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respect

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT LAW AND DIVERSITY

An Uphill Battle in the Fight Against Anti-Gay Bullying

by Jodi L. Miller

Imagine going to school every morning just hoping that you will get through the day without being taunted or physically hurt. That is the reality for many students across the country and particularly vulnerable are those students who are gay or perceived as gay.

According to statistics from the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Network (GLSEN), a national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students, five percent of American high school students identify themselves as lesbian or gay. Roughly, that statistic equates to at least one lesbian or gay student per classroom nationwide.

A GLSEN survey of middle and high school students showed that nearly nine out of 10 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students experienced some form of harassment at school and nearly one-third of LGBT students skipped school at least once in the past month because of a fear for their safety. A study conducted by doctors at Ohio's Nationwide Children's Hospital and published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found that LGBT teens are bullied two to three times more than their straight counterparts.

"There is a need for health care professionals, and others who work with children, to be aware that sexual minority youth are more likely to be victims of bullying and other forms of violence," Elise Berlan, lead author of the study and a doctor of adolescent medicine at

Nationwide Children's Hospital, told *Science Daily*.

"Parents should also take time to communicate with their children about sensitive topics such as sexuality, peer relations and violence," Berlan said.

Despite this research, a GLSEN study done in collaboration with the National Association of Secondary School Principals found that while half of the principals surveyed viewed bullying as a serious problem in schools, they underestimated the harassment of LGBT students. The study, which surveyed more than 1,500 principals, revealed that 92

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Still Fighting for Integration More Than 55 Years After *Brown*

by Cheryl Baisden

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court set the stage for educational equality, regardless of race, in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, ruling that segregated public schools are "inherently unequal," and that denying minority students the right to attend public schools with white students is a violation of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Court's ruling called for desegregation to proceed "with all deliberate speed," but integrating the nation's schools remains an ongoing process more than half a century later.

According to the Justice Department, in 2010 there were 201 open desegregation cases in the courts, most dating from the time of the Civil Rights Movement and most concentrated in the southern states. A report released in June of last year indicated that some level of school **segregation** continues to exist throughout the U.S. more than 55 years after *Brown* was decided, and a 2007 U.S. Supreme Court ruling

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percent of respondents reported that students in their schools were harassed due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation; however, only nine percent viewed this occurrence to be frequent.

Punishing LGBT teens

It seems that LGBT students are not only more likely to be bullied, they are more likely to be punished as well, according to a Yale University study published in the *Journal of Pediatrics*. The study, released in December 2010, revealed that LGBT teens were 40 percent more likely than straight teens to be punished for the same behavior whether in school, by police or in the court system.

"The most striking difference was for lesbian and bisexual girls," Kathryn Himmelstein, lead author of the study, told *The Washington Post*. "They were two to three times as likely as girls with similar behavior to be punished."

Stacey Horn, associate professor of educational psychology at the University of Illinois, likened the findings to racial disparities in criminal sentencing and told *The Washington Post*, "To me, it is saying there is some kind of internal bias that adults are not aware of that is impacting the punishment of this group."

LGBT teens and suicide

Suicides due to relentless bullying, which has coined the term *bullycide*, have made headlines across the country. Many of these bullycides have been a result of anti-gay bullying. Research has shown that LGBT students are more likely to suffer from depression and have suicidal thoughts.

An American Foundation for Suicide Prevention report released in January 2011

identified the stigma of being gay and discrimination, including rejection or abuse at the hands of family members or peers and condemnation from religious communities, as key factors in the higher rates of suicide attempts among LGBT adolescents. The report, titled *Suicide and Suicide Risk in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Populations: Review and Recommendations*, also revealed evidence that "discriminatory laws and public policies have a profound negative impact on the mental health of gay adults."

Stan Davis, who has been working with children and families for decades as a social worker, school counselor and most recently as a bullying prevention expert, noted that LGBT youth are more likely to consider suicide because of the way they are treated by today's society.

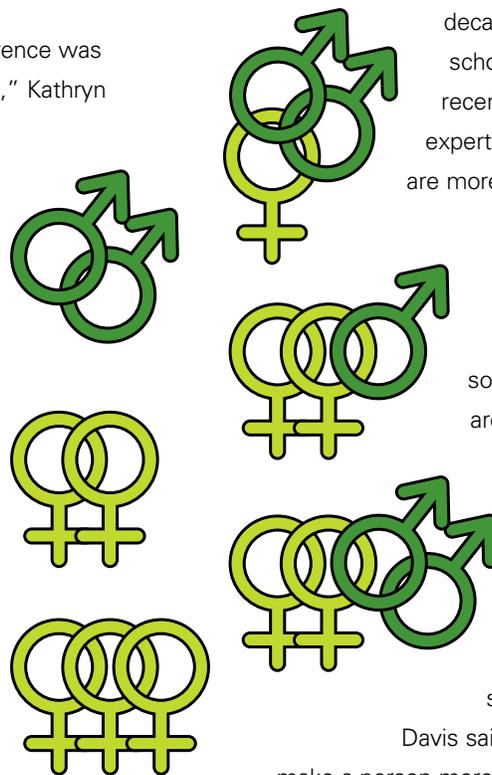
"Youth who are excluded socially, who are in groups who are likely to be mistreated or excluded, who have little other support in their lives, and who have other vulnerabilities are more likely to consider suicide than youth with strong support systems,"

Davis said. "Being LGBT does not make a person more vulnerable to suicide. Being excluded and devalued by others does."

Whether you are straight or gay, there are many organizations that can help those who feel that they may want to hurt themselves, including the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (suicidepreventionlifeline.org, 800-273-TALK [8255]), a 24-hour suicide prevention hotline; and the Trevor Project (thetrevorproject.org, 866 4U TREVOR [866-488-7386]), a 24-hour national help line for gay and questioning teens.

Teaching tolerance early

According to Dr. Paula Rodríguez Rust, an educational consultant on bullying prevention and



diversity awareness, anti-gay bias must be addressed in early grades. A survey that Dr. Rust conducted of seventh and eighth-graders at a New Jersey middle school revealed that more than 20 percent of the students reported hearing negative comments regarding LGBT people on a daily basis, including outright insults, stereotypes and **derogatory** remarks. In addition, the students that Dr. Rust surveyed also reported hearing on a daily basis, “negative comments about boys who are not masculine enough or about females who are not feminine enough.”

One phrase that Dr. Rust targets in her work is “that’s so gay.” The phrase has become part of everyday language in schools and is used to describe something that is bad, uncool, undesirable or poor.

Most people don’t think about what the phrase really means, Dr. Rust said, and they do not realize that it is offensive and contributes to a hostile school environment, just like negative comments about race or religion. “I was only joking” or “I didn’t mean gay people” or “I didn’t say it to offend anyone” are not acceptable excuses for using the phrase according to Dr. Rust, who maintains the website spectrumdiversity.org.

The word “gay” refers to a type of person, Dr. Rust stated. It is the word people use when referring respectfully to gay people, she explained. “Therefore, to use that word in a negative way, as in ‘that’s so gay,’ is to use someone’s identity as an insult,” Dr. Rust said. “It makes gay people and those who respect and care about their gay friends and family members feel uncomfortable and unsafe.”

Dr. Rust uses the following example to emphasize the cruelty of the phrase: Think of the phrase “that’s so _____,” but put the name of your specific ethnic ancestry in the blank. For example, Dr. Rust is German, so the phrase would be “that’s so German.” Then imagine how you would feel if, starting today, everyone

at your school started saying, “Oh, that’s so German” whenever they disliked something.

“I find that, even though the people saying it don’t intend to offend Germans, and claim that they are ‘not talking about Germans’ when they say it, it still sounds offensive,” Dr. Rust said. “Why would they be using the word ‘German’ in this way if there weren’t some underlying bias

against Germans? The fact that they don’t think they are insulting Germans by saying it almost makes it even more of an insult.”

What’s the agenda?

While many see the tolerance that Dr. Rust and others are trying to teach as laudable, others see it as promoting a homosexual agenda under the guise of combatting bullying. *>continued on page 8*

People Who Know Say “It Gets Better”

If you or someone you know is being bullied for any reason, it may be hard to imagine a happier time. But it is important for you to know that there are millions of people who are on your side. And it gets better.

This message is at the heart of a worldwide campaign that began last September on YouTube known as the “It Gets Better Project.” The campaign began with a single YouTube video created by syndicated columnist and author Dan Savage and his partner in response to a string of bullying-related suicides. Since then, the project has inspired thousands of user-created videos and has received more than 30 million views.

Many of the videos in the campaign speak directly to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) population, which is often the target of bullying. However, the heartfelt messages shared by celebrities and others offer hope, insight and inspiration to anyone who may be dealing with bullying or struggling to find their way. Below are excerpts from a few of the videos. To find out more, visit www.itgetsbetter.org.

“To every young person out there, you need to know that if you’re in trouble, there are caring adults who can help... You are not alone. You didn’t do anything wrong. You didn’t do anything to deserve being bullied... and there is a whole world waiting for you filled with possibilities. There are people out there who love you and care about you just the way you are.” — President Barack Obama

“I know what it’s like to be bullied and teased every single day and I know that it may seem like there is no chance of happiness left, but I promise you there is a world full of acceptance and love just waiting for you to find it. ... Know that you have friends, you are loved, and that you are not alone and know that despite such a current challenging time there is so much to look forward to... I promise, it gets so much better.”

— Chris Colfer (“Kurt” from the television show “Glee”)

“I think being different is always going to be a tough climb. There’s always going to be people that are scared of it... What you’re doing by being who you are is you’re keeping it real and you’re being really brave. I believe in you. ... There are a ton of us out here in this world that are just like you that believe in you.”

— Adam Lambert (American Idol Runner-up, Season 8)

“I want anyone out there who feels different and alone to know that I know how you feel. There is help out there. You can find support in your community. If you need someone to talk to or if you want to get involved, there are some really great organizations ... Things will get easier, people’s minds will change, and you should be alive to see it.”

— Ellen DeGeneres

Ohio Man Tried in Germany for Holocaust-Related Crimes

by Phyllis Raybin Emert

Germany recently concluded the evidence phase of what many believe—due to the ages of all involved—could be the last Holocaust trial. John Ivan Demjanjuk (pronounced dem-ahn-yuke), a Ukrainian native, who lived in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio with his family for 25 years, stands accused of 27,900 counts of accessory to murder for his part as a recruited S.S. guard at the Sobibor death camp in Nazi-occupied Poland in 1943. A verdict in the German trial is expected sometime in May 2011.

Demjanjuk, now 90 years old, emigrated to the U.S. in 1952 with his wife Vera and infant daughter, Lydia. The family would eventually settle in Seven Hills, Ohio, where Demjanjuk joined the United Auto Workers union and found a job as a diesel engine mechanic at the local Ford auto plant. The Demjanjuks bought a small house and had two more children, Irene and John Jr. They were a typical post-war family of immigrants who came to America in order to start a new life and after years of work at the auto plant, Demjanjuk retired with a pension.

The war years

So, how did an Ohio man seemingly living a quiet life become embroiled in not one but two Nazi war crime trials? Demjanjuk, born in 1920, lived in a small town in the central part of the Ukraine, which would eventually become a founding republic of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). During World War II, the Communist Party and its leader Joseph Stalin controlled the USSR and in 1939 Adolph Hitler and Stalin signed a Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact. The Soviets remained neutral but began a military buildup and Demjanjuk was drafted into the Red Army in 1940. The following year, Germany launched a surprise attack on Russia and Demjanjuk was taken prisoner by German troops in 1942.

According to an Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs report, Demjanjuk was a German prisoner of war in Chelmno, Poland when he volunteered to serve in the Nazi S.S. as a camp guard. The S.S. was the elite guard of the Nazi Party (the Schutzstaffel) that dealt with security, intelligence and military matters and was well known for its brutality against civilians. There were several million Russian prisoners of war, but only about 5,000 volunteered to be in the S.S. Of these, 500 actually served as guards at the death camps.

Demjanjuk was transferred to the S.S. Trawniki training camp and became one of the specially chosen camp guards (called S.S. Wachmans, which was the Nazi term for non-German camp aides). According to the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wachman duties included the “expulsion of Jews from their ghetto homes, packing

them into cattle trucks, escorting and guarding them on the trains while shooting escapees, [and] mass executions, in which victims were forced into gas chambers at the death camps.”

Part of the evidence, which would be used in both of Demjanjuk’s trials, included the original Trawniki certificate, which contained a photograph of Demjanjuk, his personal information, his S.S. service number, and a note that he had served at the Sobibor camp. Demjanjuk would later claim that the certificate and all other documents were forgeries created by the Russians to incriminate him.

The first trial

The current trial in Germany is not the first time Demjanjuk has been tried for war crimes. After a lengthy investigation into Demjanjuk’s wartime activities that began in 1975, his U.S. citizenship was revoked in 1981. He was **extradited** to Israel where he stood trial on November 26, 1986 before a special Israeli tribunal. Demjanjuk was accused of being the notorious Nazi war criminal Ivan the Terrible, who was well known for his vicious treatment of prisoners at the death camps. The prosecution’s case against Demjanjuk focused on the testimony of the witnesses who identified him as Ivan the Terrible at the Treblinka death camp and the original Trawniki ID certificate.

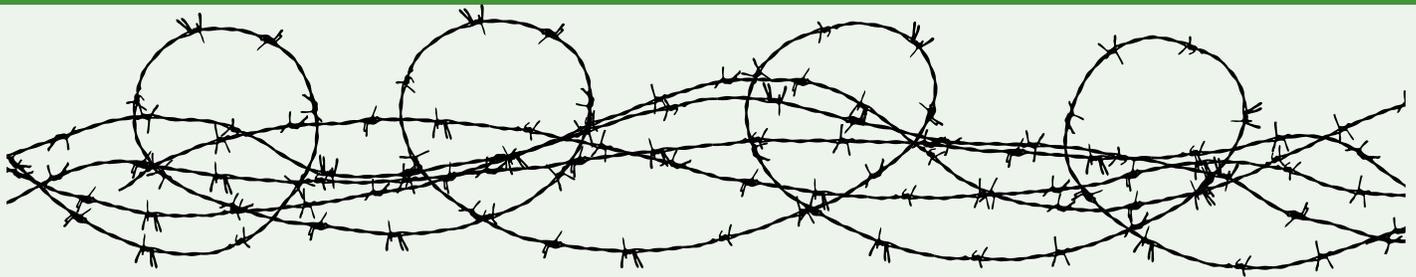
According to the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs Report, “the defense claimed all along that Demjanjuk had fallen into German captivity where he remained throughout the war, that he never volunteered to serve with the S.S. and that he was therefore not a member of the killing team at the camps of Treblinka and Sobibor or an operator of the gas chambers as alleged in the **indictment.**”

The prosecution noted that it was not possible to be a prisoner of war and an S.S. man with an ID certificate simultaneously. They had the certificate analyzed and authenticated by local and foreign experts. The defense also presented expert witnesses, however, who testified that the Trawniki ID was a forgery. In April 1988, the tribunal found Demjanjuk guilty on all counts and sentenced him to death by hanging.

Is he really Ivan?

The appeals process in the case took two years. During the appeals period, the fall of Communism occurred and relations between Israel and the Soviet Union began to improve.

In the course of going through the huge amount of documents, now available to investigators through the Soviets, it was discovered that the name of the gas chamber operator at Treblinka was Ivan Marchenko, not Ivan Demjanjuk, and that several witnesses had identified him as such. Another witness stated that



he had served at Sobibor with a Wachman named Ivan Demjanjuk and he gave identifying details in his statement.

In July 1993, the Israel Supreme Court overturned the lower court decision and ruled that there was “reasonable doubt” that John Demjanjuk was the vicious and cruel concentration camp guard Ivan the Terrible.

In his opinion, Chief Justice Meir Shamgar wrote, “A substantial number of survivors of the Treblinka inferno identified the **appellant** as Ivan the Terrible, one of the chief murderers and tormentors of the Jews who were brought to Treblinka on their way to suffocation in the gas chambers. He was therefore convicted in the district court. Before us...there were submitted statements of various Wachmannen, which spoke of someone else as Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka...Doubt began to gnaw at our judicial conscience.”

Although there was evidence that Demjanjuk was a guard at other death camps, the Court closed the case, since the original charges only included his time at Treblinka as Ivan the Terrible.”

Now a free man, Demjanjuk returned to the United States and his U.S. citizenship was officially restored in 1998. The following year, the U.S. Justice Department filed another complaint and commenced another denaturalization proceeding against Demjanjuk. A federal district court judge ruled, “The government has proven by clear, convincing, and unequivocal evidence that defendant assisted in the persecution of civilian populations during World War II” and “Because of his assistance in persecution, defendant was ineligible for a visa...His entry to the United States for permanent residence in 1952 on the basis of a visa...was therefore unlawful and his naturalization as a United States citizen was illegally procured.” Demjanjuk was again stripped of his U.S. citizenship and ordered deported to the Ukraine, Germany or Poland in December 2005.

The second trial

Germany announced it wanted to extradite the now 88-year-old Demjanjuk to stand trial for war crimes and in March 2009 the German government officially charged him. Unlike the legal proceedings in Israel, which focused on Treblinka and Ivan the Terrible, this trial concentrated on crimes committed at Sobibor.

Thomas Blatt, 83, a former Sobibor prisoner whose mother, father and young brother were murdered at the death camp, attended the trial and told *The New York Times* that the trial

and Demjanjuk’s testimony are most important. “There’s many people right now who say the Holocaust never happened,” Blatt explained.

Demjanjuk’s lawyer accused the German judges of a double standard by trying his client, who was a prisoner of war, when they had **acquitted** several German S.S. officers [in the 1970s] who had served in the death camps. Looking directly at Thomas Blatt, the lawyer said that both Blatt and Demjanjuk were victims. He also claimed that his client was just a scapegoat for German guilt over the Holocaust, and that the trial was the first time a non-German had been charged by Germany for war crimes within the country.

The prosecution claimed that simply working at a Nazi extermination camp like Sobibor was enough to make even a low-ranking prison guard an accessory to murder. The defense continued to claim that the Nazi ID card was a forgery and also noted that Soviet prisoners who served the Nazis did so to save their own lives and could not be responsible for war crimes. This was an interesting argument since it would only apply if his client were actually a Nazi prison guard at Sobibor, a claim Demjanjuk had continued to deny.

Monster or victim?

In April 2010, Demjanjuk’s statement was read aloud in court and according to Associated Press reports, he claimed, “he is himself one of Hitler’s victims,” and also “blamed Germany for starting the war that left him unable to return to his native Ukraine.”

In an *Esquire* magazine article Demjanjuk said, “The Germans destroyed my life in 1943, and they’re still destroying my life.”

Some view Demjanjuk as a monster. Famed attorney and political commentator Alan Dershowitz told *Esquire* magazine, “The tragedy is not that John Demjanjuk has lost 16 or 17 years of his life. The tragedy is that he had 20 to 25 good years of life with his family after the Second World War. His victims didn’t have those years.”

Others, like his family and those in his Ukrainian home village, see him as a victim and say whatever he did the Nazis forced him to do.

“The Ukrainians who were captured and ended up in places like Sobibor,” Demjanjuk’s son John Jr.

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in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle* and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education* actually may be fueling a move toward re-segregation.

Harvard University law professor Charles Ogletree told the *St. Louis American* the 2007 Court decision approved "...at least in theory, the idea of separate and unequal education."

The report by the Civil Rights Project at the University of California, which was based on a study of news reports across the country, found that today's African American and Hispanic students attend schools that are more segregated from white students than at any time since the Civil Rights Movement, and many of those minority-attended schools are struggling financially. The report also found that the average African American or Hispanic student attends a school where nearly 60 percent of the students are from families who are living at near or below the poverty level.

Schools marked by racial segregation and poverty tend to have a weaker teaching staff, more student instability and a higher percentage of students from homes where English isn't spoken—all factors that reduce academic achievement, the report noted. In fact, these educational inequalities were what motivated the Court to order school desegregation in the 1950s.

What the Court said

Sheldon Berman, the school superintendent in Jefferson County, Kentucky, one of the two school districts involved in the 2007 U.S. Supreme Court cases, told *The Washington Post*, "If we're going to create a vital democracy, and see our schools as the seeds of that democracy, we need schools that maintain diversity...I think the Court missed that."

Berman should know; from 1975 through 2000, the Jefferson County

School System was under a federal court order to desegregate its schools. When the courts concluded it had effectively integrated its schools, local officials voluntarily continued actively enforcing their desegregation plan to avoid an imbalance as new students entered the school system and others graduated. But local lawyer Ted Gordon sued the school board, claiming the continued desegregation policy violated the U.S. Constitution's guarantee that race could not be used as the determining factor in government decisions.

A divided Court agreed, ruling that schools can only make racial balance a goal if they are trying to comply with an actual federal desegregation order. Chief Justice John Roberts Jr. and four other members of the Court declared that continued efforts in Jefferson County and Seattle, Washington, to keep their schools integrated violated the U.S. Constitution. "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race," Chief Justice Roberts wrote in the Court's **majority opinion**, "is to stop discriminating on the basis of race....Before *Brown*, school children were told where they could and could not go to school based on the color of their skin. The school districts in these cases have not carried the heavy burden of demonstrating that we should allow this once again—even for very different reasons."

Justice Stephen Breyer, who voted in opposition to the Court's decision, called it a "cruel distortion of history" for Chief Justice Roberts to claim "efforts to continue racial segregation are constitutionally indistinguishable from efforts to achieve racial integration."

Although Justice Anthony Kennedy voted with the majority of the Court, he noted, "Fifty years of experience since *Brown v. Board of Education* should

teach us that the problem before us defies so easy a solution."

Justice Kennedy added that schools have a compelling interest to promote diversity, and that "Race may be one component of that diversity, but other demographic factors, plus special talents and needs, should also be considered."



After the ruling

Since the ruling, Seattle has essentially abandoned its efforts to continue desegregation, but Jefferson County officials have tried to maintain integrated schools despite the Court's order by focusing on Justice Kennedy's suggestions. The Kentucky plan, developed in 2008, divides the county into two districts—one with more minorities, lower incomes, and poorer test scores and academic achievement—and requires a mix of students from both districts in each school. Simply using race as the basis for integration was easier and cheaper, officials noted, and the present plan, which involves long bus rides for some students, including bus transfers in some cases, has led to challenges by parents. As a result, the Kentucky Legislature recently introduced a bill that would permit parents to send their children to neighborhood schools under a charter school program. If approved, the law could result in a highly segregated, Supreme Court-sanctioned school system.

Following the 2007 Court ruling, the Bush Administration, which supported the challenges, warned school officials nationwide to reconsider student placements that relied on race, since they could be successfully challenged in court. As a result, groups have forced changes



in school assignments in districts as diverse as New York City. Even the Charlotte-

Mecklenburg School (CMS) District in North Carolina, the first in the country to use court-ordered busing to integrate schools, has stopped desegregation efforts.

“Schools re-segregated when they went to the Neighborhood Choice Plan,” CMS board member Richard McElrath told *The Charlotte Post*. “In Charlotte you’ve got segregated housing patterns. The neighborhoods are segregated, so therefore the schools are going to be segregated.”

In the Garden State

The same thing is happening all over

the country, even in New Jersey according to a study by the Southern Education Foundation. The study found 43 percent of New Jersey’s African American students attend predominately segregated schools, a percentage that is higher than the highest ranked southern state of Alabama (40 percent).

Statistics from the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition that promotes the human and civil rights of all Americans, revealed that New Jersey is the fifth most segregated state for African Americans and the fourth most segregated state for Hispanics. According to the Leadership Conference, “Segregated minority schools are much more likely to be in poor neighborhoods, have lower graduation rates and offer New Jersey’s minority students far fewer opportunities to take the kinds of academic enrichment courses that prepare them for college.”

Why integrate?

Why is it so important to keep our schools integrated? According to a study of middle school students, conducted by researchers at University of California-Davis and UCLA, students feel “safer, less bullied and less lonely when educated in an ethnically diverse environment.”

The authors of the study attributed this finding to the balance of power in a school when all ethnic groups are represented equally. In other words, there is no dominating group and the balance of power remains stable, which the researchers found reduced harassment.

“The skills needed for young people to successfully negotiate today’s increasingly global economy can best be developed through exposure to very diverse people, cultures and points of view,” one researcher said. “Diversity benefits everyone; in fact, it is critical in contemporary America.” ■

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told *Esquire*, “How can you judge them for the decision they made to not die in a POW camp but instead get something to eat and clothes on their back? How can you possibly in a courtroom today sit there and understand?”

As for Scott Raab, the writer of that *Esquire* magazine feature, his opinion seems to be somewhere in the middle. He doesn’t vilify Demjanjuk, nor does he paint him as an unwilling victim. Raab wrote, “I myself don’t find it to be a particularly thorny question. But then I’ve never doubted that even as a prisoner and a Jew, I would have done whatever would have kept me alive; and while it’s pretty to think that I might’ve used whatever drop of strength I had to strike a blow, to brain one enemy, to die on my feet rather than live on my knees, I see little evidence for this in the actual course of my actual life, and I also thank God for never putting such a test in front of me.”

Should the past stay buried?

The advanced age of Demjanjuk has raised questions of whether alleged Nazi war criminals should be prosecuted for crimes that happened more than 65 years ago.

In response to those who believe these war criminals are too old to go on trial, Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the international Jewish human rights organization, declared in the German magazine, *Spiegel Online*, “The passage of time in no way diminishes the guilt of the perpetrator. If we were to set a chronological limit on prosecution we would be saying that you could get away with **genocide**, which is morally outrageous.” He continued, “We owe it to the victims to hold the perpetrators accountable. If someone murdered your grandmother and the murderer is only found 50 years after, it wouldn’t very much concern you if this person was now elderly,” Zuroff stated. “You’d want him or her punished for the obvious reason that they murdered your grandmother. Every one of those victims was someone’s grandmother or grandfather, son or daughter, and that’s the bottom line.”

Demjanjuk’s alleged crimes carry a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison. If convicted, the prosecution has reportedly asked that he be sentenced to six years, taking into account Demjanjuk’s age and the time he already served in Israel. ■

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For example, in the Minnesota school district of Anoka-Hennepin, where last year at least four suicides were associated with anti-gay bullying, a controversial debate ensued regarding the district's neutrality policy, which banned any discussion of sexual orientation in classrooms, claiming it is harmful to all students. The policy instructs teachers to send LGBT students to a school counselor no matter what the issue is, whether related to bullying or not.

At a heated school board meeting this year debating the controversial policy, one Andover resident and a mother of three graduates of Anoka High School stated, "Being gay is not something that can change, and sending students to the counselor as if being gay is a behavioral issue is ridiculous."

Another mother of an Anoka middle-schooler testified that her son has experienced anti-gay bullying at his school and while some teachers have tried to help him, she stated, "I feel angry because it's all on Michael and the targets of abuse—it's up to him to educate his peers. The victims of bullying shouldn't have to educate their tormentors. The district should provide better anti-bullying education."

Conservative organizations such as the Minnesota Family Council and Focus on the Family reject any efforts to improve the school climate for LGBT students, contending that it would celebrate homosexuality, which they view as an unhealthy lifestyle.

"Once schools are forced to include special categories for things like sexual orientation or gender identity in their policies, that has been used as leverage to get in homosexual-themed curriculum for kids as young as kindergarten," Candi Cushman, education analyst for Focus on the Family, told the *Minnesota Independent*. "So this just becomes a gateway for homosexuality promotion in the school."

Bringing the argument back to more immediate concerns, Rebecca Dearing, a 17-year-old junior, who belongs to the gay-straight alliance at her Minnesota high school, said in Associated Press reports, "This shouldn't be a political issue anymore when it's affecting the lives of our students. It's a human issue that needs to be dealt with. They can be doing more and they're not."

Along the same lines, Warren Throckmorton, an associate professor of psychology at Grove City College in Pennsylvania, wrote in a column for CNN, "As a traditional **evangelical**, I may have some differences of opinion with my gay friends, however, such **ideological** differences don't matter to a middle school child who is afraid to go to school. There are many such children who need adults to care more about their well being than about religious differences. Adults need to focus on common values of respect and civility and take the culture war off the school campus."

Carol Watchler, co-chair of GLSEN's Central New Jersey Chapter, said the organization's response to the religious right's accusation of an agenda is that GLSEN has always advocated for the rights of all students and addressing anti-LGBT bias in schools makes schools safer for everyone.

"The right wing often uses the language 'special rights.' Our advocacy for strong anti-bullying measures seeks the same rights for LGBT students as for all students," said Watchler. "The message of respect for all groups or individuals no matter what the differences has a positive impact in the school climate for all groups and has the potential to carry over into all a young person may do." ■

Glossary

appellant — person making an appeal to a court. **acquitted** — cleared of a criminal offense. **derogatory** — disparaging or harmful to a person's esteem. **desegregation** — the elimination of racial segregation. **evangelical** — believing in the authority of the scripture and the salvation of Jesus Christ. **extradite** — to deliver an accused person or prisoner to another state or nation for prosecution. **genocide** — the deliberate destruction of a racial, political or cultural group. **ideological** — a way of thinking that is characteristic of a political system. **indictment** — an official, written accusation charging someone with a crime. An indictment is handed down by a grand jury. **majority opinion** — a statement written by a judge or justice that reflects the opinion reached by the majority of his or her colleagues. **segregation** — the act of separating a race or social class from general society.