

The Learning Community is proud to be included in this beautiful piece by Ed Achorn: "At the core of everything our society does should be the Declaration of Independence, the founding document of our country, with its essential statement: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Each of us, as a consequence of being human, is equally endowed with sacred rights no government or politician may legitimately take away."

PROVIDENCE Journal

Editorial: The fears of R.I.'s minority children

Tuesday

Posted Nov 22, 2016 at 4:55 PM

Updated Nov 22, 2016 at 4:55 PM

In the wake of the election of Donald Trump as president, the leaders of the Learning Community, a charter school in Central Falls, have been counseling children who feel frightened, many of them Latino. And they have written down some of things they say students have told them.

"America hates us and doesn't want us living here."

"I am a Latino and Trump said Mexicans are criminals. Does that make me one too?"

"*What? Are you a Muslim?*" (A new insult making the rounds among children.)

"I'm glad I can talk to you about things. You are not like other white people."

"I don't feel safe on the street anymore because my skin is so dark. My brother and I cried walking in this morning."

"Some members of my family voted for Trump. They don't care that my moms are gay. How can they do that to us? Don't they care about us?"

"Trump got elected because he doesn't like black people and lots of white people don't like black people too."

A group of sixth grade boys said to a girl they were passing, "So you don't like Trump, huh? Why not?" and made lewd gestures.

A second grader came to the office, sobbing, saying that when she was on her way to school someone rolled down the window and said, “You[‘d] better have your papers or your family will be sent back!”

These comments reflect, in some cases, a great misunderstanding of the nature of America and what the president-elect actually said or supports. But they are important to consider because they also reflect what adults are teaching children, and because such feelings are genuine.

Mr. Trump used intemperate language throughout his campaign in his quest to narrowly win election. He was caught on a 2005 video making comments about women that, he later said, belonged in a locker room. He can no longer be so reckless, since a president inevitably represents the United States and its values.

He has a duty to make clear that, whatever the details of his policies are, he will pursue the American ideals that bind us together: equal opportunity for all and protection of basic civil liberties, such as freedom of speech and of the press, and freedom from state interference in religious beliefs.

But all of us have a role too. This is too important to leave to politicians. Adults set the example for children.

While some propaganda argues otherwise, Americans as a whole are a remarkably giving people, with strong moral beliefs, and great reserves of goodwill. Most of us support the idea of a society that creates opportunities for all Americans to live out their dreams to the best of their abilities. We should work to make this vision of freedom clear to children.

At the core of everything our society does should be the Declaration of Independence, the founding document of our country, with its essential statement: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Each of us, as a consequence of being human, is equally endowed with sacred rights no government or politician may legitimately take away.

This credo has steered the nation through many difficult times. As Abraham Lincoln noted, even before the Civil War and the death of slavery, that passage will always stand as “a rebuke and a stumbling-block to the very harbingers of

re-appearing tyranny and oppression.” And so it has.

Our country has made enormous strides against racism, but we have much further to go if children believe they are hated for their skin color or ethnicity. While immigration laws are absolutely necessary to protect society, we must make sure such laws do not become engines of hatred.

We must work tirelessly, too, to improve public education, so that poor and minority children have a full share of the American Dream. We know how to do it. We just need the will to embrace change. This is the greatest civil rights challenge of our time.

Meanwhile, let’s strive to be generous to each other, and work every day to alleviate the reasons for children to feel fearful.