

Speakers for Social Justice

There are very few students at Malden Catholic who are not aware by now of the situation in Darfur. Last year's drive to aid the situation in Darfur, coupled with the many prayers throughout the year we've had for the victims of genocide, and most recently the speakers for *Stop the Hate* month, have all reinforced in the minds of our students that there is injustice going on in the world. Perhaps more powerfully, we've been shown that, even half a world away, we can make a difference in the lives of those people.

It's a situation that often gets overlooked: the rich get rich, and the poor get poorer. Many of us are aware of crime, poverty, people in the streets, or perhaps more locally, kids getting picked on, pressured, or abused by their own peers. Many of us don't have any recourse but to turn a blind eye to it, whether for lack of courage to do anything to stop it, or lack of means. The message of *Stop the Hate* month is that we *do* have those means, however, and that we can find the courage in ourselves to make change. It just starts by opening our minds to what needs to be change and where injustice is being done. Whether we take the first step by helping a world foundation or begin with just a local charity, it is important that we work at *all* to enact social change, as it will not happen on its own.

The speakers for *Stop the Hate* month represented two minorities that have historically been the targets of injustice: Jews and African-Americans. Compared to 50, 75 years ago, there is substantially less discrimination against these groups than there was before the Civil Rights movement, or before World War II. This isn't simply an incident of history, that over time people have just come to accept them as they accept any other group. There were many movements and

efforts to recognize the very rights of these groups, in some case for basic human liberties, and many people risked themselves for the effort to fight injustice. We cannot say that discrimination against these groups has been entirely eliminated today, sadly, but through the efforts of people who went out and fought tooth and nail against injustice, it's been greatly reduced.

There are many examples of where the fight for social justice has succeeded, but there are an innumerable amount of examples where it has not, and where there is no one to pick up the flag and stand up for what's right. We can see discrimination, abuse, racism, and violence if we look for it—and sadly, it's not hard to find—but what are we doing to stop it? If we're content with our lives, where's our motivation to go out and fight for a cause, putting ourselves at risk in the process?

It is true that, as we are Christians, we may be obligated to ensure the rights of others are preserved. And we may have speakers come tell us about their experiences, and how we can share in them and participate. But these are only motivation, and the true question lies in us. In the words of the second speaker, "Who's making the call?"

It is up to us to decide that we do not want to tolerate others getting hurt, for their sake, for your sake, or for the sake of anyone who could be hurt in the process. It's only once we've made this commitment that we can give ourselves to helping others—otherwise, how can we stand for injustice, if we still turn a blind eye when it inconveniences us? When we've given ourselves to standing up, we can find strength and motivation in the stories of martyrs, survivors, social workers, and even our fellow Christians. The good we can do in the world is still greater than giving nothing of ourselves out of fear, or the mistaken belief that we can't help out. It just takes one voice, one person to stand up, to inspire a generation.