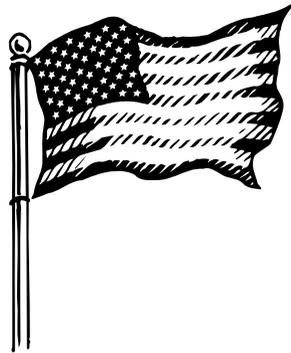


# TOLERANCE



## ...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE®

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# TOLERANCE

...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

A DEMOCRACY IS ONLY AS EFFECTIVE AS ITS CITIZENS, WHICH IS WHY CIVIC EDUCATION IS ESSENTIAL TO PRESERVING OUR DEMOCRACY. ONLY BY ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN AMERICAN, AND HOW OUR COUNTRY WORKS, WILL OUR COUNTRY CONTINUE TO THRIVE IN THE FUTURE.

ONE WAY TO APPROACH CIVIC EDUCATION IS BY DISCUSSING “AMERICAN VALUES.” THESE ARE EXEMPLARY BEHAVIORS OR CHARACTER TRAITS THAT HAVE ALWAYS BEEN VALUED AS IDEAL FOR AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENSHIP. “AMERICAN VALUES” ARE SEPARATE FROM “HABITS.” HABITS ARE ACTIVITIES THAT AMERICANS MIGHT FALL INTO, BUT ARE NOT “VALUES.” BY DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE TWO, VALUES AND HABITS, DISCUSSION GROUP MEMBERS WILL BE ABLE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT THEY APPRECIATE MOST ABOUT OUR DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM AND ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE AND DISCUSSION AS RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS.



## TOLERANCE...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

### DEFINITIONS

Why definitions? Words are extremely powerful, and dictionaries are always very precise about what vocabulary they use in their definitions. Look at how the definition of tolerance has evolved over time. Look over the definitions together as a group, and list out the words frequently used to define tolerance. Make a separate list of how the definitions have changed. Are the changes substantial or subtle? As a group, come up with your own definition for tolerance, paying close attention to what words the class wishes to include or exclude.

1. n. the power or act of enduring; tolerance is applied to the disposition of habit of mind, toleration of action. Tolerance will lead to toleration of different opinions. (Worcester Dictionary of the English Language; Boston 1874).
2. n. a disposition to be patient and indulgent toward those whose opinions or practices differ from one's own; freedom from bigotry or severity in judging of the opinions or conduct of others: "the Christian Spirit of charity and tolerance." GP Howley, Sermons II. (Century Dictionary, an Encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language; New York 1911).
3. n. forbearance in judging of the acts or opinions of others; especially forbearance towards those of religious views differing from one's own. (Funk and Wagnall's New Standard Dictionary of the English Language; New York/London 1931).
4. n. sympathy or indulgence for diversity in thought or conduct: breadth of spirit or of viewpoint <the basis of [tolerance] is the knowledge that there may be a measure of truth in the other camp>. (Webster's 3<sup>rd</sup> New International Dictionary of the English Language; Springfield, MA 1976).
5. n. a fair, objective and permissive attitude toward those whose opinions, practices, race, religion, nationality, etc. differ from one's own; freedom from bigotry. (Random House Dictionary of the English Language; New York 1987).
6. n. The ability or willingness to tolerate something, in particular the existence of opinions or behavior that one does not necessarily agree with. (New Oxford American Dictionary; New York 2001).

## TOLERANCE...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

### VOICES IN HISTORY

Quotations can help to point out values that are important to American society. The following collection of quotes indicate that tolerance has long been a part of dialogue on government. Many other quotes can be found by encouraging group members to explore quotation sites on the Internet. Ask the group to discuss the relationship of tolerance and democracy in light of these quotes.

*"The only stable state is the one in which all men are equal before the law."*  
- Aristotle

*"The highest result of education is tolerance."*  
-Helen Keller, *Optimism* (1903)

*"Laws alone cannot secure freedom of expression; in order that every man present his views without penalty there must be spirit of tolerance in the entire population."*  
- Albert Einstein

*"The love of democracy is that of equality."*  
-Charles de Montesquieu

*"You can protect your liberties in this world only by protecting the other man's freedom. You can be free only if I am free."* - Clarence Darrow

*"It is of great importance in a republic not only to guard the society against the oppression of its rulers, but to guard one part of the society against the injustice of the other part."*  
-The Federalist Paper #51 (Alexander Hamilton or James Madison)

*"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that."* -Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

*"We will only attain freedom if we learn to appreciate what is different, and muster the courage to discover what is fundamentally the same. America's diversity offers so much richness and opportunity. Take a chance, won't you? Knock down the fences which divide."* -Justice Thurgood Marshall



## **HISTORICAL SOURCES & STUDY QUESTIONS**

How does one decide what an American value might be? The soundest approach is by using core historical documents. Materials ingrained into American culture include the Declaration of Independence, the Federalist Papers, and the Constitution as well as famous speeches, Supreme Court cases, and other sources documenting events or ideas from American history.

Before moving on to the historical sources and study questions listed here, consider starting a group discussion by asking how the group might identify an “American value”. Have the group make a list of what it considers to be “American values” and why. See if the values the group members come up with are similar to those used in these study guides.

### **ROGER WILLIAMS’ “A PLEA FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY”**

Link to general information on Roger Williams at Wikipedia:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger\\_Williams\\_%28theologian%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Williams_%28theologian%29)

Link to text at University of Virginia “Religious Freedom Page:”

[http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/sacred/williams\\_plea\\_1644.html](http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/sacred/williams_plea_1644.html)

Roger Williams was a British man who moved to the Massachusetts Bay Colony, hoping to find religious freedom. In Massachusetts, he became an unpopular figure because of his radical beliefs in complete religious liberty and because he questioned the right of the colonists to take land away from the Native Americans. Eventually he was banished from the Massachusetts colony. After settling on some land and purchasing it from the natives nearby, he founded Providence and the Rhode Island colony. (More information on Williams’ life can be found at the Wikipedia link above.)

As the introduction to the text states, *A Plea for Religious Liberty* is a dialogue written by Roger Williams while he was in England awaiting Parliament’s decision on his charter for Providence & Rhode Island colony.

## TOLERANCE...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

### HISTORICAL SOURCES AND STUDY QUESTIONS CONTINUED

1) Mr. Williams wrote: *“Fifthly, all civil states with their officers of justice in their respective constitutions & administrations are proved essentially civil, and therefore not judges, governors, or defenders of the spiritual or Christian state and worship.”* Consider having the group members paraphrase this quote and discuss its meaning. What was Mr. Williams’ goal in distinguishing between judges and elected officials as civil authorities, and those who are spiritual authorities? Did he believe that judges and elected officials were essentially “un-spiritual,” or did his comment instead indicate a reason to separate government and religion? Why would he do this? What other objectives might he have had? What does the group think? Why?

2) Mr. Williams also wrote: *“Sixthly, it is the will and command of God that ... a permission of [a variety of religious or unreligious beliefs] be granted to all men in all nations and countries; and they are only to be fought against with ... the sword of God’s spirit—the Word of God.”* This quotation may provide for a good discussion within the group. Mr. Williams was not unconcerned with evangelizing or advocating his own religious beliefs to others. This did not, however, shake his equally firm belief that people should be allowed to worship as they wished peacefully and, in the case of this quote, without physical violence to force them to do otherwise. How does the group think that this freedom to worship relates to tolerance? Does the group see any connection with Mr. Williams’ firm convictions and the convictions of the Founding Fathers as identified in the Declaration of Independence (see below) or in the Constitution?

3) Also from Mr. Williams’ dialogue: *“Eighthly, God requireth not a uniformity of religion to be enacted or enforced in any civil state; which enforced uniformity (sooner or later) is the greatest occasion of civil war, ravishing of conscience, persecution of Christ Jesus in His servants, and of the hypocrisy and destruction of millions of souls.”* Here Mr. Williams is very explicit in his views on separating government and religion, and expresses his doubts about a state-sponsored church. Have the group again think about connections between this conviction and those of the founding fathers (as discussed in other guides and in the following study question). Also consider having the group think about how tolerance, or freedom, of religion would be affected if the government sponsored or enforced a state religion. What are their thoughts and feelings about this concept? What experiences or resources inform their opinions?

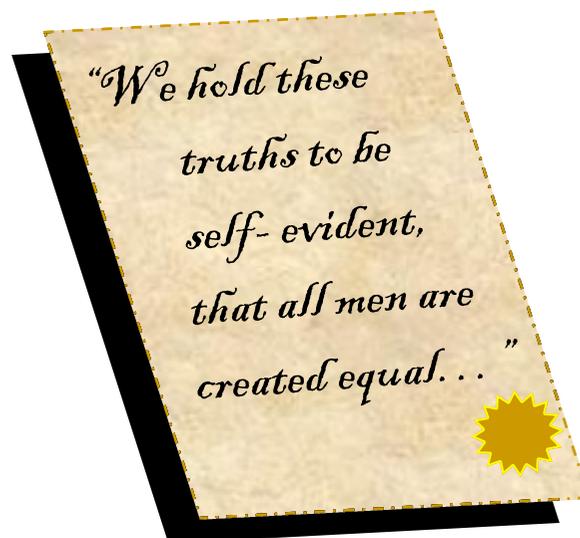
## TOLERANCE...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

### HISTORICAL SOURCES AND STUDY QUESTIONS CONTINUED

#### **THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE** [http://www.archives.gov/national\\_archives\\_experience/charters/declaration\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/national_archives_experience/charters/declaration_transcript.html)

1) *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the governed."* This is the preamble to the Declaration of Independence, which often has been quoted as a cornerstone of American democracy and culture. It states that all men are created equal, and all equally deserving of "certain, inalienable rights." How does this idea of equality relate to tolerance? Is tolerance inherent to the idea of equality? Why or why not?

2) Jefferson uses the Declaration of Independence to elaborate on the rights of a government. His idea of equality is closely related to the concept that, because all men are equal, the government's power is based on "the consent of the governed," not by its own arbitrary whims or motives. Today, America is one of the most culturally diverse nations in the world. Given this, is the importance of tolerance as it applies to government greater or lesser? What does the group think or feel should be the role of tolerance in the American government? Why? What experiences inform their opinions? What effects have policies of tolerance had in the past? Try to think of examples as a group. Do these examples inform the group's discussions?



## TOLERANCE...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

### HISTORICAL SOURCES AND STUDY QUESTIONS CONTINUED

#### **THE STATUE OF LIBERTY**

Link to National Parks site:

<http://www.nps.gov/stli/>

The Statue of Liberty is one of the most enduring emblems of America. When US adults were polled with the question, “Which of the following do you think of as the top three symbols of the United States—that stand for or represent America to you and the world,” the only thing to score above the Statue of Liberty was the American flag. (Harris Interactive Poll:

[http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris\\_poll/index.asp?PID=305](http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=305))

As the National Parks website states: “The people of France gave the Statue to the people of the United States over one hundred years ago in recognition of the friendship established during the American Revolution. Over the years, the Statue of Liberty has grown to include freedom and democracy as well as this international friendship.” For a more expansive history, have the group look over the history section of the Statue of Liberty site linked above.

1) This sonnet was written for the dedication of the Statue of Liberty in 1883 by Emma Lazarus, and was engraved on a bronze plaque in 1903. It now currently stands inside the exhibit on Liberty Island:

#### *The New Colossus*

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame  
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!”  
Cried she  
With silent lips, “Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

## TOLERANCE...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

### HISTORICAL SOURCES AND STUDY QUESTIONS CONTINUED

Have the group look over this poem together. Consider its meaning, and why it was chosen to stand as a statement for the Statue of Liberty. How does it reflect tolerance? What is the relationship between tolerance and liberty?

2) Emma Lazarus, the author for the poem, was a Jewish-American poet who lived in New York. She was active in helping Jewish immigrants become successful when they came to America following the Russian expulsion of Jews (For more info on her, consider having the group begin at Wikipedia.org ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emma\\_Lazarus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emma_Lazarus)) and then continue by searching for more information on her with Google or another search engine.) Does the selection of the poem written by a religious and ethnic minority and an immigrant-advocate for the Statue of Liberty's base reflect the purpose and greater meaning behind the statue? What does this say about America? Why?

3) The Statue of Liberty is part of a National Park that includes Ellis Island (Link: <http://www.nps.gov/elis>). Ellis Island was a Federal immigration station that received over twelve million immigrants into the United States from 1892 to 1954. Have the group read over the history of Ellis Island on the linked website. Also consider having the group look over various websites relating to Ellis Island, such as The Statue of Liberty- Ellis Island Foundation (<http://www.ellisisland.org>), which features some passenger and genealogy search functions, or have them search for stories of immigrants who came through Ellis Island. After spending some time doing this, consider starting a discussion: if the Statue of Liberty is a symbol for America's all-embracing spirit, then Ellis Island was the functioning arm of that symbol. Have the group talk about what it means to accept immigrants, no matter their station of life.



## TOLERANCE...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

### HISTORICAL SOURCES AND STUDY QUESTIONS CONTINUED

#### **MARTIN LUTHER KING'S "I HAVE A DREAM" SPEECH**

Link to text at the National Archives:

[http://www.archives.gov/northeast/nyc/exhibits/dream\\_speech.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/northeast/nyc/exhibits/dream_speech.pdf)

Delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Dr. King's speech was a call for racial, social, and religious harmony and civil rights reform in America and the world. It was pivotal to the Civil Rights movement and in it Dr. King elaborates on his idea of civil rights. He combines the ideas of famous American documents such as the Declaration of Independence, as well as speeches like the Gettysburg Address of Abraham Lincoln, and these ideas can be summarized as follows: people not only have to learn to love and respect one another, but the government has a duty to encourage and support it. The government has given "*a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*"

1) In many ways, the Civil Rights movement helped to define what tolerance means today—not merely enduring someone, or a disposition to tolerate, but a respectful and objective attitude toward other ideas. Consider having the group give some examples of how Dr. King elaborates upon tolerance and cooperation in his dream for an equal America.

2) In his closing paragraph, Dr. King—a Christian Minister—also delivers these words: "*When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"*" Here Dr. King elaborates on tolerance as encompassing race, religion, and creed. This is a combination of ideas already presented from Mr. Williams' work, as well as the Declaration of Independence. How does promotion of tolerance free people? Have the group look back on their definition of tolerance from previous discussions. What ideas did it encompass? What did the group think the government's definition of tolerance should encompass? Have the group's views changed in light of their discussions?



## TOLERANCE...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

### HISTORICAL SOURCES AND STUDY QUESTIONS CONTINUED

#### **EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW**

##### **Inscription at the U.S. Supreme Court**

Link to picture at <http://www.supremecourtus.gov/about/about.html>

- 1) Throughout history, the word justice has always been difficult to define. It can mean someone getting what they deserve; it could mean a legal “right,” or in a moral sense it could also mean the right winning over the wrong. Consider having the group look up definitions for the word “justice.” In the future, American Values Are, LLC will provide a discussion guide “Justice ... IS an American Value.” Did justice make the group’s list of American values in previous discussions? Why or why not? Which definition of justice? Why?
- 2) At the US Supreme Court building, the word justice does not stand alone; the inscription reads “equal justice.” How does equality relate to justice? How must tolerance be used within the legal system in order to see to it that everyone receives equal legal rights?
- 3) Consider having the group look over the following Supreme Court case as an example, or have them find a case of their own that applies to the current discussion:

Yarney v. Cuffley (March 5, 2001)

Link to case at About.com:

<http://usgovinfo.about.com/library/weekly/aa030501a.html>

The Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal from the State of Missouri on an original case that ruled the KKK had a right to join the Adopt-a-Highway program in Missouri. The American Civil Liberties Union, a group that commonly petitions for groups that the KKK would discriminate against, argued that: *“the First Amendment protected all, even the Ku Klux Klan, against those who would misuse government power to suppress political dissidents.”*

## TOLERANCE...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

This case should serve as a good example of “equal justice under law,” as the court tolerates even those that would not tolerate others (provided that the group is participating in such benign activities as an Adopt-a-Highway program). Consider having the group think about another route of dialogue concerning tolerance: can tolerance go too far? The KKK, for example, is a group that thrives upon *intolerance*: should it receive the same amount of tolerance that other groups do? Does the group think that tolerance of groups like the KKK fit within the ideas of people like Mr. Williams, Jefferson, or Dr. King? Why or why not?

### CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES

Tolerance continues to be a focal point of our national dialogue. Nearly every day issues related to tolerance are reported, debated, and discussed in the media and government.

As a group, go through a stack of newspapers or magazines, or browse the Internet and have group members point out articles that reflect concerns they have about tolerance. Discuss these in the context of the ideas and concepts already pointed out from the definitions and historical sources. Ask group members how their views were shaped by their own experiences with tolerance. Ask them to consider if the article or report is promoting a particular point of view. What is being reported and what is not? Why? What additional information would the group like to have?

The following examples could help begin discussion.



## TOLERANCE...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

### CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES CONTINUED

#### **“NOT IN OUR TOWN” NATIONAL MOVEMENT**

Link to information at PBS.org: <http://www.pbs.org/niot>

As the website describes, “Not in Our Town” is *“a national movement that encourages community response to hate crimes. The project combines a PBS broadcast, grassroots events, educational outreach and online activities to help communities battling hate talk to-and learn from-each other.”* The movement began in 1995 in Billings, MT in response to a series of hate crimes that included the vandalizing of a Native American’s home and a Jewish cemetery and an attack on a Jewish family’s home.

The Billings community responded to these crimes by coming together to help repair the Native American’s home by painting over the graffiti left there, and the local paper printed Menorahs for people to place in their windows as a sign of solidarity.

Eventually the hate crimes stopped in response to the community effort. Since then, similar movements have occurred in other cities across the country. More information is available at the website above. Have the group review other instances of the “Not in Our Town” movement.

- 1) In these stories, the community’s first reaction is to come together to help and support the victims of the hate crime and to make a public statement in support of the community. What does the group think this says about tolerance as an American value? Why?
- 2) In the story of Billings, there is an interview with one a former KKK member, Clinton Sipes.

(Link: <http://www.pbs.org/niot/about/niot1.html#sipes>)

Have the group think about how Mr. Sipes describes the culture of hate, why and how it thrives, his experiences within the KKK, and his gradual change while in prison and working with a black counselor. In particular, have the group discuss Mr. Sipes’ views of Martin Luther King when watching him on television as a young man. Earlier the group read one of Dr. King’s speeches and learned about Dr. King’s hopes for equality. Mr. Sipes’ experiences with Dr. King were much different, and he mentions how his community and family would disparage Dr. King. What does this contrast say about a community’s role in tolerance? What type of actions can the group identify that help a community promote tolerance?

## TOLERANCE...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

### CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES CONTINUED

#### **GAY MARRIAGE IN MASSACHUSETTS**

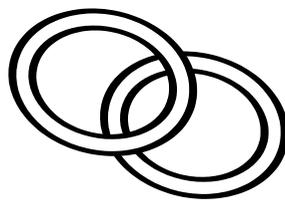
Link to a related article at CNN.com: <http://www.cnn.com/2003/LAW/11/18/samesex.marriage.ruling/>

Link to more legal information on gay marriage in Massachusetts:  
<http://www.lawlib.state.ma.us/gaymarriage.html#law>

Persisting up into 2006, the gay marriage debate is a very controversial issue in the media today concerning tolerance. In the case outlined by the CNN article above, the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled that a ban on gay marriage was unconstitutional, and in the opinion stated that: *“government attorneys failed to identify any constitutionally adequate reason to deny them [gay couples] the right.”*

Since that particular ruling, other court rulings within Massachusetts have followed, including limiting the rights of gay couples in Massachusetts coming from states where gay marriage is banned, as well as proposed state constitution amendments that would limit gay marriage. Many of these court rulings are outlined in the second link above. Consider also having the group search on the Internet for national court rulings or rulings from other states involving gay marriage.

- 1) Does acceptance of gay marriage fall within the American value of tolerance? Why or why not? Is marriage (any variety) something that falls outside of the definitions of tolerance? Is it something that falls outside the boundaries of government prescribed tolerance? Why or why not?
- 2) Does acceptance of gay marriage fall within the group’s own definition of tolerance? Why or why not? Did the group members consider something like gay marriage when originally creating the definition? If so, how? If not, have them consider how they are interpreting their own language to either include or not include gay marriage within their definition. What factors influence this decision?



## TOLERANCE...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

### CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES CONTINUED

#### **NON-DISCRIMINATION AND HATE CRIME LEGISLATION**

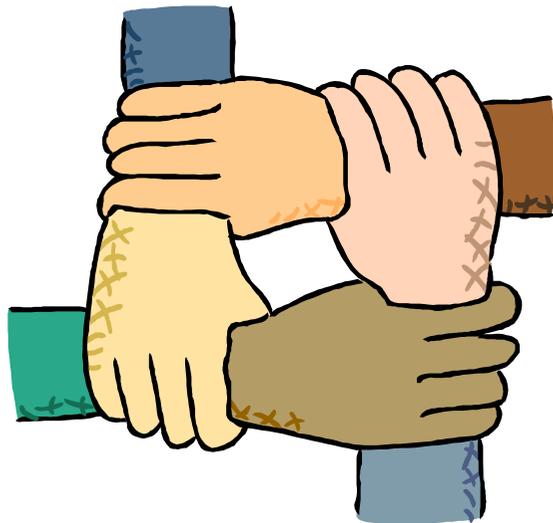
Text for Hate Crime Legislation at Anti-Defamation League website:

[http://www.adl.org/99hatecrime/text\\_legis.asp](http://www.adl.org/99hatecrime/text_legis.asp)

Non-discrimination laws began as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup> amendments to the Constitution to end slavery, and include other laws such as the Civil Rights Act or Equal Employment Opportunity laws.

As the website linked above indicates in the introduction, hate crime legislation drafted in 1981 was upheld by the Supreme Court in *Wisconsin v. Mitchell* (1983), and since then many states have followed suit and drafted similar legislation. (A map is available on the website under “State Hate Crime Laws”)

- 1) Consider having the group start a discussion about the motives behind hate crime laws. How do these reflect tolerance? Also available on the site is a long list of federal initiatives to combat hate crimes, as well as federal bureaus and agencies that are involved in the effort. How does this reflect the stance of the government on tolerance and hate? Have the group continue to explore the website, and to discuss the various acts and laws that are available to review.



## **TOLERANCE...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE**

### **SECONDARY SOURCES**

Below are links to websites and resources that deal with tolerance. You also might want to use this guide along with the "Hate ... is NOT an American Value" dialogue guide.

TeachingTolerance.org

<http://www.teachingtolerance.org>

Southern Poverty Law Center

<http://SPLCenter.org>

United Nations Charter

<http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>

The Center for Non-Violent Communication

<http://www.cnvc.org>

Multi-Cultural Education and the Internet

<http://www.mhhe.com/multicultural>

Multi-Cultural Pavilion

<http://www.edchange.org/multicultural>



[WWW.AMERICANVALUESARE.COM](http://WWW.AMERICANVALUESARE.COM)

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