

JENNY PENADO

Teaching for tolerance

KENNETH DICKERMAN FOR USNEWS



is a game. The class, at Washington-Lee High School in Arlington, Va., is part of the Anti-Defamation League's World of Difference program. These young diversity trainers—9,000 have been trained nationwide since 1991, and 3,000 are active at 150 schools—run workshops on tolerance in high schools and middle schools. Since September 11, facilitators like Penado have worked to mend the damage done to the image of Arab-Americans and Muslims.

Bias. Though the flood of hate incidents has subsided since September, more subtle discrimination persists. For example, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reports that the number of workplace discrimination complaints filed by Arab-Americans, Muslims, and Sikhs since September 11 has more than doubled to

166 from 64 over the same period last year.

W&L prides itself on diversity—the school is over 60 percent minority—and has had no violent incidents since 9/11. But one Pakistani student's father was beaten while delivering pizzas. Another Pakistani student's aunt was beaten into a coma.

The workshops encourage students to think before speaking or letting a hurtful comment go unchallenged. Penado has been running workshops for four years. She uses exercises like the rumor clinic to talk about prejudice. Should one be suspicious of the turban-wearing Mohammed—or is that ethnic profiling? One girl notes that, after the violence at Columbine, she'd be suspicious of *anyone* looking up chemicals on a computer.

Outside of class, Penado takes on discrimination a person at a time. She even confronts her mother over her comments about African-Americans. Penado, 18, believes that discrimination must be caught when children are young. "They're not born with that mentality," she says. "People learn to discriminate. They learn to hate." •

"People learn to discriminate. They learn to hate."

BY HOLLY J. MORRIS

You know that kid named Mohammed, the one who wears a towel on his head?" asks high school senior Jenny Penado of a giggling classmate. He was in the library looking up chemicals, she goes on to say. He took notes during a White House field trip, and he left early on September 11. By the time the rumor passes through several students, Mohammed has disappeared into the White House on September 11 and hasn't been seen since.

The students laugh—after all, this

BORN Nov. 25, 1983
EDUCATION Starts George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., in 2002
FAMILY Immigrated to United States from El Salvador at age 5; lives with mother, stepfather, brother, 6, and sister, 11, in Arlington, Va.
CAREER GOALS Immigration lawyer and president of El Salvador