



**CYBERHATE: Danger in Cyberspace**  
**United Nations Unlearning Intolerance Seminar 2009**

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*Cyberhate – Danger in Cyberspace* was part of the United Nations' "Unlearning Intolerance" seminar series. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon announced at the beginning of the seminar that a top priority of the UN is protecting children by preventing abuse by racism, xenophobia and related intolerance, including child abuse and pornography, in every area. The internet has brought enormous good to the world, transforming the way we live and work, but it has also brought anguish and suffering, targeting religious and ethnic minorities and bullying youth. The growth in web sites is exponential and especially impacts young people who are most involved with cyberspace.

The keynote speaker was Hemanshu Nigam, Chief Security Officer for News Corporation and MySpace overseeing internet safety, security, privacy and enforcement. A major point was to urge scepticism by teenagers, parents and teachers about internet information. To help recognize messages of hate in cyberspace, key questions should always be asked: Who put up the information? Why was it posted? What was the objective? The aspect of anonymity makes users bolder in their speech, and more violent.

Among the other speakers, Abraham Foxman, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League, spoke of the dangers found in violent games, historical manipulation of facts to vilify people, international incitement by ultra-nationalists, and terrorist activities. Scott Hirschfeld, Director of Curriculum for the Anti-Defamation League, described programmes for schools, industry and NGOs to teach people to recognize hate speech. They suggested laws not to make hate speech illegal, but to ban it when such speech incites people to take aggressive action towards others.

Cyberbullying is when a child, preteen or teen is harassed, threatened, or humiliated by a peer using the Internet, mobile phones or other interactive digital technology. John Halligan, father of a 13-year-old son, described how his son eventually took his own life after being harassed, bullied, and humiliated. The man's crusade is to require schools to acknowledge more responsibilities in preventing cyberbullying. He felt the standard approach of "conflict resolution" only made matters worse. Cyberbullying and cyber harassment are differentiated by the age of the perpetrators -- bullying is minor to minor; harassment is adult to minor, or adult to adult.

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**International Federation of University Women**

**Fédération Internationale des Femmes Diplômées des Universités**

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Dr. Parry Aftab, Executive Director of Wired Safety, spoke of the programme she developed for teen peer teaching, to recognize and deal with the dangers of cyberhate and bullying. Several teenagers who had trained in her program as "Teen Angels" also spoke. They customarily meet with teens to help them understand all aspects of internet safety using real stories and role playing. Having peers as teachers has the advantage of the information being more readily accepted.

Holly Hawkins, Director of Consumer Advocacy and Privacy for AOL, spoke of the measures that AOL uses to assess potential online risk. They have a highly trained resource team, available 24/7 as a Law Enforcement Hotline, and have a litigation support team.

For more information on cyber hate and cyberbullying:

- Kimberly Mann, Manager, The Unlearning Intolerance Seminar Series - <http://www.un.org/en/unlearningintolerance/home.html> or contact [unlearningintolerance@un.org](mailto:unlearningintolerance@un.org)
- John P. Halligan, <http://www.RyanPatrickHalligan.org>
- Dr Parry Aftab, Executive Director of Wired Safety - <http://www.WiredSafety.org>, <http://www.StopCyberbullying.org>, <http://www.Teenangels.org>

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