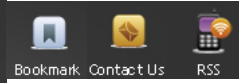


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TCA joins in national 'Stand Against Racism'

Scott Alessi
Photo and Online Editor

Among the diverse student body of Trenton Catholic Academy, Hamilton, there is no place for racism. And when the opportunity arose for the school to voice their opposition to racist attitudes, the students of TCA were eager to participate.

Students from both the Upper and Lower School of TCA stepped out of the classroom April 30 and formed a human chain along the school's property on Kuser Road as part of the nationwide Stand Against Racism. The 550 TCA students who took part were among an estimated 250,000 people from more than 2,000 organizations in 32 states across the country who participated in the event.

The Stand Against Racism is a project created by the YWCA. It began in 2007 as a joint program of the YWCA of Trenton and Princeton and has since grown into a national effort, with a goal of engaging individuals and communities in meaningful discussions of race issues.

John Shaffer, director of development and public affairs for TCA, said that when the school first heard about the annual event, it seemed like a perfect fit for the beliefs and mission of the school.

"This is something that we do on a daily basis," Shaffer said. "Our student body is already very diverse and we have proven that people from different cultures and ethnicities can live and work together successfully."

The event, which Shaffer said TCA hopes to turn into a yearly tradition, proved to be a worthwhile endeavor. Not only did students gain a greater perspective on the issue, he said, but curious drivers often stopped along the road to ask questions about the gathering, thus helping to spread the message throughout the community.

Many students who participated in the event wrote essays expressing their feelings on racism, which offered a broad spectrum of views from young people of various ethnic backgrounds, Shaffer said.

Among those who wrote about the issue was TCA senior class president Frantz Massenat, who in advance of the event penned a letter to the editor of the Trenton Times. The letter was published April 29.

In his letter, Massenat stated that the students of TCA hoped to make a statement through their own racial harmony that beliefs and attitudes on racism can be changed.

"Racism and prejudice are most often based on ignorance and fear of difference," he wrote. "We wish to create an environment of understanding, acceptance and dignity for everyone."

While TCA was one of three high schools in Mercer County to participate in the Stand Against Racism, they were the only school in the county to expand the program to incorporate younger children, all the way down to their pre-K class.

"Our diverse population extends all the way through our Lower School, so we thought that it was logical to reach



Standing for Acceptance – Students of Trenton Catholic Academy, Hamilton, line the street outside their school holding letters that spell out "TCA Stands Against Racism." The students were among an estimated 250,000 participants in the national Stand Against Racism held April 30. Photo courtesy of Trenton Catholic Academy

Student pens anti-racism poem

Trenton Catholic Academy 11th grader Ed Bynum contributed to the Stand Against Racism with the following poem, entitled "Can Anyone Explain."

Can anyone explain why I'm judged
Can anyone explain why I'm not loved
Can anyone explain why I get picked on
Can anyone explain why my feeling been gone
Can anyone explain why the sky is gray for me
Can anyone explain why they walk away from me
You say you can't explain, maybe I'm different
You can't explain, because you never listen
Can anyone explain I ask again
I already know why, it's the color of my skin

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out to children at a young age because you learn what you see, you learn what you hear," said Shaffer. "So we want to make sure that our children are hearing the right messages."

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