

SCHOOL-BASED RELIGIOUS EXCLUSION AND HARASSMENT SCENARIOS (ADAPTED FROM TDSJ2 APPENDIX 11U)

The following scenarios present examples of situations of religious stereotype, prejudice and exclusion that happen in our society. They are similar to scenarios that could be developed out of the readings in Chapter 4.

Participants should be divided into 3 or more small groups, one group for each of the 3 scenarios. Groups should not be larger than 5 participants – and more than one group can be given each scenario.

Each small group is assigned one of these three scenarios and asked to respond to the following questions and provide a brief summary of their discussion on newsprint.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is your understanding of the specific religious stereotypes, prejudice or exclusion described in this scenario?
- 2) What are the specific attitudes and behaviors that you believe should be changed? Who is responsible for intervening on behalf of change?
- 3) What are various ways that you could imagine some intervening in or resolving the situation? What do you consider the most effective way to resolve this situation? What ways of dealing with the situation might turn out to be ineffective, or even counter-productive?
- 4) If you were a participant or bystander in this scenario, how might you become an ally to the person excluded or stereotyped in this scenario?

Participants then post their newsprint for a newsprint gallery and go around the room to read each other's newsprint. When they return to their seats, the facilitator asks participants to discuss their responses to questions 2-4. They are then asked to identify some of the similarities and differences among the scenarios. Based on these similarities or differences, what are the similar or different ways of intervening or resolving them?

SCENARIO A

A Sikh American convenience store attendant is harassed by customers for wearing a turban, which is part of the religious garb worn by religious Sikhs. This Sikh man was born in the United States and speaks American English. You are a regular customer in the store and regularly hear customers make derogatory remarks behind his back but well within his hearing, such as that he must be related to Osama bin Laden, or “if you're in America dress like an American.” or that he should “go back where he came from,” or to “go home.”

SCENARIO B

You are a public school faculty member who cheers on the high school soccer team. Since you have been at this school for a while, you are aware that the soccer coach has always led the team in a quick Christian prayer before every game. This year, for the first time, a Muslim student, one of your students, joins the Varsity Soccer team. The Muslim student comes to you to explain that he cannot participate in the Christian prayer and he fears if he tells this to the soccer coach he may never really get a chance to play or start first-string.

SCENARIO C

Students are preparing presentations on different cultures and religions. One of your Hindu students prepares a report on Hinduism. As part of her class presentation she brings some religious items from home including a statue of Ganesh, the deity who is associated with removing obstacles from one's path. Ganesh is a half-elephant, half-human deity. The student brings in photographs of other gods and goddesses that have multiple arms, legs, and/or heads and are depicted with a variety of skin colors including bright red and bright blue. During the presentation, other students loudly whisper to each other about her “wild and crazy gods.” They roll their eyes and snicker while she is presenting. In the discussion that follows, the classmates claim that Hinduism not a real religion since “you people pray to animals” and “believe in myths.” The harassment continues sporadically for weeks, and is overhead by teachers in the hallways and in the classrooms.