


The New Segregation  
GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND IMMIGRATION

# TEACHING TOLERANCE

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SPRING 2010



Are we  
weaving together  
common threads  
or unraveling  
integration?

## CIVIL DISCOURSE

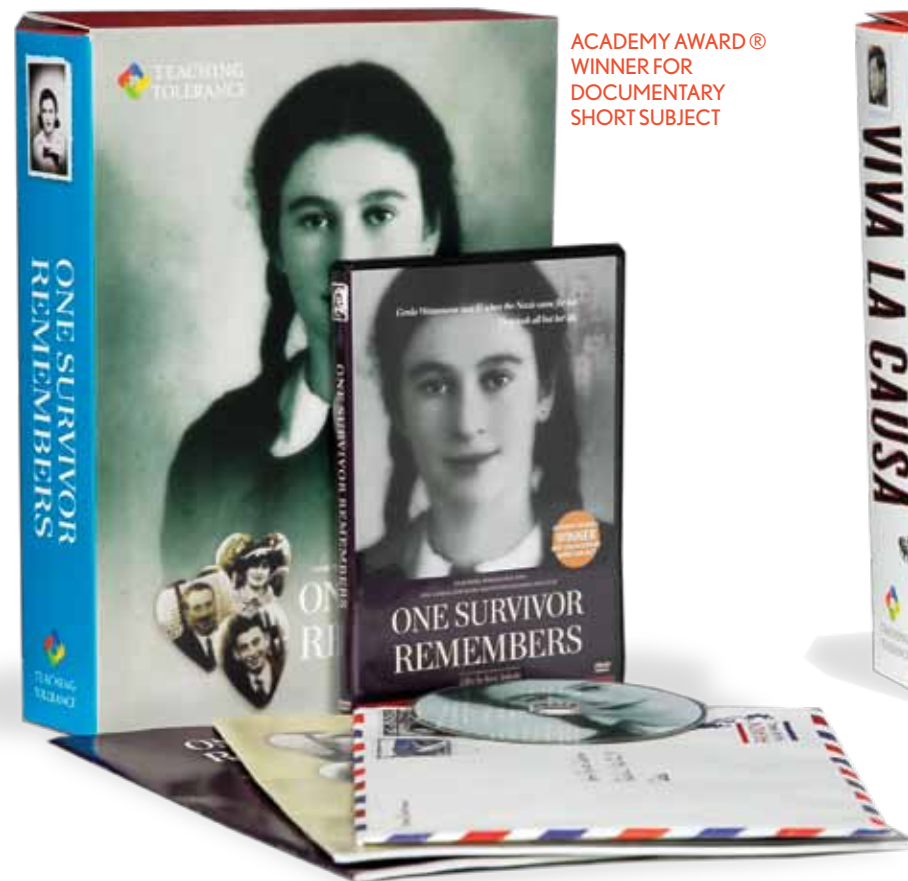
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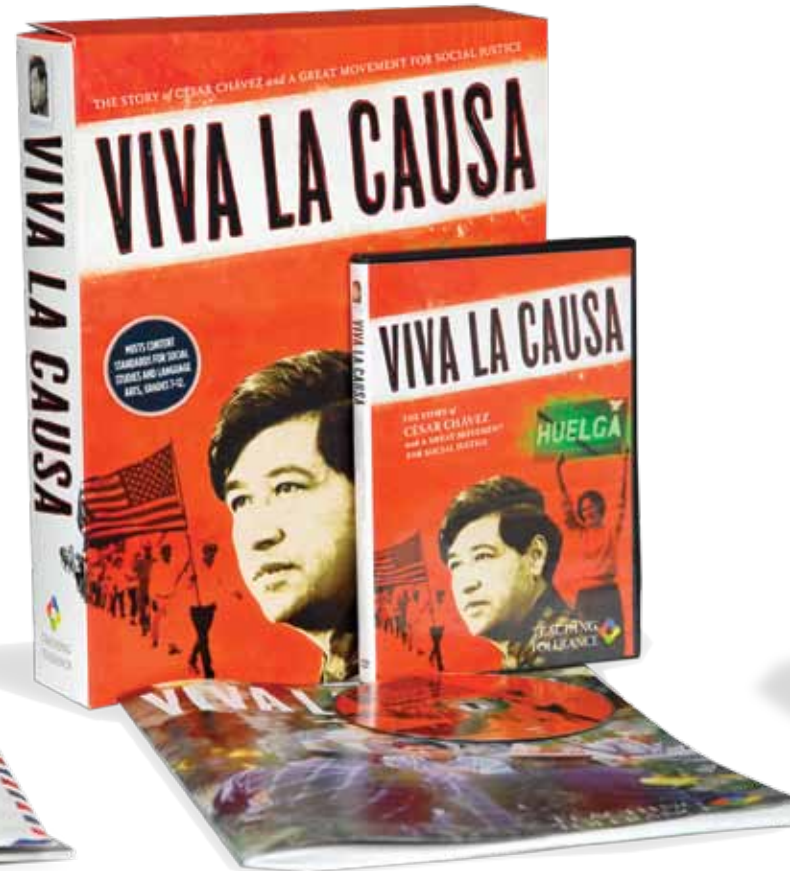
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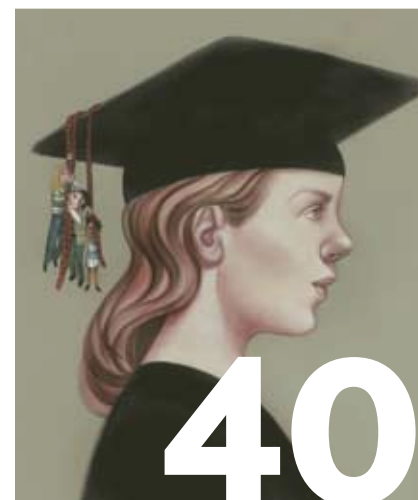
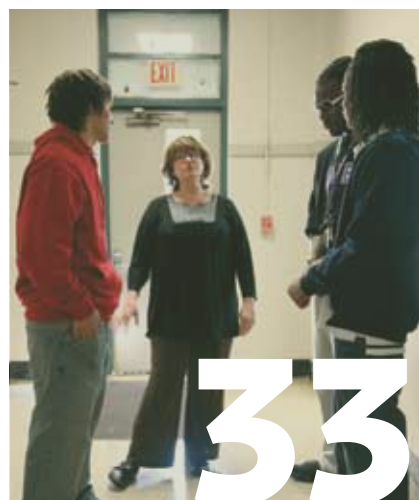
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# TEACHING TOLERANCE

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COVER ILLUSTRATION BY **MICK WIGGINS**

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## Why Do You Teach?

Lincoln Duane Johnson returned to teaching and discovered a sense of purpose. Why do you teach? Share your story. (Instructions on page 9.)

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TEACHING TOLERANCE



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DESIGN DIRECTOR Russell Estes  
SENIOR EDITOR Tim Lockette

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT Victoria Williams  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR/WRITER Sean Price  
CURRICULUM DESIGN MANAGER Thom Ronk  
SPECIAL PROJECTS MANAGER Michelle Marsh Garcia

DESIGN

DESIGNERS Valerie Downes, Michelle Leland, Scott Phillips  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT Sunny Paulk

PRODUCTION

WEB SERVICES DIRECTOR Ryan King  
WEB CONTENT PRODUCERS Melissa Henninger, Annah Kelley  
PRESS PRODUCTION MANAGERS Regina Collins, Betty Ruff  
WEB TECHNICAL LEAD Brian Youngblood

CONTRIBUTORS

Scott Bakal, Melinda Beck, Julia Bereciartu, Bob Blaisdell, Lecia J. Brooks, Patricia Clark, Danijela Dobric, Peter Grundi, James Gulliver Hancock, John Healey, David Holthouse, Camille Jackson, Lincoln Duane Johnson, Carrie Kilman, Susan Estelle Kwas, Anita Kunz, Tim Lockette, Larry Long, Sean McCabe, Ron Newkirk, Milt Priggee, Thom Ronk, Jeff Sapp, Afi-Odelia E. Scruggs, Carmen Segovia, Nirvi Shah, Kate Shuster, Amber Sigman, Helen Tsuchiya, Elizabeth Varela, Mick Wiggins, Deborah Willoughby, Eva M. Zygmunt-Fillwalk

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EDITORIAL OFFICE

400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104  
EDITORIAL FAX 334/956-8484  
ORDER DEPARTMENT FAX 334/956-8486  
SUBSCRIPTIONS 334/956-8200

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“Nobody needs to explain to a Negro the difference between the law in books and the law in action.”

— CHARLES HOUSTON, Special Counsel to the NAACP, c. 1950

How We Live Our Lives

BY LECIA J. BROOKS

The great promise of the 1954 landmark U. S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* was that children would grow up together in integrated schools. They would prove the segregationists wrong. Black children and white children would learn to respect one another as equals and bring down the walls of racial separation. Through the efforts of our children, our nation would live up to the ideals of equality and justice for all. And, as an added bonus, we'd finally abandon the false notion that *separate was equal*. Instead we'd make a commitment to provide quality educational opportunities for every child.

That's just not what happened.

This issue of *Teaching Tolerance* uncovers what did happen. The sad truth is that public schools are more racially segregated today than they were 40 year ago. Oh, and we're back to buying into the belief that separate can be equal — and this time around we're not limiting segregated space to race. As you'll see in “Immigrant Schools: A Better Choice?” and “Homo High,” communities are attempting to address the very real needs of students who are ill-served by schools they are zoned or otherwise compelled to attend by creating culturally sensitive, safe spaces just for them.

Just for them? Yes, that's segregation, too. But there is a difference.

Back in the days of Jim Crow, segregated schools existed solely to support the illogical and damaging notion of white supremacy. Though many would argue that black students fared far better academically in the segregated South than they do in any region of the country today, there was a high psychological price to pay. Blacks were deemed inferior to whites and as such we were *forbidden* from going to school with them. As we know, racial segregation was also the law of the land at restaurants, water fountains and on the bus. In more communities than we'd like to admit, segregation wasn't just about schools; it was a social norm.

Today, the legal rules governing social relationships no longer dictate separateness. Each of us has some say over how we live our lives — and, as parents, how we'll raise our kids — segregated, integrated or a hybrid combination of the two.

As I look back on my own experience as a single parent raising a male child in Los Angeles, I find that we were constantly navigating integrated and segregated spaces. I was committed to doing everything I could to ensure that Daniel had more opportunities than our race and class membership dictated he should. He entered kindergarten with classmates who mirrored him exactly — black and working poor. His high school graduating class was small, marginally diverse and relatively privileged. All along the way, we lived and socialized with folks who looked just like us.

“He talks white!” This indictment was first hurled at Daniel by family members when he was about 7 years old. We were living in South Central Los Angeles, and he was enrolled in a magnet program on the other side of town. Yet adhering to the rules of Standard English wasn't enough to keep his teacher from seeing Daniel as “troubled.”

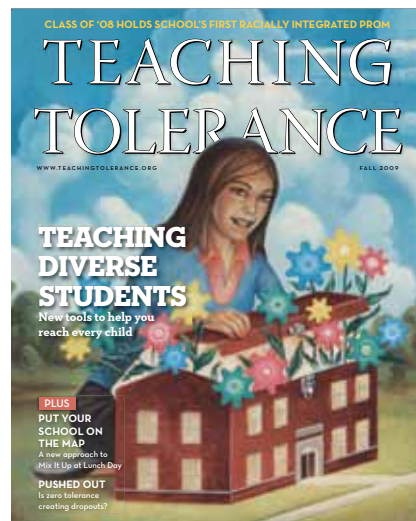
As he got older, I considered moving out of the neighborhood. Not that I didn't feel safe; I did. I grew up in East Oakland and was not easily frightened by folks who looked like me. My experiences interacting with the teachers and administrators at the magnet school on the Westside left me feeling *less than* — and at the time, I was a 5th-grade teacher in South Central. I had to take Daniel out of that school before he began to internalize their biases.

Thus began the improbable journey — through too many schools, in search of a quality education. Today, my son and I have an unshakeable appreciation for who we are and where we came from. We live naturally integrated lives and wouldn't have it any other way.



LECIA J. BROOKS has been a teacher, youth worker, and, for the past year, interim director for Teaching Tolerance. Lecia serves as the director of SPLC's Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama.

VALERIE DOWNES



**The Teaching Diverse Students Initiative**

*Editor's note: In September 2009, Teaching Tolerance launched the Teaching Diverse Students Initiative (www.tolerance.org/tdsi), a set of online tools designed to help teachers close the "achievement gap" by improving the school environment for children of color. In announcing the initiative, we noted that 88 percent of African American eighth-graders read below grade level, compared with 62 percent of white eighth-graders.*

Good grief! Forget the gap — would it be OK if only 62 percent of African American eighth-graders read below grade level?

Clisby Williams  
via Facebook

Do these children reading below grade level still enjoy reading? Are they excited and proud to choose high-interest selections that they can read and feel happy when they read?

Andonia McKinney  
via Facebook

The achievement gap is a serious pandemic that has implications much more insidious than this reading level statistic.  
Sarah Moore  
via Facebook

**Pushed Out**

I am so glad to read the article about the Zero Tolerance policy alternatives ("Pushed Out," Fall 2009). I worked as an ESL teacher in a kindergarten classroom where one of our students was homeless and would often bring banned toys to school (toy guns, etc.) and, because of the policy, would be suspended. I am *not* an advocate of toy guns, by any means. ... However, if a child is homeless and receives a toy as a gift, where is he sup-

posed to keep it?  
Rainbow Espinosa  
St. Paul, Minn.

**Kudos**

Thank you for your work, for your method of gathering and sharing ideas that are actually working to develop understanding, cooperation, respect and harmony among those with dif-

**"As an educator, I want to thank you for the work you are doing. This is the stuff that can bring about real change in our society."**

fering customs, expectations, values and beliefs. Often the desire is there, but the "how to" and "why" creates a chasm that is difficult to bridge. Thank



TEACHING TOLERANCE explores varied efforts aimed at both quality and equality in education. The results are mixed. Read the special section, "The New Segregation," starting on page 18.



you for giving some ways and means as well as explanations about "why" in order to create an environment of understanding.  
Emily Mumma  
Lorida, Fla.

As an educator, I want to thank you for the work you are doing. This is the stuff that can bring about real change in our society. I deeply appreciate the free lesson plans, kits, newsletter and magazine. Inspiring!  
Diane Horan  
No address given

**Against 'Kindergarten'**

Stop sending me your magazine!! The homosexual couple portrayed in Fall 2009 ("Our Journey to Kindergarten") makes me sick. I treat all kids the same. But homosexuality is a SIN.  
Sandy Newton  
Scottsville, Ky.

I have no problem whatsoever with the authors as a lesbian couple, but their

objections to "real" public schools border on the ridiculous. One of their chief complaints appears to be holding open houses on weekdays during working hours. It seems that these ladies consider teachers and school staff to be at their beck and call and want school staff to put in extra hours so that school functions can be convenient to their personal schedules. What ever happened to putting your child first and taking time off from work and going to the school?  
Gay Moore Fantozzi  
Falls Church, Va.

**Prom Night in Mississippi**

I watched [the film *Prom Night in Mississippi*] with my family yesterday. Since we live in the South, we really weren't surprised by the segregation. It was great to see a majority of the students were strong enough to take action to make a change.  
Jessica Johnson  
via Facebook

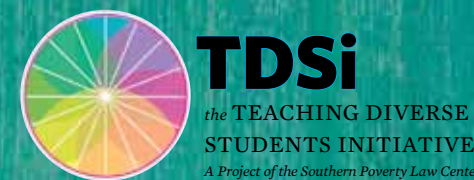
# THE TEACHING DIVERSE STUDENTS INITIATIVE

Enhancing the quality of teaching experienced by students of color

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- ➔ Learning activities
- ➔ Tools for understanding the influence of race
- ➔ Videos featuring Linda Darling-Hammond, Geneva Gay, Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, Luis Moll, Sonia Nieto, Jeannie Oakes, Mica Pollock and other leading scholars

[www.tolerance.org/tdsi](http://www.tolerance.org/tdsi)



Developed in partnership with the National Education Association and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education



# Reason, Purpose & Triumph

BY LINCOLN DUANE JOHNSON

I NEVER WANTED TO BE A TEACHER. I *hated* teachers. Growing up, I told myself I would be a movie star, a famous writer and a media mogul in the tradition of Ted Turner. Teaching was the furthest from my mind, and being a teacher was worse to me than almost any other job. I could not understand why or how people became teachers, and would never, *ever*, submit myself to that type of torture and disrespect.

I grew up in a family of teachers: my mother, grandfather, aunts, uncles, cousins and god-mother were all teachers. My discontent with teachers started in the home. During the holidays I would dread sitting with the family, because it always turned into an oral pop quiz. I would be bombarded with math equations that I should be able to solve without pencil and paper, calculator or fingers. I would have to spell “grade-level-appropriate” vocabulary, which often became an exercise in confusion. This fueled my feelings about teachers. Needless to say, I could not wait to return and take it out on the unsuspecting teachers at school on Monday.

The turning point was when I entered college and had to take general education classes my freshman and sophomore years. I began to notice the difference between the great teachers and the ones who were indifferent to my abilities as a student. I began to notice my own strengths and attribute them to the teachers who nurtured and augmented them. I also noticed my weaknesses, and realized that many of these attitudes were also learned in school. I saw a definite connection between the teachers who loved the work — loved their careers, loved their subject matter and loved their students — and my own learning in the classes they taught.

Something clicked in me. Upon graduation, I felt an urge to become a teacher. It was a difficult decision that took me a few months and some urging by my educator mother to fully realize. At 22 years old, I still had dreams of making it big as an award-winning actor and winning the Pulitzer Prize as an author.

After months of motivation from my mother — whose career has taken her from teacher’s aide to associate superintendent — I decided to drive an hour from my home and take the test. I aced it.

My first day of teaching, I had very high ideals and very little training and experience. That first school year was the hardest of my life. I struggled with classroom management, lesson planning and relating to the other teachers. I felt defeated, and I left the profession to pursue a master’s degree and career in publishing in New York City.

During the two years I lived and worked in New York, I was haunted by my failure as a teacher. I thought of classroom management techniques and new ways to engage

students. I thought about how I was so harsh and unfeeling with my past teachers without knowing what they were really going through. These were constant concerns of mine, until one day my wife advised that if I was going to obsess about it, I should return to teaching.

That was all I needed. I immediately returned to Los Angeles, and to the teaching profession. This time it was very different. I was able to manage my class, and I was teaching with a fervor and success that made me forget the trials and tribulations of my first year. It was my calling. On the heels of this success, I remembered what my own education was like and decided I needed to work with children in high-risk areas and low-performing schools. They are why I teach.

Throughout all these years in the classroom, I have sought out and assisted students in the worst socio-economic situations. I enjoy them and never tire of them. There is never a dull moment. They motivate me to be the best teacher for them, in spite of their protestations and refusals to allow me into their lives and minds. It is a constant struggle to reach them, but when I do, I feel strong, proud, successful, vital and needed. In my past, I was chasing dollar signs and notoriety without meaning. My students have given me reason, purpose and triumph that no money could buy.

I teach for students who have no fathers or male role models. I teach for children who know neither who they are nor what they want to be. I teach for students who have gaps in their skills and abilities that need filling. I teach for students who feel they are failures and have had teachers who have not only told them that, but have acted as such with them. I teach for the parents who think teachers do not care. I teach because it is my penance for the treatment of my teachers.

I teach because I can, and because I want to, and because I am needed. This is why I teach. ♦

LINCOLN JOHNSON is a special education mathematics instructor at Locke Launch to College Academy in South Los Angeles.

**“My students have given me reason, purpose and triumph that no money could buy.”**

Share Your Story

What motivates you to get up each and every morning and serve the children in our nation’s schools? We want to hear from you. Send your submission for the “Why I Teach” column to [editor@tolerance.org](mailto:editor@tolerance.org).

# A Song for Anti-Bullying

WHEN STUDENTS ARE BULLIED, THEY ARE OFTEN RELUCTANT to let teachers and parents know. Children need to learn at an early age that it's okay to let others know that they need help.

This activity involves a simple song that can help younger students deal with the issue of bullying and bullies. Before singing the song, share a simple definition of "What is bullying?"

The melody we use is from a common song that most children know: "If You're Happy and You Know It Clap Your Hands." Lyrics were created by Francie Shafer with teachers Dani Davis and Leslie Johnson.

Directions for actions to accompany the song are in parentheses.

## THE ANTI-BULLYING SONG

If you need help with a bully, CLAP your hands (Clap twice, 1, 2)

If you need help with a bully, CLAP your hands  
If you need help with a bully and can't talk to anybody  
If you need help with a bully, CLAP your hands

If you're teased and you're sad, STOMP your feet (Stomp twice 1, 2)

If you're teased and you're sad, STOMP your feet  
If you're teased and you're sad and it really makes you mad

If you're teased and you're sad, STOMP your feet

If you're happy with yourself, GIVE a smile (Use fingers and press on cheeks to form a smile)

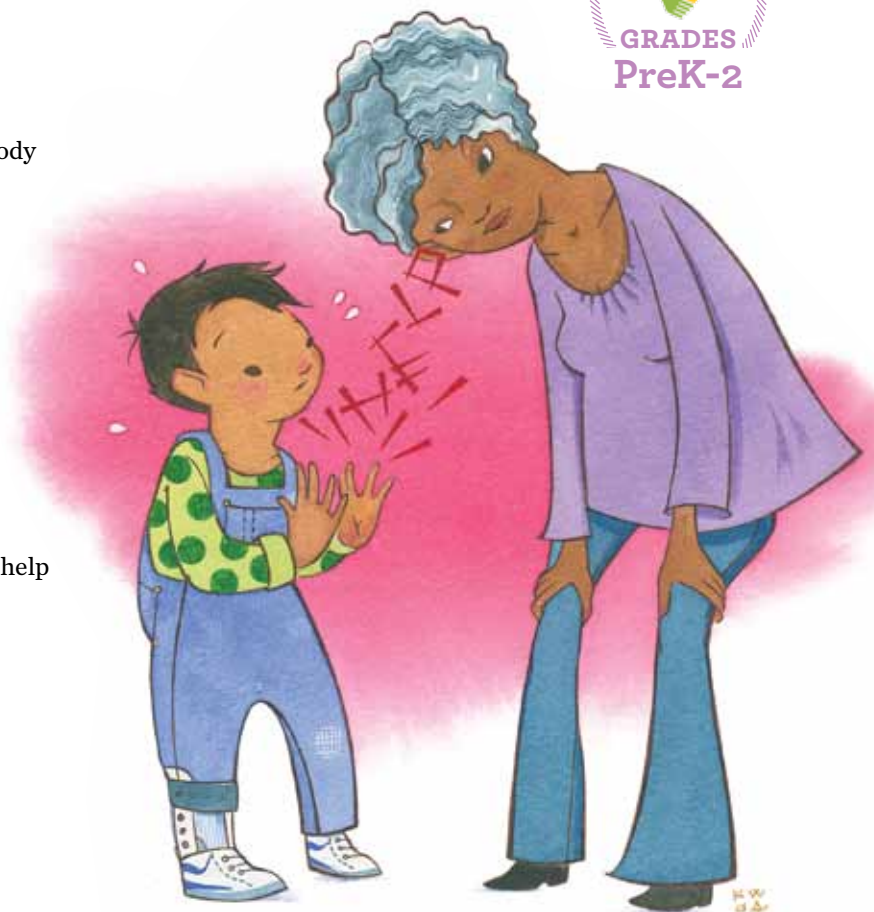
If you're happy with yourself, GIVE a smile  
If you're happy with yourself and can GIVE others help  
If you're happy with yourself, then LEND a hand

FOR MORE GREAT elementary song ideas, order Teaching Tolerance's free kit *I Will Be Your Friend: Songs and Activities for Young Peacemakers* at [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org).

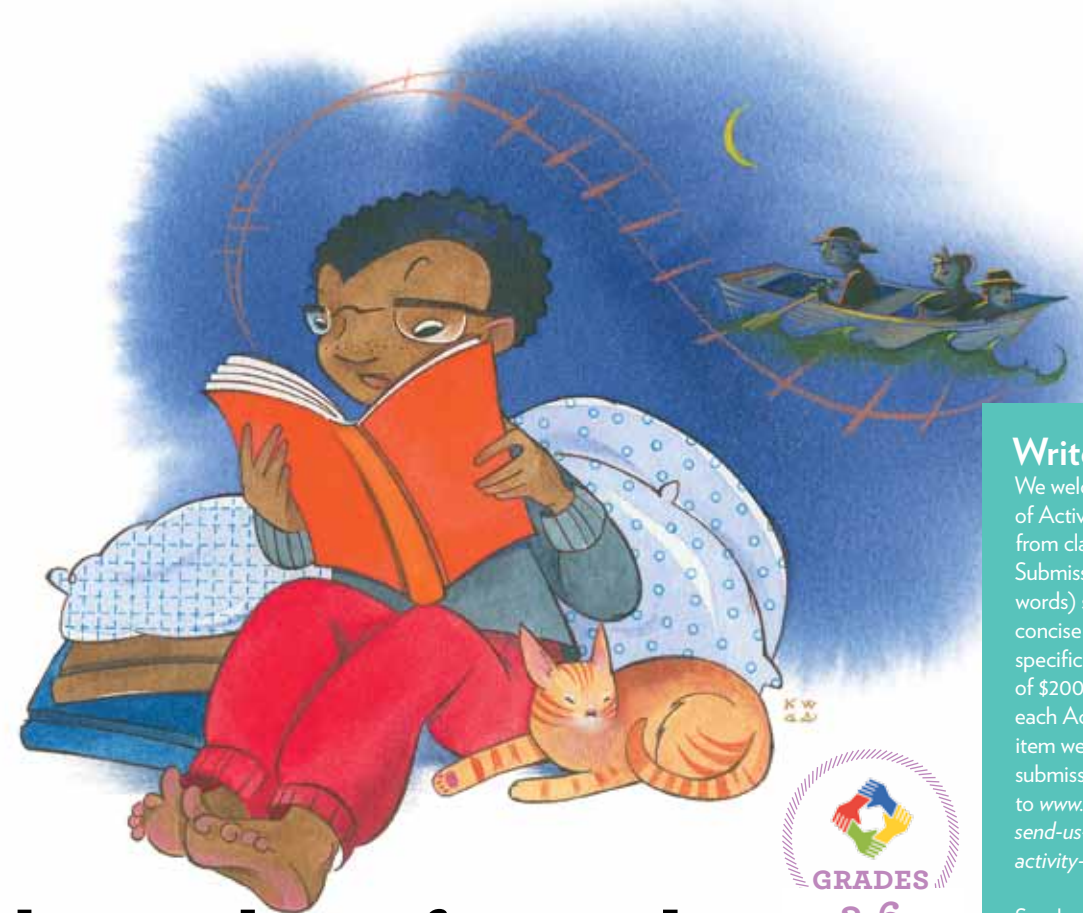
Using a familiar song with a rhythmic beat can inspire students to use alternatives to bullying situations rather than resorting to name-calling or fighting. It could also serve as an introduction to this serious topic. Providing a few clues as signals to defuse a situation may help students lose the "bystander syndrome" that perpetuates bullying.

**Francie Shafer**

Southern Illinois University  
Carbondale, Illinois



Great anti-bias ideas and activities from teachers everywhere!



# The Color of Freedom

WE DEVELOPED A UNIT BASED ON COMMON CHILDREN'S books on the Underground Railroad and the Civil Rights Movement. For each book we created a vocabulary list, active learning options and higher order thinking questions. This helped us develop our unit on these topics to make the content more substantive and the history more engaging.

There are plenty of books in your school library that will work with this approach. As an example, we chose Margot Theis Raven's *Night Boat to Freedom* (\$6.99 at [www.macmillan.com](http://www.macmillan.com)) to make the Underground Railroad come alive. The book tells the story of 12-year-old Christmas John and his Granny Judith. Granny was enslaved when strangers lured her to their ship with a piece of red flannel. Now on a Kentucky plantation, the two aid other slaves in escaping across the river to the free state of Ohio. John rows the slaves to freedom and, because of his young age, he avoids notice. Each day as Granny makes a quilt, John asks, "What color is freedom tonight?"

Pull out key vocabulary words and concepts, but also pay attention to author's language and use of figures of speech. Here are some examples from *Night Boat to Freedom*: dye pots, hanks of thread, indigo, pine straw, bay leaves, "feeble as

a baby" (simile), rawhide, "peaceful as a baby's cradle" (simile).

We find it best to personally respond to the text ourselves as a way that develops higher

order thinking questions that will engage students. Here are the ones we developed for *Night Boat to Freedom*:

How did the color red steal Granny Judith away from Africa?

What color do you imagine freedom to be? Why do you choose that color as the freedom color?

What images does the author use to describe how quietly Granny and John talked by the fireplace?

Why did the people escaping need to use passwords and codes?

What character traits does John possess?

What older person do you know who would send you off to freedom?

Strategically using children's literature is a way to bring history alive. And the great news is that your own school library is full of amazing books!

**Judy Roberts**

Hanover College

**Anne Haskins**

Southwestern Elementary School

Hanover, Indiana

## Write for Us

We welcome submissions of Activity Exchange items from classroom teachers. Submissions (up to 400 words) should include concise information on specific activities. Payment of \$200-\$300 is made for each Activity Exchange item we publish. For submission guidelines, go to [www.tolerance.org/blog/send-us-learning-ideas-activity-exchange](http://www.tolerance.org/blog/send-us-learning-ideas-activity-exchange)

Send submissions to Teaching Tolerance  
400 Washington Ave.  
Montgomery, AL 36104  
or email [editor@teachingtolerance.org](mailto:editor@teachingtolerance.org)  
Allow 1-3 months for reply.

# Gender Stereotyping Awareness

DURING MY CAREER UNIT WITH SEVENTH-GRADERS, I TAKE the opportunity to look at gender stereotyping in the work force. After students have an opportunity to familiarize themselves with careers, I challenge their learning with a game similar to the old game show “Password.”

I tell students that I will be attaching an index card with the name of a job onto their back (painter’s tape works fairly well). Students will then be given an opportunity to mingle within the classroom getting clues to the job with which they’ve been labeled. Students look at the back of a peer and talk to them the way they would someone in that profession. They can refer to the schooling that is needed to obtain that particular job or to the special equipment they might use if they did that job. I usually model how to ask questions without giving the job away.

To challenge students’ gender bias, females in class are given stereotypical male jobs like plumber, firefighter and construction manager. Meanwhile, males are assigned jobs like librarian, nurse or flight attendant. Most students accurately guess what the job they’ve been labeled with quite quickly, but usually not without an air of disgust. My female students have responded, for instance, in a horrified tone, “Plumber! Yuck!” Male students scrunch their faces in disbelief at the thought of a male librarian.

I then take the opportunity to review the definition of a stereotype. We discuss how subtle and overt

messages sometimes unintentionally are given to males and females as to what careers they can choose. The lesson ends with the recognition that interests and aptitudes – not gender – should guide people to their careers. You can extend this lesson to discuss the effects of gender on education, paychecks and politics.

**Mollie Surguine**  
Sonoran Sky School  
Glendale, Arizona



**DO YOUR STUDENTS NEED** quick comebacks to fight off gender-based putdowns? Read “Not True! Gender Doesn’t Limit You!” at [www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-32-fall-2007/not-true-gender-doesnt-limit-you](http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-32-fall-2007/not-true-gender-doesnt-limit-you).



# The Resurgence of Hate

IN RECENT YEARS THERE HAS BEEN A RESURGENCE IN THIS country of hate groups. Why have these groups been so powerful in American history and why are they gaining in popularity now? It is a good time to revisit the events of the past and help students link these lessons to their lives today. The purpose of this activity is to take a look at one of the most famous hate groups, try to understand why its members believe the way they do and learn what can be done to stop hate groups from returning to their historic levels of power and influence.

Begin by showing a 2-minute video clip from the National Geographic channel on the brief history of the Klan – *KKK: Inside American Terror* ([http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/series/inside/3954/Overview?#tab-Videos/05945\\_00](http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/series/inside/3954/Overview?#tab-Videos/05945_00)).

After viewing the video, allow students to read the *Newsweek* article “rebranding hate in the age of Obama” (available at [www.newsweek.com/id/195085](http://www.newsweek.com/id/195085)).

Have students look for the answers to the following questions:  
**Q:** According to the video, what groups did the Klan target during its resurgence in the early 20th century? **A:** African Americans and immigrants from predominantly Catholic countries.

**Q:** Prior to the 2008 election, which group had the Klan and similar hate groups begun targeting and why? **A:** Latino immigrants, to capitalize on fear of losing jobs.

**Q:** Have there been any other examples of backlashes against immigrant groups over job loss fears in American history? **A:** Chinese American, Japanese American, Italian American and many other groups).

**Q:** Why did public support of hate groups rapidly decline during the Civil Rights era? **A:** Answers will vary but should refer to the graphic images shown in media during the Civil Rights Movement.

**Q:** What effects did 9/11 have on hate groups in America? **A:** Answers will vary but will contain thoughts such as increased hate attacks against Arab and Muslim immigrants.

A good assignment for a critical reflection paper would be, “Why do you think that hate groups predominantly target people of color or immigrants and blame them for economic problems that they are not responsible for?”

**Mike Hollis**  
Texas State University  
San Marcos, Texas

**WANT TO HELP YOUR STUDENTS** delve deeper into the causes of intolerance? The author of “The Rhetoric of Hate” ([www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-20-fall-2001/rhetoric-hate](http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-20-fall-2001/rhetoric-hate)) let his students research the rhetoric of hate groups – and taught them how to recognize common logical fallacies.



# What Does it Mean to be an American?

AMERICAN LITERATURE IS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR 11th-grade English curriculum. Over the course of the year, we visit many pieces of literature and discuss many themes. The focus is to begin considering how the literature we explore reflects our society and our experiences. To this end, I ask students to contemplate one of two questions: What does it mean to be an American? What do people mean when they say “the American dream?”

Students are placed in heterogeneous groups of three or four and asked to brainstorm notions of what it means to be an American and what possible criteria define

“the American dream.” The group must collectively compose a *What We Know* paper that is two pages in length. This paper summarizes the group’s discussion. Next, the group writes a two-page *What We Want To Find Out* paper that is based on questions that arose during their discussions. These questions become the focus of their research.

Each student focuses on the same research questions that their group generated, but from their differing points of view. Invite students to think about how their racial, ethnic and religious identities affect their vision of “the American dream.” The research must include:

**Connections to class readings**  
**Primary and secondary resources**  
**One personal interview from the community**

A “Search” section, which discusses the research process, rationale for choosing materials and how their resources shaped their ideas

A “What I Learned” section, in which students reveal their conclusions

“Connections and Conclusions” — a summary of the group’s conclusions

Students can present their collective findings in panel discussions — and discuss their different points of view on these questions.

**Timothy Pletcher**  
 Washington High School  
 South Bend, Indiana



**USE THE PBS WEBSITE** *Teen Immigrants, Five American Stories* ([www.pbs.org/inthemix/shows/show\\_teen\\_immigrants.html](http://www.pbs.org/inthemix/shows/show_teen_immigrants.html)) to help students understand more about becoming American.



## Linguicism

WE ALL KNOW EACH OTHER’S NAMES, BUT DO WE KNOW THE stories of our names? To begin this activity I give students a piece of paper and have them write their name on it in big, bold letters. Have each student tell the story of how they received their name. After this, I ask students, “How important is language?” Most of us would agree that language is important in our society. The ways we communicate and speak are ways for others to know a little bit about who we are. But how accurate are our perceptions when language is all we have?

Next, I break students into small groups and tell them that they are to create a skit that reveals their answers to the following questions:

- Q: What does a smart person sound like?
- Q: What does an unintelligent person sound like?
- Q: What does a villain sound like?
- Q: What does a hero sound like?

After the skits, students reflect and discuss the following questions:

- Q: What patterns do you notice in the way each group described its person?
- Q: How important is language in determining someone’s intelligence?
- Q: Where do we get our perceptions about intelligence and language?
- Q: What if someone doesn’t speak a language “correctly?” Does that mean they are not smart?
- Q: What about accents? What does it mean to have a Southern accent, a New York accent or a foreign accent?

Use relevant video clips from the Internet or TV shows to explore linguicism further, along with a few discussion

questions. Here are a few examples:

### LINGUISTIC PROFILING

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FLdJHYMgyI&NR=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FLdJHYMgyI&NR=1) *Linguistic*

- Q: What type of discrimination did the person on the video suffer?
- Q: How do you think the person feels?
- Q: Why does he have to change his accent?
- Q: In what ways is linguistic profiling harmful?

### LINGUISTIC DISCRIMINATION

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KCL97s1lJg&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KCL97s1lJg&feature=related)

- Q: Can you tell a person’s race by the sound of their voice?
- Q: Have you ever experienced discrimination based on the sound of your voice?

### TV SHOWS

- Q: What television shows can you think of that perpetuate linguistic stereotypes?
- Q: What do these stereotypes do to the people who are being stereotyped?

As a final project, have students come up with a definition about linguicism based on all the information they’ve learned. Ask them to create a skit that combats linguicism.

**Tanya Madrid-Campbell and Julianne Hughes**  
 The Berkeley School  
 Berkeley, California

**A PERFECT COMPLIMENT** to this lesson is Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street* (\$12.60), especially the vignette titled “My Name.” Order it at [www.mcgraw-hill.com](http://www.mcgraw-hill.com).

# Toward a More Civil Discourse

New curriculum offers step-by-step lessons for engaging in effective argument on divisive issues

BY KATE SHUSTER, PH.D.

**T**here is a pressing need to change the tenor of public debate from shouts and slurs to something more reasoned and effective. But it is difficult for teachers already burdened with standardized tests and administrative duties to find the time to craft lessons to teach civil discourse in their classrooms. To support teachers working to change the terms of our national debate, *Teaching Tolerance* offers a new curriculum entitled “Civil Discourse in the Classroom and Beyond.”

We live in a climate ripe with noise: Media outlets and 24-hour news cycles mean that everyone with access to a computer has access to a megaphone to broadcast their views. Never before in human history has an opinion had the opportunity to reach so many so quickly without regard to its accuracy or appropriateness.

It is difficult to hear anything when everyone has a megaphone. For young people trying to learn how to speak and listen, this is an especially complicated business.

“The lesson learned is a dangerous one,” says Danielle Wiese Leek, assistant professor in the School of Communications at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Mich. “First, it’s anti-democratic. It’s not about learning to be exposed to a variety of perspectives in order to draw the best conclusion. It teaches young people that if they aren’t the loudest, their opinion doesn’t matter. Second, it shuts down opportunities for collaboration and innovation. Some of the best ideas that

have been produced throughout human history came from people working together.”

Educators are well positioned to provide a counterweight to this loudest-is-best approach. Schools and classrooms strive to be safe places where students can exchange ideas, try out opinions and receive feedback on their ideas without fear or intimidation.

Children, of course, often come to school with opinions or prejudices they have learned in their homes or from the media. Schools can become a place of intolerance and fear, especially for students who voice minority opinions.

Schools, then, must work to be the site of social transformation, where teachers and young people find ways to communicate effectively.

This is not simply about being polite.

As University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Assistant Professor of Rhetoric Chris Lundberg says, “There are times when a certain degree of impoliteness is called for.

In a rare joint session of the U.S. Congress on the topic of health care reform, a U.S. Representative yells, “**YOU LIE!**” at the President of the United States.

At a health care reform rally in California, opposing factions **ESCALATE THEIR ARGUMENTS** until fists fly and one man bites off another man’s fingertip.

In a marquee match at the U.S. Open, tennis player Serena Williams **GOES OFF** on a line judge, hurling foul language and threats over a foot-fault call.

If we say we are only going to allow polite discourse in the public sphere, we are writing off the first group of women who wanted political suffrage, because at the time that was seen as impolite.”

The key word, then, is civility.

“The idea of civility ... originates in Cicero with the concept of the *societas civilis*,” Lundberg explains. “What it meant was that there are certain standards of conduct towards others and that members of the civil society should comport themselves in a way that sought the good of the city. The old concept of civility was much more explicitly political than our current notion of politeness. Speech was filtered through how it did or did not contribute to the good of the city.”

Civil discourse is discourse that supports, rather than undermines, the societal good. It demands that democratic participants respect each other, even when that respect is hard to give or to earn. Democratic societies must be societies where arguments are tolerated and encouraged, but this is not always easy.

“To engage in a healthy political argument is to acknowledge the possibility that one’s own arguments could be falsified or proven wrong,” says Thomas Hollihan, professor at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School of Communication. “This demands that citizens listen respectfully to the claims made by others. Name-calling, threats and bullying behaviors do not meet the demands of effective deliberation.”

This new curriculum — based on lessons tested in diverse classrooms across the United States and proven effective with a wide range of students and topics — will introduce educators to basic tools for teaching civil discourse. It is not subject-specific; on the contrary, the tools of argumentation and discussion lend themselves to any subject in any classroom. Although it is primarily designed for young adolescents, the curriculum can be adapted for students of any age.

Using these lessons, students will be able to turn their unsubstantiated opinions into reasoned arguments. They also will learn how to effectively challenge an opposing argument — not with fists and fury, but rather with a step-by-step process for refutation.

These tools lay the groundwork for productive, reasoned and lively discussions on a variety of topics. They also will give students “training wheels” for learning how to have reasoned arguments outside the classroom. ♦

**KATE SHUSTER** holds a Ph.D. in Educational Studies from Claremont Graduate University. She is the Director of Claremont McKenna College’s Middle School Public Debate Program (MSPDP), the world’s largest program for debating in the middle grades. She has written 10 books on argument and debate instruction, and is currently the coach of the U.S. national high school debate team. She maintains the MSPDP website at [www.middleschooldebate.com](http://www.middleschooldebate.com)

## Five Tips for Bringing Current and Controversial Events into the Classroom

### 1. Select an issue

Try to choose current events that have meaningful connections to other course content. For example, if you are reading *Farewell to Manzanar*, you might consider following this with a short unit on Guantanamo Bay. In integrating current events instruction into your classroom, start with less controversial issues. Keep in mind that you’re trying to teach students how to be effective democratic citizens, and that a good way to begin is with more manageable issues as training wheels.

### 2. Break it down

Consider the component parts of the issue. If you want to discuss the death penalty, you may need to teach students about the criminal justice system, including the difference between state and federal jurisdictions. Younger students are unlikely to understand concepts like “deterrence” and “retribution,” which will make it harder for them to grapple with multiple perspectives on the issue. Breaking the issue into parts will allow you to sequence your unit appropriately and choose materials to assist in learning key concepts.

### 3. Build the vocabulary

Don’t forget to include vocabulary lessons as part of your current events instruction, just as you would any other instructional topics. Keep a running list from readings and research.

### 4. SELECT THE READINGS

For many teachers, this is one of the hardest parts of current events instruction — finding readings that are both accessible and challenging. You’ll have to read a lot of articles, chapters and other materials in order to find readings that will represent a balanced and informed set of perspectives. But, the upside is that you’ll probably need only a few readings to create a meaningful context for students to be able to discuss the issue.

### 5. FINISH WITH FOCUS

There should be something that students *do* with their current events information, some sort of culminating activity. This could be writing an informative or persuasive essay, working on a group presentation or project, engaging in roundtable discussions or debates, or any other activity that gives students the opportunity to synthesize what they’ve learned and discussed. Perhaps students could write letters to the editor of a newspaper, stating their position on an issue, or write responses to an editorial that they read, agreeing or disagreeing with the author.



# The Only One

Where schools are still separate and unequal, parents often look beyond their local school for solutions. But when you're the only person of color in your class, school can become a struggle between two worlds

BY AFI-ODELIA E. SCRUGGS

**T**ia Hall wanted to learn German. As a student at an elite private school, Hall felt that this was a reasonable request. But she still recalls the teacher who ridiculed her, saying, "Why on earth would a black kid want to study German?"

Hall didn't turn to her parents. She knew they'd urge her to be grateful for the chance to attend a top-tier school — even if she felt isolated among the predominantly white student body.

She never forgot how it felt to be the "only one." As an adult, she married a man who'd had a similar school experience. The two thought long and hard before sending their children into the same situation.

In the end, though, the North Carolina couple did decide to send their four children to a small private school. Hall's son is one of four students of color attending the high school. (She asked that the school not be identified.)

"We really struggled with whether to go that route. Because we are very hands-on with schools, it has worked to a certain point," she said.

Tia Hall is not alone. When parents have the power to choose the school their children attend, tough questions follow. *What values will my child learn here? How do I know they will be welcome?* For parents of color, there is often an added question: *Do I send my child to a school where she will be in a minority of one?*

Educators say Hall's story is far too common among students who are the only ones in their school or class. Minority children in schools where there are few, if any, of their ethnicity or racial group battle to balance the various worlds they inhabit.

Fabiana Kimberly Silva, a college student in Santa Barbara, Calif., said she was the only Bolivian when she attended middle and high school. While seeking acceptance from Mexicans and Anglo students and staff, she almost lost her culture.

"I had faced discrimination and racism from Mexicans in school because they didn't understand my culture. They saw me as an intruder," she said. "And also from white Americans because I was a Latina and they usually thought I was Mexican.

"I had to adapt to these cultures by interacting with both, mixing my Spanish with the Mexican way of talking and learning English at the same time."

Silva said the prejudice made her question her abilities, but her mother and school counselors supported her.

Jarrod Schwartz, the executive director of Just

Communities, a social justice organization in Santa Barbara, said he often hears doubts voiced by high-achieving Latino students who, like Silva, end up in advanced placement courses in the city's public schools.

He said students who are accused of acting white by their peers worry about abandoning their community or selling out.

"The one question is 'Do I belong here? Do I belong in this class?'" Schwartz said.

On the other hand, the same students feel used by people who point to their academic success to deny the existence of racism.

"High-achieving Latino students will be brought [out] and celebrated, and we don't see the price until we get with them and talk to them," Schwartz said.

That's because students of color who are the only ones, or one of a few, often become the representative for their race or ethnicity, researchers say.

"You're expected to represent and explain your group, be responsible for your group's actions," said Ronald Chennault, an associate professor in the department of education policy studies at DePaul University in Chicago.

Tia Hall believes students solve this dilemma by developing what she calls "the chameleon complex." They change their appearance, speech and demeanor when they change environments, but they find they still cannot live up to everyone's expectations.

"White children have TV expectations of black people; for example, you have this hipness. You're all about jokes and rhymes and hip hop," she said. "You've got blacks saying, 'You think you're white,' and white kids saying, 'What kind of black kid are you that you don't do this?'"

She and her husband decided that talking about racial differences, not ignoring them, was the best way to ensure their children feel comfortable as the "only ones." She insists that faculty and staff understand that her family often has a different experience and point of view from the majority, and that the point of view is valid.


That's why, for example, she demanded a teacher confront the presence of the n-word, when it came up during the reading of "Sounder."

"I approached the teacher, because you can't have a book like that and not deal with the word," Hall said.

She said other parents should adopt a similar assertiveness, if their children are "the only ones."

"We black people shouldn't be ashamed to have these conversations," she said. "I'm a consumer, and I have just as much right to speak to the quality of my child's education." ♦

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT BAKAL



In third grade, Julia Horsman's entire science project consisted of being herded outside with the other kids with disabilities and rolling soda cans down a ramp, some empty, some full, to see which would travel farther and faster.

Fast-forward a year.

This time, her science project involved freezing water, juice and milk, seeing which one froze the fastest. She poured and measured and gave a presentation about her results. And she did it all on her own.

Same kid — one who, according to the state of Maryland, has mild mental retardation.

Two very different classrooms.

# Into the Mainstream

BY NIRVI SHAH  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN HEALEY

It has been more than 30 years since the federal government first declared that children with different abilities shouldn't be automatically separated from one another in school. Julia Horsman's parents, and others all over the country, are still fighting to have the law enforced. Too often, they say, school administrators' first instincts are separation, not inclusion.

"But when you read the law it's so clear cut," says Julia's mother, Lisa Horsman.

The problem is that the radical changes the law promised never sunk in at the ground level — namely, in teacher-education programs, says Kathleen Whitbread, an associate professor of education at Saint Joseph College in Connecticut.

The latest figures from the U.S. Department of Education show that, overall, almost 57 percent of students with disabilities spend the majority of their day in traditional classrooms. But that number masks a wide range of outcomes for a diverse group of students. For students with mental retardation, for example, the inclusion rate is less than 16 percent.

"Change is slow, yes," Whitbread says, "but this is ridiculous."

When Whitbread was studying to be a teacher in the early 1980s, her special education classes didn't include teachers learning to be math or kindergarten or chemistry teachers.

"All of the students in my classes were special-ed teachers," she said. "We were focusing on things like behavioral modification, functional skills, teaching kids how to tie their shoes and brush their teeth."

Then she met an inclusion activist who put things in perspective for her.

"She said, 'Is the child breathing? Then they belong in a regular class,'" Whitbread says. "I think that people respond to the civil rights argument, that it's wrong to separate children. Would you put all the blue-eyed children in one classroom? Of course you wouldn't."

While St. Joseph and a small number of teacher-training programs no longer have separate tracks for special education teachers and everyone else, Whitbread says the combined approach remains uncommon.

She and other advocates say the time has passed — though not everyone has accepted it — for special education to be thought of as a place, instead of a service.

"Teaching is about taking the child that you get and using what you've learned to reach this child," Whitbread says. "This is what we should have been doing in 1976."

#### The Case for Inclusion

Early on, Julia was in a separate classroom but the teacher seemed passionate and her daughter seemed to be learning, Lisa Horsman recalled. Isolated, but educated.

Then the teachers seemed to stop caring.

And Julia stopped learning.

"I went in there to watch one day and the teacher said 'Let's go back to the reading we were reading yesterday,'"



Horsman said. "They had nothing to look at, nothing to follow. They were seven or eight little zombies sitting there, with their desks cleared off."

After watching Julia languish in that separate room — where all the other students were boys — she decided she couldn't let the school district in Prince George's County, Maryland, make decisions for her anymore.

"I [had done] what I thought was best for my kid, what the doctors told me, what the school told me," she says. "And I was punished for it."

Horsman called the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, where attorney Selene Almazan took on Julia's case.

"I represent families who want their children to go to their neighborhood school," Almazan says. "Really, it's just an enforcement of what their child is legally entitled to."

"There's been some progress," she says, but "it is not uniform across the country. There is this whole idea that with kids with disabilities, you need to take care of them. It really is rather paternalistic in many ways, rather than looking at each individual child. I'm hard-pressed to find where there's good education in these segregated classrooms."

It's no wonder, she says, that many schools continue to assume these same children won't be successful in a regular classroom, she says.

"I've found that the opposite is true," she says.

As with Julia.

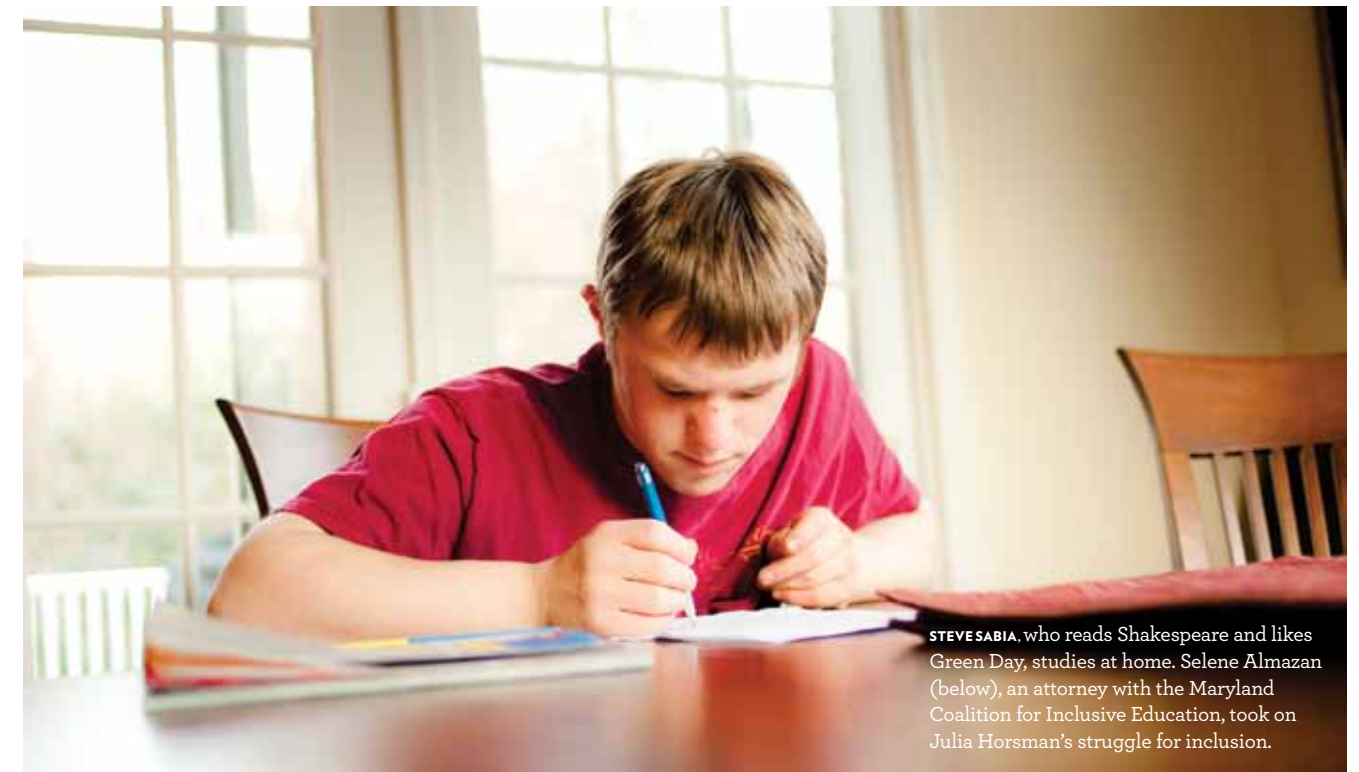
And an experience like Julia's is possible only if schools put in the effort to make inclusion meaningful.

"As kids started to spend more time in regular classes, then we had to fight for teaching them," Whitbread says. "That to me has been the more frustrating fight."

#### Who Wrote Holden Caulfield?

For many parents of children with disabilities who manage to get their children included, their work is far from over. Many say they have turned into part-time teachers once their kids make it into a regular classroom.

Ricki Sabia says creating study guides and finding supplemental materials for her son has been a part of her life



**"There's been some progress, but it is not uniform across the country. There is this whole idea that with kids with disabilities, you need to take care of them ... rather than looking at each individual child."**

for years — on top of her work as a lawyer and on the staff of the National Down Syndrome Society.

Her son, Steve, is in the 11th grade and has Down syndrome. When the rest of his class read the *Odyssey*, Steve read the 130-page abridged version, watched the movie and used a computer program that tested his comprehension.

When his class read Shakespeare, she found something called "No Fear Shakespeare," which had the original text on one side of the page and its modern English translation on the other.

"Why should he read Shakespeare? Why is that important for any kid?" Sabia says. "To broaden his horizons. To have common experiences. To see what he likes and to shape what he is going to do. When he's on the subway and he sees a picture of Shakespeare, he knows who that is."

Getting through *The Catcher in the Rye* was particularly difficult, she says, because she couldn't find this novel — centered on one character's feelings of alienation — in any other format. Still, her son plodded through it. And the experience stuck with Steve, a boy the Maryland school system wanted to teach how to sweep floors, run a washing machine and cook.

"He likes the band Green Day, and they have this song, 'Who



Wrote Holden Caulfield?" she says. "He knew what that was."

Sabia says the development of curricula designed for all kinds of learners is finally happening on a large scale, such as Universal Design for Learning, created by the Center for Applied Special Technology in Massachusetts. It offers a blueprint for teachers working with students with varying needs.

"Their idea is the curriculum is what's broken, not kids," she says. "Schools should look at who are in their classes now. We're not designing curriculum for them all."

Even without an investment in a readymade curriculum like Universal Design, the inclusion process might go more smoothly if all teachers in a school were to collaborate, Whitbread says.

Well-trained special education teachers already know many unique ways to reach children who have different learning styles, Whitbread says. If one approach doesn't work, they will know of another.

But if individual classroom teachers continue to be confronted with reinventing these approaches each time they

have a student with disabilities, inclusion can seem impossible. “It’s always been ‘Special education? You go there,’” says Sharon Leonard, an educational consultant at the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network. Instead, Leonard says, teachers should see special education as a service they bring to the student. “We can’t get a better placement than that general education classroom.”

#### Learning the Ways of the World

For Julia Horsman, life at her old school, in that separate classroom, was lonely. As the only girl, she was already isolated. She learned some vulgar words from the boys in her class, which she repeated at home. Her sweet temperament turned sullen.

She stopped smiling, says her mother.

But school district administrators warned that Julia would be just as isolated in a regular class. They said she would fail. They said she would be miserable.

The Horsmans consulted a neuropsychologist, who had a different vision. He expected Julia to blossom, and predicted that other kids would be nurturing.

“It was exactly the way the neuropsychologist said,” Lisa Horsman says. “The teacher said, ‘Whenever I would tell the kids to pair up, everybody would be fighting over Julia.’”

Almazan, who helped get Julia into her inclusive setting, notes that Julia didn’t just raise her reading level during her first year in a regular classroom.

“She got birthday party invitations,” Almazan says. “When a child is a part of the classroom and accepted by peers, peers get it. Kids know when another child needs help. Kids are the ones that can tell another kid, ‘You’re not supposed to hit.’”

Sue Davis-Killian’s daughter Lisa has Down syndrome, and Davis-Killian insisted on full-time inclusion in Florida schools. Beyond her firm belief that Lisa will get a real education in an inclusive setting, Davis-Killian wants her daughter to learn the ways of the real world.

“Most adults with cognitive disabilities are unemployed,” Davis-Killian notes. “And the biggest reason that they lose their jobs is that they don’t understand the rules: They don’t show up on time or don’t show up at all. They don’t listen to the boss.”

In segregated classes, Davis-Killian says, too often there is no reinforcement of basic social norms, like being on time. Special education buses often arrive at school late and leave early, she says. But for Lisa, an eighth-grader, school starts at 9 a.m., period.

“She knows she can’t just go walking into class whenever she wants,” Davis-Killian says.

Behaviors that can draw attention to a particular disability aren’t curbed in segregated classrooms, she says.

Like many people with cognitive disabilities, Lisa had her own soothing behavior. Lisa would put her head down and make a humming noise.

“It took me and the school two years of saying, ‘Get your head up’ to stop her from doing that,” she says. “I saw another girl in a segregated classroom and watched for 15 minutes as she hummed to herself. She was 6. Nobody ever said anything.”

The teachers in the special-ed classroom “don’t hear it anymore,” Davis-Killian says, while in a regular classroom, it wouldn’t be tolerated. “That behavior will incredibly limit what you can do in life,” she says.

From her life of inclusion, Lisa has learned hip lingo, and she knows how to send text messages to her friends — and how to delete the call logs so her mother doesn’t know she made calls after bedtime.

“It’s not that she doesn’t do anything different — she does have Down syndrome,” her mother says. “But that’s the aspect that inclusion can’t quantify: She still doesn’t realize that she’s different.”

#### Staying Included

After all the years of fighting over Julia Horsman’s placement in her neighborhood school, her inclusive status will become uncertain again when she heads to middle school next fall.

The school district only agreed to a two-year trial, at the end of which they will evaluate Julia to see whether she should go back to a segregated setting.

Tina Progar’s son Patrick was included from kindergarten through middle school. But when Patrick, who has Down syndrome, entered high school two years ago, the district balked. They say they don’t have the resources to make general education classes fit Patrick’s needs. So now he spends most of his day in a special education classroom with other teenagers who have a variety of disabilities.

“Pat’s life is now part of a group,” says Progar, of Maryland. “He is now a special-ed kid.”

Her once-independent son with a knack for technology, a host of friends and a sharp sense of humor has become withdrawn.

And Progar is exhausted. As she continues to plead with the school to let Patrick spend more time in general education classes, she is working on another project. She wants to find a place for Patrick to spend part of his day volunteering, which would give him the opportunity to socialize and regain some of his independence.

“I have gone before the school board. I joined a group that’s working for the least restrictive environment for kids with disabilities,” she says. “All of these families are getting burned out. And I cannot wait for my son to get out of school.”

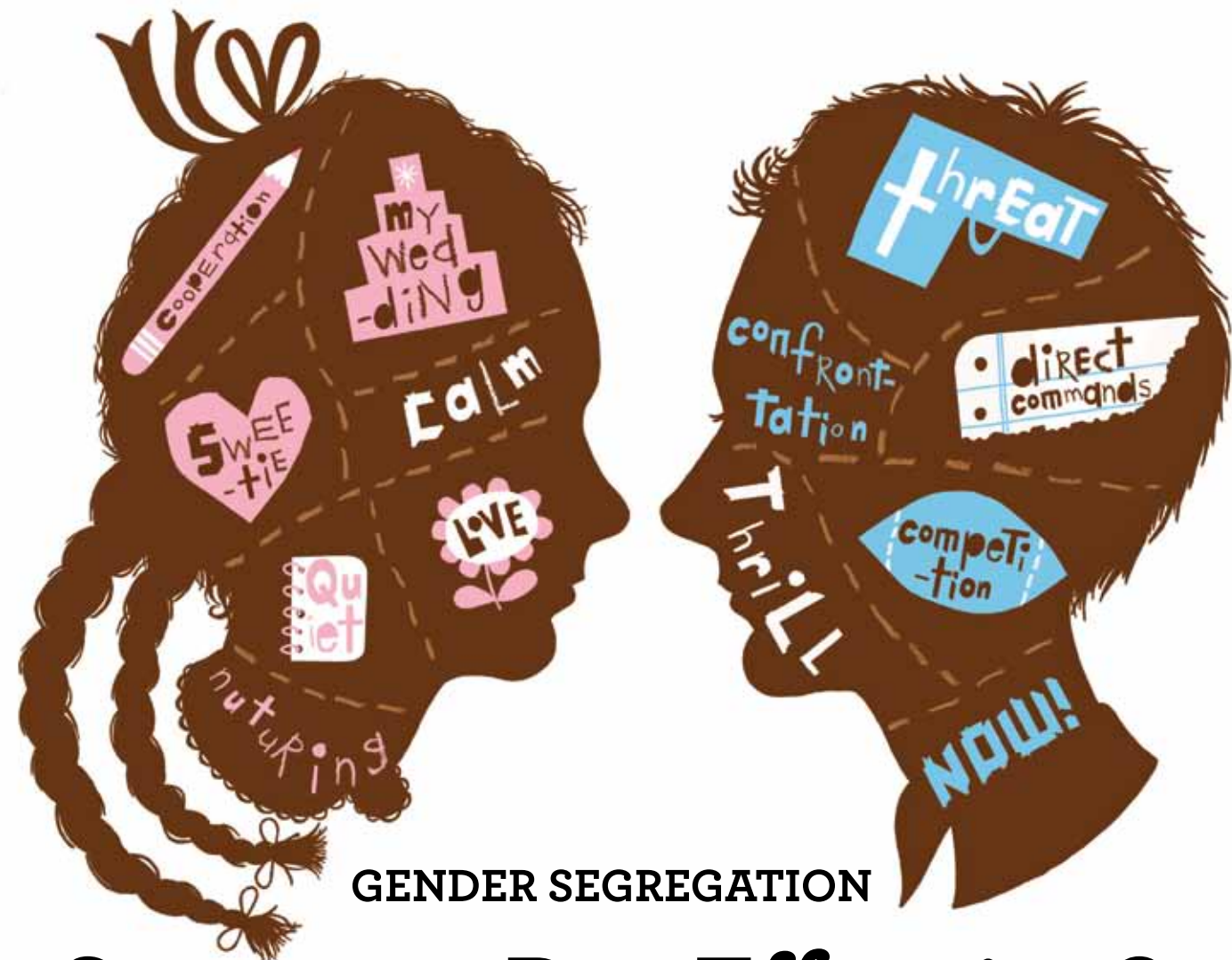
“Inclusion can be law in the books, but this is an attitude issue.”

*For now, Julia Horsman is just one of the kids at her school. Julia still takes time out of class for occupational therapy, so she can master things like opening zippers, but otherwise, her mom says, “I almost forget she’s in special ed. There’s so much less fighting to do.”*

*At a parent-teacher organization meeting last school year, Lisa Horsman ran into Julia’s principal, Justin FitzGerald.*

*“I know there was some reluctance to have her,” Horsman told him, but “she’s where she belongs.”*

*He looked at her and replied: “Absolutely.” ♦*



# Separate But Effective?

Gender-segregated classrooms are on the rise in the U.S. — especially the Southeast — but research regarding their effectiveness remains inconclusive

BY DAVID HOLTHOUSE

Last October, more than 450 public school teachers, principals and central administrators from across the United States — as well as from Argentina, Bermuda, Canada and Poland — came together in Atlanta, Georgia, for the fifth annual convention of the National Association for Single Sex Public Education.

Dozens of presentations extolled the superiority of gender-segregated classrooms and entire schools, with lecture titles such as, “Burps, Farts and Snot: Teaching Chemistry To Middle School Boys,” and “Just Don’t Say ‘SEX’ — tips on how to implement

single-gender programs in conservative, rural communities.”

Attendees ranged from Chicago and Philadelphia inner-city high school teachers to elementary school principals from small towns in Idaho and Indiana. They represented a fraction of recent converts to the Single Sex Public Education (SSPE) movement, which has expanded at a remarkable pace.

In 2002, only 11 public schools in the United States had gender-segregated classrooms. As of December 2009, there were more than 550.

The movement is based on the hypothesis that hard-wired

ILLUSTRATION BY MELINDA BECK

differences in the ways that male and female brains develop and function in childhood through adolescence require classrooms in which boys and girls are not only separated by gender, but also taught according to radically different methods.

For example, SSPE doctrine calls for teachers in male classrooms to be constantly moving and speaking in a loud voice, even to the point of shouting, while teachers in female classes should be still and use a calming tone. This differentiation stems from the central tenet of SSPE ideology that young males thrive on competition and confrontation, while young females require a more nurturing and cooperative learning environment.

“When most young boys are exposed to threat and confrontation, their senses sharpen, and they feel a thrill,” explains Dr. Leonard Sax, the founder and executive director of the National Associate for Single Sex Public Education. “When most young girls are exposed to such stimuli, however, they feel dizzy and yucky.”

In a landmark essay published in the Spring 2006 edition of *Educational Horizons*, just as the SSPE movement was gaining strong momentum, Dr. Sax detailed the different ways elementary school teachers should address their students in gender-segregated classes. “[The teacher] may move right in front of a boy and say, ‘What’s your answer, Mr. Jackson? Give it to me!’ Far from being intimidated, boys are energized by this teaching style. With girls [teachers should] speak more softly, use first names, terms of endearment and fewer direct commands: ‘Lisa, sweetie, it’s time to open your book. Emily, darling, would you please sit down for me and join us in this exercise?’”

The title of Dr. Sax’s essay was “Six Degrees of Separation,” a reference to the SSPE guideline that while the perfect ambient temperature for a male classroom is 69 degrees Fahrenheit, females learn most effectively at 75 degrees.

#### Heroic Behavior vs. Wedding Cakes

Separating boys and girls is a longstanding tradition at private and parochial schools. The concept began to gain traction in American public schools earlier this decade as schools began to experiment with SSPE in oft-desperate attempts to reduce disciplinary problems and improve test scores. The Department of Education accelerated the trend in 2006 by altering the Title IX provision of the No Child Left Behind Act to ease restrictions on gender-segregated education in public schools.

Since then, advocates like Dr. Sax, a child psychologist who never set foot in a classroom as a teacher, have stepped up their promotion of SSPE as a panacea for public education. With scant evidence backing them up, they herald SSPE as the most effective way to narrow the achievement gaps between rich and poor students and black and white students that persist eight years after the passage of No Child Left Behind.

Although SSPE programs are now in place at schools in 39 states and the District of Columbia, they are particularly popular in urban districts with large minority populations, and most concentrated in the Southeastern U.S. South

Carolina has 173 SSPE schools, by far the most of any state.

Last year, the largest school system in Alabama, the Mobile County Public School System, with 66,000 students, implemented SSPE programs in eight of its 93 schools with no parental notification. The most extreme program was at Hankins Middle School in Theodore, Alabama, where boys and girls ate lunch at different times and were prohibited from speaking to one another on school grounds.

Hankins teachers were directed to create “competitive, high-energy” classrooms for boys and “cooperative, quiet” classrooms for girls. Boys were to be taught “heroic behavior.” Girls were to learn “good character.” Sixth-grade language arts exercises called for boys to brainstorm action words

## Teachers were directed to create “competitive, high-energy” classrooms for boys and “cooperative, quiet” classrooms for girls.”

used in sports. Girls were instructed to describe their dream wedding cake. Electives were gender-specific. Boys took computer applications. Girls took drama. No exceptions.

Mark Jones, whose son Jacob attends Hankins, said that when he complained to the principal about the changes, she told him they were necessary because “boys’ and girls’ brains were so different they needed different curriculum.”

“Segregating boys and girls didn’t make things any better for our children. In fact they made things worse,” Jones said. “Our kids were basically being taught ideas about gender that come from the Dark Ages.”

Another parent, Terry Stevens, also objected. “The real world is integrated, and it’s important to both me and my son that he learn in a coed environment,” Stevens said.

Other parents and students disagreed. “You learn more like this,” 11-year-old Brenda Orduna told the *Mobile Press-Register* after making the honor roll at the end of the first quarter for the first time in her academic career. “When boys are around, you’re shy. And you won’t ask questions if you don’t get it.”

#### Muddled Results

The Mobile County SSPE experiment was short-lived. The district terminated all eight of its SSPE programs last March after the American Civil Liberties Union threatened to file a lawsuit on behalf of Jones and Stevens. The ACLU took the position that the Hankins program violated even the slackened Title IX provision. (The other seven Mobile County SSPE programs either offered all elective courses to both genders, in single-sex classrooms, or made their SSPE programs optional, with co-ed alternatives. At Hankins, they were mandatory.)

“While schools might think that sex-segregated classes

will be a quick fix for failing schools, in reality they are inherently unequal and shortchange both boys and girls,” said Emily Martin, Deputy Director of the ACLU Women’s Rights Program. “There is no reliable evidence that segregating students by sex improves learning by either sex.”

It is fair to say the supposed benefits of gender-segregated education in public schools claimed by SSPE supporters are unproven. On the other hand, there is no solid evidence that SSPE is harmful to the learning process of either gender, as critics argue. SSPE is such a relatively new phenomenon that no major credible studies have been conducted of its long-term efficacy. Likewise, research into gender-segregated education in general, let alone the controversial teaching methods pro-

## “Our kids were basically being taught ideas about gender that come from the Dark Ages.”

motated by the SSPE movement, has been inconclusive.

A 2006 study completed at the College of Education at Arizona State University showed that most of the research into gender-segregated education thus far has been of questionable value. According to the ASU study, the “research ... is mostly flawed by failure to control for important variables such as class, financial status, selective admissions, religious values, prior learning or ethnicity.” The ASU study also found that the methodology of less than 2 percent of the more than 2,000 quantitative studies of gender-segregated education was of high enough quality to meet the standards of the National Center for Education Statistics.

In 2005 the Department of Education released a comprehensive meta-analysis of gender-segregated education scholarship, titled “Single Sex Versus Coeducational Schooling: A Systematic Review.” The DOE found the results “equivocal.”

“There is some support for the premise that single-sex schooling can be helpful especially for certain outcomes related to academic achievement and more positive academic aspirations,” the DOE reported. “For many outcomes, there is no evidence of either benefit or harm. There is limited support for the view that single-sex schooling may be harmful.”

The DOE report included the caveat that most research into gender-segregated education has been conducted in private Catholic schools, which hardly makes for an apples-to-apples comparison to public education.

“Sex segregation doesn’t make public schools more like private schools,” says Allison Neal, staff attorney with the ACLU of Alabama. “If some private schools provide a better education, it’s because of their resources, not because they’re single sex.”

#### ‘A Self-Confidence Thing’

Dr. Sax counters the mixed results of the Department of

Education analysis by pointing out that most of the studies reviewed by the DOE involved merely segregating boys and girls in different classrooms without deploying SSPE teaching methods.

“The most obvious explanation for the variation is that merely placing girls and boys in separate classrooms accomplishes little,” he said. “For the single-sex format to lead to improvements in academic performance, teachers must understand the hard-wired differences in how girls and boys learn and incorporate the best practices for all-female classrooms and all-male classrooms.”

Dr. Sax has made a cottage industry of training public school teachers in those classroom practices. He maintains that two days of training, 14 hours total, is all that’s needed to prepare the staff of a public school to switch from coeducation to SSPE. Since 2002, Dr. Sax by his own count has led such two-day conversion seminars for more than 300 schools in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

One of them was Carman Trails, an elementary school in the Parkway School District, which is in the St. Louis area. Despite a lack of test data to prove the program is working, SSPE at Carman Trails has won over teachers, parents and students. The program is expanding. When it began two years ago, it was limited to first grade. For the 2008-2009 academic year, first- and second-graders were segregated by gender. In February 2009, at the urging of enthusiastic parents, principal Chris Raeker grew the program to include the third grade.

Raeker said that since implementing the SSPE program, fewer boys are being sent to the principal’s office, their overall attendance is up and they are participating in school clubs in higher numbers. First-grade teacher Alicia Wall said the program is benefiting girls in different ways. “I definitely see a self-confidence thing,” Wall said. “The girls are ready to learn and ready to work. In coed classes, they’re afraid to say something. They’re afraid to be wrong.”

The anecdotal success stories from schools like Carman Trails fail to sway opponents of SSPE, which include members of the American Civil Liberties Union and the American Association of University Women. They argue that SSPE is not a silver bullet for improving performance in public schools. Further, they point out that segregating students by race based on supposed differences in brain function between, for example, Asian students and African American students, would be decried as racist and arouse widespread protests.

“School districts across the country are experimenting with sex-segregated programs, which rely on questionable brain science theories based on outdated gender stereotypes,” said the ACLU’s Martin. “Instead, these districts should focus on efforts that we know can improve all students’ education, like smaller classes and more teacher training and parental involvement.” ♦

DAVID HOLTHOUSE is the former Senior Editor of the SPLC’s Intelligence Project. He now lives in Alaska where he works as a freelance journalist.

# Unmaking Brown

America's schools are more segregated now than they were in the late 1960s. More than 50 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, we need to radically rethink the meaning of "school choice."

BY TIM LOCKETTE

So much depends on a yellow bus, winding its way across the North Carolina landscape.

For decades, this was how Wake County integrated its schools. Buses would pick up public school students in largely minority communities along the Raleigh Beltline; in affluent Cary, a Raleigh suburb; in dozens of small towns and unincorporated communities around this fast growing state capital.

Most of the students would travel to schools not far from home. But every year, a few would cross the county to a new school, in a neighborhood very different from their own.

The system won Wake County praise from many integration advocates — but locally, people were less enchanted. In late 2008, a wave of anti-busing sentiment swept in new school board members who promised to support neighborhood schools and keep kids closer to home.

Cathy Truitt worries about what will happen next.

"If we end busing abruptly, we'll be taking a rapid step back to resegregation," said Truitt, a retired teacher who was defeated in her bid for a school board seat.

While Truitt worries about the effects of an end to busing, she says voters were exasperated with a system that seemed to randomly reassign their children to schools far from home.

"A child could be reassigned for three out of four years, while another family would go untouched," Truitt said.

"While people embraced diversity, they were absolutely tired of losing their choices."

## The New Segregation

Stories like that are bound to get a reaction from Amy Stuart Wells.

A professor at Teachers College at Columbia University, Wells has spent much of her career studying the resegregation of American schools — writing the history of the steady march back to separateness that has left our educational system more racially segregated now than it was in 1968.

"We don't have to accept this juxtaposition that puts school choice on one side and a civil rights approach to integration on the other," Wells said. "Our approaches to school choice over the past 20 years have been pretty unimaginative — and children are paying for our lack of imagination."

For Wells and other experts on school integration, the Wake County school board election is just another phase in a long-term, city-by-city struggle over how to integrate our schools. It's a struggle that the entire country has been losing for the better part of two decades.

Today, one-third of black students attend school in places where the black population is more than 90 percent. A little less than half of white students attend schools that are more than 90 percent white. One-third of all black and Latino



ILLUSTRATION BY MICK WIGGINS





students attend high-poverty schools (where more than 75 percent of students receive free or reduced lunch); only 4 percent of white children do.

Things have been better, and not so long ago. In 1990 more than 40 percent of black students in the South were attending majority-white schools. Today, fewer than 30 percent of students do — roughly the same percentage as in the late 1960s, when many districts were still refusing to implement 1954's *Brown v. Board of Education*.

That trend isn't limited just to the South, according to Gary Orfield, director of the Civil Rights Project at UCLA. According to Orfield, some of the deepest racial divisions in America today are in the Midwest, where old patterns of "white flight" have shaped the suburban landscape, and a new generation of immigrants is settling into communities that were never under orders to desegregate.

Most of the decades-old obstacles to integration still remain. Wake County's debate over active integration measures is a rarity these days: Most busing programs were killed by white backlash in the 1970s. Our schools are still governed by a hodgepodge of districts, some giant and some tiny, many of which were created as enclaves of white priv-

ilege. And Americans still are choosing — or being steered toward — home ownership in communities where everyone looks like them.

And there are new challenges. In 2007, the U.S. Supreme Court effectively gutted *Brown* by declaring that school districts can't consider racial diversity as a factor in school assignments. (Where busing still exists, it's done on the basis of family income.) And as the suburbs have spread, we've seen residential segregation on steroids.

"The old paradigm of black cities and white suburbs is no longer true," said Orfield. "Black and Latino communities are expanding into the suburbs — but they're concentrated in specific areas. We're seeing a suburbia that is divided by ethnicity."

#### Separate is Still Unequal

Depending on where you stand, the drift back to segregation may be obvious, or it may be entirely invisible.

"Many white students attend schools that are overwhelmingly white, and those schools are actually seeing an increase in diversity," Orfield said. "We have the irony that white students can feel that their educational experience is more integrated, when in fact the level of segregation na-

tionwide has increased."

In the mid-1960s, 80 percent of American students were white. Today, due to immigration and other factors, children of color make up almost 40 percent of the student body. While the student body as a whole has grown more much more diverse, many majority-white schools have seen only a slight bump in their minority enrollment.

Meanwhile, growing numbers of black, Latino and Asian American students are finding themselves in what Orfield calls "intensely segregated" schools — schools where students of color make up more than 90 percent of the student body. Typically these schools have high concentrations of students in poverty — what Orfield calls "double segregation." And increasingly there is "triple segregation" as English language learners in poverty find themselves concentrated in certain schools.

"These schools are just fundamentally different from other schools," said Erica Frankenberg, a scholar on the Civil Rights Project.

"In terms of AP classes available, number of veteran teachers, graduation rates — on almost every measure you see an indication of a school in severe stress."

Students in these intensely segregated environments are far less likely to graduate, or to go on to college. It's a problem that is well known to many people of color. Frankenberg says its time for the entire country to realize that this is a crisis for each of us.

"If we don't start educating black and Latino students better than we are doing now, we are going to see an intergenerational decline in the percentage of high school graduates in the adult population for the first time ever," she noted.

There's strong evidence that integration could help us eliminate the "achievement gap." Frankenberg and Orfield both note that the gap was lowest during the late 1980s and early 1990s — the period in history when our schools were

at their most integrated.

"We have never been able to implement *Plessy v. Ferguson*," Frankenberg said. "Separate schools have never been equal. Yet we keep trying to make a segregated system work."

#### A Hidden History of Choice

How do we reverse a 40-year trend, one that is embedded in our residential landscape? And how do we integrate schools when the Supreme Court has ruled that race and diversity can't be factors in school assignments?

The solution might be as simple as changing the way we think — particularly the way we think about school choice.

"We need to rethink what choice means, and we need to realize that it isn't inimical to the 'civil rights' approach to integration," Wells said.

Experts such as Wells and Orfield point out that many fundamentals of school segregation haven't changed all that much since 1990. There was residential segregation then, and many racially homogenous districts date back to the 1970s.

What did change was a paradigm shift. Court rulings weakened local integration plans, and Americans increasingly began looking for solutions that appealed to their free-market instincts. Charter schools and vouchers began to look like the best way to liberate students from intensely segregated schools — and the best way to create innovative, effective schools.

By and large, it hasn't worked, Orfield contends.

"Charter schools are the most segregated segment of the school system," he said. "They often appear in highly segregated areas, and they tend to increase segregation."

Again, so much depends on a yellow bus. By not providing transportation and other services commonly found in traditional public schools, charters were limiting their student

body to kids who lived nearby — and to parents who had the right social networks.

"With charters, recruitment is largely word-of-mouth, and, as a result, these schools aren't as accessible as they could be," Wells said.

Orfield notes that charters aren't bound by civil rights mandates, the way magnet schools are. But even magnet schools — with their implied mission of providing alternatives — don't have enough capacity to provide parents with a true choice. With waiting lists at every magnet, it's the schools that are doing the selecting.

"The laissez-faire, market-based approaches of the past 20 years have done a really good job of providing schools with a choice of students," Wells said. "But they haven't done

**“Our approaches to school choice over the past 20 years have been pretty unimaginative — and children are paying for our lack of imagination.”**

a good job of providing students with a choice of schools.”

It didn't have to be that way, Wells said.

“The problem is that there's a whole history of school choice that has been hidden and forgotten,” she said.

Wells recently co-authored a major study on school systems that still have voluntary busing. Eight major cities — including Indianapolis, St. Louis, Palo Alto and others — still have voluntary busing systems that allow students from intensely segregated schools to choose to attend other schools — even across district lines.

“These programs aren't thriving — in fact, they're struggling, politically, to survive — but they're hanging on in large part because of support from parents,” Wells said.

That includes parents in white, affluent suburbs who want students from other districts to be brought into their schools.

“A lot of white parents in the suburbs bemoan the fact that they're raising kids in an all-white, privileged context,” Wells said. “Even the kids realize they're in this bubble.”

For Wells, the voluntary busing programs represent an approach to school choice that once was well known — one most parents have forgotten, or believe to be a failure. And that's a shame, she said, because for students in these programs, the achievement gap has shrunk.

“Not only do these programs provide meaningful choices, they provide the intangibles — high expectations, higher academic aspirations, exposure to more ways of seeing the world,” she said.

## What Educators Can Do

**Teach the history of resegregation.** Encourage students to research what factors have led to resegregation. Have them ask adults about their memories of school (keeping in mind that schools were at their least segregated 20 years ago). Have them ask parents how they decided where to live.

**Know how to respond to bias incidents.** When bias incidents — or rumors of them — go unacknowledged and unaddressed, they can grow into ugly controversies that brand a school as an unsafe place. Fear of racial tension is a factor in driving parents away from diverse school, Orfield says. “In the early days of integration, everyone knew you had to address this,” he said. “We seem to have forgotten the importance of in-school race relations.”

**Testify.** The educational benefits of a diverse learning environment are well-documented, but the public often doesn't see diversity as a “must have” in a school. Share your own classroom experiences with the public, and help shift the paradigm.

### Rethinking Districts

Wells is quick to point out that these are programs that bus students from one district to another. School district boundaries, she says, are “the new Jim Crow,” separating poverty from wealth and white from black and brown.

Frankenberg agrees. She notes that the most segregated states today are the ones with the greatest profusion of districts — a legacy of a post-*Brown* movement to establish white and affluent enclaves in the shadow of major cities.

Frankenberg, who grew up in Mobile, uses her home state as an example. Alabama has 67 counties and 167 school districts. Neighboring Florida also has 67 counties — and 69 districts (one for each county and two special districts for university laboratory schools.) According to Frankenberg, Alabama is the most segregated state in the South — the only Southern state that consistently shows up in the top 10 of most segregated states.

Consolidating districts in highly segregated areas might be a difficult political battle, but complete consolidation isn't the only option.

“We need to rethink our attitude toward districts,” Wells says. “The boundaries can be more permeable than they are now.”

In an age of economic hardship, that approach may be more welcome than ever before. Well points to Long Island, New York, which has 125 individual school districts.

“People are starting to understand that this system is wasteful,” she said. “Districts are starting to talk about saving money by consolidating back-office operations. There's even talk about consolidating certain employment functions, though I'm not sure the union will approve of that.”

“If districts can share these services, why can't we find ways to allow students to attend school across district lines?” she said. “Why can't we create interdistrict magnet programs?”

### A Paradigm Shift

Wells, Orfield and Frankenberg all say they're hopeful things will change now that America has its first black president. So far, though, the signals from the Obama Administration have been mixed.

Wells says she hopes a new generation of research on the benefits of a diverse education will help “put integration and civil rights back on the public radar.” She cites the work of Scott E. Page, a mathematician who has used computer models to show that diverse groups of thinkers come up with better solutions than homogenous groups.

But the testimony of teachers and parents is just as important. If debates like the one in Wake County reach an unhappy ending, it may be because we're losing sight of the perspectives that only educators can provide.

“We need to be politically active in seeking a change,” she said. “And teachers need to be prepared share what they know — to explain why diversity is important.” ♦



How do we teach the significance of the Civil Rights Movement in communities that are still largely segregated?

By letting students ‘do’ history for themselves

# Uncovering the Movement

BY AFI-ODELIA E. SCRUGGS

VICKIE MALONE'S STUDENTS SEE INTEGRATION WHEN THEY GATHER IN HER CLASSROOM at McComb (Mississippi) High School. Black and white youngsters talk and study with peers they've known since elementary school.

But Malone doesn't want her students to *see* integration. She wants them to *think* about it, to understand their families' roles in the struggle that, to some extent, continues in their Mississippi town.

She doesn't want them to learn history; she wants them to *do* history.

She accomplishes that goal by prodding, poking and challenging her students to develop critical thinking skills. She has them troll through public documents and conduct

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMBER SIGMAN



oral histories with community residents. She pushes them to search and search, until they discover that one answer invariably leads to another question.

Malone's classroom is located in one of the battlegrounds of the Civil Rights Movement — but her dilemma is one faced by teachers all across the country. The Movement happened here, yet there's more that should have happened. Jim Crow was outlawed, but much is still separate and still unequal. Schools were integrated, but many lives remain segregated.

For the past three years, Malone has taught a class on her town's local history, inviting students to find out what really happened, and why.

"I create an environment that allows them to do the research and the thinking, and ask the questions," says Malone, who also teaches psychology and sociology. "But I don't give them the answers. They arrive there on their own."

It's her way of adhering her school's philosophy of teaching with rigor, relevance and relationship. The rigor comes from conducting research and shaping questions. The relevance comes from showing students how events connect with their own lives. The relationships are the bonds between classmates, students and the people they meet and interview.

Two states away, in Louisville, Ky., Louis Bryant worked at accomplishing the same goal during his 14 years teaching African American history at Ballard High School.

His students didn't have to go outside the classroom to find primary sources; they talked to one, every time they spoke to Bryant. The Mississippi native was active in the Civil Rights Movement when it came to his home state.

"(The students) were in awe," he says. "Their minds are eager to learn, and then someone is standing in front of them who had been a part of the movement. It's a one-on-one thing," says Bryant, who now serves as a liaison for the school's online division.

Bryant and Malone have crafted solutions to a problem that plagues any history teacher: making the past relevant to students thoroughly grounded in the present. But teaching the importance of integration is possibly even more vexing, now that public schools are re-segregating at an increasing pace.

Research by the Civil Rights Project at UCLA revealed that 40 percent of Latinos and 39 percent of African Americans go to "intensely segregated schools."

These students are segregated by class as well because "the average black and Latino student is now in a school that has nearly 60 percent of students from families who are near, or below the poverty line," according to the organization's January 2009 press release. "After two decades of a hostile Supreme Court, and two terms of a presidency committed to reversing civil rights gains, only the nation's small towns and rural areas retain substantially integrated schools."

The trend is evident in Mississippi, which arguably has a dual school system. The public schools are 50 percent African American, 47 percent White and 2 percent Hispanic/Latino. The state also has a sizable system of private schools, most of which have few African American students.

"There are private schools ... that have a predominately Caucasian student body, but are in an area that is predominately African American. I think a lot of people are resigned to that reality because they are private schools," says Chauncey Spears, who directs advanced learning and gifted programs at the Mississippi Department of Education.

"It's not to say there isn't a private school option for African Americans, but many can't afford the tuition, or meet the enrollment requirements," he says.

Malone and Bryant stand on either side of those lines. Bryant is an African American whose students are predominately white and affluent. Ballard High School is a comprehensive high school that offers courses in six languages, cultural arts and health careers.

Malone is a white teacher whose students are predominately African American, and moderate- to low-income. McComb High School has 815 students, according to its website. The school offers two foreign languages and numerous



VICKIE MALONE chats with former student Daryl Porter, who still remembers the empowering nature of Malone's civil rights lessons. "It's about the only class in McComb that you can actually communicate with the teacher in a back-and-forth dialog," he said.

courses in fine arts.

When it came to civil rights history, however, both said their students shared a trait: ignorance.

"Most of my students came in with no knowledge about the Civil Rights Movement," Bryant says. "They were blank about it."

The McComb students bluntly admitted they knew nothing about the tumultuous time in their city.

"I wasn't really familiar," Marcus Spears said in a documentary about the school's civil rights class. "But when we got into the class, I realized the things that happened, it was right in my own neighborhood."

Malone blames such lack of knowledge on the way subjects are taught. "The reason they don't know very much is that they learn certain things for tests. The style is stand and deliver," she says. "They get the information from the teachers, by and large in a factual way. They haven't had information down to the level where they own it."

Malone and Bryant agree that promoting ownership requires a specific setting. The class must be student-centered, where the teacher is a leader or guide instead of an authority.

"I let my students have control of the everyday experience, and lead the discussion," Bryant says. "I lead into it by question and answer."

The classroom must also become a safe space, because exploring civil rights history exposes intense and conflicting emotions.

Bryant started his classes by setting ground rules about language and behavior.

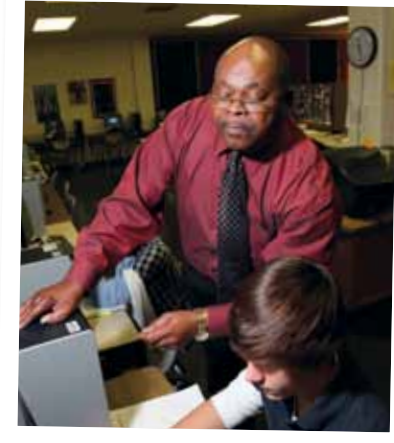
"My philosophy is respect for one's opinion. It's a two-way thing: you give respect and respect comes back to you," he says.

He also forbids casual use of racial slurs. "We had to get rid of derogatory terms: the n-word, the cracker word. I'm up front. I let them know we will not use those words, and if the words come up in a book then we will talk about them."

Malone arranges the classroom so everyone is on equal terms. She's abandoned desks for a table where she joins the students.

"We sit around and table, and I sit with them so we're all at eye level. Nobody can look at something else, nobody can lay down on the table," she says.

In fact, the seating arrangement is one step toward creating community. Malone says she spends at least half of the semester creating a trusting, open atmosphere.



LOUIS BRYANT helps 17-year-old sophomore Sean McCoy at Ballard High School, where he encourages students to ask questions about the Civil Rights Movement and see where the answers lead them.

"I spend nine weeks building community, so they get a lot of background about when and why (McComb) began," she says. By the time students get to what Malone calls "the stuff that's heavy" — issues of family history and ongoing injustice — students are already accustomed to talking in a frank but sensitive way.

Students start by researching their names, and writing a poem about themselves. Then they look into their families and create a real narrative. Relating those stories helps break down defenses that students have erected to protect themselves from their situations, and from each other.

"Before they come in the class, there are lots of attitudes from the boys and the girls," she says. "Once they begin to share from the heart about their own personal experiences, the kids respond [to each other] in such a different way."

When the walls begin to crumble, Malone sends her students out once more, to ask about their families' involvement in civil rights. The stories that come back show why creating community is so necessary.

One of her former students only shared when Malone insisted. He

revealed that his family had once gone through his great-grandfather's belongings. There, stored in the attic, they found a red Klan robe; the student's relative was an official in the white supremacist organization.

Malone immediately steered the discussion to the student's feelings.

"We talked about how it makes you feel to know that and the fact that he's not responsible (for his great-grandfather's membership). There's nothing he can do about it, but the awareness makes him a different person," she says. "We don't have any control over the past, all we can do is grow from the knowledge."

As students begin to uncover the injustices of the past, it's natural for them to feel a certain righteous anger. But that anger plays out in different ways, depending on where the student stands.

"The black students were not angry at the white students; they were angry at the times. They wanted to know, how this could be," Bryant says. White students, Bryant says, blamed themselves for their grandparents' behavior.

"I never let any student leave class with their dignity not intact," he says. "If something is said that offends [any] student, we talk about it."

The power of the class isn't in the knowledge transmitted, but in the transformations the students undergo, Malone says. ♦



# ‘HOMO HIGH’

Some people argue “gay-friendly” schools offer needless segregation. Others say they’re the only chance some kids have to make it.

BY CARRIE KILMAN  
ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN McCABE

Soon after the Center on Halsted opened in 2007, Rick Garcia, whose office overlooks Halsted Street, began to notice something troubling.

The Center, near downtown Chicago, is perhaps the Midwest’s largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community center. “All of sudden,” says Garcia, political director for the LGBT advocacy group Equality Illinois, “the street was inundated with kids — kids who’d been abandoned by their families, who had nowhere else to go. All I could think was, ‘Why aren’t these babies in school?’”

Chicago’s public school system had a problem. LGBT students were three times more likely than straight peers to miss school because of threats to their safety, according to a 2003 districtwide survey; and students who faced regular harassment were more likely to drop out. For these kids, schools were failing.

In fall 2008, Chicago officials took a drastic step. They proposed a “gay-friendly” high school where students of all sexual orientations could learn in bully-free classrooms where a safe and welcoming environment was the norm.

Some gay-rights advocates — including Garcia — publicly questioned whether the district’s plan to protect LGBT students only worked, in reality, to segregate them.

“If we create ‘Homo High,’ we don’t have to prohibit this behavior in other schools,” Garcia said recently, recounting his opposition. “The reality is, we have to live as neighbors. We have to learn to tolerate one another, if not accept one another. All our kids should be safe in all our schools; segregation is not the answer.”

Officials eventually withdrew the proposal. If it had passed, the new campus would have opened this September, becoming one of only a handful of LGBT-friendly public high schools in the United States.

Anti-gay backlash played a large role in the opposition to Chicago’s proposed Pride Campus. Two other LGBT-friendly schools — New York City’s Harvey Milk High School and The Alliance School in Milwaukee — have also sparked ire from social conservatives.

But these schools can also be troublesome for those

who want LGBT kids to learn and live free from harm. For some gay-rights advocates, LGBT-oriented schools smack of “separate but equal.”

Others believe LGBT-friendly schools offer a refuge and a blueprint — a chance to reach kids whose lives, sometimes literally, are at risk.

“Across the country, folks who support gay rights are starting to think about these issues,” says David Stovall, an associate professor of educational policy studies and African American studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

“In popular culture we’ve seen a shift toward more widespread acceptance of LGBTQ spaces,” Stovall says. “Now we’re at the point where people are asking, should the focus be on taking care of our own concerns, or should we be pushing for a more integrated model?”

## The Alliance School

Ninety miles north of Chicago, in a commercial section of central Milwaukee, The Alliance School sits at the back of a parking lot, an older, boxy-looking building the color of gray chalk.

Alliance opened its high school five years ago as part of the small-schools movement. In September, it moved into a bigger building and added a middle school after frequent requests from parents and other educators to expand. The school operates on the Summerhill model — democratic governance, student-led curricula, peer mediation, high academic expectations, no official principal and teachers called by their first names.

Though it’s commonly called Milwaukee’s “gay school,” Tina Owen, Alliance’s lead teacher and founder, is quick to clarify that the school is not about sexual orientation. “We’re about creating a safe space free from bullying,” she says.

Owen prefers the term “open and affirming,” a phrase she borrowed from her church. “We’re open to everyone,” she says, “and everyone is valuable for who they are.”

Owen started Alliance after teaching in another Milwaukee school where administrators did little to address the bullying and harassment of LGBT students. When she proposed Alliance — whose name comes from *gay-straight alliance* — “some people were skeptical, but we received mostly support. Everyone could remember a time when they didn’t want to go to school because of a bully.”

Alliance is tiny for an urban school, with 20 staff and 166 students. Almost 80 percent of students here qualify for free or reduced lunch, and 40 percent are students of color. While teachers legally cannot survey students’ sexual orientation, they know anecdotally their students

represent a diverse mix of orientations and identities.

“You can be yourself here,” says Nona, a ninth-grader, “and the teachers help you learn to work together.”

The weekly class representatives’ meeting proves Nona’s point. Six students, a mix of straight, gay and transgender, gather around a table in the empty Spanish classroom, debating themes for the upcoming Homecoming dance. The group includes a teen mom with a nose ring, a pony-tailed girl with tattoos around her neck, and a freshman who frequently pauses to check his hair in a mirrored compact plucked from the bottom of his purse.

They might easily be considered misfits in other schools. They’re the ones who might watch their backs, avoid locker rooms, and feel unwelcome at school dances. These are kids who, judged solely by the superficial, might get written off.

“Many of our students were unhappy in school,” Owen says. “Here, they can focus on getting their education, and they have people who support them.”

Local data suggest it’s working. The suspension rate at Alliance is 18 percent lower than the district average. In its first year, 90 percent of Alliance seniors graduated, compared to the district’s 69 percent average.

And, notable for a school accused by some of segregation, Alliance is one of the most racially integrated campuses in one of the nation’s most segregated cities.

Demetris Green, a tall, studious-looking 12th-grader, transferred to Alliance at the start of his senior year, in search of teachers who would expect more of him. “For 11 years,” Demetris says, “I didn’t believe in myself, because my school didn’t believe in me.”

#### ‘The Problem is the Bullies’

These are the concerns: By creating a separate school for LGBT kids and straight allies, districts give other schools a free pass, do little to help students get along and respect each other’s differences, and leave a lot of LGBT kids behind.

“We can’t fit every gay kid in a gay school,” says Equality Illinois’ Rick Garcia. “The problem isn’t gay kids; the problem is the bullies. If we’re going to create a special school, let’s create it for them.”

Ten years ago, while serving on the governor’s hate crimes commission, Garcia traveled to high schools across Illinois, asking kids about racism, sexism and other forms of intolerance. Almost everywhere, anti-gay slurs were the No. 1 complaint.

“Kids can’t wait for our system to be perfect,” Garcia says. “Something has to be done quickly, but someone needs to

raise these questions so that one school doesn’t become a dumping ground for ‘problem’ kids, and so we don’t absolve other schools from having to create safe spaces.”

Ryan Roerman, executive director of Iowa Pride Network, which worked to make Iowa one of the few states with an anti-bullying law that includes protections for sexual orientation and gender identity, supports the mission of schools like Alliance. He understands the criticism, too.

“Can we make sure training is being provided to teachers and counselors on mainstream campuses, so they’re educated on these issues?” he says. “What about the students who can’t go to that high school? What happens to them?”

On the other hand, Cindy Crane, executive director of the Wisconsin-based GSAs for Safe Schools, which sup-

ports gay-straight alliances in middle and high schools, finds the segregation argument “almost offensive.”

“Students in minority groups can experience a particular kind of long-term stress that creates barriers to thriving academically and socially,” Crane says. “If there is a way to help students avoid that stress so they can thrive, we should do it.”

Besides, she argues, “the thought that all gay kids would

want to flock to a gay school is silly — and mistaken. A gay school might be the answer for some students, but it certainly wouldn’t be the answer for all. Being gay is only one part of our identity. Kids who are gay are also a lot of other things, and there may be other parts of their identity that guide school satisfaction.”

Yet in the beginning, even Owen questioned whether a separate school was wise: “Are we just taking students away from the problem, and leaving the problem there? But I was finding that the victims of bullying in any one school didn’t have the tools to change the powers-that-be.”

#### Examining the Risk

Bullying for any reason can be harmful. For LGBT kids, the stakes are arguably highest.

According to the National School Climate Survey, released last October by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, almost nine out of 10 LGBT students experienced harassment during the previous year. LGBT students were seven times more likely than straight kids to skip school to avoid bullying. In all, 61 percent felt unsafe at school.

From these statistics emerge horror stories: the Minnesota student who was repeatedly harassed by teachers who assumed the student was gay; the 15-year-old

Oxnard, Calif., boy who was shot in the head by a classmate after coming out as gay; the Massachusetts 11-year-old who hanged himself after enduring anti-gay bullying at school.

Attempts to tackle anti-gay harassment can elicit strong, often coordinated, opposition from social conservatives. In this context, safe schools advocates argue, “gay-friendly” schools become a crucial stopgap.

Harvey Milk High School, for example, opened 25 years ago — the first explicitly gay-friendly school in the country — to address the alarming number of LGBT kids for whom school was a dangerous place. The school continues to serve LGBT students at risk of dropping out. Most students report “negative experiences in other schools,” says Harvey Milk principal Alan Nolan. “They’re seeking a safer, more accepting environment.”

Adds GLSEN Executive Director Eliza Byard: “Given the inequalities in the existing system, these schools are essential resources of last resort for students who may otherwise not graduate. They fill a pressing need.”

#### ‘I Always Got Picked On’

After school on a recent Monday, the basketball club practices in the gym. The musical club watches *Rent* on a classroom TV. And Alliance sophomore Tarrell Hogle pores over his science presentation in the computer room.

It’s hard to call anyone “typical” here, though in many ways, Tarrell comes close. At his old school, with few openly gay classmates, Tarrell was hounded by bullies. He skipped so often he faced regular suspension. His grades plummeted. “It’s hard to pay attention when other people are taking your things and trying to provoke you,” Tarrell says.

He transferred to Alliance midway through ninth grade, and the harassment stopped. “Growing up, I thought all straight kids were bullies,” Tarrell says. “But I have straight friends here. I never thought in a million years that could happen.”

Here, Tarrell hasn’t missed a day. He seeks out extra credit, loves math and recites the periodic table like most people rattle off their birthdates. “I used to *hate* math,” he says. Now, he wants to be a forensic scientist.

“I used to leave my house early and steal my report card from the mailbox,” Tarrell says. “I never brought home a test paper. Now, I run home, because I can’t wait to show my dad.”

Classmates share similar stories. “I always got picked on,” says Emiliano Luna, a pink-haired freshman wearing lime green pants. “It made me feel so angry, inside and outside. Here, the way I look isn’t a big deal.”

Not everyone comes to Alliance to escape harassment; some come because the smaller class sizes and supportive learning environment offer them a chance to succeed that can elude them in larger, traditional schools. And while potential students are told of the school’s LGBT-friendly mission, some come with homophobic views.

Jahqur Ammons, now a junior, failed seventh grade.

“I spent more time chasing girls than chasing grades,” he says. Jahqur’s brother, already at Alliance, told him about the open campus, the small classes, the helpful teachers. Jahqur enrolled at start of his freshman year.

“When I came here,” he says, “I thought all gay people were nasty. I used to say snide things. But I got to know them instead of judging them. Now I realize they’re just like me.”

Last year, when a conservative Christian group picketed the campus, it was Jahqur who led the response. “The protesters were saying this school was teaching us to be gay and that we were all going to hell,” Jahqur recalls. “I didn’t think that was very a Christian thing to say. So we got all the students to go outside and show them: Gay, straight, trans, goth, emo — we’re all one.”

#### Not Either/Or

Who is right? Proponents like Tina Owen, or skeptics like Rick Garcia? At the end of the day, they aren’t that far apart.

“It doesn’t have to be ‘either/or,’” says Cindy Crane, from GSAs for Safe Schools. “If these schools help students thrive, let’s do it — but we should work on the existing structure, too, so all schools can be safe places for all students.” At their best, what Alliance and Harvey Milk offer the rest of us isn’t the suggestion they be replicated from scratch in other communities, but that existing schools learn from their success.

“This is an environment we want to create in *all* of our schools — inclusive, safe, welcoming,” says Nolan, from Harvey Milk. “I believe that should be every administrator’s goal.”

In Milwaukee, officials are paying close attention to Alliance, turning the school into something of an incubator. Already, several campuses have adopted Alliance’s restorative justice model, to which Owen credits the school’s low suspension rate. And Alliance students and staff regularly travel to other schools to help educators learn how to improve the climate there. “All we’re doing is offering best practices that haven’t become institutionalized in most places,” Owen says. “These are practices all students benefit from, not just gay students.”

Back in Chicago, proponents haven’t given up. A new proposal is in the works, though Stovall says they’ve learned some important lessons.

“I don’t think we were explicit enough the first time around that we wanted to create a training ground for other schools,” Stovall says. “There are schools that have no clue how to address LGBT students’ issues and concerns. We can use this campus to help them learn how to address those issues within the walls of their own schools. Therein lies the power.” ♦

**CARRIE KILMAN** is a writer and activist based in Madison, Wisconsin. She is the author of *Epitaph for the Living*, a memoir about voice, family and displacement. She received an MFA in Creative Nonfiction from Goucher College and a graduate certificate from the Salt Institute for Documentary Studies.



## IMMIGRANT CHARTER SCHOOLS

# A Better Choice?

Charter schools tailored to the needs of newly arrived immigrants are getting a lot of attention. But are they working? And will they lead to a new kind of segregation?

BY CAMILLE JACKSON

**T**hird-grader Jaime of Denver, Colorado, was having a hard time concentrating in school. The son of Mexican immigrants, he had learned to speak English perfectly in his dual-language public school, but reading and writing was another story.

“The teaching method wasn’t working for him,” said Jaime’s mother, Xochitl Rico. She was anxious to change schools, but, due to the economy, could not afford to spend extra money on the English tutoring he would need.

“I had to choose between paying for health insurance and tutoring,” Rico said.

A friend told her about Cesar Chavez Academy, a new tuition-free charter school where the majority of students are of Hispanic origin. She enrolled Jaime in the fourth-grade class and his younger brother into the first grade. Within months, she said, the difference was “amazing, something like magic.”

“I was surprised. They are motivated and want to be number one in the class. My oldest is writing and reading in English. It was everything I was looking for,” Rico said.

Stories like Rico’s are becoming increasingly common as parents of English language learners, or ELLs, are turning

to charter schools to provide their children with a school experience that meets their academic needs and honors their cultural heritage. And as more immigrant parents seek alternatives, charter schools are becoming increasingly focused on serving specific immigrant populations. For example:

At Twin Cities International Charter School, founded by East African immigrants, school lunches meet Islamic dietary requirements, girls can wear headscarves without being teased, and officials are trained to help students who have grown up in refugee camps.

At Hebrew Language Academy Charter School in Brooklyn, immigrant students from Russia and Israel can learn subjects such as art, music and social studies in a dual-language, Hebrew/English environment.

Immigrant parents often praise these schools for providing a sensitive transition to English language proficiency. In a country where students of color succumb to an “achievement gap” and ELLs are often underserved, the hopeful image of immigrant students in friendly schools has drawn national media attention.

But even if immigrant-focused charter schools are indeed “something like magic,” some educators worry the

ILLUSTRATION BY ANITA KUNZ

trend will only increase the pervasive de-facto segregation in America's schools.

"I think there are some reasons to worry that programs that expand parental choice over schools could also expand segregation," said Robert Bifulco, Jr., an associate professor of public affairs at Syracuse University who has studied school choice and segregation. "But do they do better in segregated schools? It depends on what you mean by better. Better in what?"

"They may do better in some ways and not in other ways; there's a tradeoff."

Urban sociologist Pedro Noguera of New York University describes how parents are compelled to consider that tradeoff.

"You want students to

be in class with educators who care about them and are skilled, but in integrated schools, you don't necessarily have people with skills to meet the needs of immigrant students," said Noguera.

Clearly, parents find the charter schools appealing. Many engage parents in their native language and focus on the children's English language development with customized teaching methods. Educators at these schools are better equipped to address special circumstances experienced by immigrant families, such as refugee trauma. And the students seem to thrive.

Noguera said he has seen "a lot of really good public schools that are segregated.

"But we have to be concerned about segregating the schools because these students don't get the same kind of exposure as they would in an integrated setting. Immigrant kids learn from being on the playground and being around kids who speak English," he said. "Segregation is not in their best interest."

#### Reconnecting the Generations

Principal Deborah Wei wants a diverse school, a multi-racial school where immigrant and non-immigrant students can excel. But in many ways, her school is a perfect example of the advantages of immigrant-focused charters.

The Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School, or FACT, was born out of years of parent dissatisfaction with the outcomes of Asian American students in Philadelphia. There was no school in the city's Chinatown, and none on the construction schedule for a number of years. Things were so bad for the growing number of immigrant Asian American students that the nonprofit group Asian Americans United (AAU) filed a lawsuit requesting equal access to district schools, as well as other reforms.

Some reforms were instituted, but AAU eventually decided to take matters into its own hands. The group partnered with The Folklife Project to create FACT, the first

publicly funded school in Chinatown North.

"We wanted to serve immigrant children and families in a way that honors their culture and provides education," said Wei, principal and CEO of FACT. "And we wanted a multi-racial diverse school, not just Chinese and not just immigrant."

The school is indeed diverse — with students of Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian and Hmong heritage, many of them immigrants. Yet with a student body that is 71 percent Asian American and a curriculum that emphasizes connec-

tions to home culture, it's easy to see why this school is a particularly comfortable place for Asian immigrant students.

The school brings in artists, storytellers, dancers and musicians who are experts in their field but

who also are recognized in their own communities. Artists who come to the school must meet a set of folk standards, similar to standards used for other subjects such as English and math. For Wei, it is a stark contrast to what might be called "international day" at a traditional public school where students are asked to dress in costume and eat ethnic food.

"We wanted kids to know that their own communities and families have valuable knowledge that can and should be shared," said Wei. "We felt this aspect was particularly important because of the disconnect between generations. It's really exacerbated in immigrant communities because of the marginalization of immigrant culture as the kids turn 'American.' Parents are watching their kids grow apart from them, and we wanted to interrupt that."

Wei and her colleagues engage in a 45-minute community building session each morning to create the kind of climate that allows all students to feel comfortable and supported.

"It takes a lot of work," Wei said. Her multilingual staff translates all written material into four other languages besides English, and the school subscribes to a telephonic transcription service that helps teachers talk to parents with the help of a translator.

Wei said she'd like to see more racial diversity in the school, where black, Latino and white students make up 29 percent of the population, but diversifying has been a challenge. Outreach, she said, is something charter schools don't do well enough.

#### Do They Work?

While immigrant-focused charters have generated lots of positive buzz from parents and the press, the jury is still out on their effectiveness. Many of these schools are relatively new, and data is scarce.

In 2009, Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) released a report on the

effectiveness of charter schools. The study looked at all charters — not just charters with an ethnic focus.

The study indicated that charter school students were not faring as well as students in traditional public schools. However, there were some notable exceptions. According to the CREDO report, English language learners performed significantly better in charter schools.

It's hard to say why. Perhaps it is the individualized attention; charter schools are often smaller than traditional public schools, with lower levels of bureaucracy. Students seem to feel empowered in schools where they can share their cultural knowledge.

Some say that even when charter schools do work better for ELLs, the public shouldn't think of them as a "magic bullet." Because there just aren't enough charter slots to go around, in some districts, ELLs often aren't getting the slots that do exist.

"ELL students in particular get the short end of the stick when it comes to charter schools," said Noel Anderson, an associate professor of political science at Brooklyn College. "Because admission is determined by lottery, often there is an information void about the how to apply to the school. It is a highly competitive process."

The state of Massachusetts has been struggling with ELL access to charters. An article in *The Boston Globe* last summer reported that in Boston, which hosts a quarter of the state's charter schools, ELL students represented less than 4 percent of the students in all but one of the city's charter schools. This, in a school system where ELLs comprise nearly one-fifth of all students. Some allege that the charters are less likely to enroll ELL students because they might negatively affect test scores.

Noel Anderson believes the innovative spirit woven throughout schools like FACT should be present in all schools, not reserved for a select few entered into a lottery.

"We talk about charter schools as the only answer, but there is a tremendous amount of work going on in public schools," Anderson said. "We can't look at charter schools as the end of the movement because we can never, ever satisfy all children through their expansion."

Xochitl Rico wishes more parents knew about charter schools because in her community "we don't have a lot of support or information about schools."

But she wouldn't trade her sons' school for anything.

"I want my children to have good opportunities in this country so they can go to college like everybody else," she said. ♦

**CAMILLE JACKSON** is a former writer for *Teaching Tolerance* and now works as a communications specialist at Duke University. She also has worked as a staff reporter for the *New Haven Advocate* in Connecticut and holds a master of science degree in journalism from Quinnipiac University.

## Tips From Immigrant-Focused Charter Schools

Immigrant-focused charter schools work well for many ELL students and their families — though experts say it's unlikely that there will ever be enough of these schools to serve every ELL student. Here are a few common charter-school themes that might work well in your own school:

**Language immersion** — Students are immersed in a new language for part of the day. Dan Gerstein, a spokesperson for Hebrew Language Academy, said parents embrace the opportunity for their children to learn a second language. "Some parents, for example, Israeli and Russian immigrants, really want their children to learn Hebrew," he said.

**Cultural exchange** — Students share knowledge from their home cultures — which helps them stay in touch with their home cultures. "At FACT they would always tell me to keep up with my home language," said Maitrivia Liem, originally from Indonesia. "They said that just because I'm learning English doesn't mean I have to speak it all the time. Sometimes I thought if I went to another school, there might not be anyone telling me that."

**Individualized learning plans** — School officials collect data to identify and assess the needs of each student, devising an individualized learning plan. "There is a high emphasis on strategies to teach ELL students," said Randall Eckart, director of Twin Cities International in Minnesota.

**Community building** — Teachers create a warm and inclusive environment. "In a charter school we can build the type of climate that we want to have," said principal Deborah Wei, who created "lunch families" at her school. "The older kids eat lunch with the younger kids, and they really learn how to take care of the younger ones."

**Cultural competency** — Teachers respect and honor the cultures represented in ELL classrooms. "We don't look at ELL as a barrier. We look at it as an advantage. Every one of our children speak two languages, some speak three languages, some speak four," said Twin Cities' Eckart.

**Parents and grandparents are engaged** — Teach students to respect the wisdom of their elders. Students at FACT "come from cultures where seniors are in the prime of their life," said Wei, who hires local elders to spend time with students, sharing oral histories and cultural traditions.



# Check *the* Labels

A simple writing assignment sharpens students' minds — and challenges their biases

yes I'm fine  
and how  
about you?

VOFF!

crunch  
crunch

BY BOB BLAISDELL

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIJELA DOBRIC



**“If you are describing any occurrence, or a man, make two or more distinct reports at different times. Though you may think you have said all, you will to-morrow remember a whole new class of facts which perhaps interested most of all at the time, but did not present themselves to be reported.”**

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU, JOURNALS

I ask my students to go find a place on campus where they can comfortably sit down, a place where anybody associated with the school can go — so that means no offices, no restrooms, no club-rooms — and without leaving this spot to write for 30 minutes, non-stop, about everything they see, hear and smell. “You’re a video-camera with smell-sensors,” I tell them. “Record what you see, hear and smell — not what you *think* about what you see, hear and smell. Got that?”

It’s confusing, so I explain it again. I tell them it’s an experiment, that I’m not grading this but using it for them as practice for their upcoming research paper. I try not to explain too much, but I’m emphatic that it’s not about their opinions. They’re reporters, not interpreters.

Then I see what happens, which as variable as my classes and students are, is invariably fascinating.

When the students drift back to class, some of them amused and pleased, some of them annoyed and confused, I read aloud from as many of the observations as we have time for. (Other teachers might prefer having students read their own aloud, but I find I can get us to savor particular details just by reading clearly and well.) Some students who have never written anything interesting in my class will have written beautiful, artistic, coherent observations. It’s thrilling. We see the campus anew through their words — the trees, the litter, the birds, the flowers, the variety of the student body. Overhearing recorded conversations, we’re reminded of the pervasiveness of idioms and colloquial phrases we usually ignore. We call to mind those smells that are particular to particular areas of the campus. I try to resist stopping and commenting, but after a page or two I usually can’t hold myself back.

I read: “*I see a Chinese guy*” I say: “How does the observer know the guy’s ancestors aren’t from Korea?”

“What?”

“How does he know ‘the guy’ is not American?”

“I don’t know!” says Ivonne, who didn’t write this.

“So why is he ‘Chinese?’”

The students sigh.

“How can you see ‘Chinese?’”

“Oh, come on,” says Daniel, who did write it. “You know what I mean ...” He’s smiling. “I know you do. We all do.”

“I do — but I don’t want to! I don’t need or want my stereotypes confirmed. I want knowledge.”

“Knowledge?” says Prita. “How am I supposed to know someone’s Chinese?”

“Right,” says Daniel. “How am I supposed to describe him, then?”

“Yes, *describe* him — don’t label him.”

“I said he was Chinese, but I didn’t say he *wasn’t* American.”

I laugh and nod. “But if you were describing me, would you say — maybe after ‘old guy,’ ‘professor-type,’ ‘tall man with gray hair in green plaid shirt’ — would you say, ‘American’ or ‘Brazilian’ or ‘Brazilian American?’”

“I didn’t know you were Brazilian,” says Ivonne.

“I didn’t know I was either. I’m not.”

The class laughs.

Soo Young, a female student sitting to my right, in a beret, blue and white bold-striped shirt, black slacks, and open-toed sandals, raises her hand. “Am I American?”

“Okay, class, is Soo Young American? Or Japanese? Or Vietnamese? Or ‘other?’”

“If you’re born here,” says Ivonne, “you’re American.”

“Then you can’t become American?”

“Hmm,” says Ivonne, thinking that over.

“So, what is Soo Young?”

“Uh-uh, professor,” says Daniel. “I’m not sticking my neck out.”

Ivonne answers, “A human being, that’s all.”

“A safe guess,” I say. “But sometimes we know more than an animal’s species and *can* identify a human being’s national origin. Okay, so your parents are from Korea — right, Soo Young?”

Soo Young nods.

“But why do we say Soo Young is ‘Korean’ or even ‘Korean American’ and not ‘American’? Why, just because my skin is pale and my eyes are round, do I get to be *American* and Soo Young, who was born and raised in Brooklyn, is *Korean*?”

“Because America is prejudiced,” says Harvey, who doesn’t usually talk in class. “Because in America, face it ... yeah, *face* it, if your face isn’t white, then you’re not American. If peo-



ple are generous, it’s like you get to be a *half-American*.”

This is very troubling. We all sink into these prejudices. I often feel sunk myself by them. The only way out that I have found, the only way to overcome it, is to stick with what I like to call “Art.” Others might call my approach “Objective Observations.” If my students want to distinguish between people of different ethnic backgrounds, I want them to create something to *show* the difference.

And then, if readers can’t distinguish what somebody *is*, our sighing resignation doesn’t seem so bad. We accept that we don’t have enough information to know.

“I’m not even going to *try* to describe anybody by race, by nationality, by *nothing*,” says Jewel. “Everyone will just be male or female, young or old, tall or short.”

Harvey is in the mood for participation. Smiling, he says: “How you know somebody is female or male? You don’t always know.”

“So what are we supposed to do, professor?” says Daniel. “Think of it this way: Does your digital camera label people?”

“It does!” says Harvey. “I got this program — it goes around in my photos on my computer and it finds faces and it labels them: ‘Grandma,’ ‘Grandma,’ ‘Girlfriend,’ ‘Ex-Girlfriend,’ ‘Brother,’ ‘Me,’ ‘Me,’ and my favorite, ‘Me’ ...”

Prita asks, “It says ‘Girlfriend’ or it says her name?”

“All right,” I say. “So you see the problem we have with labels.”

Diana: “Isn’t everything a label? Aren’t all words labels?”

“They can be, but they can be judgmental or more or less neutral descriptions. But we know it’s a lot harder to describe someone if we stick to facts — observable, confirm-

able details. Notice the kinds of details that you notice.”

Diana: “So we’re just supposed to describe people? It’ll be like painting.”

“Yes.”

“How are we supposed to know how old somebody is?”

“How do you show that in a painting?”

Diana: “Their skin — if they have wrinkles. Gray hair. I don’t know!”

“No, you *do* know. Out in the halls, out on the streets, we use lots of little details to tell us someone is old — as old as me or as your parents! We see how they walk, the way they move

their hands — their *clothes!* — we hear the kinds of words they use; we hear vibrations in their voices. So collect the details that tell you they’re old. Yes, ‘old’ is a judgment word.”

I tell them that journalism, for all its limitations, is really quite wonderful in this, in that someone’s color is not mentioned in a story unless color or race or ethnicity is *part* of the story — and it almost never is.

This experiment gets us into these interesting arguments, and I’m pleased because they seem to me to be about artistic matters, which (and this is my prejudice) trumps political and sociological ones. That is, we know that in our culture and country color and race matter so much, but it’s more interesting to go at this like reporters or painters, where skin color is just tone; where if we want to mention someone’s ethnic background, we have to work really hard and know an awful lot about the person and their background.

So from the observations, when Nicole writes she saw “this Dominican guy,” I can say (or write in the margin), “How do you know he’s Dominican?”

Nicole laughs. “Professor, I know because *I’m* Dominican! It takes a Dominican to spot a Dominican. We have this way we talk, these ways we move — no,” she says, glancing at Harvey making a motion, “not like that. We move different from that. And we have these what-you-call-‘em expressions nobody else uses. And this dude I saw, he was wearing sandals without socks — so I know he wasn’t Puerto Rican, which would have been my second guess.”

“Have you ever been wrong, Nicole, in your instant detections?”

“Yeah. But usually it’s not my fault, like because their mom’s Puerto Rican and their pops is Dominican. Or they’re Dominican, but they grew up white — sorry, professor! — around a lot of ... pale-skinned people” — the class laughs — “and it’s hard to see the D.R. in them.”

When a student from Russia spots a Russian, we discover that the details that they picked up on would not be readily apparent or meaningful to outsiders. I ask Oksana, “But how did you *know* at that playground the woman was Russian?” She explains: “She was having these earrings that Russian women have — from Italy, these designy things — I myself have two pair, by the way — and with dangles there. And then I heard her say something to her daughter in Russian.”

“But you didn’t write that down.”

“There’s so much to write down. So much things!”

Yes, the world is full of details. This assignment brings out what students of all levels can do. They describe as well as they can, with their own everyday words. Nouns and verbs naturally take precedence — and the adjectives and adverbs require facts rather than judgments. How happy I am that for an hour or two we are overwhelmed not by electronic overload but by sitting on a bench and trying to notice all the details of the world right there in front of us!

For the research project, I send them out into public spaces to observe. The rules are the same as we had on campus, except this time, the observation is for an hour. We discuss what “public spaces” means: no one can be excluded from that space (we argue about whether or not the public library is a public space, and we decide it is) except when *no one* can be in that space (parks in my city, for example, have “closing” times even when they don’t have gates). Is a private space that “everyone” uses okay? I usually try to dissuade my students from the subway, because besides needing the fare to get in, my students sometimes get suspiciously observed themselves there, and I don’t like putting them into uncomfortable situations.

This project is the most effective way I’ve found for students to finally get out into their own neighborhoods — into public parks, onto city benches — or to relearn and appreciate bits they *used* to know. Some are frightened about doing so, and I suggest to them that they bring a companion. (Later, we discuss how the companion affects the way the observer herself is seen.)

One of my favorite students of the last few years, Marcella Mohammed, ventured into Prospect Park for only the second or third time in her several years living close by to it. Marcella so delighted me because just as she described the Prospect Park trees and their colors, the yellows, tans, browns, oranges, she also described the skin of the people she saw. We were trees, or the trees were people. Anyway, there we all were, growing and alive.

After this hour’s work I read off the observations and make lots of marginal comments, bracketing off their unhelpful

opinion words (fat, ugly, beautiful, tall, nerdy).

I ask my students to write about what the people walking by would have noticed about them. What were they wearing? (Marcella accounted for this too; her own hijab and those of her daughters were as natural and matter-of-fact as the leaves and bark on the trees, as the baseball caps on the heads of young and old walkers.)

Then I send them back to that very same spot — they must stick to the same spot, just as surely as landscape artists — for another hour. I don’t tell them that they might get bored this time. I tell them to do it again, but perhaps at another time or day of the week, and I ask for more details to clear up evaluatory vaguenesses in their earlier report (“a lot,” “really smelly,” “hardly any,” “always jumping around”).

The landscape is different the second time around. Trees have sprouted more leaves. The weather has changed! A scaffolding has gone up. The dog-walkers appear. The after-school children take over the previously desolate playground.

The focus usually narrows in the second observation. From the previous hour, when they noticed “a lot of garbage cans,” this time they *count* them: “There are 19 green barrel garbage cans between the playground and the handball courts, 12 on the east end of the park and seven elsewhere.” They know something! “There are 16 children — no, 17! — and four nannies (yes, I know, professor, ‘opinion word’) — all I’m saying is the women are much darker in skin-tone than the children they’re minding!” (This, I point out to Marie, would be a good point to research in periodicals. How many nannies are there in Park Slope? What are the demographics of nannyhood in New York City?)

The students’ final research projects involve not only reading about the area and returning to their spot to confirm or clarify details, but interviewing residents of the neighborhoods surrounding the sites they wrote about: Marine Park, Crown Heights, College Point, Roosevelt Island, Brighton Beach, the East Village. I want my students to have their own experiences through which to filter the observations, rather than the other way around. I want my students to see and know something, to trust their curiosity to be their guide to further research. I want them to be *informed writers*, to be Thoreaus rather than retailers of processed impressions and information.

They know something under their noses that *always* could have been known — but probably no one else in the neighborhood knows either. There is plenty of research material, mountains of paper and jillions of gigabytes, on New York City neighborhoods, but to my great satisfaction, my students discover that not everything out there is “known,” that in fact they themselves have recorded previously undocumented details. They learn that whatever they find in an article or book had its origins in some particular person having gone out and looked at and listened to and taken in the world with her senses. ♦



# Whose Student is She?

No Child Left Behind is plunging many English language learners into the educational mainstream — and sometimes getting them in over their heads. Teacher collaboration may help such students stay afloat

BY ELIZABETH VARELA  
ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES GULLIVER HANCOCK



Olivia Contreras remembers being afraid.

As an eighth-grade student at Jackson Middle School in Nashville, Tennessee, Olivia had arrived in the United States from her native Nicaragua the previous year. All of her academic experiences in the seventh grade had been in an English language learner (ELL) program. There, the teacher taught at a level slightly above that which was easily comprehensible to students, using demonstrations, pictures, diagrams, graphic organizers and hands-on materials to help students understand.

But Olivia learned English so quickly that she was placed in mainstream content classes the following year. Texts and materials in these classes were at grade level, and the expectations and requirements were the same for all learners.

“Science was the most difficult for me,” recalls Olivia. “I usually understood the information from labs, but I had difficulty reading the book and I couldn’t explain what I did understand because I didn’t know how to say it or write it in English. I was afraid that the teacher would think I just didn’t get the concepts.”

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 created a lot of stories like Olivia’s — stories that include big steps forward and big steps back. NCLB placed a new focus and accountability on the achievement levels of English learners by requiring that they develop English proficiency and meet the same academic standards that all children are expected to meet by the year 2014.

Administrators and teachers have responded by taking a good look at the ways English learners might progress more quickly toward proficiency on state tests, both in English language skills and in other content areas. In some cases this means students have moved out of ELL programs after one or two years. Sometimes, it means incoming English language learners will bypass ELL programs altogether, entering classes alongside native English speakers, usually with some type of ELL teacher assistance.

For ELL students who might otherwise get stuck on a separate academic track from their English-dominant peers, this sort of mainstreaming can be a good thing. Supporters of mainstreaming note that it can help students learn faster because they have English-proficient peers as models. And clearly, being included in all aspects of the school — rather than segregated into a separate classroom — can only help their sense of belonging.

What’s more, NCLB allows students to get credit toward graduation only for classes taught by “highly qualified” teachers endorsed in their subject areas. By moving students toward grade-level classes, teachers are helping them stay on track to graduate.

Still, this very distinction has effectively reduced or eliminated many transitional subject-area classes taught by ELL-endorsed teachers. The effects of this trend can now be seen in middle and elementary schools, where students are often placed in grade-level classes with ELL teacher assistance

but with little or no opportunities for students to be pulled out into their own classes for specialized instruction.

And rapid mainstreaming seems to ignore what the research tells us: It takes five to seven or more years for students to pick up the academic language needed to survive in grade-level classes.

No matter how we feel about the trend toward mainstreaming, it is happening. If English learners are to be mainstreamed into grade-level classrooms, we must look at the ways in which grade-level teachers can be taught basic second language acquisition theory and research. We must give teachers the tools to incorporate effective and essential strategies and techniques into lessons so that English learners are not simply *sitting* alongside native English-speaking

peers, but *learning* alongside them as well.

In this way, we all take “ownership” of students, and everyone *can* become a language teacher.

#### An Effective Tool

At Claremont Immersion Elementary School in Arlington, Virginia, where one-third of the students are English learners, I am responsible for the professional development of a staff of 50 grade-level teachers, specialists and special education teachers in grades Pre-K through 5.

Our professional development is centered on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, or SIOP, which has been proven to be an effective tool for improving ELL student learning.

## SHELTERED INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION PROTOCOL (SIOP)

### The Components of ELL Instruction

#### 1. Lesson Preparation

- Clearly define content objectives
- Clearly define language objectives
- Select content concepts that are appropriate to learners’ age and educational background
- Use a variety of supplementary materials to make the lesson clear and meaningful (computer programs, graphs, models, visuals)
- Adapt the content to all proficiency levels
- Use authentic and meaningful activities and integrate them into lesson concepts

#### 2. Building Background

- Explicitly link concepts to students’ background experiences
- Explicitly link past learning to new content
- Emphasize key vocabulary

#### 3. Comprehensible Input

- Use speech that is appropriate for students’ proficiency level
- Clearly explain academic tasks
- Use a variety of techniques to make content clear (model, use visuals, demonstrations and hands-on activities)

#### 4. Learning Strategies

- Provide ample opportunities for students to use strategies
- Consistently use scaffolding techniques throughout the lesson
- Include a variety of question types that promote higher-order thinking skills

#### 5. Interaction

- Provide students with frequent opportunities for interaction

- and discussion between teacher and student and among students and encourage extended student discourse about the lesson concepts
- Carefully configure the grouping of students to support language and content of the lesson
- Consistently provide sufficient wait time for student responses
- Provide ample opportunities for students to clarify key concepts in their native language

#### 6. Practice and Application

- Provide hands-on materials and/or manipulatives for students to practice using new content knowledge
- Provide activities for students to apply content and language knowledge in the classroom
- Use activities that integrate all language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking)

#### 7. Lesson Delivery

- Clearly support the content objectives in lesson delivery
- Clearly support the language objectives in lesson delivery
- Engage students 90 percent to 100 percent of the time
- Pace the lesson appropriately to students’ ability level

#### 8. Review and Assessment

- Include a comprehensive review of key vocabulary
- Include a comprehensive review of key content concepts
- Provide regular feedback to students on their output
- Conduct assessments of student comprehension and learning of all lesson objectives throughout the lesson

SOURCE [www.cal.org/siop](http://www.cal.org/siop)

SIOP organizes 30 features of good lessons for English learners into eight overarching components. In the training, teachers learn how to incorporate those features into their lessons and units of instruction from practical examples.

Some of the ideas in SIOP (see sidebar, or visit [www.cal.org/siop](http://www.cal.org/siop)) may seem obvious. Some may take you by surprise. All the lesson features suggested in SIOP are backed by research and arranged in a framework that helps teachers stay focused on what works. The strategies identified in SIOP are crucial for English learners and may prove to be beneficial to other learners as well.

SIOP uses a peer coaching approach. Teachers are encouraged to pair up with a colleague and use a checklist of the 30 features to evaluate each other's instruction in a systematic and non-threatening way. As someone who has been a classroom teacher, a program administrator and assistant professor in a master's degree program for ELL teachers, I find that I am always excited to implement SIOP and work alongside teachers — because I always learn something I didn't know.

The term “sheltered” refers to the means for making academic content comprehensible to English learners while they develop English proficiency. Classrooms with sheltered instruction teaching methods may be used in self-contained ELL classes or in grade-level classes that contain both English speakers and English learners. SIOP is currently being implemented in schools and school systems throughout the United States, including Kansas City, Missouri, where every teacher in this Midwestern urban district of 27,000 students and 4,000 teachers is trained in the SIOP model.

In preparing to write this article, I surveyed grade-level teachers, special education teachers, reading specialists and ELL teachers in both elementary and secondary schools. I asked them what they believe are the most important considerations for instruction of English learners, particularly given the trend that these students be placed in grade-level classes soon after achieving basic levels of English language acquisition.

Most teachers agreed that primary instructional issues are covered by the SIOP model. But they also identified a few additional issues that educators should be thinking about. These issues include:

**Community:** In order for students to work together and learn from each other, we have to create unity in a school and classroom.

“Integrating your community is not as simple as putting your kids together in a class. What is it to truly build community in your classroom?” asks Joseph Provisor, a former ELL teacher with the Los Angeles Unified School District and director of the Council Project, which teaches students and teachers to tell their stories in the classroom.

“Teachers and students need tools to make the classroom a beneficial learning place for all,” Provisor says. “When you have kids from Vietnam, from El Salvador and from Azerbaijan, you have an extraordinary opportunity to

expand your world view by truly integrating these folks in the community. What makes America? That's a challenge.”

**Time:** Pacing guides, state tests and the pressure to make adequate yearly progress all force teachers to push through curriculum at a pace that is not appropriate for English learners who are learning the language as well as the content.

One grade-level middle school science teacher I spoke with said, “When I teach science, I cruise. I always get through all of the curriculum by the end of the school year.” But at what cost? When the pace is accelerated so that students are taught the declarative knowledge that is commonly required for success on state tests, they miss out on opportunities to probe deeply into concepts and explore higher-order thinking. This is especially unfortunate for English learners who need opportunities to use the new language and concepts in a variety of ways over time.

**Differentiating Instruction:** Teachers need to know how to differentiate instruction within a classroom. As budget cuts further increase class sizes, some teachers are faced with teaching 25 to 30 or more students per classroom and five to six preparations a day. Teachers benefit from training and specific guidelines as to how to plan and teach for different ability levels within one class.

**Team-teaching:** Putting two teachers together does not necessarily mean that they will function as a team. Team-teaching between ELL teachers and grade-level classroom teachers can work well, but teachers need to have mutual respect for each other, clearly defined roles and opportunities for shared planning.

Susan Connors, a 30-year veteran ELL teacher at Taylor Elementary School in Arlington, Virginia, uses what she calls a “tag team” approach with her grade-level teachers. Susan and the grade-level teacher take turns leading instruction within a lesson. Susan's focus is on extension activities that promote language development that work with all children in the room. “If we expect our grade-level teachers to be English language teachers, then we have to be grade-level teachers as well. It's reciprocal.”

When I asked my principal, Cintia Johnson, why she believed in a mainstreaming approach to teaching English learners, she responded, “In my view, by including students in grade-level classes with English-speaking peers, we capitalize on the strengths and abilities these students bring to the learning experience. We raise the bar by having high expectations for all learners. My desire is for us to recognize the true abilities on the high end of what a child can do and not focus on their weaknesses. Training all of the staff in strategies to understand the needs of these children and know how to teach them is the key.”

Maybe then, students like Olivia Contreras won't have to feel afraid of school. ♦



# ‘I Don’t Think I’m Biased’

‘Encounter experiences’ help pre-service and practicing teachers confront their attitudes about race and privilege

BY PATRICIA CLARK & EVA M. ZYGMUNT-FILLWALK

Multicultural understanding and proficiency have never been more important to teachers than they are right now. Never before have we had so many young children entering schools populated by teachers who reflect neither their race, nor their language tradition, nor the communities from which they come. This growth in culturally diverse classrooms has unfortunately coincided with an “achievement gap” of historical proportions.

In our work as teacher educators over the years, we have carefully watched and listened as pre-service and practicing

teachers struggled with their own understandings of diversity — and consciousness of their own racial, ethnic and class identities and how these identities affect their teaching. While white students are often confronting these identities seriously for the first time when they reach our classroom, this is work that all teachers need to do in order to reach their students effectively.

With few exceptions, the process of becoming competent in multicultural discourse is advanced by an initial event or “encounter” that challenges individuals to reconsider their

ILLUSTRATION BY PETER GRUNDL

beliefs and attitudes. The encounter, according to Gay, is “an experience or event that shatters a person’s current feelings... It may be real or vicarious, personal or social, verbal or visual.” The design and provision of such encounters is a decisive component of our diversity work.

While some of the most powerful encounter experiences involve immersion in a different culture, these experiences are not always available or accessible. Because of this, we have worked to identify encounter experiences that can occur within the walls of university classrooms or schools — and have found that many of these encounters can elicit similar outcomes.

The Teaching Diverse Students Initiative (TDSi), now available at [www.tolerance.org/tdsi](http://www.tolerance.org/tdsi), includes a number of resources to help create an encounter experience. The section on “Understanding the Influence of Race” includes tools to help teachers examine their own biases and think critically about what “race” really means.

Another encounter experience that we use can be found at the website for the Public Broadcasting Service television series “Race: the Power of an Illusion” ([www.pbs.org/race](http://www.pbs.org/race)). The “Sorting People” exercise asks participants to categorize individuals into racial/ethnic groups based solely on their visual appearance. Participants’ error scores ease the transition into a dialogue about race as a social construct. The website provides support materials and other experiences to help students further explore this content.

We have also used more traditional means to provide opportunities for teachers to examine beliefs, attitudes and biases. One of the most powerful readings for our predominantly white, female students is Peggy McIntosh’s 1999 article, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*. Most of these students are unaware of the privileges they receive just by being born white in the United States and are startled to read this article. We often accompany it with another article, *White Privilege in Schools*, by Ruth Anne Olson (1999). These two articles examine racism on a systemic level and challenge students to consider the perpetuation of injustice on a larger, more daunting scale.

The experiences presented above encourage reflection in novel ways. We have found that individuals exhibit a range of responses when confronted with the potential of personal bias, and that these responses present important scaffolding opportunities for teacher educators. In the following sections, typical responses are detailed, along with strategies to facilitate processing and further engagement.

### DISMISSAL

“None of this is true; the author obviously has a political agenda.”

When individuals are presented with information or experiences that challenge their beliefs, one possible response is to reject the source. Taking the stance that “it’s simply not true” can end the conversation quickly. This can be a con-

venient strategy to avoid the potentially painful process of reflecting on hidden bias.

One of the least effective strategies we have found in addressing this response is trying to convince the individual of the accuracy of the source. Approaching bias in a “hard sell” fashion is rarely palatable, and resistance will likely increase. By allowing individuals time to explore a variety of information on bias and listen as peers discuss the issues, we can provide a cooling-off period. Afterward, individuals may be more inclined to consider the potential of personal bias. We can then employ many of the strategies listed below.

### DISBELIEF

“I don’t think that I can really be biased. I grew up in a diverse neighborhood, and I have a lot of friends who are African American.”

or

“I didn’t grow up privileged. My family didn’t have a lot of money, and we worked for everything we got.”

An equally common response is the disbelief that individuals experience when they encounter information that is incompatible with how they perceive their beliefs and practices. Teachers view themselves as “good” and “fair” people, and they are skeptical about being biased. They are typically eager to cling to the comfort of their perceived neutrality on such issues, which again can provide a roadblock to productive dialogue and reflection.

To address this response, we encourage teachers to consider how they were socialized as children. Many are quick to report that individuals in their family had racist attitudes, which they actively reject, but which may have played a part in the associations that are part of their subconscious. At this point, we share excerpts from films such as *Mickey Mouse Monopoly* (Sun, 2001), which examines how the “other” is portrayed in Disney films. In addition, we show the short documentary *A Girl Like Me* (Davis, 2006), where young African American girls recount their issues with race, and repeat the historic experiment asking children to choose the doll they want for a friend. As teachers watch young African American children consistently select the white doll, their eyes are opened to considering how such associations develop for children at a very young age. These experiences elicit rich dialogue about how associations may develop under our radar and, when unchallenged, potentially become ingrained.

### ACCEPTANCE

“It makes sense to me that I am biased, because I am white and I grew up only around white people.”

or

“I do think I have received privileges because of being white, but that is how things are. There’s nothing I can do about it.”

When teachers read articles about white privilege, we find that many accept bias and privilege as realities in their lives. While individuals express regret, they indicate that they are not surprised, having relatively little exposure to diversity as

a child, and working in a homogenous, majority setting. This line of reasoning rationalizes their bias and sense of privilege. They see bias and privilege as societal issues, rather than personal ones, and this allows them to avoid taking responsibility for their attitudes and biases.

The teachers with whom we work accept the societal factors that have contributed to bias but don’t see their inaction as contributing to the problem. At this point, we use readings from Tatum’s (2003) book, which provides the example of the moving sidewalk at the airport as analogous to racism in America. Her metaphor — of standing still while the walkway moves forward — shows how failure to challenge prevalent systems can unintentionally perpetuate injustice. This visual illustration effectively resonates with teachers as they consider their prior acceptance as problematic.

### DISCOMFORT

“Much of this is surprising to me as well as embarrassing. I am mortified by the fact that I have taken issues of privilege for granted that people of color struggle with on a daily basis.”

or

“I have always been proud of being color blind and treating people fairly ... now I’m wondering if I was being unfair.”

Discomfort is another common reaction to becoming aware of bias. Teachers are frequently distressed by what this might mean for their life and work. In this case, we usually reassure teachers that the first step to addressing their biases is to acknowledge them. We note that everyone has hidden biases, but that these are most dangerous when they are unrecognized. One of the resources that we refer to is the movie, *Crash*, which shows the devastating effects of overt and hidden bias.

Discomfort can manifest itself in other ways as well. Some teachers with whom we work frequently hold great pride in their pronouncement of being actively “color blind” when it comes to their students. They view this as an expression of their lack of bias, and it can be difficult to readjust this thinking. A powerful reading that we provide at this point is *I Don’t Think of You as Black*, a series of written correspondences between Naomi Tutu and her friend, Rose Bator. This reading helps teachers recognize the impact that race has in all our lives, but particularly for people of color in the United States.

When teachers express discomfort, we encourage them to explore ways to take action to combat stereotyping and discrimination. We suggest examining materials in classrooms for racism and sexism, addressing and eliminating racist language, and examining school policies and practices that discriminate against



### On the Web

For a full list of the research and resources referenced in this article, read the online version at [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)

particular groups of students. We encourage teachers to incorporate diversity into their classrooms in authentic ways in order to combat societal bias. Derman Sparks, Ramsey and Edwards provide teachers with some concrete strategies to begin to address such issues, even in environments where little diversity exists.

### DISCLOSURE

“Everything I am experiencing shows me that I have strong preference for African American individuals. I interpret this as a distrust of white people, which is unfortunately true.”

A less common response is when individuals actually disclose a conscious bias. This differs from the *acceptance* response, where an acknowledgement of a hidden bias is recognized. This response is characterized by an open admission of prejudice — a step beyond acceptance. This confession requires a great deal of honesty and courage and can be disquieting to divulge.

Although there is the potential for this response to elicit alarm, our experiences indicate a level of self-awareness that differentiates these respondents from others. Individuals who disclose personal bias frequently express how hard they work to intentionally focus on others’ abilities, without regard to race. Their consciousness of prejudice guides their active attention to guard against a translation of attitude to practice. They generally recognize the historical and contemporary roots of their prejudice, and they frequently articulate anger toward a society that perpetuates racism.

We find it critical to actively support teachers who have made this proclamation. The consequences of slavery and colonialism are decidedly visible in our society, and individuals’ experiences with racism are real and must be validated. As individuals confront the realities of racism, their awareness is critical in making conscious decisions about themselves, others and their role in affecting change.

### CONCLUSION

As teacher educators, we continue to challenge ourselves to provide varied opportunities for teachers as they engage in the exploration of education for social justice. This work is not achieved without challenge. As we present pre-service and practicing teachers with new ideology and experience, we also must acknowledge ourselves as cultural beings continuously encountering and interpreting ideas and interactions. This process of continuous mindfulness and self-examination seats us as co-learners, with each discourse providing opportunity for illumination.

We find it important to remind ourselves, and the teachers with whom we work, that the process of addressing personal bias isn’t about reaching a destination. According to B.J Cahill and E.M. Adams, “No one ever arrives; they just bring more of themselves through each time.” As we open our heads and hearts to new understandings through the invitation of persistent experience and inquiry, we embrace the journey. ♦

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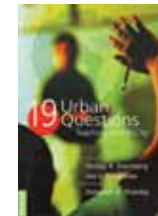
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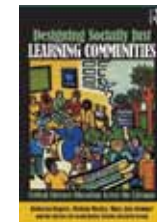
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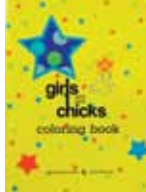


Children's author Icy Smith has long been a chronicler of Asian American communities. Now she takes on her hardest task: telling the story of genocide in Cambodia. *Half Spoon of Rice* takes an unflinching look at a story that needs to be told. Not a light read, this book could be a centerpiece for any well-thought-out unit on genocide. (Grades 3-5)  
**ISBN# 978-0-9821-6758-8**  
**East-West Discovery Press**  
**(310) 545-3730**  
[www.eastwestdiscovery.com](http://www.eastwestdiscovery.com)




Tens of millions of kids can't be wrong. In *Indonesian Children's Favorite Stories*, author Joan Suyenaga collects some of the most-loved children's stories from one of the world's most populous countries. Trickster heroes figure largely in these eight stories: children will enjoy figuring out the

secrets behind the tricks. (Grades 3-5)  
**ISBN# 978-0-7946-0171-3**  
**Periplus Publishing Group**  
**(800) 526-2778**  
[www.peripluspublishinggroup.com](http://www.peripluspublishinggroup.com)



"I ain't moving from this tuffet," declares Ms. Muffet on one of the pages of *The Girls Are Not Chicks Coloring Book*, by Jacinta Bunnell and Julie Novak. The book includes 27 coloring pages that promote active, powerful images of girlhood. Some of the pages include vocabulary that isn't at an early-grades level, but you can explain what "assertiveness" and "patriarchy" mean while coloring with your students. (Grades PreK-5)  
**ISBN# 978-1-6048-6076-4**  
**Reach and Teach**  
**(415) 586-1713**  
[www.reachandteach.com](http://www.reachandteach.com)




Alex has a reading disability. When Alex learns that Thomas Edison had a disability too, it gives him courage to keep trying. *The Don't-Give-Up Kid and Learning Disabilities*, by Jeanne Gehret, comes with discussion starters to help educators lead discussions on ability. (Grades PreK-3)  
**ISBN# 978-0-9821-9820-9**  
**Independent Publishers Group**  
**(800) 888-4741**  
[www.ipgbook.com](http://www.ipgbook.com)




*Sunflowers/Girasoles*, by Gwendolyn Zepeda, is a bilingual story of 7-year-old Marisol and how she learns to plant a garden with her grandfather. When given a bag of sunflower seeds to eat, Marisol plants them in her neighbors' yards and her schoolyard instead. Soon the whole community is one big bouquet. (Grades PreK-3)


**ISBN# 978-1-5588-5267-9**  
**Arte Público Press**  
**(800) 633-2783**  
[www.latinoteca.com](http://www.latinoteca.com)




Young Chuy longs to join his father, who has left Mexico for the United States. In *Muffler Man/El hombre mofle*, by Tito Campos, Chuy gets a job at the muffler shop where his father used to work and learns that it was his father who built the "muffler man" who welcomes people to the shop. It's then that Chuy gets an idea of how to help his family live in the United States. (Grades PreK-6)  
**ISBN# 978-1-5588-5557-1**  
**Piñata Books**  
**(800) 633-2783**  
[www.latinoteca.com](http://www.latinoteca.com)



Margaret Read MacDonald's *Surf War!* tells the story of a whale and a sandpiper who each claim to own the ocean. When they both call in all their cousins and attack each other, they quickly learn that the ocean is for everyone. Based on a Micronesian legend, this story offers a fresh look at the causes of fights on playgrounds or anywhere. (Grades K-3)  
**ISBN# 978-0-8748-3889-3**  
**August House Publishers, Inc.**  
**(800) 284-8784**  
[www.augusthouse.com](http://www.augusthouse.com)




*Juneteenth Jamboree*, by Carole Boston Weatherford, tells of the celebration that is said to have begun on June 19, 1865, when Union Army soldiers arrived in Texas to tell slaves that they were free. (Grades K-6)  
**ISBN# 978-1-6006-0248-1**  
**Lee & Low Books**  
**(888) 320-3190, Ext. 28**  
[www.leeandlow.com](http://www.leeandlow.com)




Emma Tenayuca learned about equity as a very young girl, and as a young adult led a labor movement for the pecan shellers of Texas in the 1920s and 1930s. *That's Not Fair! Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice/¡No Es Justo! La Lucha de Emma Tenayuca por la justicia*, by Carmen Tafolla, shares her story with a new generation of young readers. (Grades 3-6)  
**ISBN# 978-0-9167-2733-8**  
**Independent Publishers Group**  
**(800) 888-4741**  
[www.ipgbook.com](http://www.ipgbook.com)




"My longing for affiliation has been the source of my creativity," said the artist Isamu Noguchi. As a biracial child, Noguchi was often shunned during his childhood in Japan. *The East-West House*, written and illustrated by Cristy Hale, tells how the young Noguchi designed a house for his mother, belonging to both Eastern and Western design. A great way to introduce both racial identities and different artistic traditions to young students.  
**ISBN# 978-1-6006-0363-1**  
**Lee & Low Books**  
**(888) 320-3190, Ext. 28**  
[www.leeandlow.com](http://www.leeandlow.com)



Sam Goldstein's *Some Kids Just Can't Sit Still!* is a rhyming book about children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The book aims at explaining ADHD to a child who has it, parents, and siblings who experience conflict as a result of a brother or sister who has ADHD. (Grades 3-6)  
**ISBN# 978-1-8869-4173-1**  
**Specialty Press, Inc.**  
**(800) 233-9273**  
[www.addwarehouse.com](http://www.addwarehouse.com)



Jeannine Atkins' *Get Set! Swim!* is about a Puerto Rican girl named Jessenia and her first swim race. Jessenia's mother and brother join her on the bus ride that takes them from the tall buildings of the city to the large suburban houses where they'll compete. Jessenia is afraid that her team can't compete against the wealthier students whose pool probably doesn't break down. (Grades 3-6)  
**ISBN# 978-1-6006-0336-5**  
**Lee & Low Books**  
**(888) 320-3190, Ext. 28**  
[www.leeandlow.com](http://www.leeandlow.com)




*Paul Robeson*, by Eloise Greenfield, tells the story of the famed 20th century African American singer and actor. Robeson traveled the world entertaining people, and when he became disturbed by the poverty he saw, he began to speak out against it. (Grades 3-6)  
**ISBN# 978-1-6006-0262-7**  
**Lee & Low Books**  
**(888) 320-3190, Ext. 28**  
[www.leeandlow.com](http://www.leeandlow.com)



Common in African American communities during the Great Depression, "rent parties" began as a way to help people in need get rent money before landlords threw them out. Over time they evolved, shaping the development of jazz and aiding labor movements. *Rent Party Jazz*, by William Miller, follows one young man as he organizes a rent party to help his struggling mother in 1930s New Orleans. (Grades 3-6)  
**ISBN# 978-1-6006-0344-0**  
**Lee & Low Books**  
**(888) 320-3190, Ext. 28**  
[www.leeandlow.com](http://www.leeandlow.com)

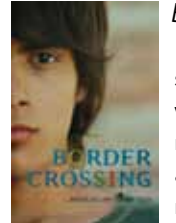
**MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL**



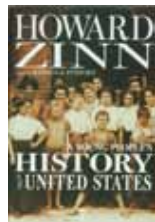
Packed with evocative photographs, *Transforming Lives: Turning Uganda's Forgotten Children Into Leaders*, by Stephen Shames, shows the struggles of the central African country through personal narratives of former child soldiers, children in refugee camps, and kids affected by AIDS and poverty. For kids who are turned off by large blocks of text, this book could still be a page-turner — and a call to action. (Grades 7-12)  
**ISBN# 978-1-5957-2213-3**  
**Star Bright Books**  
**(800) 788-4439**  
[www.starbrightbooks.org](http://www.starbrightbooks.org)



*Blue Mountain Trouble*, by Martin Mordecai, tells the story of 12-year-old twins Polly and Jackson. When a bully comes to their town and begins harassing their family, the twins need all of their wits to keep their family safe. The story is set in the Blue Mountain region of Jamaica, where the author grew up. (Grades 7-9)  
**ISBN# 978-0-5450-4156-0**  
**Scholastic Books**  
**(800) 724-6527**  
[www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com)



*Border Crossing*, by Jessica Lee Anderson, tells the story of teenager Manz, who spends the summer negotiating his identity as a working class mixed-race child in rural Texas — while dealing with symptoms of schizophrenia. (Grades 7-12)  
**ISBN# 978-1-5713-1689-9**  
**Milkweed Editions**  
**(800) 520-6455, Ext. 560**  
[www.milkweed.org](http://www.milkweed.org)



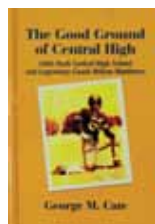
*A Young People's History of the United States*, by Howard Zinn, is a middle-school version of Zinn's progressive classic. The book not only seeks to set the historical record straight for children, it

also highlights children who have influenced history. (Grades 7-12)  
**ISBN# 978-1-5832-2869-2**  
**Seven Stories Press**  
**(800) 283-3572**  
**www.sevenstories.com**



*Grumble Bluff*, by Karen Bessey Pease, is the story of two teenage girls who, because they are different, are bullied at school. The novel follows the girls through middle and high school, seeing them defined by the choices they make in their lives. (Grades 7-12)

**ISBN# 978-1-6069-3290-2**  
**Eloquent Books**  
**(888) 808-6190**  
**www.eloquentbooks.com**



Even before his school became the center of a famous struggle over integration, football Coach Wilson Matthews taught his all-white team to respect people of all backgrounds. *The Good*

*Ground of Central High: Little Rock Central High School and Legendary Coach Wilson Matthews*, by George M. Cate, is the perfect book to get athletes interested in history and issues of social justice. (Grades 7-12)  
**ISBN# 978-1-9351-0603-6**  
**Butler Center Books**  
**(501) 919-3093**  
**www.butlercenter.org**



*Nothing Pink*, by Mark Hardy, is about a teenager named Vincent who moves with his family to a new town. Vincent's father is the local pastor. Vincent is gay. Can Vincent reconcile his sexual orientation

and his religious identity? (Grades 7-12)  
**ISBN# 978-1-9324-2524-6**  
**Boyd's Mills Press**  
**(800) 490-5111**  
**www.frontstreetbooks.com**



Liza Winthrop and Annie Kenyon meet by chance one day in the museum and fall in love in Nancy Garden's *Annie on My Mind*. A powerful LGBTQ novel about falling in love for the first time. (Grades 7-12)

**ISBN# 978-0-3744-0011-8**  
**Farrar, Straus and Giroux**  
**(888) 330-8477**  
**us.macmillan.com**



"Isn't every crime a hate crime?" *Hate Crimes*, by Janell Broyles, answers that question. The book thoroughly explains what a hate crime is, as well as the reasons for hate-crime

legislation. (Grades 7-12)  
**ISBN# 978-1-4358-5035-4**  
**Rosen Publishing**  
**(800) 237-9932**  
**www.rosenpublishing.com**



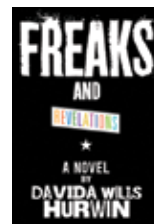
*Gringolandia*, by Lyn Miller-Lachmann, is the story of high school student Daniel, who has made a new life for himself far away from the politics of Chile, where his father was arrested and imprisoned. But then his father returns — broken and haunted — and Daniel has the

chance for the family he always longed to have. (Grades 9-12)  
**ISBN# 978-1-9318-9649-8**  
**Curbstone Press**  
**(860) 423-5110**  
**www.curbstone.org**



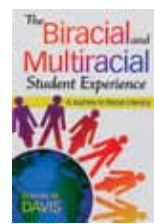
*Wandering Star*, by Nobel laureate Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clezio, relates the parallel stories of two teenage girls. One is Jewish, and the other is Palestinian. The two girls meet only in passing, but

the memory of each other forever shapes and haunts their lives. (Grades 9-12)  
**ISBN# 978-1-9318-9656-6**  
**Curbstone Press**  
**(860) 423-5110**  
**www.curbstone.org**



Jason is a gay teen who has been living on the streets ever since he was kicked out of his house. Doug is a budding skinhead who found a "tribe" of his own after a lifetime of abuse. When Doug beats Jason

nearly to death in a hate crime, the pair has no idea that they will meet again under very different circumstances. *Freaks and Revelations*, by Davida Willis Hurwin, is a searing story of violence and forgiveness, based on an amazing true story.  
**ISBN# 978-0-3160-4996-2**  
**Little, Brown & Company**  
**(800) 759-0190**  
**www.hachettebookgroup.com**



*The Biracial and Multiracial Student Experience*, by Bonnie M. Davis, offers a powerful look into school as seen by multiracial students. Filled with firsthand accounts by multiracial students and teachers, the book offers a deep look into the ways ra-

cial identifications affect us all — particularly in school settings.  
**ISBN# 978-1-4129-7506-3**  
**Corwin Press**  
**(800) 831-6640**  
**www.corwinpress.com**



Growing up in Hong Kong in the 1960s, Ching Yeung Russell struggled with gender bias — but her mother always said, "girls and boys are just the same." In the poetry collection *Tofu Quilt*, Russell

paints a loving portrait of the family that supported her dream of becoming a writer.  
**ISBN# 978-1-6006-0423-2**  
**Lee & Low Books**  
**(888) 320-3190, Ext. 28**  
**www.leeandlow.com**



"Being in Auschwitz was like being in a car accident every single day," writes Holocaust survivor Eva Mozes Kor. *Surviving the Angel of Death: The Story of a Mengele Twin in Auschwitz* gives a first-hand

account of her experience in a Nazi death camp — and her controversial decision to publicly forgive her tormentors. Eva Mozes Kor and co-author Lisa Rojany Buccieri have a gift for breaking down the horrors of the Holocaust into language that young people can relate to and understand.  
**ISBN# 978-1-9337-1828-6**  
**Tanglewood Books**  
**(800) 836-4994**  
**www.tanglewoodbooks.com**

WEBWORKS

ProCon

**www.procon.org**  
 Talking about controversial topics in the classroom can be intimidating — but it's also a great way to teach critical thinking skills and respectful civil discourse. ProCon gives you a framework for discussing a wide range of controversial issues, with background information to help your students support their points.

About Face

**www.about-face.org**  
 They say a picture is worth a thousand words. For the women at About Face, 200 words is more than enough space to deconstruct some of the most disturbing sexist images in popular culture. This site can help get your students talking back to the media — and will call attention to the fact that gender-stereotyped pop culture is neither creative nor fun.

Iced!

**www.icedgame.com**  
 In this downloadable video game, players take on the role of immigrants trying to find their way toward citizenship. In a world of complicated

paperwork, naturalization scams and detention without due process, gaining full citizenship is more challenging than most might think. The site includes a downloadable teachers' guide.

Understanding Prejudice

**www.understandingprejudice.org**  
 Recently revamped, this website offers a feast of materials on anti-bias education, including self-tests, classroom activities and links to books and films on sexism, racism, homophobia and ableism.  
**Public Schools and Sexual Orientation: A First Amendment Framework for Finding Common Ground**  
**www.firstamendmentcenter.org/PDF/sexual.orientation.guidelines.PDF**

Long title, simple idea. This PDF document, produced by the American Association of School Administrators, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and other professional organizations, outlines best practices for starting a constructive conversation about LGBT concerns in your classroom.

Eracism!

**http://sites.google.com/site/eracismproject**

Sometimes you can't see what's all around you until you take a step back. The Eracism! Project is an Australian-based blog that critiques white privilege and anti-immigrant bias Down Under — with frequent commentary on how these issues play out in the United States. It's a dose of perspective that might help you rethink your opinions on bias and prejudice in America.

Fagbug

**www.fagbug.com**  
 Erin Davies was out as a lesbian, and someone didn't like that. In fact, someone spray-painted anti-gay slurs on her Volkswagen Beetle. Instead of scraping the words off, she embarked on a cross-country journey, talking to people about the meaning of this hate crime. Fagbug.com shares Davies' surprisingly heartwarming story.

Racial Equity Tools

**www.racialequitytools.org**  
 Want to take action on the racial equity issues in your community — but don't know where to start? Racial Equity Tools offers sturdy advice on how to begin a community group and work on the "low-hanging fruit" before taking on the larger

problems. The site also includes assessment tools to help you measure your progress.

Safe School Ambassadors

**www.safeschoolambassadors.com**  
 Teachers want to break down the social barriers between their students — but students often find power and belonging in their social circles. Safe School Ambassadors offers a method for enlisting clique leaders in your effort to create a school climate of acceptance for everyone.

FWD/Forward

**http://disabledfeminists.com**  
 Written by women with disabilities, this blog shares their stories as they deal with ableism in everyday life, the media and politics. Of particular interest is the "Ableist Word Profile" feature, in which writers explain why many commonly used words are disempowering for people with disabilities.

Welcoming Schools

**www.hrc.org/welcomingschools**  
 From the Human Rights Campaign, a free, downloadable 93-page guide to help K-5 teachers and administrators improve their approach to family diversity, gender stereotyping and bullying.





## Beyond the Barbed Wire

My name is Helen Tsuchiya. My maiden name was Tanigawa. Growing up, my family included my parents, three sisters and one brother. My parents were born in Japan but I was born in the United States. My father was a farmer, growing grapes on our family farm.

Many things changed for me on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the United States declared war on Japan. Many believed that Japanese Americans could not be trusted. Executive Order 9066 was passed, which said that Japanese Americans must be put in internment camps. This is difficult to understand because everyone in my family was a U.S. citizen.

Japanese Americans were evacuated from their homes. We had only a few weeks to prepare and we could take only a few things with us. We sold some of what we owned for very little money. My mother left family pictures and wedding photographs on the wall. She said they that they would protect our home when we are gone. She really believed we would all return to our home in California. But in one day everything was stolen — even the pictures. It broke my mother’s heart.

The internment camp was surrounded by barbed wire. For three years we lived in a 20-by-20-foot room in barracks. We had no privacy, and it was so dusty it was difficult to breathe.

A Pima girl who lived nearby would come up to the fence and talk to us. She felt sorry for us confined in the camp, while we felt sorry for her, confined to the reservation.

Fifty years later I revisited the camp and met that Pima girl. She said, “My Grandfather would take me to the camp on a pony. I remember the children reaching across the barbed wire to feel the pony. Even though I was 3 years old, that experience stayed with me.” Now she’s serving her people as a nurse on the reservation.

The survivors later received \$20,000 as an apology from the government. But my parents had already died — they were the ones who really deserved the apology. Before the war they owned 40 acres of farmland but lost it all because they could not make the payments while in the internment camp.

During the war my brother joined the Army to prove his loyalty. He was sent to Fort Snelling in Minnesota to learn Japanese so he could fight alongside U.S. forces in Japan. After the war he found work at an engineering company. His boss loved him like his own child. We moved to Minnesota to join him.

When you think about it, it’s my parents who really suffered. Now I want to share my story with the children so it will never happen again. ♦

**HELEN TSUCHIYA** told this story to folklorist and folksinger Larry Long. Long is the creator of Elder’s Wisdom, Children’s Song, a project that brings elders into the classroom to share their stories with children, who retell the stories in song. For more information, go to [www.communitycelebrationofplace.org](http://www.communitycelebrationofplace.org). To learn more about Americans of Japanese ancestry who fought for the U.S. in World War II, go to [www.goforbroke.org](http://www.goforbroke.org).

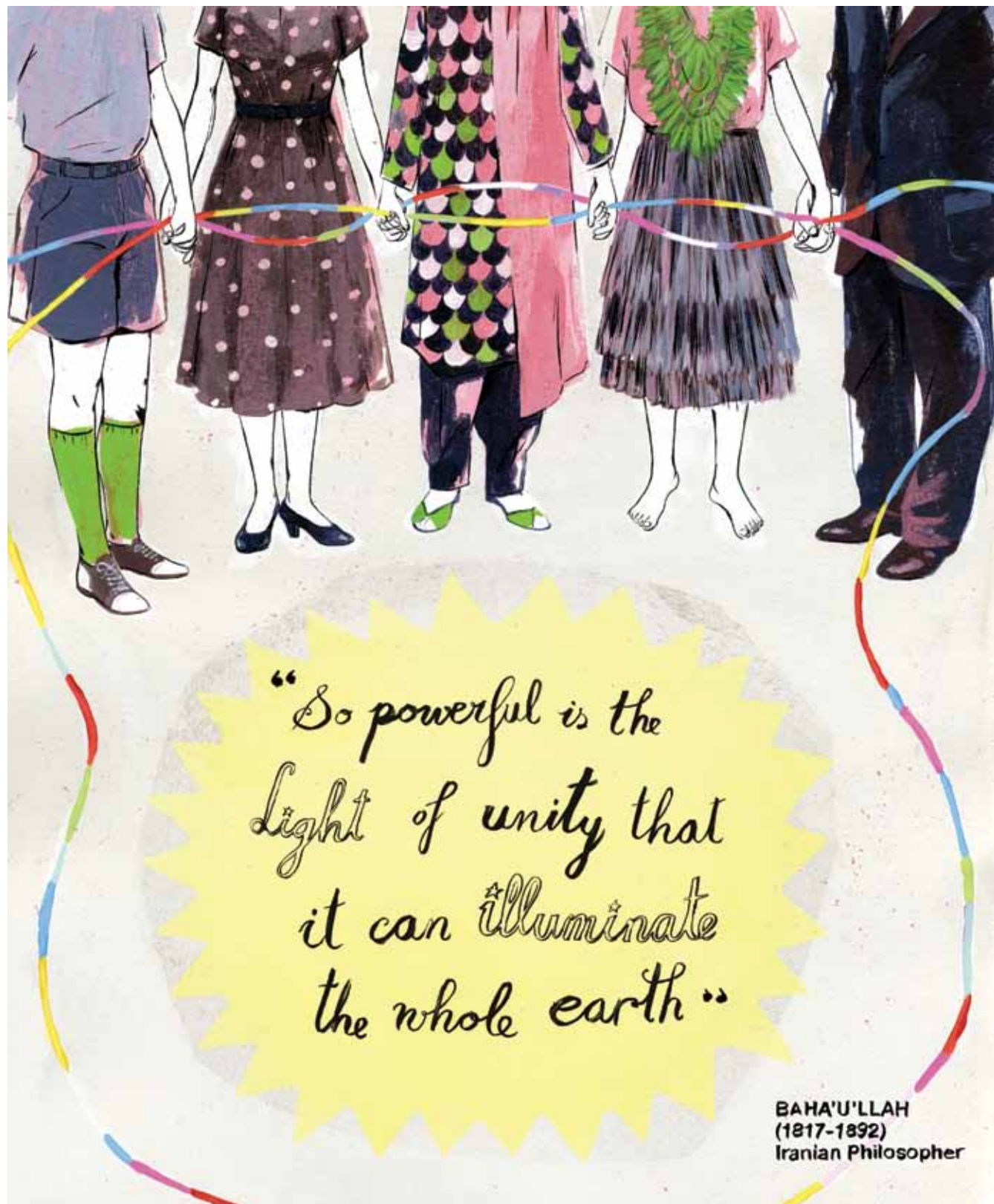


ILLUSTRATION BY CARMEN SEGOVIA

Teaching Tolerance and participating artists encourage educators to clip the One World page to hang on a classroom wall. It is created with just that purpose in mind. Enjoy!



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— Dorothy Strickland, EDUCATION PROFESSOR, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY



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