



## 4-LESSON SEQUENCE – CURRENT EVENTS – HATE CRIME

### "Should it be considered a crime?"

Grades 8-12

#### Learning objectives ... Students will be able to:

- a. Research a law or a bill and describe three specific ways a person can try to get it passed, changed or enforced.
- b. Discuss a controversial current event in a respectful way, expressing strong opinions without personally attacking those who differ

#### Lesson agenda DAY ONE:

1. Reiterate your class' ground rules. Explain that you are about to take them into controversial territory and remind people that it is your job to keep the class emotionally and physically a safe place (i.e., you expect and will enforce their treating one another respectfully). **5 minutes**
2. Pass out copies of the CBS story, "Girls Charged With Hate Crime For Anti-Gay Fliers" below on pages 3 & 4 (and online at: [http://cbs2chicago.com/topstories/local\\_story\\_137105252.html](http://cbs2chicago.com/topstories/local_story_137105252.html).) Have students read the story silently, or if some are reluctant readers, have two volunteers take turns reading it aloud. **5 minutes**
3. Tell people they'll have a chance to discuss it, but they have to do a little research first for **homework**. Take **5-10 MINUTES** to divide the class into 4 groups and assign each group to research and come back prepared to explain in simple, non-legal language ONE of these 4 things:
  - a. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Go to "Library of Congress" and search for "Bill of Rights")
  - b. The hate crime law in Illinois that these young women are charged with violating (called the Illinois Human Rights Act, go to <http://www.state.il.us/dhr/>) and the one now being considered for passage (SB1047, search for "Illinois +SB1047").
  - c. Your own state's or province's hate crime law, if there is one (Washington State's is RCW 9A.36.080 "Malicious harassment" – go to <http://search.leg.wa.gov/pub/textsearch/ViewRoot.asp?Action=Html&Item=1&X=518142845&p=1>)
  - d. The federal (U.S.) hate crime bill that has passed the House (called, in the House, "Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007": <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c110:5:./temp/~c110TywY6l::>) and is currently being considered in the Senate (called, in the Senate, the Matthew Shepard Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c110:6:./temp/~c110TywY6l::>)

ALL GROUPS should ALSO research:

- e. Why some people and organizations oppose the bill, and hate crime laws in general
- f. Why some people and organizations support the bill, and hate crime laws in general

HOW?

- \* They can use the Internet and the library.
- \* They can search for editorials and opinion columns.
- \* They can contact local and national organizations and elected officials.
- \* They can survey friends and family and people at the local mall.



Give them **10 minutes** in their workgroups to discuss where to find information and to divide up who will do which kind of research. If there are computers and social studies texts in your classroom, people may be able to start their research in class. They will do the bulk of it for homework. A list of suggested sources is attached, below. Give them **a couple of days** to do their research.

4. Using a classroom computer, show a series of YouTube videos on "hate crimes" (there are dozens if you search at YouTube.com for "hate crimes," fewer if you search specifically by bill number). Preview them the night before class and choose 5 or 6 to trigger students' thinking. Be sure to include a mix of videos ... some that explain hate crimes, some supporting hate crime laws, some opposing them)
5. After you show each one, invite people to take 2 minutes to write notes to themselves about their reactions to and opinions about that video. Then have them talk in pairs, giving each person 1 minute exactly of uninterrupted air time, with the other person just listening. Check in, after their first paired talk, about how it feels to have to (get to?) talk for a full minute without interruption and how it felt to just listen. Check in at the end of the period about their feelings about the process.

#### **Lesson agenda DAY TWO:**

Continue with #4 above.

#### **Lesson agenda DAY THREE:**

5. Allow time in their small groups for people to share the research they did for homework and to prepare to report out. Provide each group easel paper or transparencies and pens with which to work. **20 min**
6. Give each group 5 minutes to report out to the large group. **20 min**

#### **Lesson agenda DAY FOUR:**

7. Reread the CBS article from day one (attached). **5 min**
8. Remind people that there are ground rules for a reason. Then invite students to explain their own opinions about whether, in this particular case, what the young women are alleged to have done (distribute flyers of a male classmate kissing another boy and containing the words, "God hates fags") should be considered a criminal act and, if so, and assuming they are guilty of it, what the punishment should be. **15 min**
9. Move the discussion in the direction of hate crime laws in general and whether they should be passed and, if so, how they should be written. **20 min**
10. **Homework:** "Whether you support or oppose the hate crime bill now under consideration, research the various ways you can express that opinion or influence what happens. Then write a 1-2 page essay describing at least three ways to be an activist about it ... about what you could do and/or did do." **5 min**



May 17, 2007

## Girls Charged With Hate Crime For Anti-Gay Fliers

### Prosecutor: 'This Is What The Legislators Wanted Us To Stop'

by Tom Musick / Northwest Herald / Reprinted here with permission.

*"I don't care that people are gay," Diamond said. "If my best friend told me he was gay, I'd be fine with it. I just don't think my friend should be arrested for that. Give them a warning, give them a fine, that's one thing, but to arrest them, that's bull."*

CRYSTAL LAKE, Ill. (Northwest Herald) — Some classmates on Wednesday defended two Crystal Lake South High School students who appeared in juvenile court this week on hate-crime charges.

But McHenry County State's Attorney Lou Bianchi said the students clearly broke the law when they printed and distributed fliers that showed a male student and another boy kissing, along with inflammatory statements about homosexuality.

Police charged two 16-year-old Crystal Lake girls last week with committing a hate crime, disorderly conduct, and obstructing justice. The girls, whose names were not released because of their age, appeared in juvenile court Tuesday and are scheduled to return to court next Tuesday.

Crystal Lake South juniors Ryan Diamond and Crystal Erdman said the fliers stemmed from a recent dispute between one of the girls who was arrested and one of the boys who was pictured.

The pair used to be best friends but recently feuded, Erdman said, and one of the girls posted the picture on her MySpace page before police said she and another girl printed the fliers and distributed them in the school's parking lot.

Diamond said authorities went too far and described the incident as a prank that had been blown out of proportion.

"I don't care that people are gay," Diamond said. "If my best friend told me he was gay, I'd be fine with it. I just don't think my friend should be arrested for that. Give them a warning, give them a fine, that's one thing, but to arrest them, that's bull."

Bianchi said the students targeted a specific person and his sexual orientation. Under Illinois law, a person commits a hate crime when he or she commits a crime against another person based on that person's race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, or national origin.

"This is a classic case of the kind of conduct that the state Legislature was directing the law against," Bianchi said. "This is what the legislators wanted to stop, this kind of activity."

Investigators and school officials would not specify the flier's contents or whether the students remained in school this week. But classmates said the flier showed a picture of two boys kissing along with the words, "God hates fags."

Tom Carroll, first assistant state's attorney for McHenry County, said penalties for the girls could range from probation to a 30-day sentence in the Kane County Juvenile Detention Facility. If they were convicted, Carroll said, the girls' records would be cleared at age 18 but those records would remain available to law-enforcement agencies.

Ed Yohnka, a spokesman for the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois, said the case illustrated a complex struggle between protecting targeted groups of people and protecting the First Amendment.



In fact, the issue is so divisive that the ACLU of Illinois differed from its national organization's support of a federal hate-crimes law that passed the U.S. House of Representatives and now is in the U.S. Senate. The law would include gender and sexual orientation as protected groups in hate-crime laws, as Illinois already does.

"We have a rather strong and historic strain of protecting free speech in this affiliate in a way that caused us to differentiate from the national organization," Yohnka said.

District 155 spokesman Jeff Puma said the district needed to provide a safe and comfortable environment for students to succeed.

"Our focus is to make sure that each of our students is able to learn while at school and is in a situation where they feel comfortable coming to school and learning," he said.