



GSR in the Classroom: RACE RELATIONS

GUIDE – ANTI-RACISM EFFORTS IN FERGUSON CONTINUE

BACKGROUND:

Racial tensions have deep roots. When they escalate to violence, it's usually the sign of a combination of social imbalances that have spun out of control. Whether someone is injured by weapons or words, however, the hurt is real and hard to heal.

This lesson explores the impact of a widely known incident that many consider to be a flashpoint in race relations. It affected many people who had no previous connection to the victim. It's important to explore the lessons that can be learned from senseless acts of violence.

FOCUS:

The Bible connects some clear dots as it shares stories of God and salvation history.

- God created humans in God's image and likeness.
- The crucifixion of Jesus, though not racially motivated, reflects societal tensions and crowd dynamics that transcend eras.
- Paul, filled with the spirit of Christ, tells Christians that they are parts of the body of Christ. Any hurt to one part of that body hurts all of its parts.

Each of these messages can inform discussions of racism.

ACTIVITY:

Invite each student to experience minor pain by pinching themselves hard on their hand or earlobe until you tell them to stop. Then give them a simple task, such as reading a paragraph or doing a math calculation while enduring that pain.

Tell them they can stop pinching themselves once they've completed the assignment. Ask:

- Was it difficult to concentrate on the task because of the pain you were experiencing?
- Did you rush to finish or even make mistakes because of the distraction of the pain?

DISCUSSION:

Begin by saying “Pain, whether it’s caused by injury or loss, affects our ability to function as individuals and as a community. The pain of racism takes many forms.”

Then ask:

- How might a racial slur hurt not only its intended target but anyone who hears it?
- How does discrimination involving housing, employment or access to education or health care hurt entire communities?
- When you see an act of violence, no matter who the perpetrator or victim are, do you wonder whether you or those you love are safe?

PRAYER:

Remind students of the pain they briefly endured, then say:

“Loving God, keep us mindful of the pains we endure and those we observe in the lives of our sisters and brothers.

Help us to remember that when one part of your body suffers, all suffer with it. Bless us with the strength to lift each other beyond the pain of racism so that we might know true joy as we love like you.

Amen.”

