

CHHRE SUMMER RETREAT / REFLECTIONS ON ORLANDO TRAGEDY



Many months in planning, we had no idea how relevant and timely the Summer Retreat would be. As Interim Director of the Center, I am proud to have worked with Dr. Rachayita Shah and Dr. Rose Gatens to bring these topics to educators at this time. Our hope was that they will take it to their students and peers, their classrooms, and their schools. The objective of this experience was to strengthen knowledge and to develop skills to facilitate moving beyond the superficial to a deep dialogue in classrooms about the social and political consequences of discrimination based on religion, race, gender, and sexual orientation.

The Holocaust Education Mandate in Florida focuses on learning about the Holocaust in order to prepare students actively to uphold the dignity of all persons in a pluralistic, democratic society. At the core of this challenge is enabling students to understand the vulnerability of minorities, even in democratic societies, and the responsibility of all citizens actively to protect and foster minority as well as majority rights. As the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum reminds us, the purpose of Holocaust education is to move from memory to action, not only to learn about, but to learn what to do in the face of the political consequences of prejudice and hatred.

Our goal was to provide participants with a toolbox of background knowledge, current information and practical applications to share with the faculty and staff at their schools in order to teach their students in a manner that leads to an investigation of human behavior, an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping, and an examination of what it means to be a responsible and respectful person, for the purposes of encouraging tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society and for nurturing and protecting democratic values and institutions.

In light of the tragedy in Orlando, it was our hope that we could provide educators with both background information and opportunities for discussion in an attempt to understand. More importantly, we wanted participants to bring this back to their peers and colleagues, to their students, and to their classrooms and their schools. It is the only way that we can hope to make a change!

As Levar Burton said, “Literacy and education are our greatest weapons against hate”

— Linda Medvin, CHHRE Interim Director



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