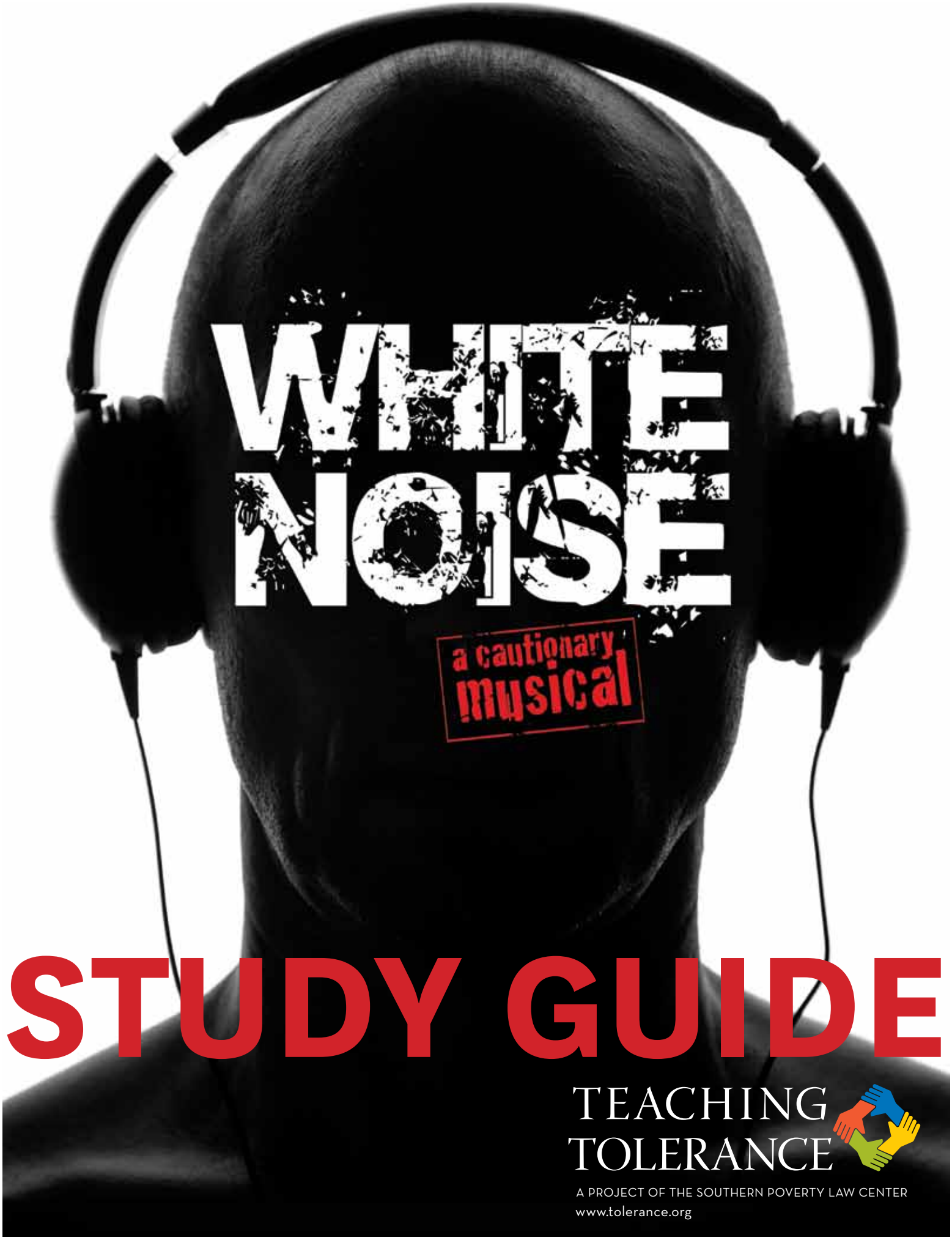


STUDY GUIDE

TEACHING TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

www.tolerance.org

Why White Noise?

Messages of hate aren't confined to the radical fringes of our society. They can be encoded in popular music. They can be threaded into political rhetoric. They can be heard on talk radio—or in the schoolyard.

We cannot outlaw hate speech—it's protected by the First Amendment. But we can be aware of it. We can understand its implications and context, and recognize where it's coming from.

And, we can speak out against it.

This groundbreaking production raises important issues about the power of hate speech in our culture and should inspire people of conscience to call out others who engage in it. As a leading voice in the fight against hate, bigotry and discrimination, the Southern Poverty Law Center believes this production is an important step toward that goal.

Working with the producers of *White Noise*, the SPLC's renowned Teaching Tolerance project has produced this educational guide to help students, from high school to college, reflect upon and discuss these issues as responsible consumers of pop culture.

TEACHING TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER
www.tolerance.org

Contents

Characters and Songs 4

Q&A with the Creative Team 5

Discussing the Play 9

The Worlds of *White Noise* (and Us) 11

Hatecore: Racist Music 12

The N-Word: Is it Ever Okay? 13

Language and Speech:
How Hate is Expressed 14

Take Action 17

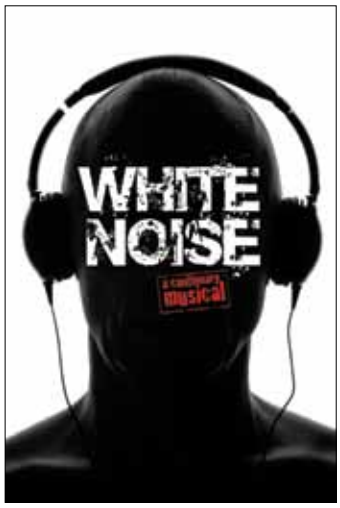
Respond to Hate Music 18

Organize Virtually 19

Curriculum Standards 20

Resources 21

Acknowledgements 23



White Noise **is a rock musical that follows a pair of sisters, Eva and Eden Siller, who have established a small following as folk singers promoting messages of white power. A powerful New York producer convinces them that they can penetrate the world of mainstream rock/pop, dramatically increasing their reach, by simply coding the lyrics to their hate songs.**

Steadily baited by the lure of fame and power, two diametrically opposed groups—"White Noise," the pop band, and "Bloodbrothas," the hip-hop-turned-"gangsta"-rap duo—collide with consequence at the top of the charts.

The Characters and Songs

EVA She is an eloquent 17-year-old white female from small-town Oregon, and is stereotypically "Aryan"—blonde and beautiful. On the surface, she seems approachable.

EDEN She is a 19-year-old white "Aryan-looking" female who wants to escape from her small town in Oregon. Unlike her sister Eva, Eden is good-natured.

MAX He is a white man in his 40s. Max represents the worst possible stereotype of a record label executive. He is charismatic, passionate, overly confident, controlling and could be described as Machiavellian.

JAKE He is a young, handsome, smart white man in his 20s, a New Yorker growing his music-industry career.

DUKE He is a 20-something white "skinhead," also from small-town Oregon, and Eva's boyfriend. Duke is tall, handsome, aggressive and intimidating.

TYLER He is a young black male in his 20s, a preppy college graduate, hungry for success as a rapper. But his original positive rap music is repackaged into "gangsta" rap.

DION He is Tyler's brother, a black man in his 20s, and a college graduate who, with his sibling, seeks a successful music career. He is very smart, passionate, attractive and aggressive when pushed; he is the more "alpha" of the brothers.

LAUREL She is the sisters' 40-something mother, who has lost her husband to suicide. Laurel is prejudiced, but doesn't understand why her daughter, Eva, is a crusader.





THE SONGS

WELCOME TO EDEN
LIFE, LIBERTY AND HAPPINESS
BIG BANG
MEXICAN VACATION
WELCOME TO EDEN REPRISE
N.G.S.
LIVE FOR THE KILL
W.T.F.
LOVE STORIES
MONDAYS SUCK
NOT YOUR ENEMY
SHOWTIME
HIP HOP COUNTRY
CITY ON A HILL
LIFE AROUND
MONDAYS SUCK REPRISE
MASTER RACE
FINE
I AM AMERICA

The Creative Team Q&A

SERGIO TRUJILLO, *director and choreographer*

WHAT DREW YOU TO *WHITE NOISE*?
I was working on a new Broadway show that I felt was missing something. It had wonderful music and a great composer, but I felt it had nothing to say. It's been my goal for the past few years to really challenge myself as a creative force and as an individual to take on the responsibility of inspiring conversation and discussion amongst an audience with my craft, while being able to deliver something entertaining.

White Noise ... is provocative and has something very real to say. This piece inspires talk around important, larger social issues I want to take on at this point in my career. This is the edgiest piece of theater I have ever done, and a great project through which to grow as a director.

Q: TRUJILLO SAYS THE PLAY "INSPIRES TALK." WHAT DID THE PLAY MAKE YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT?

WHAT CREATIVE CHALLENGES HAVE YOU FACED IN DIRECTING AND CHOREOGRAPHING THE PLAY?
White Noise breaks every rule. It has an anti-hero and an anti-love story. Its themes hit close to home and it is designed to inspire discussion. So I first and foremost have had to stay true to what the play is trying to say, in spite of theatrical conventions.

Several times throughout this process I've found myself thinking "be careful what you wish for." Yes, I wanted to take on a piece of challenging, in-your-face theater in this way, but this responsibility requires a lot of courage to truthfully convey the show's message. Finding the balance of creating something entertaining that is also inspiring the audience to think and see things in new ways is as exciting as it is tough.

WHAT DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO TAKE AWAY FROM *WHITE NOISE*?
I want people to examine the part they play in the commercial success of hate music.

Music is the most powerful messenger. It makes us happy, motivates us and teaches us. So we have to be mindful as a society of what we feed on. I want people to be careful, to read the fine print, to educate themselves about what they are letting in and putting out.

MATTE O'BRIEN, *author*

HOW DID THE PLAY *WHITE NOISE* COME TO BE?
White Noise is inspired by a pair of sisters whose mother pushed them into the White Nationalist spotlight. They became a singing duo spouting neo-Nazi messages, and they got lots of national attention almost as poster children for this movement. As their popularity grew, their music became mainstreamed through coded messages, expressed through metaphor and imagery.

This current production of *White Noise* grew out of an earlier, very different version of the play, produced by a different team. The original was more of a spoof on neo-Nazism. The play's current producer brought me on to take it in a more serious, contemporary direction.

My writing is politically driven. I never write for pure entertainment. I was fascinated by the

sisters' story and the sociopolitical themes that are present in it, so this production reflects that.

WHAT ARE THE PLAY'S MAJOR THEMES?
The primary theme is the clever and strategic packaging of hate in the entertainment industry, the music industry in particular. In *White Noise,* you see how messages of pure hate get manufactured—through simple tweaking and angle changing—into ones that inspire the public.

Q: IN WHAT WAYS DOES MUSIC BOTH REFLECT AND SHAPE CULTURE?

Hate groups use language cleverly, manipulating free speech to their advantage. They have legal teams aiding them in this process; thus, their fundamentalist point of view is very well argued. Their messaging has become much more mainstream, and therefore much more acceptable in the public eye. Instead of promoting themselves by spewing hate towards other groups like they used to, they play on the heartstrings of otherwise dispassionate white Christian people by instilling fear that their race is in jeopardy. It's a dangerous tactic because it's much farther reaching than that of encouraging violence.

Interestingly, it seems the public has an appetite for unabashed hatred, racism and misogyny in music, especially when the music comes from the black community. So artists who are black are being packaged as aggressive "street" artists when their roots are often far from it. We see how this happens in *White Noise* as well.

WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO TAKE AWAY WITH THEM?
When you live in this world of carefully designed rhetoric, it's hard to know right from wrong. And you stop paying attention to what words mean. Take responsibility by listening to what is being said. Be an informed consumer and conscientious of what is being said. The language of hate is not easily discernible.

I hope that people also become more aware of how they use language to describe themselves and the people who are part of their community—being mindful of who is listening to them.

Finally, we might not be able to change people's viewpoints, but we might be able to talk to people differently if we hear what they are saying. Right now, we are not listening to the noise around us.

ROBERT and STEVEN MORRIS and JOE SHANE, *lyricists and composers*

WHAT DREW YOU TO *WHITE NOISE*?
First off, it is an exciting and challenging play. The play is a vehicle for opposing extremism and fundamentalism. It's great to have the opportunity to play a part in that and speak to people through our music in such a powerful way.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO CREATE THE MUSIC AND WORDS FOR THIS PLAY?
First, the music—modern rock, pop, hip-hop—had to be convincingly real. It had to be contemporary-sounding. But it also had to be show music. The audience has "current ears" ... they identify these genres in very specific ways based on what they're hearing on the radio. The music has to appeal to that.

To write convincing songs, to make them true to the characters in the show, we have to crawl inside their skin and imagine what they would say. Sometimes, especially for the more fundamentalist characters in the show, we would have to imagine the most incendiary thing they would say and be open and willing to go to that. That was hard and very uncomfortable.

THERE ARE SOME CATCHY TUNES IN THE SHOW WITH DISTURBING MESSAGES. HOW DO YOU EXPECT PEOPLE TO RESPOND?
Some people will really get it, and they will see the themes and messages as important and reflective of the society we live in today. Others won't get it, seeing it as fantasy, something that is just part of a fictitious stage story. What we hope people understand is that *White Noise* is a cautionary tale of morality. It's about responsible consumerism. Essentially, the message is: "Be careful when you traffic in the world of dangerous ideas."

DOES THE PLAY MIRROR YOUR EXPERIENCE IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY?
It is a tough business. No record deal comes with an obligation for the record company to release a record made by the artist themselves or even one they helped manufacture. So if an artist is determined to make it—or even just stay alive—in show business, what can he or she say no to? In the business, an artist must accept that he or she is the clay out of which the executive will shape the music and his or her presence.

WHAT DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO THINK ABOUT—AND DO—AFTER THEY SEE THE PLAY?
Young people especially are inundated with music. We want people to tune in to what is actually said, be mindful of the ideas behind the music and become aware of where dangerous ideas can—and will—go.

Q: WHAT DOES "RESPONSIBLE CONSUMERISM" HAVE TO DO WITH MUSIC?

We hope the show inspires people to pay attention to it all—the words, the sounds, the media, everything—and develop the discipline to be critical. At the same time, we want people to try to understand different points of view, to the extent that they can, and examine and let go of preconceived notions of race ... maybe extend their hands to someone different from them.

The play ultimately encourages people to filter out "the noise."

PAUL TAZEWELL and ROBERT BRILL, *costume and scene designers*

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO DESIGN FOR WHITE NOISE? WHAT DROVE YOUR DESIGN DECISIONS?
TAZEWELL: To dress the "White Noise" music group, I studied neo-Nazi images to get an understanding of the look. In this case, the clothes are modern with a military bent—camouflage pattern, olive drab, the iconic neo-Nazi, white supremacist, punk, American military image. I found a lot of clothing in stores already with a military sensibility.

The Bloodbrothas are costumed in the stereotypical "urban" dress that pop culture ascribes to rap artists. Max's clothing signals confidence and power, and Laurel's clothes go through a subtle transformation before and after she begins to benefit financially from her "sellout" decision.

Another factor that figured into the design is the short scene shifts that don't allow for a change in the physical space. So the audience relies on the costumes to give information about where people are, what's happening or even the time of day.

BRILL: What's really unique about the physical setting for *White Noise* is that it's set within a rock concert. That gave me the rare opportunity to not just design a set, but the wonderful challenge of creating a total environment. From the moment the audience enters the theater, our objective is to make them feel like they're in a space that captures the energy and adrenaline of being at a concert.

The stage structure's signature design element is two giant radio towers. Complete with antennas and satellite dishes, they're symbolic of how we communicate and receive messages and information. I also knew that multimedia would be a major component of the storytelling. So we've featured large LED screens that allow us to feed the audience with video content that transcends both the worlds of the concert stage and all the other locations in the musical.

WHAT SHOULD PEOPLE TAKE AWAY FROM THE PLAY?

TAZEWELL: In American society, we try to keep a lid on racism. But we learn more and more through media; the "other" story becomes much more exposed. As things come up politically and through the media, we realize that some "stuff" has just not gone away.

White Noise can jumpstart a dialogue to wake people up and create awareness toward change. It can encourage them to read between the lines, be smart about what they find enticing and sexy, and take control of the info that is out there.

BRILL: Among the many themes in the play, it's also about how we, as a society and as consumers, digest the information that we receive via all forms of media and pop culture. It can be informative, but it's also intentionally seductive. Do we take it all at face value? Or do we really think about what we see and hear? Ultimately, I think the play invites people to question everything and not be afraid to do so. It's less about answers and more about the opportunity to engage in a dialog.

Q: HOW DOES DESIGN HELP REINFORCE MEDIA (MUSIC, ART, FILM) MESSAGES TO MAKE THEM MORE ATTRACTIVE OR BELIEVABLE?

Discussing the Play

REACTIONS AND REFLECTION

What conditions allow hate to take root in society? What can we do to reduce—or even stop—hate-based actions?

How can artists balance integrity with professional success? Do all artists face the pressure to sell out?

Why does the First Amendment protect free speech, even hate speech? What responsibilities does free speech entail for citizens?

What might those who influence pop culture—such as people in the music industry—do to promote a hate-free society? What is their responsibility for creating a more ethical and inclusive world? And, on the flip side, what is the role of the consumer in working toward the same goal?

The song *Live for the Kill* poses the question, "Do you wanna be a player or the one being played?" When it comes to messages and media, is there another choice besides being the manipulator or the one being manipulated?

HATE GROUPS AND WHITE POWER

What attracts people to the white power movement? What impact, if any, does the movement's messaging have on society at large?

How can one reconcile the existence of hate groups with American ideals like freedom of expression, individual rights and respect for difference?

HATE MUSIC AND HATE SPEECH

What makes music a particularly effective medium for communicating messages of hate? How can consumers recognize the true meaning of songs?

What cultural conditions make it acceptable to use some hateful words and not others?

Is it better to drive hate underground through censorship or allow it in the public sphere?

POP CULTURE AND MEDIA LITERACY

How powerful is pop culture and, in particular, music? What are some ways that behavior and thought are shaped by pop culture/music?

When you look at media—whether advertisements, music, news stories or films—ask these five key questions:

1. Who created this message and what is the purpose?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract and hold attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in this message?
5. What is omitted from the message?

MEDIA EDUCATION LAB, TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

More and more, pop music and social messaging are disposable and fast. How does that make it difficult for consumers to make informed choices?

RESPONSIBILITY AND ROLE

Does the entertainment industry have a social responsibility when it comes to hate messaging, or should businesses simply supply what the market demands?

What is the responsibility of the artist who is, as Max says, "mixing art and commerce"? In a market-driven industry, how much control does an artist have over image and message?

What role do consumers have in determining the kind of music produced? Should consumers examine the motives and message of music creators before making selections?

The Worlds of White Noise (and Us)

"What we must fight for is to safeguard the existence and reproduction of our race and our people, the sustenance of our children and the purity of our blood …" Eva

HATE GROUPS AND THE WHITE POWER MOVEMENT

The Southern Poverty Law Center defines as hate groups those having "beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics."

Many—but not all—of the groups believe in the superiority of the "white race" and the inferiority of all people of color. The groups come in a variety of flavors—Ku Klux Klan, neo-Confederate, neo-Nazi, racist skinhead and Christian Identity—but all of them rail at growing immigrant populations that will make whites a minority in this century.

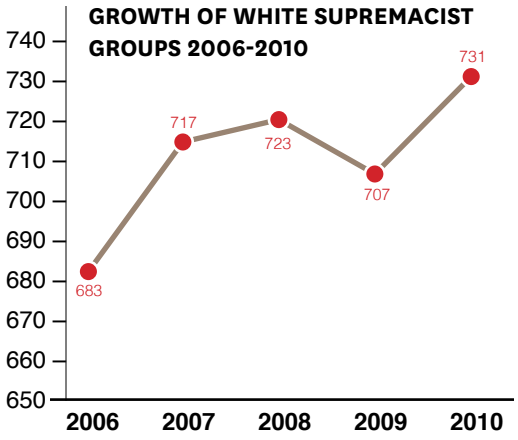
Q: THINKING ABOUT THE YEARS 2006-2011, WHAT MIGHT ACCOUNT FOR THE RISE IN THE NUMBER OF WHITE POWER GROUPS?

These groups range from those that use racial slurs and issue calls for violence, to others that present themselves as serious, non-violent organizations and use academic language. They have websites that allow them to spew extremist hatred and gain followers across the country and around the world.

Their websites, music and networks allow the groups to spread fears of losing control of America to a "One World Government" dominated by Jewish bankers, multinational corporations and the United Nations. Sometimes their messages are blatant; at other times, they couch their views in coded words.

Traditionally, hate groups recruited people who had experienced personal failures, had low self-esteem and wanted to vent their anger and frustration. The group's ideology allowed them to blame scapegoats for their troubles. They frequently acted under the influence of alcohol or drugs, recruiting disaffected teens through music and other means. In recent years, white supremacist groups have changed their marketing strategies to recruit from mainstream society.

Hate groups are relatively few in number and represent extreme views not shared by large numbers of people. They are dangerous because they pump out harmful propaganda that is picked up and amplified by mainstream media. They are also responsible for about 10 percent of hate crimes.



SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

Hatecore: Racist Music

The "white power" music industry is a leading source of money and young recruits for many hardcore racists. Since the early 1990s, it has grown from a cottage industry to a multimillion-dollar enterprise. This remarkably violent music has given racist extremists around the world a common language and it has created a new generation of young racists.

The music grew out of the skinhead movement in Europe. The classic skinhead look—Doc Martens boots, red suspenders and shaved heads—first appeared in Great Britain in the 1960s as an angry working-class response to hippie culture. The English band Skrewdriver introduced extreme racism into popular music in the 1980s when it launched a series of white power concerts. While "hatecore" was once almost always hardcore rock 'n' roll, it has more recently taken on all kinds of musical forms, even ballads. Today, it is played by hundreds of bands and is popular among hard-core racists in the United States, Europe (where it is often illegal) and elsewhere.

White power bands recruit successive generations of young racists to the movement and often make a sizable profit for themselves and the small companies that distribute their music. There is serious money to be made in hate rock. The neo-Nazi organization National Alliance at one time filled its war chests with hundreds of thousands of dollars in proceeds from its wholly owned hate-rock subsidiary Resistance Records. Today, the music scene is no longer dominated by a single label, but instead fed by scores of small and often competing racist firms.

Today, with the rise of digital music, Internet-based radio shows stream racist music around the world. In the United States, racist music from more than 100 domestic bands, plus hundreds more foreign ones, is available online.

ADAPTED FROM "RACIST MUSIC" AT WWW.SPLCENTER.ORG.

Q: HOW HAS MUSIC SHAPED YOUR VIEW OF THE WORLD? CAN YOU LIKE THE "MUSIC" AND NOT THE MESSAGE?

GENRES OF RAGE

White power isn't the only brand of hate you'll find in music. Jamaican reggae musician Buju Banton, who won the 2011 Grammy Award for Best Reggae Album, is also recognized for violent anti-gay messages in his "murder music" songs, most notably *Boom Bye Bye*. An international "Stop Murder Music" campaign protests the music, arguing that the artists are going beyond expression of ideas to actually inciting violence and murder.

Others have criticized hip-hop and rap artists for their use of racist language and violent imagery. Joseph Simmons defended the music, saying "But we're just giving you back what you've given us. We're the voice of pain. We're in your face and the poor people have the mic. And when we say black and rap, the question is are we talking about black, are we talking about rap? Eminem is white. He's sold the most records … It's not white rage. He's enraged because he's been held down. He's been … He's been beat up by America."

The N-Word: Is it Ever OKay?

The n-word is rooted in hate and misery, but it's a term that today is uttered freely and frequently, by young people as well as comedians, actors, rappers and writers.

For most people, the n-word triggers a history of oppression and is a slur so powerful that it cannot—and should not—be uttered out loud. Its roots are in slavery and Jim Crow, and it was the word whites used to maintain racial superiority. During the modern civil rights era, activists condemned the word as they sought equal rights and dignity for African Americans.

It's a word with a bright line drawn around it, and one that carries so much negative weight that careers can be destroyed by its careless use. Many high schools no longer teach Mark Twain's classic *Huckleberry Finn* because of the word.

RE-APPROPRIATION

In recent years, the term has taken a twist, especially with its use in pop culture, as *White Noise* demonstrates.

"Nigga" is the modern version of the word. For many young blacks, it's used between friends. The n-word is known to be derogatory, but "nigga" is seen in a different light. As Tyler explains in *White Noise*, it's a "re-appropriation" of the word from "the haters." Some argue that taking the word back is a way to deprive it of the power to inflict pain. Others caution that it shouldn't be used at all by whites or in mixed-race company.

Its prevalence in pop culture heats up the argument. There is a difference, people say, between the gratuitous use of the word and artistic expression intended to raise awareness of racism.

The way the black community and pop culture have used the term seems to have taken away some of its social stigma. Some white people, especially teens, are using it freely to describe their friends.

But should they be using it? Many people say no. They argue that it has deep racial implications with the power to wound people who remember its history and that whites should never use it, even in an endearing context.

Q: IS IT EVER OK TO SAY THE N-WORD? CAN THE POWER OF A WORD THAT HAS HISTORICALLY AND TRADITIONALLY BEEN GROUNDED IN HATE BE DEFUSED?

Language and Speech: How Hate is Expressed

"Hate often moves softly; it is a subtle menace, and this is especially characteristic of the rhetoric used by many of the well-established racist hate groups."

"THE RHETORIC OF HATE," BY JEFFREY MORGAN. *TEACHING TOLERANCE*. NOVEMBER 20: FALL 2001.

BIASED LANGUAGE

People express intolerance in a variety of ways, sometimes unintentionally and sometimes deliberately. The language of hate constructs and reinforces differences based on race, gender, sexuality and religion—it builds on stereotypes to attack and dehumanize entire groups of people. Moreover, it can provoke violence.

Biased, hate-filled speech emerges in different ways. It can unfold in casual conversations, and it can be glimpsed in "humorous" ethnic jokes or cartoons. This type of speech also reaches larger audiences through news media and entertainment outlets. The online world provides a virtually unlimited platform for the spread of hate.

To some extent, everybody encounters bias. In fact, we are probably all guilty of some sort of biased language. It is an everyday occurrence. That does not make us immune to its impact, but people commonly tune it out. And we might not always be aware of our role in promoting and maintaining it.

Q: HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU HEAR SOMEONE MAKE BIASED REMARKS? DO YOU FEEL ABLE TO RESPOND?

CODED LANGUAGE

Coded language is like a secret handshake: It lets insiders know you're a member of the club while allowing the speaker to avoid the appearance of bigotry. Hate groups deftly employ coded language to signal their real meaning to others in the know.

Extremists use coded rhetoric to disguise hate. They work with words and associations in ways to misrepresent information and manipulate others.

For instance, white power groups often use phrases that sound innocuous but are lifted from sources like Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. One of these is the phrase "14 words," a mysterious-sounding term that references this direct quote from Hitler's work: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children."

Code words are more common than you might think, and they serve as shorthand to signal one's position on an issue. Consider the immigration debate. Those calling for tougher enforcement or increased restrictions use the term "illegal aliens," which focuses on the activity and dehumanizes immigrants. Those who favor less harsh and punitive measures prefer the term "undocumented workers" or "unauthorized immigrants." Most controversial issues turn into battles over language as well as over policies and ideas.

Q: HOW IS CODED LANGUAGE POWERFUL—NEGATIVELY AND POSITIVELY?

"Last summer, the Target department store chain announced it would yank shorts and baseball caps decorated with neo-Nazi hate symbols from its 1,100 stores. A customer in Sacramento ... had complained about Target-label shorts and baseball caps decorated with "88"—neo-Nazi shorthand for 'HH' or 'Heil Hitler.' ... Target's buyers had made an innocent mistake, [a spokesperson] said: They had no idea what 'Eight Eight,' 'Eighty Eight' or '88' meant."

"HATE FOR SALE," SPLC *INTELLIGENCE REPORT*, SUMMER 2003, ISSUE #110

CODED SYMBOLS

Symbols have the ability to convey meaning, intent and significance in a compact, immediately recognizable form, so they have a terrific impact, particularly when they have negative connotations. For extremists, they offer a visual vocabulary.

For example, neo-Nazis, racist skinheads, white supremacists and others in the hate movement use swastikas, "SS" thunderbolts, runes and group logos to intimidate individuals and communities. These symbols give haters a sense of power and belonging, a way to identify with others who share their ideology, and a way to instill fear.

Q: HOW IS A SYMBOL WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS? WHAT DOES THIS MEAN WHEN IT HAS A HATEFUL PURPOSE?

Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press ... "Speech that deeply offends our morality or is hostile to our way of life warrants the same constitutional protection as other speech because the right of free speech is indivisible: when one of us is denied this right, all of us are denied."

—NADINE STROSSEN, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

THE FIRST AMENDMENT: NO LIMIT TO FREE SPEECH

The First Amendment's protection of expression extends to repugnant and offensive speech. Neither the federal nor state governments may restrict speech. People may not be prosecuted for merely advocating violence against minorities. But First Amendment protections are not absolute; some speech that can be linked to injury or danger can be limited. This includes true threats, obscenity, libel, perjury, incitement to imminent lawless action and child pornography.

Why should hateful language and words not be restricted? Our society is based on the free and open exchange of ideas. Defenders of civil liberties offer these reasons:

- Banning hate speech would deny to everyone the First Amendment right to equally voice opinions, regardless of whether they present offensive or prejudiced viewpoints.
- Hate speech restrictions are a "slippery slope." They set a precedent that could allow

the government to further limit—or outlaw—any type of speech.

- Limiting or banning hate speech would suppress the speech of one group to shelter another, thus unfairly favoring one group over another because the first group's perspectives are not popular.
- There's no uniform agreement on what hate speech is or who would define it. Different groups have different ideas about what constitutes offensive speech.

FACTS ON FILE NEWS SERVICE, "HATE SPEECH," NOV. 7, 2005

Q: HOW DO YOU STAND UP AGAINST BIASED AND BIGOTED SPEECH?

The First Amendment protects hate speech. But it also protects your right to speak out against hate speech. Partner with others to campaign against it in your community. You don't have to stand by when people use hateful words or bigoted language. Call them out.

HATE CRIMES ARE DIFFERENT

A hate crime is a criminal act—such as such as physical assault, intimidation, arson or vandalism—against a person or property. It is motivated by prejudice against the victim's perceived race, religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Q: WHY IS IT CRITICAL FOR HATE CRIME LAWS TO ENUMERATE SPECIFIC TYPES OF BIASES—BASED ON RACE, SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND DISABILITY, FOR EXAMPLE?

Hate group members directly commit only about 10 percent of all hate crimes, but their propaganda can inspire additional violence by others. Fear and intolerance stoked by bigoted rhetoric can lead to aggressive acts.

In 2009, President Obama signed into law the *Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act*. This expanded the definition of a federal hate crime to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived disability, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity (e.g., transsexual and transgender persons).

Forty-five states and the District of Columbia have laws enhancing the penalties for hate crimes. They all ban crimes motivated by race, ethnicity and religion. The majority also cover sexual orientation, disability and gender.

The use of bigoted and prejudiced language does not in and of itself violate hate crime laws. This type of offense is usually classified as a bias incident. But when words threaten violence, or when bias-motivated graffiti damages or destroys property, hate crime laws may apply.

Take Action

Always speak out against hate speech. When we don't act, and bigoted language goes unaddressed, we're sending a message that it's OK. Remember: It's not just rhetoric. Biased speech builds barriers, bolsters antagonism and can lead to violent acts, including hate crimes.

> "Responding to hate speech of any kind is difficult. It is much easier to stay silent, or to simply walk away. Sometimes this is the wisest choice. But you should feel empowered to confront hate speech directly: to tell people that their language is inappropriate and unacceptable."

"RESPONDING TO HATE SPEECH: A CITIZEN'S GUIDE" AMERICAN ISLAMIC CONGRESS

SIX STEPS YOU CAN TAKE RIGHT AWAY TO SPEAK UP

1. Be Ready. Prepare yourself for the inevitability of hate language. Think of yourself as the one who will speak up. Promise yourself not to remain silent. To bolster that courage, have in mind what you will say when an incident happens. Open-ended questions often are a good response. "Why do you say that?" "How did you come to that belief?"

2. Identify the Behavior. Sometimes, candidly pointing out the behavior helps someone hear what they're really saying: "Janice, what I hear you saying is that all Mexicans are lazy" (or whatever the slur happens to be). Or, "Janice, you're classifying an entire ethnicity in a derogatory way. Is that what I hear you saying?" When identifying behavior, however, avoid labeling and name-calling. Describe the behavior; don't label the person. And be mindful to use a neutral tone and avoid inflammatory language yourself.

3. Appeal to Principles. If the speaker is someone you have a relationship with—a sister, friend or co-worker, for example—call on their higher principles: "Bob, I've always thought of you as a fair-minded person, so it shocks me when I hear you say something that sounds so bigoted."

4. Set Limits. You cannot control another person, but you can say, "Don't tell racist jokes around me anymore. If you do, I will leave." Or, "My room is not a place I allow bigoted remarks to be made. I can't control what you say outside of this space, but here I ask that you respect my wishes." Then follow through.

5. Find an Ally/Be an Ally. When frustrated in your own campaign against everyday bigotry, seek out like-minded people and ask them to support you in whatever ways they can. And don't forget to return the favor: If you aren't the first voice to speak up against everyday bigotry, be the next voice.

6. Be Vigilant. Remember: Change happens slowly. People make small steps, typically, not large ones. Stay prepared and keep speaking up. Don't risk silence.

Respond to Hate Music

When a white power rock concert was announced in Traverse City, Mich., a group of citizens created "Hate-Free TC." In a day-long seminar, human rights experts educated local people about neo-Nazi skinheads, their racist music and their connection to an international movement that includes Nazis, white supremacists and the Christian Identity church. They later held an alternative rock concert, and the publicity forced cancellation of the white-power gathering.

"10 WAYS TO FIGHT HATE," SPLC

Get to know the warning signs: Keep on the lookout in your community for white supremacist activity. The most obvious sign that they are around? The symbols embossed on the hats, T-shirts, pendants, etc., that they wear. Make sure to alert the community and the music scene about their presence, especially if white-power activists look like they might be organizing an event in a local club or venue.

Expose: Let people know about white power bands, record labels, magazines ... and especially about scheduled concerts. Gather support from local bands and DJs who can participate and take away some of the group's power.

Influence where you buy music: Research white power bands and check out the store or website to see whether this music is being sold. If yes, let the management know that they are selling hate music (they don't always know) and ask that they stop.

Write to your favorite band: Contact your favorite music group and ask its members to take a public stand against hate music. Their visibility will add weight in the fight against racism.

Talk to local venue owners: Educate them about white power groups: Tell them about the coded messages they deliver and how they are good at negotiating their way into clubs, bars and similar music spots. Name the white power groups. Encourage the owners not to give these groups a performance platform.

Announce: Contact the manager of local or online radio shows to let them know that you don't want to hear hate music anymore. Lobby the radio station to make changes.

ADAPTED FROM: TURN IT DOWN RESOURCE KIT. TURN IT DOWN, A PROGRAM OF THE BUILDING DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE OF THE CENTER FOR NEW COMMUNITY; IF WE COULD END HATRED, IMAGINE WHAT MORE WE COULD DO. ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE; "RESPONDING TO HATE SPEECH: A CITIZEN'S GUIDE." AMERICAN ISLAMIC CONGRESS.

TEN WAYS TO FIGHT HATE: A COMMUNITY RESPONSE GUIDE

The Southern Poverty Law Center produced a guide to assist communities in the fight against hate. This guide sets out 10 principles for fighting hate, along with a collection of inspiring stories of people who worked to push hate out of their communities.

Ten Ways to Fight Hate* is available online at *http://splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/

Organize Virtually

Online activism is a powerful organizing tool to raise awareness and garner support.

Use activist sites like *Change.org* to set up online petitions that can be circulated in a wide group.

Use social media networks like Facebook or Myspace to raise awareness and organize boycotts.

Write a blog that reports on the activities of hatecore groups and other hate organizations.

Create—or join—a listserve or forum where like-minded people can set up events, share information, post important news, organize rallies around specific hate music engagements and distribute fliers.

Make collections of links, DVDs, books and other resources that expose white power music groups. Regularly post these collections on blogs, web forums, Twitter, chat, email signatures, community profiles, video descriptions, newsletters, etc.

Send messages to friends, colleagues, family and peers to create awareness about an upcoming event or meeting. Make sure everyone forwards the message to those they know will support anti-racist work.

Curriculum Standards

White Noise addresses the following curriculum standards (McREL 4th Edition)

THEATRE

Standard 5: Understands how informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions create and communicate meaning.

BEHAVIORAL STUDIES

Standard 4: Understands conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups, and institutions.

CIVICS

Standard 4: Understands the concept of a constitution, the various purposes that constitutions serve, and the conditions that contribute to the establishment and maintenance of constitutional government.

Standard 11: Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society.

Standard 25: Understands issues regarding personal, political, and economic rights.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Standard 7: Uses skills and strategies to read a variety of informational texts.

Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

UNITED STATES HISTORY

Standard 31: Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States.

THINKING AND REASONING

Standard 1: Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument.

Standard 2: Understands and applies basic principles of logic and reasoning.

Resources

ARTICLES AND MEDIA PROGRAMS

A Hip-Hop Town Hall
The Oprah Winfrey Show, July 13, 2009
www.oprah.com

Children of Hate
www.splcenter.org
Discusses how some children of racial extremists walk away from the hate ideology.

Hate in a Cocoon of Silence
www.nytimes.com
Explores the individual's role and actions in response to hate acts.

Hip-Hop Music and Activism
www.resistinc.org/newsletters/articles/hip-hop-music-and-activism

Neo-Nazi Hate Music: A Guide
www.adl.org
Comprehensive overview of hate music in the United States.

Not in Our Town
www.pbs.org/niot
A national movement that encourages community response to hate crimes. The project combines PBS broadcast, grassroots events, educational outreach and online activities to help communities battling hate talk to—and learn from—each other.

Rebranding Hate in the Age of Obama
www.newsweek.com
Discusses how extremist groups are trying to enter the mainstream.

Sharing the Hate
www.splcenter.org
Discusses video-sharing websites as venues for extremist propaganda and recruitment.

ORGANIZATIONS

Change.org
Tell Apple to Stop Selling White Power Music
www.change.org/petitions/tell-apple-to-stop-selling-white-power-music

Everyday Democracy
www.everyday-democracy.org
An organization that offers tools for community organizers and activists.

Freemuse: Freedom of Musical Expression
www.freemuse.org
An independent international organization that advocates freedom of expression for musicians and composers worldwide.

Media Coalition
www.mediacoalition.org
Association that defends the First Amendment right to produce and sell books, movies, magazines, recordings, DVDs, videotapes and video games, and defends the American public's First Amendment right to have access to the broadest possible range of opinion and entertainment.

Media Justice History Project
mediajusticehistoryproject.org/wordpress
The project generates activities that will help activists and teachers learn from and reflect on past and current struggles for media justice.

No Name-Calling Week
www.nonamecallingweek.org
The project focuses national attention on the problem of name-calling in schools, and provides students and educators with the tools and inspiration to launch an ongoing dialogue about ways to eliminate name-calling in their communities.

Project Implicit
www.projectimplicit.net/generalinfo.php
Project Implicit invites people to examine their hidden biases.

Turn It Down
turnitdown.newcomm.org
Youth, bands, parents, teachers and friends in the record industry speaking out, standing up and turning down the sounds of hate.

Acknowledgements

Written by Michele Isreal

Editors Maureen Costello, Thom Ronk

Reviewers Sean Price, Heidi Beirich, Kate Shuster

Design Director Russell Estes

Design Russell Estes, Valerie Downes

Web Director Ryan King

Web Content Producer Annah Kelley

Photography Peter James Zielinski

Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, is one of the nation's leading providers of anti-bias resources for educators. Its mission is to promote respect for differences and an appreciation of diversity in the classroom and beyond.

Teaching Tolerance reaches hundreds of thousands of teachers and millions of students annually through *Teaching Tolerance* magazine, multimedia teaching kits, online curricula, professional development resources and special projects, like Mix It Up at Lunch Day. These teaching tools are provided to educators at no cost.

Teaching Tolerance materials have won two Oscars, an Emmy and more than 20 honors from the Association of Educational Publishers, including two Golden Lamp Awards, the industry's highest honor. Scientific surveys demonstrate that our programs help students learn about diversity and bolster teacher practice.

The generosity of the Southern Poverty Law Center's supporters makes our work possible.

TEACHING TOLERANCE®

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

400 Washington Avenue • Montgomery, Alabama 36104
www.tolerance.org • 334-956-8200