

# Diversity & Inclusion Newsletter

## October 2017

Welcome to the first Diversity & Inclusion Newsletter!

### *No Place for Hate:*

This year, PS39 is working with the Anti-Defamation League to become a "No Place for Hate" school. No Place for Hate® is designed to create inclusive school communities by promoting unity and respect, and empowering schools to reduce bullying, name-calling and other expressions of bias. Over the course of the school year, our students will participate in at least three ADL approved activities that address bias and bullying and involve discussion, active learning, and an action plan.

### *"Mix It up at Lunch Day"*

Our first "No Place for Hate" activity will be on October 31st when we celebrate "Mix it Up at Lunch Day". This day is part of an international campaign that encourages students to identify, question and cross social boundaries. During their lunch period on this day, all students will sit in a new location and have a chance to meet new people at their lunch table. Our classroom teachers will be supporting this experience through explicit lessons and discussions about this event.

### *Puerto Rico Aid*

Puerto Rico is experiencing a humanitarian crisis and PS39 is committed to providing aid. Diversity and Inclusion Committee member, Jeannie Gallego takes this crisis personally as she spent many summers in Puerto Rico during her childhood. Poverty reigned where her abuela lived, like much of the island, but her pueblo regularly came together to chat about their families, politics, or the latest gossip, and to trade and barter what they grew on their land or made with their hands. These visits gave a sense of just how big and connected her community was, and how much they depended on one another.

On September 20th, Hurricane Maria slammed into Puerto Rico "ripping off metal roofs, generating terrifying and lethal flash floods, knocking out 100 percent of the island's electrical grid and decimating some communities." The island, home to 3.4 million and sanctuary to countless others who are inextricably linked to it, was devastated. To help our students and their families understand the devastation in PR, here are some facts about the current situation:

- More than 80% of the island's electric grid is still not functioning
- 28% of Puerto Rico residents lack running water
- As of last week, only 22 of the 1,113 schools in Puerto Rico had been reopened
- All of the public schools are without electricity and more than ½ are without water
- More than 100 schools are still functioning as shelters
- Nearly ½ of hospitals also remain without electricity
- 80% of the island's agriculture was destroyed

Puerto Rico is just beginning what will be a long road to recovery. In the coming weeks and months, our school community will be partnering with a local school in Puerto Rico to provide children with school supplies necessary to resume their lives as students. We will continue to provide information on how PS39 is taking action to support Puerto Rico.

If you are interested in making monetary donations, the [Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Puerto Rico](#) is a worthy organization which has provided a safe and creative place for kids during this time of change. Their commitment is to serve as a second home and provide assistance to more than 15,000 kids during the recovery effort.

### **In this Issue**

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## Family Friday Partnership

We are aware that it can be difficult for parents to attend every Family Friday. The Diversity and Inclusion Committee has put in place a process for those parents who can't make it. When parents notify their class parent on the Monday prior to Family Friday, parent volunteers from your child's classroom will be paired with children whose parents cannot attend.

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## Book of the Month, Coming Soon!

What could happen if everyone at PS39 read the same book? Our hope is that a Book of the Month will spark robust conversations around inclusion and diversity while bringing us together as a community with shared ideals. The teachers are thrilled to launch our Book of the Month Read Aloud program with a selection of books on the theme of Multiculturalism.

In the coming weeks, teacher members of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee will be preparing questions and activities to guide classroom discussions around these books. They will be available after the Read Aloud, so that families can be part of the conversation, too! Each month our Read Aloud selections will focus on a different theme, bringing us deeper into our work on building a more inclusive and culturally aware community. Stay tuned!

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## Book Lists on Amazon

In an effort to bring more diverse books into PS39 homes and classrooms, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee has curated a list of books that can be purchased on Amazon.com. We have set up 'idea lists' that offer [Books for Children](#) at various grade levels as well as a list [For Adults](#). Book titles are continually being added and suggestions are welcomed. Additionally, we hope to create individual lists by grade and/or teacher in order to further enhance classroom libraries. More information on these efforts can be found on the [Diversity and Inclusion Webpage](#).

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## Thank You and Acknowledgements

Thank you to Principal Anita de Paz for helping to create a more diverse and inclusive school community; to Karen Herskowitz for always being passionate, thoughtful and beyond helpful; to the teachers of the committee, it is your commitment and desire to enlighten our children that will make an invaluable impact; to the Welcome Dinner organizers and volunteers, specifically Jane Chuang, Chiwoniso Kaitano-Price, Schele Williams Kleinberger, Kate Navarro-McKay, Kevin Merritt; to Andrea Margulies for starting our first newsletter; to Dana Luria for creating our surveys; to Chanda Evans and Kathy Price for outreach and collaborations in/out of District 15 and lastly, thank you to all current (and future) members of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee for your enthusiasm and dedication to creating wonderful little humans at PS39.

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### Defining a Word:

**Microaggressions:** *a subtle but offensive comment or action directed at a minority or other nondominant group that is often unintentional or unconsciously reinforces a stereotype: **microaggressions** such as "I don't see you as black."*

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## Member Spotlight

### Molly Solomon

As a parent, I have a responsibility to make sure my children see the world as it is, full of injustice and inequity and also full of love and humanity. As I woke up my own privilege, and how long I had walked through my life without looking within, as well as not taking action toward change, I also realized I had some power to do something about it --better late than never.

I started the Diversity & Inclusion committee to help cultivate an environment at PS39 that shines a light on both how our history created, and our present upholds, a world in which some people are privileged and some are disadvantaged; and that teaches our children – from the start- that through empathy, understanding and action, they can be a part of the solution. I believe that through sustained dialogue, learning, inquiry and even, fun, together we will be able to realize our vision of a more inclusive and equitable community.

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## Reminders

**Diversity and Inclusion Survey:** There's still time to complete our survey!

Survey for families [RETURNING to PS39:](#)  
Survey for families [NEW to PS39:](#)

**Website:** Don't forget to visit our [website](#) for updates on events, as well as more information on newsletter happenings.

**Meeting time and date:** the next Diversity & Inclusion Committee Meeting will be held on Wednesday November 8th at 8:30am in the PS39 Cafeteria

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## Featured Media

Podcast: [This American Life: Tell Me I'm Fat](#)  
A discussion regarding how society often overlooks discrimination based on someone's weight.  
One of our PS39 parents recommended this podcast after seeing his son have recurring social issues about his weight at school

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