

HOW DIFFERENT CULTURAL ETHNICITIES AND DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS COULD LIVE IN HARMONY AT THE SAME SCHOOL?

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The results of two studies undertaken by the Grade 11 students during the school year 2005-2006, in the frame of the Scientific Methodology Course, showed that, at Greaves Adventist Academy, there were 50 nationalities and 10 different religious affiliations among 180 students. The objective of the research was to find out if this diversity could provoke conflicts among the students, and if not, what could be the reasons.



According to Kallen (1995) “Ethnicity represents social groups with a common history, sense of identity, geography and cultural roots, which may occur despite racial differences.” Kymlicka (1995) defines it as: “Members of an ethnic group often presumed to be culturally similar.” Definitely, with 50 nationalities represented in the same school, we could presume that they are not culturally similar, and that they do not have a common history or a sense of identity. As we all know, cultural diversity, in the same geographical space, causes conflicts among the different groups.

The results of a study undertaken by McGill University six years ago were interesting. The objective of this survey was to determine the degree of racism existing in all public and private schools in the city of Montreal. The results showed that the only school where racism didn’t exist was Greaves Adventist Academy. This is certainly to the honor and the glory of our God. But how is this possible?

At Greaves Adventist Academy, we have not only cultural diversity but also religious diversity. Deedat (1994) states: “There are many religions around the world and they are all aiming to guide human beings to God, the Creator.” How does this diversity become united? We can try to find many hypothetical reasons. But when the Grade 11 students asked the students from Grades 5 to 10 what the reasons were, there was one simple answer: “This school is like a family.” What is the common denominator of a united family? There is love, respect, and acceptance among all the members.

These principles are underlying our sacred mandate which is to spread the Gospel. Some of our students come to the school with strong religious beliefs, some come with no particular religious beliefs, and others come with the traditions and beliefs of their parents. This diversity can also generate conflicts in the world. But how can these possible conflicts be overcome?

All the personnel, and, in particular, the teachers have a tremendous task. It is not only a matter of teaching about Jesus, who is our and their Savior, but also a matter of having a close relationship with Him.

When these principles of love, respect, and acceptance guide any family, then these diversities become united, and gives us a small sample of what heaven is going to be: people coming from all nations worshipping the same Creator.

Resources:

- Kallen, Evety. (1995) *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada*, Oxford University Press Inc.
- Kymlicka, Will. (1995) *Multicultural Citizenship*, Oxford University Press Inc.
- Deedat, Ahmet. (1994) *Islam and Christianity*, Awakening Publishers.