

Daryl Davis: Using Communication as a
Weapon to Disassemble the KKK

Dylan Chang

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While watching the news of the Black Lives Matter Protests, I decided to research figures who had a large impact on Civil Rights for African-Americans as I thought it would connect well to the NHD theme of Communication in History. Though I considered many well-known figures as the topic of my project, I decided to choose a less prominent man who addressed the base of the problem that endanger many African-Americans: Racism. This man was Daryl Davis, and he was distinctive, as I learned that he would peacefully exchange ideas with KKK members, not attempting to convert them, but simply wanting to share ideas. In addition, he did most of his work in my home state so I felt connected to him. I knew he would perfectly fit in with the theme so I selected him.

Having experienced harsh instances of racism as a child, Davis set out to find the answer to why people hate others because of race. A meeting with a KKK member at a band gig placed Davis in the perfect situation to find the answer to his compelling question. Through exchanging ideas with leaders of the KKK, he realized that these men were previously uneducated and their beliefs on race had been unfounded. He was able to communicate his ideas to these leaders, and also absorb their thoughts to challenge his own ideas. As these leaders and Davis better understood each other, they were able to make new judgments on race, which led them to leave the Klan and dismantle the KKK of Maryland. This story is the epitome of how communication is an effective weapon when trying to sway somebody else to your side.

I felt there would need to be visuals to fully understand Davis along with a decent amount of textual information, and the website allowed me to combine both

elements. I often used text to explain something about Davis, then used multimedia, visuals, or quotes to further enhance my argument. I thought this method would raise the project to its fullest potential and make my argument stronger. Although there weren't many newspaper articles or books that focused on Davis, there were interviews, speeches, and websites, which I mainly focused on. They were extremely helpful as I knew they would be credible primary sources.

Daryl Davis is not only significant because he effectively dismantled the Maryland KKK, but he taught lessons that everybody can learn from, one being that communication is your best weapon. As issues in the world become more polarizing and our arguments become more jarring, we need to learn to utilize communication with each other and share ideas respectfully. Even though racial injustice still occurs, with his story, Davis has inspired a new generation of activists to bring about change through peaceful means of communication. His work of getting KKK members out of the Klan proves that communication is much more effective than commonly thought. Hopefully, we can learn from Davis and apply his knowledge to our daily lives.