: Peoples of the Nation and World) Indicator, C1: Analyze major sources of tension, cooperation, and conflict in the world and the efforts that have been made to address them.

World Studies: Students will understand the historical development and current status of the fundamental concepts and processes of authority, power, and influence, with particular emphasis on democratic skills and attitudes necessary to become responsible citizens. (Grade 7, Standard 1: Political Science) Indicator, C2: Analyze how governments, organizations, and policies around the world protect or fail to protect the rights of individuals and groups.

World Studies: Students will examine significant ideas, beliefs, and themes; organize patterns and events; and analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time in Maryland and the United States. (Grade 7, Standard 5, History) Indicator C1: Analyze the major sources of tension and conflict in the contemporary world.

The Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum Content Standards can be found online at <http://mdk12.org/mspp/vsc/index.html>.

Virginia

Civics and Economics: The student will demonstrate knowledge of personal character traits that facilitate thoughtful and effective participation in civic life by. (CE4) a) practicing trustworthiness and honesty; b) practicing courtesy and respect for the rights of others; c) practicing responsibility, accountability, and self-reliance; d) practicing respect for the law; e) practicing patriotism.

Virginia and United States History: The student will demonstrate knowledge of economic, social, cultural, and political developments in the contemporary United States by c) explaining the media influence on contemporary culture and how scientific and technological advances affect the workplace, health care and education.

Introduction to History and Social Science: The student will explain the responsibilities of a good citizen, with emphasis on a) respecting and protecting the rights and property of others; b) describing actions that can improve the school and community (Grade 2, Civics 2.10)

Standards of Learning currently in effect for Virginia Public Schools can be found online at www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Superintendent/Sols/home.shtml.

Washington, D.C.

Social Studies: Students identify major waves of immigration and demographic changes in United States history and describe the diverse nature of American people and their contributions to American culture. (United States History, 5.16, Grade 5)

Social Studies: Students distinguish relevant from irrelevant information, essential from incidental information, and verifiable from unverifiable information in historical narratives and stories. (Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills, 14, Grades 6-8)

Social Studies: Students describe the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. (Civic Values, 2.2, Grade Two) Identify the rights and responsibilities that students have in the school as citizens and members of the school community (e.g., right to vote in a class election, responsibility to follow school rules, responsibility not to harm one another, responsibility to respect each other's feelings).

Learning Standards for DCPS are found online at www.k12.dc.us/dcps/Standards/standardsHome.htm.