

## **Schule ohne Rassismus – School without Racism**

ASS has been awarded the label "School without Racism – School with Courage", the latter implying integration and acceptance.

"What would you do if people were harassed or abused at school or in your neighborhood because of their clothing, different language or color of skin? How would you feel if those people were your classmates or your friends?"

These questions were put to the entire student body of our school by a group of students last year starting an initiative: for some months they scrutinized the social coexistence of cultures at Albert-Schweitzer-Schule and to their disappointment they discovered incidents of discrimination, derogatory remarks, bullying, racism and other forms of verbal or even physical abuse. As a consequence the team started to deal with these problems and soon agreed on the goal of their commitment: to contain and end racism, harassment and discrimination at our school. They wanted ASS to become a "school without racism, a school with courage".

In order to receive that title, at least 70 per cent of the entire school population (students, faculty, staff) had to sign the following negotiated agreement:

1. I will make a special effort to support our school's central projects, activities and initiatives aimed at defeating discrimination, especially racism.
2. If I witness cases of racial harassment or violence or even disparaging language I will make an effort to counteract those and to solve future problems in an open discourse of mutual respect.
3. Once a year our school will offer a project on the topic which I will support in order to work towards a long-term prevention of discrimination and racism.

To summarize, all signatories commit themselves to vigorously counteract any form of racism at our school.

The initiative group organized a kick-off meeting for the student council and the teachers' assembly in order to broach the subject and to collect signatures. After 70 per cent of the school community had signed the agreement, the group started looking for a renowned sponsor who might support future projects. ASS being a "center of competitive sports", the team very soon agreed to choose a sports celebrity. This is how they came to decide in favor of swimmer Dr. Michael Groß, native of Offenbach, Olympic gold medalist and world champion, one of the most successful German swimmers ever. He had been awarded the title "sportsman of the year" several times and now supports the initiative "Respekt: kein Platz for Rassismus" ("Respect: no room for racism"). The team managed to contact Dr. Groß and to everybody's great delight he accepted the proposal.

In July 2014 ASS had fulfilled all conditions to be awarded the title "School without Racism – School with Courage". The title was officially awarded in September 2014 at our school's "summer festival of cultures".

(Tsa 10/2014; transl. Lz/Car 9/2015)