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Using modern communication techniques to challenge violence and intolerance, and promote global citizenship

Amid a global resurgence of racism and intolerance, young people are at risk both of victimisation and of being manipulated into victimising others. While education can play a vital role in challenging this problem, evidence-based arguments alone are unlikely to be effective.

By drawing on modern communications techniques to “reframe” the discussion, we can tackle intolerance by tapping into commonly-held values, building empathy and a sense of shared identity.

Within both the traditional press and a profusion of new media, there has been a proliferation of stories demonising migrants, refugees, Muslims and other groups. Often such stories have involved systematic distortion or fabrication. While there is nothing new about the phenomenon of so-called “fake news”, there is growing concern at the degree to which financial incentives - the need to drive “clicks” and boost newspaper sales at a time of declining print circulation - may be making the problem worse.

In the UK, experts have warned that hostile media coverage has fuelled a rise in hate crime. Young people have been among those experiencing verbal and physical abuse on the basis of their religious or ethnic identity - but others have also, tragically, been the perpetrators of such attacks.

Stop Funding Hate began as a small online campaign in August 2016, but has since reached an audience of millions. Our campaign videos, challenging the demonisation of minority groups within the UK media, have been widely shared through Facebook and Twitter, but have also been shown in schools and faith communities.

By speaking in a language that draws people together - emphasising friendship, neighbourliness, family, civility and community - we have sought to appeal to a broad audience that crosses religious and political divides. In drawing on well-established concepts within human rights - while seeking wherever possible to express these ideas in an everyday, accessible way - we have sought to ground our campaign in universal ethical values.

The public response to Stop Funding Hate reflects growing awareness of the role of established media outlets in fuelling division and intolerance. By equipping young people with a greater understanding of the factors that shape and create the news - both online and offline - educators can help to counter this manipulation and promote a more critical and engaged public debate.