



Tooning Out Racism

by **Melissa Minklin**
Contributing Writer

WITH LITTLE MORE THAN THE belief that they could fight racism, 26 local students recently produced a series of animated public service announcements (PSAs) they hope will chip away at stereotypes and prejudice. Most participants had no previous animation training, just a desire to make a difference. In a marathon six-hour session, the youth developed their concepts, learned basic animation techniques, and made more than 1,200 individual drawings for the 30-second spots.

The result is four animated, non-verbal PSAs with mottos like "Don't Hate, Communicate," "Dance Out Racism," "We Are One World," and "In a Colorblind World, Race Doesn't Matter."

The workshop, Tooning Out Racism, was run by youTHink, a program of the Jewish Community Center of Greater Los Angeles' Zimmer Children's Museum and the Center for American Studies and Culture. The youTHink Student Organization unites youth around the city in social justice and community involvement activities. Guiding the session were mentor artists from AnimAction, an organization that teaches animation to young people. The free program was largely funded by Los Angeles City Councilman Jack Weiss' office and efforts are underway to run the PSAs locally.

In a PSA titled "Undermining Hate," a group of different-colored miners "look around and think, 'I don't like that person because they're that color,'" according to one of the PSA's creators, Fairfax High School 10th-grader Kayl Harrell. "When they come out of the mine [they're covered in soot] and are

all the same color. They don't know who's who. So at the end of the day, everybody's the same."

In "People Are Weird," two dogs are confused when their owners get into a fistfight over racial differences. Christina Meniffee, a ninth-grader from City Honors High School in Inglewood explained that dogs are colorblind. "So if you see people fighting for no reason, you think either they're weird, or they're missing a couple of screws," she said. "To break down racial barriers and stop tension and animosity, we have to see beneath the surface."

Daphne Ferreiro, a fifth-grader at La Crescenta Elementary School in Glendale, summed it up well: "We're trying to show that we're all the same inside, but we might look different." ■