

FIGHTING RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Portraits of Hate, Lessons of Hope



Lesson Plan: Overview of Anti-Mormonism

Objectives:

- The student will be able to define religious intolerance based on a perception of power.
- The student will be able to recognize the different manifestations of the theme of power in the relevant images from the web-site.
- The student will be able to describe the different motivating factors for discrimination based on a perception of power.
- The student will be able to articulate the differences and similarities across all three religious groups discussed in this lesson.

Activities:

- Introductory lesson on power as a theme of religious intolerance. Information sheet provided.
- Students can work individually, in groups, or as a class to complete the worksheets provided.
- Homework – Each student should choose two different images, from the web-site, that feature religious intolerance based on a perception of power. Write a 2-3 page paper comparing and contrasting the different manifestations of power within these images.
- Concluding Discussion Questions – Why do perpetrators of religious intolerance use the perception of power to justify their bigotry? How do manifestations of intolerance based on a power differ when comparing religions—Catholicism, Judaism, and Mormonism?

Assessments:

- In-class responses to worksheet questions.
- Participation in class discussion.
- Graded Essay completed out of class. (Possible rubric provided.)

Background Information on Religious Intolerance based on Power: A Brief History

General:

- Many marginalized groups do not meet with hatred until they are perceived as an imminent threat to the American way of life. This threat is often the result of increasing political or economic power (or at least the perception of such).
- Hatred based on a perception of increasing power is not specific to religious intolerance but is also tied to racism, nationalism, sexism, etc.

Anti-Semitism:

- Jewish immigration skyrocketed between 1830 and 1860, the Jewish population in the United States increased from 4,500 to 150,000 during that time.
- As a result of this increase in immigration, Jews experienced increased prejudice including being barred from colleges, hotels, and certain neighborhoods.
- By the early 1900 many Jews were able to find economic success despite the constraints placed on them.
- The increasing wealth and power of the Jewish community, particularly in the financial and banking sectors, led to increased bigotry and intolerance.
- One of the most famous instances of this intolerance is the case of Leo Frank, a young Jew who helped run a family business, a pencil factory. In 1913, a thirteen year old factory employee named Mary Phagan went to the factory to pick up her paycheck and was later found dead in the basement of the factory. Only a handful of employees were in the factory that day, of them Frank, a Jew, was arrested, convicted, and sentenced to death despite the fact that substantial evidence linked the janitor, Jim Conley, to the murder. The governor of Georgia, realizing that the evidence was inconclusive, commuted Frank's sentence to life in prison. Frank was later pulled out of his jail cell and lynched by a mob on August 17, 1915.

Anti-Catholicism:

- Catholic immigrants from Europe had been immigrating to the United States since the Colonial era.
- The Irish immigration boom occurred during the Irish Famine between 1845 and 1850. This increase in the Irish population made Americans acutely aware of the Catholic presence. During the famine, these Irish Catholic immigrants to the predominantly Protestant United States were ill received.
- Catholic immigrants typically settled in cities and worked in factories and other entry level jobs. However, due to their large numbers many Americans considered them to be a threat.
- During the Mid-1850's the Know Nothing Party was formed and nominated Millard Fillmore for the presidency in 1856 on an overtly Anti-Catholic platform.
- Catholics also became one of the primary targets of the second Ku Klux Klan (established in 1915).
- Further implications of power as a source of anti-Catholic rhetoric are fueled by the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church. Those who perpetuate anti-Catholicism see

this hierarchy as un-democratic and easily corruptible. They also view the Pope as a political figure who demands Catholic loyalty (over loyalty to one's nation).

Anti- Mormonism:

- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints began in 1830 and grew rapidly in the following decades.
- Mormons were seen as “clannish” and viewed as a political, economic, and religious threat.
- Mormons were expelled from several cities and states through violence, public mandate or both. Instances of such expulsion include: Independence, Missouri, and Nauvoo, Illinois.
- Fears of Mormon power were also fueled by Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, who was considered a prophet of the faith
- Smith's elevated status among his followers led outsiders to believe that he had too much power over his followers.
- Smith's political aspirations made his power a more imminent threat. Smith was at one time the mayor of Nauvoo, Illinois and later a minor candidate for president.