

Ten ways to fight hate

All over the country people are fighting hate. Standing up to hate mongers. Promoting tolerance, acceptance and inclusion. The *Southern Poverty Law Center* recently published a community response guide to fight hate. This guide sets out ten principles for fighting hate along with a collection of inspiring stories of people who acted, often alone at first, to push hate out of their communities. Their efforts usually made smaller headlines than the acts of the haters, but they made a difference. The steps outlined in this guide have been tested in scores of communities across the U.S. by a wide range of human rights, religious and civic organizations.

One person, acting from conscience and love, can neutralize bigotry. A group of people can create a moral barrier to hate.

Ten Ways to Fight Hate

-

ACT - Do something. In the face of hatred, apathy will be interpreted as acceptance - by the haters, the public, worse, the victim. Decency must be exercised, if it isn't, hate invariably persists.

-

UNITE - Call a friend or co-worker. Organize a group of allies from churches, schools, clubs and other civic sources. Create a diverse coalition. Include children, police and the media. Gather ideas from everyone, and get everyone involved.

-

SUPPORT THE VICTIMS - Hate-crime victims are especially vulnerable, fearful and alone. Let them know you care. Surround them with people they feel comfortable with. If you're a victim, report every incident and ask for help.

-

DO YOUR HOMEWORK - Determine if a hate group is involved, and research its symbols and agenda. Seek advice from anti-hate organizations. Accurate information can then be spread to the community.

-

CREATE AN ALTERNATIVE - Do NOT attend a hate rally. Find another outlet for anger and frustration and people's desire to do something. Hold a unity rally or parade. Find a new hook, like a "hate-free zone."

-

SPEAK UP - You too, have First Amendment Rights. Hate must be exposed and denounced. Buy an ad. Help news organizations achieve balance and depth. Do not debate hate mongers in conflict-driven talk shows.

-

LOBBY LEADERS - Persuade politicians, business and community leaders to take a stand against hate. Early action creates a positive reputation for the community, while unanswered hate will eventually be bad for business.

-

LOOK LONG RANGE - Create a "bias response" team. Hold annual events, such as a parade or culture fair, to celebrate your community's diversity and harmony. Build something the community needs. Create a web site.

-

TEACH TOLERANCE - Bias is learned early usually at home. But children from different cultures can be influenced by school programs and curricula. Sponsor an "I have a dream" contest. Target youths who may be tempted by skinheads or other hate groups.

-

DIG DEEPER - Look into issues that divide us: economic inequality, immigration,

homosexuality. Work against discrimination in housing, employment, and education. Look inside yourself for prejudices and stereotypes.

Obtain a full text of the Community Response Guide from your local library or access the Southern Poverty Law Center web site: www.SPLCENTER.ORG