

10th Grade

*Power to Change*

Before discussing how young people can promote tolerance in Haddonfield, it is important to recognize that Haddonfield has and has had issues of intolerance, racism, and discrimination. While Haddonfield residents should celebrate its history of participating in the Underground Railroad, they should not ignore Haddonfield's history of biases, microaggressions, and discrimination. Young people can advocate for peace and inclusion by ultimately developing an open mindset in which inclusion and love are at the forefront, so they can eventually lead their peers by example.

Education and knowledge serve as pillars for change, so students should push community leaders to confront and teach Haddonfield's history of race relations, both the failures and successes, with full transparency. After students of Haddonfield are presented with information that includes multiple perspectives, they are given the opportunity to learn from the community's past mistakes and correct them for future generations. Recognizing and discussing the community's history will be a vital step for students who want to promote peace and inclusion because one must first fully grasp and understand a problem before they begin to search for solutions.

To lead others, one must focus on improving themselves, therefore students should self reflect. They should utilize this time to develop or strengthen an open mindset. Students should search for and embrace perspectives that may be outside of their comfort zone. For example, young people can accomplish this by reading or watching television and movies that demonstrate

different cultures than what they are typically accustomed to in their daily lives. Young people should also begin to ask questions both in their household and educational settings.

Young residents should now have the tools necessary to not only create change within themselves but leave a lasting impact on their peers and community. Students now are equipped to combat situations of injustice. Many students are comfortable standing up to strangers, but they find it difficult to stand up to their friends and especially their innermost circle. After crucial education is provided and the time of self-reflection is completed, young people should feel empowered to stand up and stand out among their peers. Young people who challenge, correct, and point out biases, microaggressions, generalizations, and insensitivities, even when it's their friends who are speaking, have the opportunity to change the culture of our school and community.

Young people have the responsibility and opportunity to promote inclusion and tolerance to create a more unified, inclusive, and loving community. Haddonfield has made mistakes in the past, but with every new generation, those costly mistakes are given the opportunity to be corrected. The community has shown improvement, but it would be neglectful not to mention that much growth is still needed. This past year has shown everyone that many factors in life are out of human control, yet educating, reflecting, and strengthening one's mindset is completely achievable, so therefore young people have the power to change the course of history for the better of the Haddonfield community.