



EXPLORING HOT BUTTONS

To the Teacher: Place 3" × 5" note cards and the handout "Flag Comments" (19-1) on desks before students arrive. A teacher-made compilation of student comments from their writings can be substituted for the "Flag Comments." This lesson requires considerable skill and is not appropriate for every group.

Objective: Students will become more sensitive to how words can affect others.

- Activities:**
1. Ask students to list their "hot buttons," names (excluding profanity) that they don't want to be called on 3" × 5" note cards. Collect the cards.
 2. Ask students for their reaction to the "Flag Comments."
 3. Choose names or words that students perceive negatively based on information on cards collected and list them on the chalkboard.
 4. Ask students if there are any surprises on the chalkboard.
 5. Discuss implications of the "hot buttons" for members of various cultural groups like Native Americans, Asians, and Latinos.
 6. Ask pairs of students to share experiences they have had or observed when someone offended a member of a group by using an offensive name.
 7. Ask volunteers to share experiences.
 8. Discuss what can be done to increase the cultural awareness of other students.

FLAG COMMENTS (19-1)

The following comments are excerpts from student writings about the tee-shirt incident.

"I am the first person to stand up for freedom of speech. I started out on the side to have Joe wear the tee-shirt, but today for the first time in all of our discussions, I could see both sides of the story."

"I am offended by the Confederate flag. However, people do feel proud of their Southern heritage and have a perfect right to wear the flag as a symbol of the South."

"I am a South Carolinian and I am proud of my Southern roots."

"Many people here became upset and have a right to. But that shouldn't mean Joe can't wear the shirt."

"The subject of Joe's shirt obviously hurt a lot of people, and I thought it was interesting that he saw it as symbol of his heritage, but when something hurts people as much as it did, we need to be sensitive to that."

". . . if people are going to wear something like that, they should know that others will be offended. I wouldn't come to school with a shirt like that because it means different things to different people. I know that someone will be offended . . . it's good that people let others know how they feel."

"It is obvious that everyone sees their point of view differently."

"I was so surprised that people got upset."

"Good for Marna! She needs to be assertive and tell people how she feels."

"No one is trying to control freedom of speech and expression, but every intelligent person must realize the need for respecting others and not offending them."

"Too many people consider themselves important and refuse to accept new beliefs and outlooks."