

Reading to End Racism

"... to help eliminate racism and bias through interactive personal and literacy programs that educate and empower youth."

In support of the Vermont Education Department's goal of promoting and valuing diversity, local schools are participating in a community initiative titled "Reading to End Racism" (RER).

The RER project is designed to provide engaging and age appropriate forums to explain and explore racism with students. It gives students an opportunity to listen to literature, personal stories and insights regarding racism and allows them the opportunity to discuss racism.

During sessions students are encouraged to come up with their own ideas to help eliminate racism.

Classroom presentations are led by volunteers who are concerned with racism. They may be artists, educators, elected officials, police officers, school board members, parents, pastors, high school students and other community members.

In Boulder, Colorado, where the program has been successful for the past twelve years, during the 04-05 academic year over 4400 middle and elementary students participated in RER. The results of computed evaluations were extremely encouraging. An average of 85% of the students responded "4" or "5" out of a possible 5 that they had increased understanding of racism. An average of 85% participating students responded "4" or "5" out of a possible 5 that they would intervene when they heard racist comments.

The Reading to End Racism project is a local collaborative effort between the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the Vermont Anti-Racism Action Team (VARAT).

For further information and/or to have RER come to your school, church or community, contact Denise H. Dunbar, M.Ed. -- dhdunbar@uvm.edu.