

The School that Tried to End Racism

Sheila has already given a comprehensive account of the content of the two programmes, so I will not repeat that here. However, I have a few questions and comments:

- I would have liked to have known more about the test that was used at the beginning and end of the three-week experiment. Was it simply based on how words were attached to the pictures, or did speed of decision also play a part?
- I watched the 'unfair' running race and the reactions of the children taking part; what interested me was that, when the whistle blew, two rather large boys – one white, one black – ambled across the start line, looking less than willing to take part. Here we have the age old problem of school sports for the overweight, almost-teenager who is becoming aware of their own body image.
- Most interesting to me was the ability of the BAME group to discuss and celebrate their own backgrounds and ethnicity, and how reserved in comparison the white group were. The sounds that could be heard by the white group, coming from the room where the black group were meeting, indicated that they were having much more fun; there was also a feeling of jealousy from one of the white girls that items brought forward during the 'show and tell' session by the black pupils were much more interesting. One of the white girls brought along a flag of St George and my reaction, as well as that of one of the presenters, was that there is now an unfortunate association between that flag and some right wing, nationalist and racist groups – perhaps we need to reclaim our flag!
- There was one girl, Farah (?) who is the child of mixed parentage; when the children were asked to divide themselves into two groups according to whether they identified as black or white, she really struggled and was encourage by the black group to stay with them. However, when the Asian group of children said they didn't fit within the black group, and a third group was established, Farah appeared to be more relaxed with them. It made me consider the fact that the 'Black Lives Matter' protest may itself discriminate, as it appears to be 'Black African Lives Matter' and could be considered to exclude other 'non-whites'.
- A child who stood out for me, for all kinds of reasons, was Henry; he really found the whole process very difficult at the beginning – mainly because he felt there was no difference between black and white, and seemed almost surprised that anyone would question his lack of racist views. He was a very thoughtful young man, extremely articulate, and I did wonder if being smaller than average, with bright red hair and glasses (triple whammy!) meant that he had encountered and had to deal with other forms of bullying – though I think he could have held his own against any opponent. I wanted to adopt Henry!

The programmes are really worth watching - I found it through 'Catch Up' on All4 on my television. Thank you, Joan, for your recommendation.

Kathy Hodgson