

JUST LIKE ME
An Anti-Racist Childcare Film Project

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Design and production of a film and learning guide which will be a resource for both parents and childcare workers in helping to develop positive racial attitudes in children.

Community Education is the purpose of this project and a consultative process will be built into the design and planning of the film. A related community development and awareness component is integral to this project and will be carried out throughout the planning, production and distribution of the film.

Links with parents, childcare professionals, community groups will be built into the planning and research process. This will ensure links with potential users.

The film will use appropriate images to present a discussion of race relations issues with respect to young children, the development of positive attitudes, etc. Among the discussed will be:

- causes of racial attitudes
- how children learn racism
- impact of racism on the development of both black and white children
- implication of racism for the education of young children, the socialization process, etc.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

- To provide child care workers with race relations training materials
- To provide Canadian based information on race relations as it affects children
- To provide parents with a resource that would help them to understand and respond to race related matters in dealing with their children
- To develop a facilitators guide for use with the video/film. The guide will respond specifically to the need of parents and child care workers.
- To ensure wide distribution and use of the film

RESEARCH RATIONALE

The Congress of Black Women of Canada recognizes that racism and sexism are institutionalized within our society. In order to combat these attitudes and entrenched systems, the issue must be confronted at the earliest stages in the development of children.

It is widely accepted that the pre-school years are perhaps the most critical in beginning to shape an individual's social, emotional and cognitive development. Between the ages of three and four, children become aware of the status assigned to them by race and sex (G. Wilson: Childcare Shapes the Future: Anti-Racist Strategies). Equally, it has become clear that racism has serious effects upon and dehumanize those in the favoured position. Research has shown that white children are damaged intellectually by learning racism. As G. Wilson states: "(it) . . . limits their cognitive development and affects their ability to reason, impairing judgment and distorting perceptions of reality".

As the members of the Toronto Chapter examined the area of childcare and its role in the healthy development of children, we agreed that it was important to confront racism at an early age. Such a "preventative stance" is one of the few positive strategies that we can enact to reshape young minds.

Racism and multiculturalism have been increasingly identified as issues in preschool settings. Racism has received very little formal attention. Preliminary research has shown the Toronto Chapter that there is a dearth of Canadian resources in this area. Daycare centres in Toronto do not have programming to deal with the issue. There is no systematic training of daycare staff in their educational and employment settings in how to deal with racial incidents. These concerns were expressed by childcare staff in Chapter workshops held over the past two years, 1986 and 1987. The workshops were presented at the annual conferences of the Ontario Coalition for Better Daycare.

The necessity of developing training materials for use in Early Childhood Education programs arose from a realization that children spend many hours with daycare and early childhood workers. Discussions reinforced the need for input from visible minorities into the childcare system. Members of the Chapter who are also Early Childhood educators have stressed the fact that training materials are seriously lacking. They state that the film/video would be a valuable learning tool for students in Early Childhood Education programs, and would be well received within the childcare community.

The importance of the need for such a film/video is further shown by the number of requests to the Toronto Chapter for workshops and seminars on this topic from childcare and women's groups, and labour organizations. These requests clearly demonstrate that others also recognize the need that this issue be addressed.

JUST LIKE ME - THE FILM

It is our intention to produce a 30 minute documentary film which explores the idea of anti-racist education at the daycare and kindergarten level.

Using a documentary style we will show existing daycare and kindergarten settings and talk with caregivers, educators and parents in those settings. We will experience with the children the environment, ideas and concepts being transmitted.

We will also interview experts in the field of anti-racist education across Ontario; through them we will carefully examine the type of information - overt and covert - that is being transmitted to children at this early stage of their development.

Through these experts we will also explore the new ways being designed to involve and train childcare and kindergarten teachers around the issues that surround anti-racist education.

JUST LIKE ME will have a wide focus. We will experience the effects of biased education and expectations on children who come from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. Through games, discussions and other classroom and playground interaction, the film will show how minority children from Black, Native, Oriental or Asian backgrounds respond in situations which they become uncomfortable. We will also see how racism affects white children and the ideas and impressions they have about who they are in relation to their minority peers.

JUST LIKE ME will introduce parents, educators and caregivers to ways in which space and curriculum may be used to give all children in their care positive and empowering images of themselves and their place in Canadian society.

Due to the length and style we have chosen JUST LIKE ME will be easily accessible to educators/daycare teachers and parents alike. It will be an informative tool in helping them to cope more effectively with educating all children in ways which make them full participants in Canadian society.

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COMMUNITY EDUCATION/AWARENESS ASPECT OF PROJECT

The overall goal of the Chapter's initiative in this area is to develop a film focused on anti-racist childcare strategies. The community development component is an integral part of this process. The workshops will be aimed at parents, early childhood educators, students, as well as teachers of these programs. The intention is not only to educate but to raise the consciousness of all involved. Through this process it is hoped that the information will be further disseminated to a wider community.

A critical aspect of the production of the anti-racist childcare film is the community consultation and education process in both the development, distribution and use of the film once it is completed.

It is recognized by the Congress of Black Women that if a film is produced with little or no involvement by parents, childcare workers and community groups, and with no commitment or interest in use; the production will serve no real purpose. The need for resources available on this topic is urgent. It is essential that we build into the production process participation, consultation and an interest and commitment to use after the film is completed.

This project will implement a strategy to ensure consultation and involvement of parents, daycare workers, and other community representatives in the development and use of the film. Through the community development and awareness component we will ensure that an educational process is a part of the film production as well as its subsequent use, and will maximize the impact of the film on the community in Toronto and possibly across Ontario.

Objectives

To build a wide educational component into the production and subsequent use of the film: "Just Like Me".

Encourage the greatest possible use of the film upon completion within both Toronto and across Canada by forging community links, interests, and commitment.

Include parents, community organizations and daycare workers as key actors in the development of the film and discussion guide. The film can thus accurately reflect the situations that confront parents and children, and will provide useful and usable anti-racist childcare strategies.

Methods to Achieve Objectives

1. Hire a Community Development and Education co-ordinator who will work with the film production crew and the advisory committee to the film to co-ordinate and initiate extensive community contacts.
2. Hold focus group discussions prior to film production with parents, daycare workers, community organizations to get their input on:
 - a. current situation within daycare settings
 - b. needs of daycare workers with regard to combatting racism, particularly activities, resources, etc.
 - c. questions that the film must consider regarding how best to work with daycare workers and parents
 - d. format and content for the learning guide and discussion guideAt least three group sessions to be held with parents, three with daycare workers, and three with community organizations.