

10-PART VIOLENCE PREVENTION SERIES

LEADER'S GUIDE

# *PeaceTalks*<sup>™</sup>



PROGRAM #7

## BRIDGING RACIAL DIVISIONS

Distributed by:

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## ***PeaceTalks: Series Overview***

Violence is a choice, and each and every one of us can reduce violence and make our lives safer by choosing peace. Choosing peace means understanding that violence is not random, universal, or inevitable. We can prevent and reduce violence by choosing to avoid or deescalate conflicts and avoid risk factors for violence such as alcohol, drugs, guns, and gang membership. This is the underlying message of the 10-part *PeaceTalks* video series featuring humorist and youth counselor Michael Pritchard.

Filmed across America, in real schools with real students, each *PeaceTalks* video program turns its attention to one aspect of the spectrum of violence that young people face in their everyday lives: managing anger, resolving conflicts, dealing with bullies and troublemakers, the issue of respect, sexual harassment and dating pressures, racial conflicts, peer pressure, gangs, and triggers to violence such as drugs, alcohol and guns.

In these programs, Michael and the young people take a long and honest look at kids' lives today and how the violence in our society affects them. Michael uses his special talents of humor, warmth, empathy and understanding to help the teens discover for themselves the choices they have and the answers to living together peacefully. Together, they look at the basic changes teens need to make in their attitudes and beliefs, and the skills they must learn in order to step up to peace.

*PeaceTalks* offers a three step program for choosing peace which is the unifying theme for all ten programs. These steps are:

1. Predict Consequences
2. Cool Down
3. Walk Away

Throughout the videos, Michael encourages young people to have the maturity, confidence, and composure to walk away from insults and confrontations, and channel peer pressure into a positive force for peace in their schools, neighborhoods, and communities.

## **How To Use This Video**

This video is designed for use in classrooms, community centers, youth organizations, camps, teen groups, libraries, or for children at home. Although teenagers are the target audience, parents, teachers, school administrators, school support staff, counselors, social workers, youth workers, peer counseling trainers, and anyone else who has regular contact with and a commitment to young people would benefit from the video as well. This Leader's Guide is aimed at the classroom teacher, but it can be used by any group leader or parent who wants to get the most out of BRIDGING RACIAL DIVISIONS.

As with the other videos in the *PeaceTalks* series, BRIDGING RACIAL DIVISIONS is intended to be used as part of a learning experience that begins before viewing the program, and ends beyond the classroom walls. The discussion questions, activities, projects and events suggested in the guide are intended to focus and enhance this learning experience.

Before showing BRIDGING RACIAL DIVISIONS to your students, the following steps would be useful preparation:

- Screen the video at least once, and note areas where you might want to stop the tape to probe an issue more fully.
- Read this guide to get a sense of how the video might be used, what discussion questions would work best with your students, and what follow-up activities or projects would be most appropriate and beneficial.
- Ask the students questions to get them thinking about some of the key issues presented in this program. You might want to distribute copies of the discussion questions on pages 5 and 6 of this guide. Be sure to go over these questions in advance to make sure they are understood and that they are appropriate to your students. They can be used to spark discussion after the screening.

The teaching technique underlying the entire *PeaceTalks* series is peer education. Because we believe that teen viewers will more easily learn the skills and attitudinal changes proposed if they are taught by their peers, the programs are structured around discussions where real kids grapple with tough situations and model positive solutions and attitudes.

### **Bridging Racial Divisions: Objectives**

- To examine the causes of racism
- To understand stereotyping and how it is destructive to people
- To help break the cycle of distrust and division caused by racism
- To examine nonviolent ways of expressing feelings experienced as a result of racism
- To look at the benefits of being open to individuals from other cultures

### **Bridging Racial Divisions: Synopsis**

Michael Pritchard begins this video by discussing what racial tensions were like when he was growing up and choices he made to find better ways to relate to people of different backgrounds. He asks a group of students if there are different cliques or groups at their school and if race or cultural background is the basis for those groups.

One boy says that it's like there are four large boxes, and each box contains one racial group. If you go outside of your box, you hear voices telling you to stay inside. But he doesn't want to stay in his box, he wants to experience all the different boxes.

A girl from Taiwan tells how hard it was for her when she first moved to the United States. "You just move here. You don't know English. You have no friends, and people kind of make fun of you. You go to school, but you don't really understand. It's sometimes even hard for you to find a box of your own."

Michael asks if there's a lot of racial insulting among students. The students agree that there is, although a lot of it isn't serious. One girl says that many of her friends are very racist and tells about a fight where racial insults were used. Other students share personal experiences of racial insults and Michael asks how it makes them feel when they're confronted because of their race.

A boy responds that the only thing that pushes him toward racism is how other races

are toward him. "It makes me feel smaller, but sometimes I just start to hate!" he answers.

Michael asks if there is racial graffiti around and the students describe examples of race-related graffiti they've seen in school. He asks them how it makes them feel when they see the graffiti and know it's probably classmates who wrote it.

"It makes me wonder when I'm walking down the hall if this person I passed is the person who wrote it or if that person I'm talking to wrote it. But since you don't know, you can't do anything about it," answers a student.

In another school, students discuss a conflict between black students who wear T-shirts with Malcolm X on it, and white students who wear T-shirts with the rebel flag on it. Michael encourages the students to discuss what these symbols stand for. Each group thinks the other group's shirt stands for hatred.

"We might be learning in this small group that we can talk to each other, and learn about each other, and express our feelings without it breaking out in a fight," shares one student. "But when you get all these students talking, different opinions start flying. And when different opinions start flying, attitudes start flying. And when attitudes start flying, fists start flying," says another student.

"What causes that?" Michael asks.

The students answer that, "We don't look at it with an open mind," and "People don't want to change themselves."

Michael says that it takes a lot to change yourself inside because it's easier to stay the way you are. Instead, you should be saying to yourself, "I'm going to try and hear what these other people are saying and feel what they're feeling. I'm going to try to put myself in these other people's shoes."

"Have you ever been prejudged or stereotyped?" Michael asks one group of students.

A boy describes how people react on the street to young black males, pulling their handbags away, speeding up, or acting like they're not there. His way of dealing with this behavior is to chalk it up to ignorance.

Another girl tells about being insulted based on a stereotypical reaction to her family. Michael asks if she now has bad feelings toward the people who insulted her. She says that she does have bad feelings, but realizes after these discussions that she shouldn't stereotype people either.

"Why do you think we're afraid of differences?" Michael asks.

"What you don't know, you're scared of," answers one girl.

A girl who is biracial tells about the pressure she feels from whites and blacks, because she is never white enough or black enough to fit in completely with either group.

“When people see our race before they see anything else, it is as though who we are doesn’t matter,” Michael says. “This kind of behavior, whether it’s thoughtless or calculated creates more tensions and divisions. And when feelings are hurt and tensions are high, even the most simple and innocent disagreements can escalate into a big conflict.”

A group of students discuss one racial conflict in their school that ended in a fist fight and ways the conflict might have been handled peacefully.

According to Michael, “To break the cycle of distrust, each of us needs to make changes. And if we do, we’ll find our lives will be richer as a result.”

One girl who socializes with many different types of people says that people are basically the same. “We all have the same worries. We laugh at the same things and talk about the same things, even though we may not look the same, or dress the same, or talk the same.”

The students believe that some of the benefits of being open to all types of people include:

- Feeling good about yourself
- Increased confidence
- Broadened horizons
- Learning new things
- The freedom to be yourself

“You have the choice if you want to be racist or prejudiced,” says one girl. And another adds that, “Every single one of us could make a difference. Maybe you can’t change anybody else, but you can change yourself. And you can change your children because they’re not born racist. They’re the way you teach them to be.”

Michael concludes that each generation has an opportunity to overcome the ignorance of the past and create a world that is less racist, fairer, and more just. In order to break the cycle of bigotry, distrust, hatred, and violence, we have to find the courage to change ourselves and, in so doing, change our world.

### **Bridging Racial Divisions: Discussion Questions**

1. Early in the video, students are asked to describe the social groups in their school. Do you consider your school culturally diverse? Do students tend to stick to “their own kind”?
2. One of the students compares the separation of racial groups to large boxes, where each group is expected to stay in its own box. What are some attitudes that lead people to believe that we should only stay with others of the same race, religion, or cultural background? What causes people to stay within their “box”?
3. A boy tells about discussing country music with some white classmates. Because he is black, they didn’t feel he could know much about the subject. This is an example of stereotyping. Have you ever been a victim of stereotyping? Have you ever stereotyped someone and found out that you were wrong? What happened?

4. One group in the video discusses the conflict in their school between students who wear Malcolm X T-shirts and students who wear rebel flag T-shirts. In this instance, symbols were able to spark racial conflict in the same way as words or actions. What are some other symbols which spark conflict?
5. Students in the video share stories about confrontations caused by racial conflict. What do you think causes such confrontations? What are some ways we might be able to discuss sensitive issues without name calling or fighting?
6. Many students in this video say they have experienced or witnessed prejudice in the form of racial slurs and graffiti. Is there much race-related insulting or graffiti here? What are some ways we might reduce or eliminate that in our school?
7. One girl shares her feeling that it would be boring to only be with people exactly like you. Do you agree or disagree with that statement and why?
8. Michael says that “the American dream is not just a destination, but an idea, a promise for tomorrow.” What does this statement mean to you?
9. One girl in the video states that we are not born racist, we learn racism. Do you agree? Where do you believe people learn prejudice? What are some ways we might be able to stop or reduce the prejudice in our school, neighborhood, or community?

### **Bridging Racial Divisions: Classroom Activities, Projects, and Events**

1. Ask each student to create a piece of work on some aspect of their cultural background. The work could be an essay, collage, painting, drawing, poem, song, etc. The purpose is to share with the class characteristics of their culture about which they are especially proud, or which mean something special to them. Results will be shared with the entire class.
2. Hold a class celebration and invite each member to bring a food or dish common to their culture with a sign stating the name of the food, its ingredients, if the food is eaten at certain special events or times of the year, and any other information that might be of interest to classmates.
3. One girl in the video says that everybody in America has relatives from somewhere else. Ask each student to research their ancestry and write an essay about their cultural background: where their ancestors came from, when and why they came to America, etc.
4. Divide the students into pairs. Have students write a list of qualities that make them different from their assigned partner. Then, have the students make a list of qualities they have in common with their partner. Discuss with the group what they learned from this exercise. Discuss how similarities and differences enrich us.
5. Organize an essay contest around Michael Pritchard’s statement about the American dream being an idea, not just a destination. You may choose to open the contest up to the entire grade or school. Announce the winner during a school assembly.
6. Ask students to evaluate race relations within the school and create a list of

suggestions to improve relations among students. Depending on the results of this project, you may want to turn the student suggestions into a more formal recommendation which can be given to the school administration.

## **A Few Words About Michael Pritchard**

Michael is a humorist, actor, youth activist, former probation officer and PBS host who is known to audiences across the United States for his ability to help young people gain insight into themselves and the choices they make. He gained national attention when *The Power of Choice*, his popular PBS series for teens on values and choices, first aired in 1987. His fans have grown with the release of his two subsequent series, *You Can Choose!* and *Big Changes, Big Choices*. Mr. Pritchard serves on the boards of directors for Special Olympics, The California Association of Peer Programs, and the Chinese-American Educational Institute. He also acts as a consultant to the California Consortium on Child Abuse and the Department of Pediatrics at San Francisco General Hospital.





## ***PeaceTalks Program Titles***

- Program #1 Preventing Violence
- Program #2 Resolving Conflicts
- Program #3 Managing Your Anger
- Program #4 Dealing with Bullies, Troublemakers and Dangerous Situations
- Program #5 Respecting Yourself and Others
- Program #6 Handling Dating Pressures and Harassment
- Program #7 Bridging Racial Divisions
- Program #8 Handling Peer Pressure and Gangs
- Program #9 Drugs, Alcohol and Guns: Triggers to Violence
- Program #10 Stepping Up to Peace

Each program is approximately 30 minutes long.