

VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

Choose Your Voice looks at attitudes we hold about people who are different and the way we respond to them; from name calling to bullying to exclusion to victimization to hatred to genocide. The opinions and experiences of the people in the video demonstrate how we are all responsible for the world we live in.

The following are suggested discussion points to stimulate critical thinking following viewing of the video segments. Teaching prompts are included in parenthesis.

Introduction to the video:

- The video opens with children's opinions about stereotyping. What does the word stereotype mean to you? (For a definition of the word stereotype, please refer to the Glossary provided in this resource)
- What purpose do stereotypes serve in our lives? (To distinguish friend from foe, to categorize people based on social and other characteristics)
- How do we learn our biases and prejudices in life? (For example, from images in the mass media; through attitudes or opinions passed on by our family, friends or society)
- How can we avoid using stereotypes in our everyday lives? (Be aware of what your own hidden biases are and correct them; ask yourself where your biases come from, what they mean and what you can do about them)



Ben Mulroney from CTV's eTalk introduces the *Choose Your Voice* video

“Genocide is not extreme war or conflict; it is extreme exclusion. Exclusion may start with name-calling, but may end with a group of people being excluded from a society to the point where they are destroyed.”

James M. Smith speaking to the London Assembly, January 2006.

Unit 1: The Voices of Stereotypes

- The playground chant, “Sticks and stones will break my bones but names will never hurt me” is supposed to protect kids from the effects of name calling. The boy in the video, Josh Vernon, said however that bruises heal, but insults never do. What did he mean by this? Do you agree? Disagree?
- In the video, Holocaust survivor Nate Leipziger says that, “Even calling names is dangerous.” What connection can you see between calling names and the images of genocide in the video? (To help stimulate classroom discussion, you can write the above quote by James M. Smith on the board)
- How can you stand up to name-calling and bigotry? (some examples include: have something to say in mind before an incident happens; set limits and let people know you won't accept their comments in your presence; lead by example and inspire others to do the same)

- Maurice Switzer of the Union of Ontario Indians spoke of the difficult experience he had growing up as an Aboriginal person and gave the example of a classmate who did an "Indian war whoop" whenever he entered the classroom. How would you feel/act as a member of a class in which this happened? What should a teacher do in response to this behaviour?
- Len Rudner says in the video that, "We are all responsible for the world we live in." What is your world? Family? Classroom? Circle of friends? Do you witness incidents of stereotyping or victimizing in your world that make you uncomfortable? How do you react in these situations?

Unit 2: Voices from the Past

- In this segment, we learn about several individuals who lost their families in genocides. What personal details in their stories make them seem very real to the viewer?
- These survivors suffered terrible losses in their countries of origin. They came to Canada expecting to find a country that was free of racism. Did they?

Unit 3: Voices from the Present

- Canadian law applies more significant penalties to criminal acts that are motivated by hate. For example, an individual who commits an assault that is racially-motivated may receive a lengthier prison sentence than one who commits a simple assault. Why do you think this is the case? (Hate crimes are attacks on entire communities vs. one individual, and a crime against a group of people deserves tougher sentencing than if it were against one person; a hate-crime hurts the victim more than a non-hate motivated parallel crime)
- Children at the Montreal Jewish school that was firebombed were traumatized by the violence in what they thought was a safe place. Do you feel that your school is a safe place?
- Does your school run programs that educate students about acceptance of differences of race/culture/religion? Are they effective?
- Suggest some things that could be done in your school to fight hatred?

Unit 4: Choose Your Voice

- Elizabeth Moore formerly belonged to the *Heritage Front*, a white supremacist group who, she said, hated everyone who was different from them. Why do you think people might be attracted to such groups?
- Elizabeth pointed out that choosing your voice can be really hard because it often means not following the crowd. It takes special courage, for example, to report cases of bullying. If you witness a classmate being intimidated or attacked, or if you are such a victim, what are your options?
- Len Rudner remembers the woman behind the door, who refused to get involved when he was being beaten up as a child. What do you think that woman was thinking? What is the danger posed by those who simply "mind their own business" when witnessing an injustice?