

OVERCOMING PREJUDICE by Walter L. Williams

My research findings for my "Overcoming Prejudice" class, suggest that to persuade people (to drop their prejudices, or to accept certain ideas), it is most effective to do several things at once:

1. One-to-one dialogue, not by strangers, but among friends, relatives, and co-workers. The ongoing, repeated contact is most effective in gently nudging persons, bit by bit, to change their attitudes. Attitudes generally change one step at a time, not dramatically. This is consistent with Buddhist teachings.
2. To persuade someone to change their mind, it is most effective to get them to see that THEY will benefit, in their own life, due to the positive contributions of the other group. It also helps to convince them that their attitude on the particular issue at hand is not consistent with their larger values. People strive to be consistent, and will often change their viewpoint if they can be convinced that such an inconsistency exists.
3. Besides one-to-one contact, the most effective means of changing prejudices is the media. Thus, in order to maximize an influence in society, it is most effective to get activist individuals from our group into positions of influence in the following media fields:

*** Broadcast journalism (TV news reporters and directors)

*** Print journalism (editors and writers of major newspapers, magazines, and supermarket tabloids)

*** Cinema and television (especially producers, directors, script readers and screenplay writers).

*** Writers of mass-market popular fiction (both adult pulp paperback authors and editors, as well as children's comic book writers and pop teen magazines).

4. The next most effective means of changing attitudes is through education. But rather than trying to directly impact every teacher, it is most effective to target the teachers of teachers and school administrators. This means focusing on the four following areas:
 - (a) specialists in educational administration at large Education school.
 - (b) graduate school professors at major research universities, who train the bulk of college teachers,
 - (c) teachers of personnel managers for large corporations, who have an impact over the work-day hours of many employees (both by their own employment practices and because smaller businesses follow the lead of major corporations in their personnel practices).
 - (d) teachers of counselors and therapists, who have a big impact on individuals at crisis turning points in their lives.
5. We need to set up mentor programs in each of these targeted fields, to encourage young activists to go into these fields, and then help them gain practical experience in how to do their job well and hunt for the job where they would have the most influence. For example, a Publications Department could set up an apprenticeship system for student members who are majoring in journalism, to give them encouragement, experience, and on-the-job training. In fact, such publications might be largely written and edited by these apprentices. Such experience would greatly help them get jobs in their field,

making a direct impact on spreading certain ideals through journalism. A dormitory for apprentices could be set aside, where student members could perfect their skills in print journalism, and also have seminars suggesting how they might best incorporate tolerant approaches into their writing. For those in broadcast journalism, videotapes might be produced by them of TV News-like videos, analyzing the news from an accepting perspective. These student-produced videos and/or audio tapes could be advertised for sale in publications, and thus pay for their production costs. If funds are available, it would be nice if such apprentices could be given free housing and food while they are resident, as well as scholarships to pay for their transportation.