

**VOICES**  
**PEACE • PRIDE • ACTIVISTS • SOCIAL ACTION**

## EXPLORING SOCIAL ACTION

In a small Idaho school, Football meant everything to Earnest “Neto” Villareal. And yet as fans screamed racial insults during a football game, the player left the field. The insults also bothered Andy Percifield. When Neto and Andy teamed up, each using his own special powers, fans began to feel the heat they had never felt before.

**“We made it known that we wouldn’t accept racism in our school or from our fans. We made a difference in the part of our lives that we really could control.”**

**Neto Villareal**



### Grade Level

Grade 3-6

### Curriculum Area

Art • Communication • English/Language Arts • Math

### Overview

In his book, *Its Our World, Too!* author, Phillip Hoose profiles young people who have chosen to make a difference by actively taking a stand for something they believe in. Many of the young people integrate core curriculum skills to ignite social change. To introduce children to the study of social activism integrates learning areas, supports school-to-work initiatives, and links classroom study to real-world situations with potential for global impact. *Face Relations* is a collection of stories that looks at race in teen reality --- how it plays at school, in the cafeteria, on teams, and at home. Mixed race people are the fastest growing population in this country, further blending heritage in our melting pot. Teens who are exploring their identities and finding their roles know that learning about different cultures is essential. The stories cover many different ethnicities, including African, Indian, Mexican and Asian-Americans, and often combinations of them. "Skins" by Joseph Bruchac shows how three teens of color at a predominately white high school hide or flaunt their perceived ethnicities. One dyes his hair black to look more Native-American, one remains ambiguous about his ancestry,

and one becomes defiant. When their paths converge in this short but powerful story, surprising revelations change perspectives for characters and likely for readers as well.

## Objectives

Students will demonstrate positive attitudes towards life, living, and learning through an understanding and respect of self and others.

Students will make responsible decisions, solve problems and think critically.

Students will demonstrate responsible citizenship and an understanding of global interdependence.

## Key Words

### Letter Writing

Definition-a written or printed message usually sent by mail in an envelope.

Context-Letter writing campaigns are effective ways to start a movement rolling.

### Interview

Definition-a meeting, especially one at which one meets and asks questions which are broadcast or published.

Context-By holding an interview with people in their neighborhood, students can gain a feeling for their community.

### Movement

Definition-an organization of people who share the same beliefs.

Context-The Civil Rights Movement is an example of an activity of National Proportion.

### Unity

Definition-to bring together in a common purpose or belief.

Context-Unity is the key to the success of any social action project.

## Examples of Social Action Projects in our Community

### Mural Restoration

Elementary students collected pennies for the restoration of the "Mural of Peace." The mural located on a wall of Esperanza Unida, 1329 West National Avenue, is currently under repair for damage to weather. They researched the mural's artist and the impact it has had on the neighborhood and larger community.

### Lead Poisoning Awareness Campaign

Elementary students held an awareness campaign educating their community about the dangers of lead poisoning. Fourth and fifth grade students tested paint chip samples brought in from the students' homes. Working with the Sixteenth St. Health Center staff they tested the paint chips for their level of lead content. Students designed and distributed brochures describing the impact lead

poisoning can have on one's health. They held a rally at the school to build community support to eradicate this health concern.

### **Community Gardens**

Various elementary schools have created "community gardens". Students used various math skills and concepts as they designed the garden plot. They studied plants and researched seed companies for the best plants to grow in this area.

Students planted the seeds, cared for the plants throughout the summer, and will distribute the produce to the neighbors.

### **Food Drive**

Students held a food drive to support the Second Harvest Food Bank. Students brought in canned goods, weighed the contents, graphed and charted the weight and used the comparison for their daily math practice.

### **Tot Lot Campaign**

Kindergarten students were successful in getting a tot lot built on their school grounds due to their hard work. They surveyed their classmates as to what kind of play equipment was preferred, gathered the data and graphed it. They wrote letters to their alderman and the MPS Facilities and Maintenance Department expressing their concern for needing a playground in their community. First graders designed and built models of the desired playground from recycled materials and presented their designs to the alderman and community at a Neighborhood Meeting.

## **Activities**

### **Activity**

Study one of the examples of student activism from "It's Our World, Too!" by Phillip Hoose. Graph or chart the example to illustrate and further explain the concept. Write the activist to ask additional questions.

### **Activity**

Research (books, Internet) additional examples of young people who are working for social change. Students could dramatize the situation to present to other classes or a school-wide program of Peace or Citizenship.

### **Activity**

Interview adults regarding social change and citizenship. Students craft well-worded questions in advance of the interview. What events do adults remember? Use the information as part of an in-class presentation (multi-media, written, or oral). Invite the interviewed persons as distinguished guests further celebrating diversity and pride.

### **Activity**

Invite speakers from the local Gang Squad to address the class concerning local gang graffiti issues and what the city and school is doing about the problem. Brainstorm additional strategies with students and create a class project action plan. Contact partner classrooms from different schools or states and establish support communications (email, letter writing, speaker phone communications, etc)

### **Activity**

As this classroom action peace progresses throughout the year, have students graph from month to month the activities of the project. Consider exploring field experiences and service-learning opportunities.

### **Activity**

Explore school-based issues. Present students with classroom issues, or school-wide improvements and develop strategies to address the problem. Examples may be specific to the class (such as homework turn-in rate, test scores, numbers of books read) or could concern community issues (homelessness, hunger, litter, graffiti). Strategize an action plan in which all students work together towards a single issue or goal. Students maintain journals.

“Sometimes to be silent is to lie”  
Miguel Unamuno  
Spanish Philosopher

## Resources

*It's Our World, Too!* Phillip Hoose. New York, New York: Joy Street/ Little Brown Publishers. 2002.

*Face Relations: 11 Stories About Seeing Beyond Color.* Marilyn Singer. New York, New York: Simon and Schuster. 2004.

## Internet Links

### Teacher Sites:

*Fight Hate and Promote Tolerance*

<http://www.tolerance.org/>

Lessons in Tolerance

<http://www.ccsf.edu/Resources/Tolerance/>



“It’s been said that we don’t inherit our land from our parents- we borrow it from our children. You’re a child; it’s your land. Why not fight for it? It’s our earth. I challenge kids to protect it. If we don’t do it, no one else is going to.”

Andrew Holleman

12-year-old student on saving a forest from a condominium developer

Used with permission of author, Phillip Hoose

## Standards and Expectations

- *MPS Standards Level 3 Reading A.3.4*

Read to acquire information.

- *MPS Standards Level 4 Writing B.4.1*

Create or produce writing to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

- *MPS Standards Level 5 Research E.5.1*

Conduct research and inquiry on self-selected or assigned topics, issues, or problems and use an appropriate form to communicate their findings.

- *Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Mathematics A.3.25*

Attend to important features of a graph to imagine the stories behind graphs of change over time and to draw graphs to fit particular stories.

- *Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Social Studies C.4.10*

Describe and distinguish among values and beliefs of different groups and institutions.

- *Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Visual Arts*

Students will reflect upon the nature of art and meaning in art and culture.

- *National Standards for Visual Arts Education Content Standard #4*

Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

## Assessment

Following research, students would prepare a persuasive poster or presentation campaigning for change. Utilizing research from prior activities, the presentation could include writing, drama, illustration, multi-media, or other.

Videotape presentations and score. Premier the videotapes created at a parent night or open-house event.