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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the issue of culture and its impact on education in California, this document offers glimpses into the lives of individuals who ask the question, "Is there now or will there ever be a common American culture?" Organized into 10 articles, the first article, "Whose Culture is This? Whose Curriculum Will It Be?" (Laurie Olsen), examines the debate surrounding the selection of a social studies textbook series by the California State Textbook Commission. In the second article, "History of Winners Leaves Too Many Losers," Laurie Olsen presents an interview with California teacher, Jacquelyn Smith. Smith discusses the issue of using textbooks as the sole teaching tool. The third article, "Books Symbolize a Greater Outrage" (Laurie Olsen), is an interview with Pedro Noguera talking about textbooks, racism, and a multicultural curriculum. In the fourth article, "Beyond Images" (Katherine Kim), Ruthanne Lum McCunn and Jean Chan Moore demonstrate that ethnic identity transcends skin color. The fifth article, "1990 Census Poses Challenges for California's Future" (Eric Mar), illustrates the census as a social and political tool for the state's diverse citizens. The sixth article, "The Masters: A Journey Among California's Folk Artists" (Carol Dowell), reviews "California Artists: At the Crossroads," a book on California artists by John Bishop. A seventh article, "Stopping Bias in its Tracks" (Laurie Olsen; Nina Mullen), follows child care workers taking an intensive course in diversity. The eighth article, "Decent Housing Comes Home" (Susan Anderson), describes the construction of an affordable housing community in South Central Los Angeles. The ninth article, "On Becoming a Teacher" (Wendy Tanaka; Annie Alcott), uses the journals of two student teachers to describe classroom cultures. The last article, "The Good Common School" (National Coalition of Advocates for Students), presents a prescription to ensure the best education for children. (CK)

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CALIFORNIA TOMORROW is a non-profit, non-partisan organization built on the belief that the state's diverse population offers a rare opportunity to create a fair, working, multiracial, multicultural society. CALIFORNIA TOMORROW conducts policy research and advocacy, organizes local coalitions, and provides technical assistance and support to local communities and schools.

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California Perspectives

An Anthology from the California Tomorrow Education For a Diverse Society Project
Fall 1991, Volume 2

Editors' Note

This issue of *California Perspectives* is devoted to themes that touch directly or indirectly upon culture. "Whose Culture Is This?" explores the emotional debate over the culture we teach our children through the sanctioned school curriculum and through more subtle school practices such as segregation and tracking. The unique cultures within a kindergarten and a fifth-grade classroom come to life through the journals of two student teachers in an ethnically diverse East Oakland school.

In John Bishop's photographic essay, "The Masters," we find that the traditional folk arts of cultures from around the globe are thriving in California's own cities and backwoods. In "Beyond Images," Ruthanne Lum McCunn and Jean Chan Moore tell their personal multicultural histories, squashing stereotypes along the way.

Today, Californians along with the rest of the nation are struggling with the question, "Do we now or will we ever truly share a common American culture?" We can't propose to answer that here; instead, we offer glimpses into the lives of some inspiring people who remind us why it's so important to keep the question on the table.

Whose Culture Is This? Whose Curriculum Will It Be?

The selection of a controversial textbook magnifies a long-polarized debate over power, knowledge and national identity.

By LAURIE OLSEN

LAST FALL, the California State Textbook Commission adopted a new social studies textbook series for the upper elementary school grades. The books, which portray a history of America built by diverse peoples but based on the values of Europe, were welcomed by a majority of the Commission as the most balanced and unbiased texts available to date. Meanwhile, during months of public hearings and private commission meetings previous to the adoption, lepsons had protested the books on the grounds that they skewed and marginalized the histories of many of California's ethnic and cultural communities.

Few educational issues have galvanized as much reaction in California as the process that led to the selection of these textbooks. *This is not just an argument over books.* At heart, it is fundamentally a struggle over inclusion and exclusion, over power and knowledge, and over inequities in society. Textbooks wear the official stamp of "legitimate knowledge." But the social studies books have become the red flag for a much larger debate that has been smoldering for years about the politics of culture, and about national identity. In this scenario the textbook authors and proponents, many of whom are California education leaders, call themselves "pluralists" and say they applaud multiculturalism, but not at the expense of a common culture. "Too much" focus on diversity is posed by this group as a barrier to national unity. The magnitude of this sentiment nationally was reflected in *Time* magazine's July 4, 1991 cover story which blasted multicultural education efforts around the country. The cover headline: "Who Are We? American kids are getting a new—and divisive—view of Thomas Jefferson, Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July."

The large, loose coalition of civil rights and community groups that oppose the California textbooks call a "myth" the pluralist version of a unified American evolved through assimilation and integration. They cite the inequalities and segregation prevalent in society today as resounding proof, and demand that their children know the story of how these came to be. Only when children know one another's full heritage and history can their self-esteem thrive and their chances of working together as equals improve. We will call those who oppose the textbooks "Inclusionists," as their mission is to see their diverse experiences and perspectives included in the core curriculum of the schools. Most basically, they call upon schools to teach the whole and full truth.

Demographic Change: The Context of the Cultural Politics Debate Over Curriculum

The word "nation" comes from the Latin word for "birth," implying that a nation is a group of people of common ancestry. But Americans do not share a common ancestry or religion. The United States has been, since inception, a culturally diverse nation. The mission of knitting a nation out of diverse peoples is encapsuled in the national motto, "*E pluribus unum*"—"Out of many, one." The tension implicit in that motto has been a recurring theme throughout our nation's history—and never so profoundly as during peak eras of immigration.

This is, of course, such an era. In record numbers, people are immigrating to California—from every continent, speaking close to 100 different languages, and representing hundreds of national and cultural groups. The 1990 Census counted six million foreign-born immigrants in California. In the past decade, the number of limited-English-proficient children in California public schools tripled.

The swiftness and magnitude of the changes have

Fear, anger, anxiety and confusion enter all the public dialogues over diversity. What *do* we have in common? What will hold us together as a society?

thrown our society into a deep identity crisis. Fear, anger, anxiety and confusion enter all the public dialogues over diversity. What *do* we have in common? What will hold us together as a society? Can we unite as a nation without ignoring the historical struggles and unresolved injustices among our people? What will be the terms of the compact?

It is not surprising that the tensions over how we define ourselves as a nation surfaced largely around what is to be taught in the schools. Schools are the formalized institution of cultural transmission. The school curriculum has long been used as a means to shape the minds and values of the next generation. Curriculum is not neutral, nor is knowledge. But what or whose values should the public schools reflect? What is the role of schools in an era of diversity? Whose knowledge will be taught?

The history of American public schools has included many social and political clashes over these questions. What ends up taught in school—what is counted as legitimate knowledge—is the result of power struggles between various cultures, classes, races, genders and religions, and the widely ranging perspectives they bring.

The debates about the role of curriculum and whose interests it will reflect have changed in different historical periods. At times it has focused on regional differences (north vs. south), gender, religion (Catholic vs. Protestant), and lifestyle (1960's counter-culture). At times of social and demographic turmoil, these kinds of conflicts most dramatically come to the fore. In this era, undeniably, the clearest lines of demarcation are racial and ethnic.

1990 Social Studies Textbook Adoption in California

State law governs the purchase of textbooks in California. The first phase is the development of a curriculum framework by a committee of appointed "experts" in a subject matter—in this case, social studies. The framework describes what should be taught and how. A cornerstone of State Superintendent of Instruction Bill Honig's school reform strategy has been massive revisions of the curriculum frameworks, accompanied by upgrading instructional materials and developing accountability measures aligned with the frameworks. Many aspects of these reforms have been widely lauded in national education circles. But the long process of developing the new social studies framework was not itself without controversy and echoed at times the broader societal debate about cultural diversity.

The new Social Science Curriculum Framework states:

> "We want our children to recognize the multicultural character of American society and the existence and contributions of the many groups who comprise our society; to develop an awareness of how their lives will be affected by domestic and international politics, demographic shifts and the stress of social change; to learn that our national heritage is pluralistic; and that our national history is the complex story of many peoples in one nation, of '*E pluribus unum*'."

The framework was viewed as a progressive and triumphant move towards increased excellence by some, as a compromise by others, and as a deep defeat by still others. But the full force of these differences didn't fully explode as a public issue until the textbook adoption process began, highlighting the tensions and differences in interpretations of the framework.

Publishers were invited to submit books that met the mandates of the new social studies framework. Only two publishers came forward. During the required period of public comment, support and criticisms of the books came from hundreds of advocates, educators, parents and academicians throughout the state. Groups representing numerous ethnic groups spoke repeatedly against the books, offering lengthy citations of their weaknesses.

The State Board of Education had the job of formally approving the books, and only one K-8 series, by Houghton Mifflin, was finally adopted by a split vote. After the adoption, the fight moved to local school boards as they deliberated whether to buy the books, knowing alternatives and the resources to buy them would be scarce.

During the heated debates previous to the adoption, the most challenged aspect of the Houghton Mifflin books was their treatment of slavery. Following are two examples of controversial passages:

> "Cotton growing seemed especially well suited for the institution of slavery because it kept the slaves busy the year 'round. Slave owners always feared that if their workers had little to do they would get into trouble!"

> "Harvesting was usually over by Christmas time.

Then, for about a week, all work stopped...the harsh and cruel side of slavery was put aside, if not forgotten. There were feasts, singing and dancing, a Christmas tree...(and) small presents for everyone. Some masters even dressed up as Santa Claus and distributed gifts."

Other complaints stated that Native American tribes were treated in the books as warlike and politically scheming; that the harsh working and living conditions of Mexican farmworkers were washed over; that the imprisonment of Japanese Americans in the U.S. during World War II was trivialized; and that the scriptures of non-Christian religions were discounted as historically questionable.

Dissenting commission member Joyce King, director of teacher education at Santa Clara University, spent months trying to dissuade her colleagues from approving the books, saying, "I feel an ethical and moral responsibility to oppose the adoption of instructional materials which violate the dignity and worth of people in any way." Public tempers flared when the education establishment defended the books at a press conference by citing the high number of "references" to minorities. Only two of the 100 frustrated parents and advocates who attended in opposition to the books were allowed to speak. Context, perspective and accuracy were at issue, not minority "quotas," they tried to explain. The entire adoption process was further questioned because Gary Nash, one of the principal authors of the Houghton Mifflin text, was a UCLA colleague of Charlotte Crabtree, the chair of the commission's history subject area committee.

To understand the complexity of this tragically divisive debate requires analysis of the perspectives of the inclusionists and the pluralists. The groups differ philosophically in their views of the common good, their views of culture, and their visions of life in an increasingly diverse society.

The Pluralist Position

During the textbook debates, the pluralist position was firmly represented by the power structure of California public education. It included a majority within the Commission on Textbook Selection, State Superintendent of Instruction Bill Honig and the well-known Boston textbook publisher Houghton Mifflin. It was backed up by prominent national educators such as Diane Ravitch, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and Chester Finn, who call themselves "pluralist multiculturalists," though those who oppose the textbooks refer to them more often as "educational traditionalists" or "racists."

In the pluralists' view, the growing diversity of the population is weakening the glue that binds us together as a society. The role of teaching history is to emphasize a core of shared experiences — an American community to which we all belong.

"In California a powerful group of educational traditionalists, with links in the Bush and Reagan administrations, has successfully promoted a blend of pluralism and nationalism that forms the basis of California's new history curriculum. It is rooted in the contention that there is a "common culture" to which all American immigrants have contributed—and which is the glue that keeps the nation together. This common culture, according to Diane Ravitch, was formed by different ethnic groups who 'competed, fought, suffered, but ultimately learned to live together in peace and even achieved a sense of common nationhood'." —*San Francisco Examiner*

In the pluralists' view, the growing diversity of the population is weakening the glue that binds us together as a society. While other voices in the school reform movement focus on the role of schools in meeting the economic crisis facing our nation, the pluralists are more concerned with what they view as a cultural crisis. The role of teaching history is to specifically emphasize a core of values and experiences that defines what holds us together—an American community to which we all belong. Curriculum becomes the key to creating this common culture. Highlighting differences will lead to cultural and societal dissolution, they say. The most widely publicized supporter of this position is Diane Ravitch:

"If there is no overall community, if all we have is a motley collection of racial and ethnic cultures, there will be no sense of the common good. Each group will fight for its particular interests, and we could easily disintegrate as a nation, becoming instead embroiled in the kinds of ethnic conflicts that often dominate the foreign news each night."

When the teaching of history becomes reduced to a single text with limited pages, inclusion in history is a scarce resource, forcing groups to fight for their place.

Ravitch fears what she views is the position of "particularistic multiculturalists":

> "Pluralists...say that we are all part of this nation's gorgeous mosaic of racial and ethnic groups; as citizens of the same society, we are all responsible for one another. By contrast, the particularists neglect the bonds of mutuality that exist among people of different groups and encourage children to seek their primary identity in the cultures and homelands of their ancestry."

Critical to understanding the pluralists' position is their reading of the American past. In their view, American culture belongs to all of us. The United States was built by all of us. We remake our society and culture with each generation and, by definition, U.S. culture is and always has been multicultural. While some brief mention may be made of the struggles between groups, the pluralists are emphatic that in teaching children history we must emphasize the ties that bind, and not the struggles which they fear will divide.

> "In elementary and secondary texts, the story must be told as the forging of a new people who are learning to live amicably with others who are different. It is a story in which people of many different backgrounds have joined together to become one nation, all Americans."—*Ravitch*

Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., a staunch pluralist whose views on the issue have been widely published in the *New York Times*, *Time*, and elsewhere, was a dissenting member of a New York schools commission that recently took a strong controversial position in favor of a more inclusionist curriculum. He wrote:

> "The contemporary ideal is not assimilation but ethnicity. The escape from origins has given way to the search for roots. We used to say "*E pluribus unum*." Now we glorify *pluribus* and belittle *unum*. The melting pot yields to the Tower of Babel...If we repudiate the quite marvelous inheritance that history has bestowed on us, we invite the fragmentation of our own culture into a quarrelsome spatter of enclaves, ghettos and tribes. The bonds of cohesion in our society are sufficiently fragile, or so it seems to me, that it makes no sense to strain them by encouraging and exalting cultural and linguistic apartheid. The rejection of the melting pot points the republic in the direction of incoherence and chaos."

The pluralists repeatedly pose versions of the question: "How can we ensure that education promotes pluralism and not particularism?" The most essential public good at this time in history, according to the pluralists, is a sense of racial and ethnic unity.

To promote such unity requires some inclusion of minority experiences into the traditional dominant view of American history. The pluralist position put forth in the textbook adoption dialogue seeks to account evenhandedly for the contributions of selected racial and ethnic groups to a common culture, but within an existing and overarching framework of an American society born from selected values of Europe. The contributions of these groups become important as illustrations of the themes of democracy, of individual rights, of industrial progress. To include more details or additional groups would be unwieldy and unnecessary. When teaching of history becomes reduced to a single text with limited pages, inclusion in history is a scarce resource, forcing groups to fight for their place. As Gary Nash, author of the Houghton Mifflin series selected for adoption, explained in a response to pressures for more inclusion: "Students would need to replace their bookbags with wheelbarrows."

The greatest threat to national unity are those who emphasize the differences between groups, who call attention to past injuries and struggles between groups in society, who (in the eyes of the pluralists) reject a common culture. They are, in the words of the pluralists, "particularists," "separatists," "filiopietists" (ones with excessive reverence for their ancestors), "Europhobes," and "tribalists."

The Inclusionist Position

With a litany of names leveled at them by the pluralists, the voices calling for rejection of the textbooks simply call themselves "civil rights advocates" or "with the people." In the San Francisco Bay Area, for example, they include the NAACP, the National Chicano Human Rights Commission, the Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism, the National Coalition of Educational Activists, Chinese for Affirmative Action, the Arab Resource Center and the San Francisco State University Women's Studies Department and School of Ethnic Studies.

The inclusionists say the textbooks perpetuate a pervasive and longstanding pattern of invisibility or marginalization of the experiences and heritage of the majority of people. They say their stories are excluded, their ethnic, racial, gender, class and cultural identity denied, and their children taught a distorted and narrow view of American culture that perpetuates their oppression. As Henry Der, Executive Director of Asian Americans for Affirmative Action, said in testimony before the Textbook Selection Committee:

"We do not want ethnic history, we want accurate history for all children of all races. We do not want to be marginalized any longer."

From the inclusionists' perspective, it is an ironic twist of rhetoric and a disturbing commentary on the polarized political climate that their calls for inclusion are viewed as special interests and as separatist. The common culture they strive for is based on acknowledgement of everyone's experiences. Segregation, inequity and "apartheid," as Schlesinger charged, are not created by ethnic recognition, but by powerful forces of exclusion. In the debate about the nature of American history, the inclusionists view culture as rooted in the historical, economic and political experiences of diverse peoples, defined in great measure around race, gender, class and ethnicity. Access to one's culture requires knowledge about one's roots. The formal school curriculum either provides this, misrepresents it, or denies that it exists. The outcome of the curriculum battle to the inclusionists will determine whether children are excluded—prevented by distortions and omissions from knowing their own history—or thrive as full members of the society, affirmed by knowledge and recognition of their cultures and backgrounds.

Furthermore, in the inclusionist view, access to the perspectives and experiences of diverse groups provides *all* children with richer exposure to the breadth of human experience, painting a fuller picture of history.

Many inclusionists reject outright the pluralist perspective of a common unifying culture in America to which diverse peoples have voluntarily assimilated and contributed. They believe the assimilation and integration portrayed in that view is a distortion of the truth, particularly for African Americans and Native Americans, and that United States history has failed to produce a pluralist society of ethnic, class and cultural equals. The ideal of an American common culture of equality and democracy has not yet, in fact, delivered for America's ethnic and racial minorities. The culture of the United States has often instead supported a racist political and economic hierarchy.

Pedro Noguera, a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and member of the Berkeley school board, which eventually adopted the texts, addressed this issue:

From the inclusionists' perspective, it is an ironic twist of rhetoric and a disturbing commentary on the polarized political climate that their calls for inclusion are viewed as special interests and as separatist.

> "If we are to get to a point where as a society we can learn to respect each other, it has to be based upon open recognition of past injustice—that slavery was wrong, that genocide of the Indians was wrong. That clarity is essential to assure ethnic minorities that those kinds of activities won't occur again. That the books failed to do that is a reflection, really, of an ongoing debate within the country over whether or not, in fact, slavery was wrong. There are many historians and others who still believe that the ends justify the means. That maybe on some abstract moral grounds it was wrong to have carried out slavery or murdered Indians, but the result was that we have this great country. The implication is that slavery was a necessary part of building our greatness, and that slavery actually helped Black people, that it brought them 'civilization'."

Meanwhile, the inclusionists claim the price paid for the steeping of minority children in the mythology of a common culture has meant the loss of cultural identity for minority communities. In a sense, children are made culture-less through the obscuring of their true history and roots. And they are left isolated by lack of exposure to the experiences of other politically powerless groups. The traditional and pluralist conceptions of American culture are, to many inclusionists, merely someone else's culture (dominant European) imposed on culturally diverse peoples.

The rejection of the adopted state social studies textbooks is a civil rights assertion for full recognition and inclusion, and the redefinition of "common" culture to be a commonality based on acknowledgment, justice and equity.

Time's "report" raged against the inclusionist position:

(continued on page 12)

History of Winners Leaves Too Many Losers

Interview by LAURIE OLSEN

JACQUELYN SMITH *has taught for more than 20 years in the Ravenswood City School District of East Palo Alto, where she herself was raised and educated. She is president of the teachers association in her district, which has rejected the state-adopted Houghton Mifflin social studies textbooks. She is now working with her colleagues to develop alternative social studies curricular materials suitable for Ravenswood's students, who are predominantly African-American, Latino and Pacific Islander.*

LO: ***What you think are the problems with the adopted textbook?***

JS: There's too much interpretation built into it, but it's presented as fact. History is always written by the winners, including fifth-grade history. But if you're working with children who are not part of that so-called "winning circle"—they're immigrants or they're African-American kids, for example—then you realize that these textbooks are wiping out their contributions to world history and U.S. history. And that destroys children. It causes them to feel they've always got to look up to somebody else, and that somebody else is usually going to be white. And sooner or later, they'll believe what they are being taught. No matter what has happened to indigenous peoples, the textbook history in this country will never treat them fairly because the purpose of that history is to pass on the winner's view.

LO: ***Is it textbooks per se, any textbooks, or the specific textbooks that are available to you that you feel don't work?***

JS: Teaching is difficult. Textbooks are like an instant TV dinner answer to a complicated challenge.

I talk to first-year teachers all the time. They say, "Jackie, you don't have any textbooks in reading. You're not using any in history. How do you do it?" And I have to explain that it takes time and a lot of work to wean yourself from textbooks and pull your curriculum together. I didn't do it from the beginning. I had one novel that I bought to share with my class the first year of my teaching, and from there I branched out.

> ***"Textbooks are like an instant TV dinner answer to a complicated challenge. ...I think teachers would be quite willing to use literature on its own without textbooks, if we had time to write the curriculum that goes with it, but we don't have that time."***

I do wish that the people who are fighting the Houghton Mifflin battle would also advocate for giving teachers something to replace what they're rejecting, like a better text, and time and support to write our own curriculum the way we need to. I already have my own plan, but many of my first-year colleagues are not going to be able to make it without a textbook.

LO: ***If textbooks aren't adequate, what ought to be happening in curriculum?***

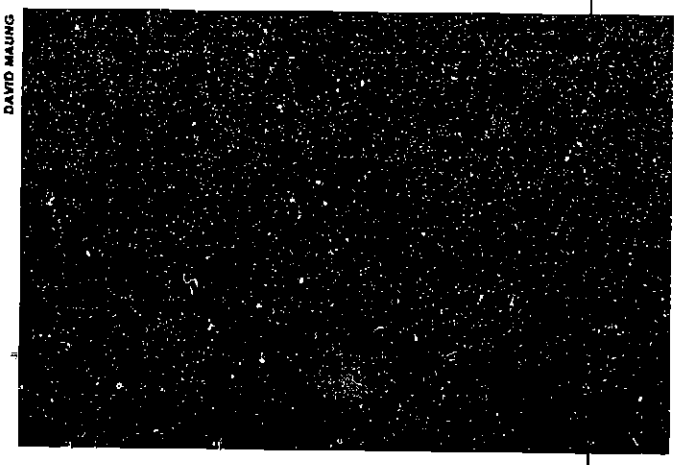
JS: In teacher credential programs, students should be required to get their hands on the framework and begin to start creating their curriculum, and to understand that they will need something more than the available textbooks to make the story they teach both true and just. Of course, when you use core literature, when you gather your own materials, you go out on your own. You have to be ahead of what's happening in the classroom. You have to prewrite everything. I think teachers would be quite willing to use literature on its own without textbooks, if we had time to write the curriculum that goes with it, but we don't have that time.

LO: ***What do you want to accomplish in teaching history to your students? Tell more about wanting to give them the views of the eyewitnesses and participants in history. And how do you decide what perspectives you're going to present?***

JS: Well, for example, we listen to the music of the times we study. Then we take a look at the clothing of the people. We talk about the resources that were in the land at that time and focus on what all people had, and at the differences among people. Then we compare that to our own resources, our own music. I'd like children to be able to think about both the differences and universal aspects of life as relates to every culture and time period we study. I want them to ask, "Why was Rome built the way it was built?"

History and social studies are all about the way people get along and work together, and how we each survive in our little subgroups and society, and what our needs are. And so we start with the study of our own classroom and of the children in it. At the beginning of the year, I bring the parents in oftentimes, and they share family history. So then when we read world history or U.S. history, the kids are able to ask, "Where was Samoa in all this?" or "Where was Mexico in all this?" because they're already tied in to this realization that each of us brings *something* to the classroom, that every culture and group has a story and perspective. By the time we get to November, we're ready to get into looking at other cultures and other times in history and they already understand that every human, every family has needs, and that there are cultural and political and individual influences on how we meet those needs. The textbooks don't support that kind of view. If you jump right into the textbook, it separates people right away.

DAVID MAUNG



Jacquelyn Smith

LO: ***Would the novels you bring in and the eyewitness accounts and primary materials you present, be different if you were teaching different cultural or racial groups?***

JS: No, I don't think so. Socrates would be somebody we would study in any case. But we'd talk about other great philosophers who brought great ideas to this world. And I'd say, "Let's find out about the great thinkers in your cultures." It's a real challenge to try to find that kind of information. For example, here's what I do with my Samoan kids. In their culture, the minister is a highly esteemed person—the king—the person where the knowledge comes from. And so I bring the king into the classroom, and he talks about how laws are set down, about the principles and wisdom behind them, the ideas of the culture. And so we read Socrates and then I flip to eyewitness accounts and materials I can find on a king from Samoa, trying to link great thinkers from one country with those from others. I use a lot of resource people in the community who reflect the culture of the people in the class.

LO: ***What do you think about the concern that an emphasis on diversity is divisive?***

JS: It's not divisive at all. It gives children tools to look at different groups of people with a sense of the universal. ❑

Books Symbolize A Greater Outrage

Interview by LAURIE OLSEN

PEDRO NOGUERA *is a sociologist and professor in the School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley. As a board member of the Berkeley Public Schools, he chaired joint community hearings held in Oakland and Berkeley where parents and advocates hotly debated local adoption of the Houghton Mifflin textbook series.*

LO: ***What was your impression of the community hearings regarding the textbooks?***

PN: I think the problem in the way this thing is being debated in public is that there's an exaggeration on the part of those who oppose the books; they give too much weight to the books themselves. I don't think that even if we had great books it would be a solution. It could only be part of the answer to the problem. The real, the bigger issue is whether or not the teachers themselves believe or understand or can teach a different perspective on history. The teacher has the power to portray history in the way that he or she sees fit, regardless of any textbooks. People who focus too much on the textbooks miss the point.

There is a tendency to think that if we had better textbooks, then we would reduce racism or we would reduce the alienation that kids experience in school. That's placing way too much weight on the textbooks. The key issue here is that minority kids don't achieve in school, they drop out, they feel alienated. The anger and upset over the extent to which schools fail minority kids is what's really behind the opposition to the books. But the books themselves are a misplaced emphasis which enables those who really don't want to confront those broader issues to dismiss the opposition as irrational and unreasonable people.

LO: ***Why do you think the broader issue of schools failing minority children is getting played out now, over textbooks?***

PN: Because the textbook adoption process has been mishandled politically and it made people mad. Because the writing of the history and the fact that school districts are going to be forced to approve these books, bring the politics over minority education concretely into focus. The decision over district purchase of the books is an occasion for people to have some say on what kind of education they want their kids to receive. And so the textbook becomes an opportunity to debate larger questions. The problem is that I don't think people are making those broader arguments particularly effectively.

LO: ***What's been ineffective in the debate?***

PN: It's become a matter of political principle to oppose the books. But what does that leave us with? The old textbooks or no textbooks! By making the new textbooks out to be so bad, it defines the debate in very stark terms. That is, if you're for the books, then you're a racist. And if you're against the books, then you're with the people. In so doing, the other issues, the broad range of other critical issues related to the achievement of minority students and the failure of schools get lost.

LO: ***Could you talk more about those broader issues?***

PN: It's the whole range of issues related to why minority kids are disproportionately in the bottom levels of achievement in school, why they drop out, why they are the ones to be expelled, to be suspended, to not go on to colleges. There is a lot of frustration among people, and I share it, because to a large extent it is clear that the commitment to public education is not there on a state or federal level. And there is a growing sense that public schools have been abandoned, largely because minorities are now the majority in many districts. And it is precisely because minorities are, in fact, the

majority now, that it is time that we should have the right to exert more control over the curriculum.

LO: ***The textbooks have already been approved at the state level. What do you think has been won or lost in this struggle over their adoption?***

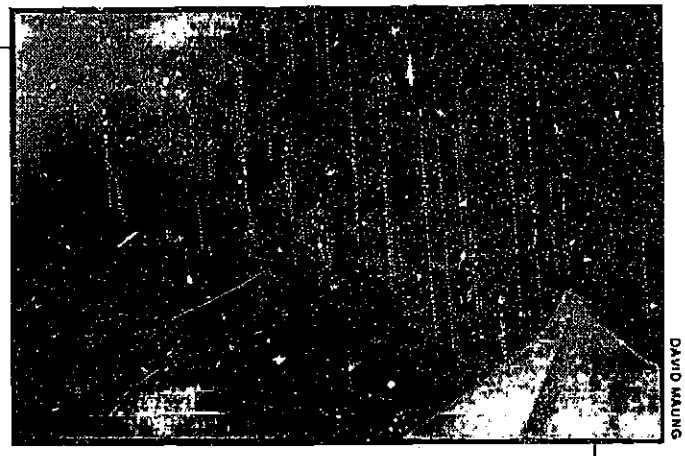
PN: California could have made a real leap forward in terms of really appreciating the diversity that everyone now talks about all the time, and that would have enabled us as a society, I think, to really push forward an agenda of tolerance between people of different races...That opportunity has been missed because of the hostile and exclusive process through which these textbooks were approved and the insistence on the part of those who adopted the books that they did a sufficient job of incorporating other perspectives, despite contrary evidence...They could have required some revisions to see to it that a book which would satisfy more people was produced...but they didn't. They refused to.

LO: ***Why?***

PN: I think the folks who really fought for the adoption of these books really believe in the content and perspective that are portrayed in them....And I think that for the most part, most white people still believe in the history of our nation as it's been taught—that white supremacy is basically right, that the history of civilization is the history of white men, and that the darker peoples of the world haven't contributed much. And that firm belief, even though it may not be expressed in those kind of stark terms, underlies their opposition to people who would want to see a different kind of curriculum, one that does, in fact, appreciate and include more of the perspectives, experiences and histories of minorities.

LO: ***Can all cultures be taught within the time limits of the school curriculum? Do choices and priorities have to make?***

PN: There's a balance. There's a great book, Howard Zinn's book, *The People's History of the United States*, which tells the history of the United States through the experience of working people, women, African Americans, Native Americans, Asian-Americans, everyone. You still get the history from the colonial period all the way up to the present, including how people in different positions and regions experienced it. It is possible to have a coherent textbook of American history that tells other stories. In fact, it may be the only way to give the whole picture. Why emphasize so much the actions of presidents, and never include the experience of working people? Why emphasize just what was shared and in common? What about the contributions of women or of other minority groups?



DAVID MAUNG

Pedro Noguera

LO: ***So where do you think all this is going?***

PN: The debate will clearly continue. Houghton Mifflin will win this round because they have the money and the power on their side. The state has approved the textbooks and it has leverage over the districts by being able to say, "If you don't approve these books, then you don't get the money to buy textbooks." That's where there's basically a monopoly over the curriculum and over the control of those resources which will result in these texts being adopted in district after district, with few exceptions.

However, the central debate over a developing multicultural curriculum will continue, particularly in districts which are made up largely of students of color. Teachers, parents and students will continue to demand a curriculum that is more representative and reflective of their experiences. It will be demand that will be impossible for school boards to continue to ignore. Perhaps Honig can ignore it because he's in Sacramento. But in Oakland, in Berkeley, in San Francisco, in Los Angeles, in San Jose, it can't be ignored. Because that is who our population is now. So the issue will remain alive until there is change. ❑

Inclusionists call a myth the pluralist version of a unified America evolved through assimilation and integration. They cite the inequalities and segregation prevalent in society today as resounding proof.

(continued from page 7)

> "It is now fairly commonplace to learn American history in the context of who has oppressed, excluded or otherwise mistreated whom...The customs, beliefs and principles that have unified the U.S., however imperfectly, for more than two centuries are being challenged with a ferocity not seen since the Civil War....Do Americans still have faith in the vision of their country as a cradle of individual rights and liberties, or must they relinquish the teaching of some of these freedoms to further the goals of ethnic and social groups to which they belong?"

In response to charges that an emphasis on diversity will result in cultural dissolution, the inclusionists point to the cultural and societal dissolution that is already a reality in American life. The low self-esteem and achievement of their children who do not see themselves reflected in the history taught in school is one example. Inclusionists demand reinforcement from the schools for those cultures that have been squashed by a dominant culture and political system. As parent Karleen Lloyd of Oakland was quoted in the *East Bay Express*, "I opposed the book because of my own experience in the public schools. As a person of color, I had to come to terms with who I am, and it never appeared in the history books. I don't want my children to go through that."

Inclusionists want history taught that accurately acknowledges past harms and fully credits the contributions and accurately describes the experiences of *all* people. Their mission is community and cultural survival, recognition and full inclusion. Thus, they do not share the pluralists' concern about unity as a goal in and of itself. They ask instead, "What will be the basis of that unity? What will be the price for us, the minority ethnic and racial communities of California? What is a vision of unity that we can embrace without denying our own culture and experiences?"

To the pluralists, however, this represents an abandonment of the possibility of unity. Peter Schrag addressed this in a *Sacramento Bee* commentary after hearing arguments against adopting the textbooks:

> "The refrain at the hearing, as in so much of education these days, was "diversity," a characteristic long and honorably celebrated in American history, but almost always in the larger context of national unity, *E pluribus unum*. But calls for unity were remarkably scarce in this affair, just as they are now sadly absent from most curricular discussions, or indeed, from so many other contemporary cultural undertakings."

This is an interpretation stemming from fear. A call for inclusion can more accurately be called a plea for unity—a unity based on truly equal access for the voices of all.

The pluralists won the state-level textbook adoption round. But the scars are yet to be measured. And the debate itself is continuing at many different levels of the school system—in districts facing the decision to purchase the new texts and in classrooms as individual teachers seek ways to create curriculum appropriate to their diverse students. [See accompanying interviews with Pedro Noguera and Jacquelyn Smith.]

The Subtext of Fear

The two major sides of the debate over cultural diversity in California's textbook adoption controversy share a deep fear of societal and cultural dissolution, of increased racial intolerance and hostility. They also agree on the power of formal curriculum to shape and transmit culture, and the political ramifications of what is officially sanctioned knowledge. But they face each other across deeply polarized divides of race, ethnicity and political viewpoint.

Indeed, can there be a consensus on what we want children to learn in school? Most of the national debates about schooling encompass this. Should there be a national curriculum? Should there be locally determined and chosen curriculum? Should parents be able to choose the kind of schooling and curriculum they want for their children or will that erode the public right to determine education for a common welfare? Even if we sought a strong national common school, could there ever be agreement in a society as diverse as ours?

Curriculum about history is particularly central in textbook battles, because it is the official line about who we are as a people. Our curriculum could and should play a role in shaping a new cultural reality—a new American cultural paradigm, inclusive of diversity and owning fully the histories of all of our peoples.

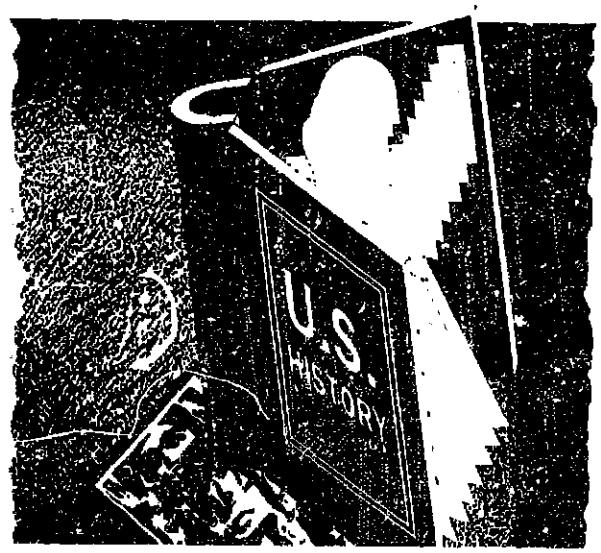
Many teachers, striving to create a curriculum appropriate to the cultural and ethnic diversity represented by the students in their classrooms, are finding textbooks too limiting. In California Tomorrow's *Embracing Diversity* report, teachers selected for their effectiveness in educating diverse groups of students reported unanimously that t: teach inclusively requires a non-reliance on textbooks—and the regular use instead of a broad array of supplementary materials which bring in the cultural and national backgrounds of their students and which assure the multiple perspectives and critical thinking emphasis that is central to learning in a diverse society. Districts that have opted to reject the Houghton Mifflin texts, such as Oakland, Hay ·d and East Palo Alto, are now working with parents and community groups to create their own history materials for the children of their classrooms.

Hidden Curriculum Yet to Be Addressed

The dialogue over curriculum is important, but it does over emphasize formal curriculum, as opposed to the hidden curriculum of school structural elements that deny access to the basic skills of learning. These include schooling practices such as tracking, low teacher expectations for minority students, and the fact that most racial and cultural minorities attend schools with less well-trained teachers, worse facilities and fewer materials than their counterparts in middle class and affluent communities. Judging from emotional public comments in hearings about textbook adoption, much of the anger and fear underlying the opposition to the new textbooks seems rooted in these larger patterns of inequality.

Furthermore, cultural politics and struggles over cultural diversity don't occur only at the level of fonnal curriculum decisions and textbook adoption. They also occur at the classroom and individual levels. The textbook does not wholly define what is taught. Teachers shape and reshape what they are willing to teach, what they want to teach. They present material in their own ways and scramble for supplementary materials to round out what the texts offer. In so doing, they often transform the curriculum. Therefore, teacher prepatation, planning time and the availability of supplementary materials becomes crucial. As a result, teacher prepuration, planning time and the availability of supplementary materials becomes crucial. What they teach is then filtered by students who selectively listen to, accept, reinterpret, or rejeel what they hear in school. Their parents may comment on what children repeat from their school lassons, helping children develop political and cultural lenses to mediate school loatning. On all of these levels, the acceptance or rejection of the official versiun of knowledge occurs.

Finally, the textbook adoption and purchase struggle is



but one round in the Cultural Diversity debate. For the past decade, language minority communities have struggled with the dominance of the English language and the loss of their native tongues. They have focused less on the content of the curriculum than on the language in which it is taught. In many ways, this fight mirrors the debate over cultural diversity in the curriculum. The English Only advocates (similar to the pluralists in the curriculum debate) view native language rights as divisive to the unity of our nation. The role of the schools in their eyes is to ensure a common tongue—English—and therefore, public funds should not be used for native language instruction or development. There, too, unity is posed as threatened by diversity, and commonality as only possible through conformity.

In both the fight over curriculum and the fight over language in education, the traditional educational policies of cultural and language assimilation are being forced to concede increasing degrees of incorporation. The formal curriculum in U.S. schools cannot simply be a reflection of dominant values and ideas imposed unmediated. These polarized debates also illustrate the urgent need to develop a new, strong, American cultural paradigm that sees unity as strengthened by diversity and inclusiveness. We already have the political paradigm—it is called democracy.

The critical challenge we face today is to refuse to accept the idea that commonality can only be at the price of diversity, that unity only exists if we demand conformity. And this is the macro-challenge facing schools in an era of diversity. We need to find new terms of unity that meet the needs of all students equitably. We must gain courage in our demands for full inclusion, swallow our fears of diversity, and wade deep into the waters to discover the terms of mutuality and respect that can bind us together. ❑

Laurie Olsen, executive director of California Tomorrow, has authored numerous education policy reports and articles. She formerly taught high school history and wrote for a textbook publisher

Beyond Images

They grew up in loving Asian families, one in Hong Kong and one in California. But the stories of Ruthanne Lum McCunn and Jean Chan Moore bring home the caution that you can't judge a book...

By Katherine Kam

Photographs by Dexter Dong

The Golden-Haired Kitten

To her Chinese kindergarten class in Hong Kong, she was "gum see mao"—the "golden-haired kitten." The third daughter of a U.S. seaman named Drysdale and a Eurasian mother named Lum, she was one-quarter Asian, three-quarters Caucasian, and very blonde. Nevertheless, she spoke only Cantonese, played only with Chinese children, and had spent almost her entire life in a Chinese neighborhood in Hong Kong. When she looked in the mirror, she saw a girl who was wholly Chinese.

But then her parents removed her from the local Chinese kindergarten and placed her in a British school. She had crossed an invisible but firmly drawn line. The neighborhood Chinese children, her former friends, no longer saw her as one of them, albeit different-looking, but as a "fan gwai mui,"—foreign devil girl. They avoided her.

In her new class of entirely white faces, the golden haired kitten was the lone Eurasian—and unable to speak a word of English. During her first recess, British classmates snatched her doll away to the top of a jungle gym. They tore off its arms and legs in front of the new "Ching Chong Chinaman."

Thus, at a tender age, San Francisco's Ruthanne

"Chinese sensibilities": McCunn in her San Francisco home

Lum McCunn, author of the acclaimed novel *Thousand Pieces of Gold*, experienced her first identity crisis, falling into a crack between the Chinese and British from whom she was descended but not claimed.

To this day, Ruthanne, now in her forties, wonders how her life might have been different if her parents had allowed her to remain in the Chinese school where she had been so happy.

To meet Ruthanne Lum McCunn is to realize how much one makes assumptions, however benign, based

In Harmony

In the kitchen of her home in Martinez, Jean Moore shows off her wedding album to a visitor. In many ways, the nuptial shots resemble so many others—the joyous couple, the walk down the aisle, the wedding attendants, the beaming relatives. But there is a striking quality to this celebration. The bride, a lovely Black woman, and her groom, who is white, stand proudly encircled by the Chinese-American family that adopted Jean at birth.

On a sunny June day, Jean wears an aqua shirt and shiny silver earrings that handsomely set off her light brown, slightly freckled complexion. Formerly a Cal-Trans employee, she now works at home raising her nine-month old son, Casey. The child naps in his room while his mother talks about her own birth and adoption 32 years ago. The facts are fresh in her mind. Only days earlier, Jean met her birth mother for the very first time.

Jean learned during the meeting that "Susan" was an unmarried nurse who had immigrated from her native Scotland at age 27. She became pregnant from a brief relationship with a man of African-American descent while working for Jean's adoptive father,

Jean Chan Moore, shown with husband Russell and son Casey, takes pride in her multicultural heritage

on appearance—and how wrong those assumptions can be. Ruthanne's house is a metaphor for the warm, articulate woman who dwells within. The outside is ornate San Francisco Victorian. Ruthanne is a Caucasian-appearing woman who speaks flawless American English. With her fair skin, brown hair and tall build, it takes concerted imagination to see a strand of Chinese heritage in her.

But step inside the house and the living room is filled with the artifacts of Ruthanne's Chinese childhood: Buddha statues, carved Chinese furniture, embroidered silk pictures. And inside the woman through and through are "Chinese sensibilities," she says, sprinkling her conversation with occasional Cantonese phrases.

"The strange thing about me is that my skin color doesn't match who I am, and that's just because of circumstances."

Like many biracial adults, Ruthanne has found great richness and contentment in her dual heritage. "I'd not change a thing," she says. But as a child, she suffered turmoil and deep anger during the complex process of developing her ethnic identity.

"The strange thing about me is that my skin color doesn't match who I am, and that's just because of circumstances."

—Ruthanne Lum McCunn

Ruthanne's mother met and married Robert Drysdale, a merchant marine, during a visit to San Francisco in 1939. During World War II, Lum bore three daughters in the safety of San Francisco's Chinatown, but immediately took her children back to Hong Kong when the war ended. The children's father returned to the seas. Ruthanne, then one year old, became part of a large, tightly-knit household full of great-aunts, aunts, uncles and cousins in Asia.

Though culturally Chinese, her clan enfolded Chinese, Eurasian and Indian members. Ruthanne recalls playing with Black dolls as a child; they reminded her of her favorite uncle, an Indian with a dark complex-

Wallace Chan, a San Mateo physician and U.S.-born son of Chinese immigrants. Dr. Chan arranged for a medical colleague in the South to adopt the baby. But Susan had told no one that she was carrying a biracial child. When she delivered the infant, the prospective parents decided it would be unfair to bring the child back to Virginia, considering the South's repressive treatment of Blacks.

Dr. Chan and his wife, Dorothy, who was then three months pregnant with the couple's third child, decided to adopt Jean themselves. "They must have been very brave to have done something like that at that time," Jean says. "They weren't as ethnocentric as a lot of families would have been back then. My grandmother jokes about how my father took in anything stray. He had a big heart."

A more traditional Chinese immigrant family, accustomed to the homogeneous households of their native land, probably would have been stunned by the Chan family. But Jean says her parents were more colorblind than many Chinese families because of their U.S. upbringings, travels and extensive education. In many ways, the remarkable story of Jean Chan Moore and her family illustrates how Californians have been blending into a variety of multicultural families, whether through interracial marriage or adoption.

"One woman, so bowled over when Mrs. Chan introduced Jean as her daughter, exclaimed, 'Why, she looks just like you!'"

These families soften racial boundaries and implore society to consider ethnic identity as something that can transcend mere skin color.

Jean says she was happy in her childhood home, which included an older brother and sister and the youngest girl born shortly after Jean. At age five, Jean began to realize the racial differences between herself and her family. In photographs, she compared her dark complexion and curly hair to her younger sister's amber skin and straight hair. Up to that point, "It's not that I believed I was Chinese," she says. "It's just that my family never made me feel any different from them. I was always such a part of them." At age eight, she was taken aback when her brother picked her out immediately in a wide-angle photograph filled with 100 faces, all Asian except for her own.

Jean spent her elementary school years in a pre-

ion. However, the family melange was far from the norm. Hong Kong in the 1950s was deeply segregated, even unto death. At Easter and Ching Ming—a Chinese holiday to honor one's dead ancestors—Ruthanne recalls visiting the non-Chinese "colonial" cemetery, and then the Chinese cemetery.

When Ruthanne began school, her father came home to his family after many seasons on the waters. In Ruthanne's eyes, he was a "fan gwai lo," a foreign devil man. She couldn't speak to him in English and refused to acknowledge that such a different-looking being could be her father. Instead, she called him "Uncle."

Alarmed, Drysdale insisted on putting Ruthanne and her sister into British school the following year. There, Ruthanne retreated into unbroken silence amid daily taunts. After the doll incident, the school promptly skipped Ruthanne from first to second grade so that her older sister could protect her. Ruthanne recalls a kind Chinese janitor woman who took pity on her, allowing her to tag along as the woman worked.

The unhappy years fueled bitterness and anger that exploded on occasion. In the British school, each child tended to his own little garden plot. One day, Ruthanne uprooted all the other children's plantings. Another time, she chalked Chinese characters all over the school. Several times, her teacher expressed concern to Ruthanne's mother about the child who never uttered a word.

For the rest of her school years, Ruthanne never associated with white classmates off-campus. For the British and the Americans, social life revolved around clubs, where Eurasians were unwelcome. Even though Ruthanne could "pass," she refused to go places where her family could not tread.

But many Chinese rejected her also; Eurasians were stereotyped as the offspring of western servicemen and Asian prostitutes. Children, Asian and white alike, teased her about being illegitimate. Only years later did Ruthanne realize how angry she was as a child, "angry at the name-calling and abuse I took from everybody." She found friends mainly in other Eurasians and some Chinese, but most of all, she took refuge in books, in writing and in the closeness of her family. "I saw a hostile outside world," she recalls.

At age 15, she graduated from high school. Getting

dominantly white, affluent Sacramento neighborhood. There, she had little exposure to other African Americans, and she thought little about being Black herself. She was very close especially to her mother and says she never felt at odds at school or within her family's Chinese-American culture; it was all she had ever known. She certainly recalls quizzical looks from strangers when she went out with her family in public. One woman, so bowled over when Mrs. Chan introduced Jean as her daughter, exclaimed, "Why, she looks just like you!"

As Jean was preparing to move on to junior high school, her parents divorced and Mrs. Chan moved the children to a multiracial neighborhood. When Jean started school, she stepped into a world of vast differences: rich and poor, Black, white, Asian and Latino. Later, she would credit this multiculturalism for her comfortableness with her own racially mixed background. But for the first time in her protected life, she also came face to face with the harsh politics of color. Some Black students targeted her immediately as a Black girl who was "trying to act white" because, in her own words, she dressed and talked differently and listened to different music.

Their fury frightened and confused her. "I just couldn't understand the anger of these kids," she recalls. "How could they be so angry at me just because I was a little different? As far as I was concerned, I looked the same [as they did]."

The first year was extremely tough, she says. She hung out mainly with whites. But eventually, she made friends among the Black students. Pretty and sociable, she soon became popular, attracting friends of all races.

Her Scottish heritage and Chinese upbringing aside, she defines herself as a Black woman. Before her marriage to Russ Moore, Jean had close relationships with two African American men, each for four years. When she first moved away from her family, she furnished her apartment with Chinese knick-knacks, but says she has grown to favor antiques—something in which no other Chan family member shows interest. While she would be happy to read an Amy Tan novel, she would rather devour a work by Alice Walker. She still attends Chinese New Year celebrations in San Francisco's Chinatown, where her grandmother lives. But more and more, she is learning about African-American art and culture.

She seems to take pride in her multicultural past and her resulting ability to flow easily through the worlds of various racial groups. Much of it she attributes to her nonconfrontational personality. She

McCann and one of her four resident cats

into Hong Kong's lone and extremely selective university was impossible, so she came to the United States to further her education. She stayed for a while with her father's family in Idaho, but they were total strangers who did not make her feel welcome. She was a Chinese immigrant—and still considers herself as such.

In the United States in the 1960s, Ruthanne's skin color protected her from much of the hostility her fellow immigrant Chinese experienced. Still, when some whites found out she was a Chinese woman from Hong Kong, the racism surfaced. At age 19, Ruthanne married Don McCann, a college classmate who was white. Ruthanne's parents objected because of the couple's youthfulness, but Don's parents disowned him for marrying a Chinese woman. His aunts "melodramatically" told him he could never walk down the street and hold his head high, Ruthanne now recalls with a laugh. Don is still estranged from them today. He did make peace with his parents before they died, but their relationship with Ruthanne never warmed up past politeness.

In 1965, laws barring interracial marriage were still in effect in the South, where Don was stationed with the Navy. Don and Ruthanne were forced to travel to New York to be married. When they returned to Norfolk, Virginia, a neighbor threatened to turn them in for cohabitating.

In 1968, the McCanns moved west and unwittingly rented a San Francisco apartment reserved exclusively

and Russ encounter occasional hostility, such as a snub from an African-American family during a cross-country drive through the South. But Jean's strategy is to let such incidents slide by, even though she admits her fear of them. "If I sense hatred in anybody, I'm just quick to avoid it," she says.

Growing up, Jean did not know her birth mother's identity, only that she was white with a freckled complexion. At age sixteen, Jean asked her adoptive mother for the woman's name. "I could see that it scared her and maybe it hurt her that I asked. But she did tell me."

For fifteen years, Jean harbored the name in her memory, but did nothing to find her birth mother. After Casey's birth—and with some prompting from Russ—she began a search in earnest. She wanted Casey to know his roots and feared that she might wait until it was too late. And, she says, "I was really anxious to see my eyes in someone else."

Her search culminated in a picnic meeting with her birth mother that was less emotional than Jean had imagined. "There were no tears at all," she says. "I had a fantasy in the back of my mind that when I saw her, I'd really see myself for the first time, but I didn't."

The Chans on Jean's wedding day

Susan was friendly, nevertheless, and wished to develop a relationship slowly. Jean was disheartened to notice only slight physical resemblances and mannerisms between herself and her birth mother—almond-shaped eyes and a nervous giggle. When Jean returned home, she stared and stared at a picture of Susan, hoping to see more of a likeness. Almost in

"To me, Chinese is family. Chinese is where my heart is."

—Ruthanne Lum McCunn

for whites, although ironically, a Chinese owned the building. When Ruthanne's Chinese relatives visited, the apartment manager confronted the couple angrily, accused them of renting under false pretenses, and harassed them constantly. In defiance, Ruthanne hung a "Yellow Power" poster on her door for all to see.

On the flip side nowadays, when she is asked, sight unseen, to various conferences to present an Asian point of view, some organizers are disturbed that she doesn't appear Chinese. "People get angry when I show up," she says. "I ruin the color scheme. They feel they've been duped." One shocked woman even asked indignantly, "Couldn't you at least have worn a black wig?"

"I don't hide the fact that I'm Chinese," Ruthanne says. "On the other hand, I'm not going to go around apologizing for the way I look."

Though painful, Ruthanne finds hostility from whites in this country to be mostly inconsequential. "It never hurts as much as getting it from other Chinese," she says. "To me, Chinese is family. Chinese is where my heart is."

For example, when she worked as a teacher in a bilingual Chinese program at a San Francisco middle school, immigrant parents found it difficult to accept her. And when researching her books, Chinese sources sometimes don't trust her immediately, a situation she calls "a terrible inconvenience."

"I have to overcome how I look to them because they see me as a 'fan gwai,' or 'foreign devil'"—an obviously derogatory term, she notes.

But she confesses that she, too, has struggled with her own prejudices, mainly against Chinese-Americans who seemed too westernized and could not speak the tongues of their forebears. "They seemed like sell-outs," she said. Only after years did she realize that in spite of skin color, they were shaped as much by their society as she was by hers.

Despite the double-edged prejudices of the U.S.,

"If I sense hatred in anybody, I'm quick to avoid it."

—Jean Chan Moore

tears, she finally gave up. But later, Jean says, while doing some housework, she looked into a mirror and was startled to see her birth mother's face in her own.

Susan also gave Jean photos of the family she bore with the Irish immigrant she married three years after Jean's birth. But Susan made it clear that her husband has strong racial prejudices. When his daughter, Jean's half-sister, married a Latino, he refused to attend the wedding and cut the couple off for years. He knows that his wife gave up a daughter for adoption, but Susan feared telling him that Jean is half African-American. "I may never meet him," Jean says with regret. He stands in the way of her fantasy that she might spend some holidays with her birth mother's family.

Still, somewhere out there is her biological father. Jean will start a search for him soon, as Susan has given her his name. Jean hopes that maybe she'll find a closer resemblance to herself in his side of the family, that there will be a stronger "click."

With half her search realized, Jean feels changed. She has put to rest fears that her adoptive parents might have, with caring intentions, given her erroneous information about her birth mother just to give Jean a sense of identity. "I feel a little more settled," she says. "I'm glad that I really know." She hopes her son will grow up comfortable in the knowledge of his ethnic identity. Jean and Russ bought their first home in a white, working-class neighborhood in Contra Costa County because the area was affordable. But Jean is anxious to move to a more racially mixed neighborhood before Casey starts school so that he can make friends of all races. "Hopefully, he'll be lucky enough to surround himself like I did with people who aren't the type to base their friendships on somebody's color or race or background." ❑

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she is glad she came because this country has given her a freedom she doubts would have been hers as a Eurasian in colonial-minded Hong Kong. "But I very much recognize its [the U.S.'s] freedom for me because of my white skin. Somebody else who doesn't have that white skin doesn't have that freedom."

In this country, she gained access to a college education that helped her to launch her successful writing career. She began to fulfill the promise in her Chinese given name, "Lo-duk,"—which means, "whatever path you choose is possible." First, she wrote *An Illustrated History of Chinese in America*. Then, in 1981, she had another work published, *Thousand Pieces of Gold*, a biographical novel about Lalu Nathoy, a Chinese pioneer woman born in the mid-1800s. When Ruthanne came to the U.S., she was surprised to find a misconception that Chinese women are "weak, passive China dolls." "Believe me, none of the women I grew up with were like that!" The novel's true-life heroine survived sale to rural Chinese bandits and then slave passage to the U.S., where she was forced to work in an Idaho saloon. Later, after gaining her freedom in a poker game, she homesteaded acres of wilderness with incredible gutsiness and determination. This year, Lalu Nathoy's story was told in a commercial film based on Ruthanne's novel.

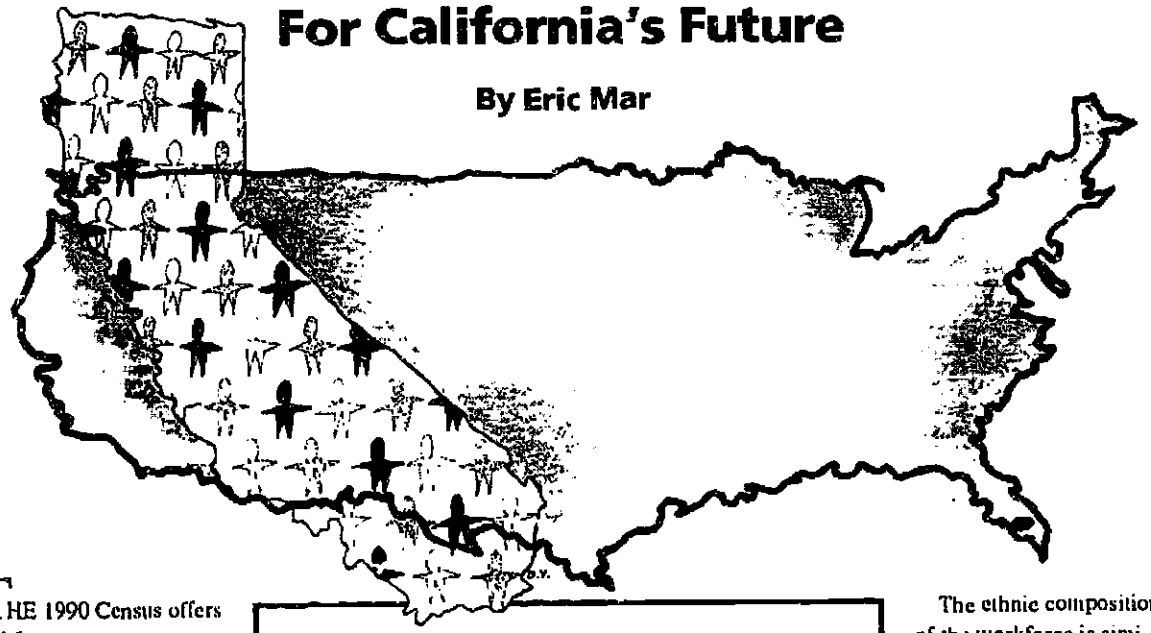
Ruthanne also wrote *Sole Survivor*, the true story of a shipwrecked Chinese man who holds the Guinness world record for longest survival at sea—133 days. The book was partly a response to the myth that Asians don't value life the way Westerners do—a charge Ruthanne has heard from people unaware of her Asian ancestry. Says she: "If you don't value life, you won't struggle the way Poon Lim did, and the way Asians everywhere do on a day-to-day basis."

Ruthanne's Asian identification fuels her mission to tell the stories of extraordinary Chinese women and men buried in history. And in a sense, the characters mirror her own experience. All her book subjects start out in Asia and end up in the U.S. "I'm writing the immigrant experience over and over again," she says with a laugh. "I guess I'm really just looking for what people do to survive." ❑

Katherine Kam, a former California Tomorrow fellow, is co-editor of California Perspectives.

1990 Census Poses Challenges For California's Future

By Eric Mar



THE 1990 Census offers Californians a rare glimpse at our dramatically changing population and a critical opportunity to prepare for our future.

This headcount verified the obvious: California is undergoing an unprecedented demographic shift. In 1970, whites made up nearly 80% of the state's population. Today, they make up 57%. In contrast, the state's racial minority population jumped from 22% to 43% during that same period.

California, already the nation's most populous state, continued to grow rapidly during the past ten years, with more than half the new residents flocking to the suburbs of major metropoliten areas, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego and Sacramento. Our state grew at a rate of more than 2.5 times the national average — 25.7% versus 9.8%. Demographers predict that within 14 years or less, there will be no majority ethnic group in California.

Our public schools already reflect this transition to a multiracial society. Students of color* outnumber whites 54.4% to 45.6%. California's school children speak nearly 100 languages. The rapid demographic change in the schools poses a tremendous challenge for educators, parents and communities to reflect upon the needs of the diverse student population.

** No longer the "minority," students of color encompass Hispanics, Asians, African Americans and Native Americans.*

California: The Big Picture

California's population in 1990: **29.76 million**
Number added between 1980 and 1990: **6.2 million***
Percentage of U.S. residents now living in California: **12%**
Number of California cities among the U.S.'s 30 largest: **18**

*Of these **6.2 million** new Californians, **51.6%** were of Hispanic origin, and **26.1%** were of Asian Pacific Islander background—a total of **77%**.

The ethnic composition of the workforce is similarly changing, largely as a result of the influx of new immigrants. According to the Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy, more than 80% of labor force growth in the next decade will be from Latinos and Asians.

In light of this great social flux, census figures become extremely important. They provide the basis for the state govern-ment's redrawing of legislative and congressional district boundaries to ensure equal political representation. The numbers also affect the distribution of federal aid—such as health, employment training, housing and economic development funds—to state and local governments.

"Information is power," said voting rights attorney Joaquin Avila. "The census provides an opportunity for empowerment both politically and economically."

So important are the numbers that Latino, Asian American and African American community groups, civil rights organizations and various city governments last year pressured the U.S. Department of Commerce, which oversees the Census Bureau, to take measures to ensure an accurate count. Under settlement of a lawsuit brought by some of these groups, the Census Bureau was required to conduct a "post-enumeration survey" (PES) to help minimize the historic undercounting, especially for people of color.

In June 1991, the Bureau admitted it had severely undercounted the populations of Los Angeles, San Jose and

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DEIRDRE VALDES

California's Diverse Asian American Population

Ethnic Group	Percentage in California	Number in California
1. Filipino	25.7	731,685
2. Chinese	24.8	704,850
3. Japanese	11.0	312,989
4. Vietnamese	9.8	280,223
5. Korean	9.1	259,941
6. Indian	5.6	159,973
7. Cambodian	2.4	68,190
8. Laotian	2.0	58,058
9. Hmong	1.6	46,892
10. Thai	1.1	32,064
Total other Asians:		80,195
Total Pacific Islanders:		110,599

Total Asian Pacific Islanders: 2,845,659

[Source: Census Bureau]

Racial Breakdown of California's Population

	Percentage in 1980	Percentage in 1990
White [non-Hispanic]	67.0	57.0
Hispanic	19.3	25.8
Asian Pacific Islander	5.3	9.6
African American	7.7	7.4
American Indian	0.9	0.8

California contains the nation's largest Hispanic and Asian Pacific Islander populations.

In 1990, Hispanics constituted nearly **7.7 million** of the state's population. Of the national growth in the Hispanic population, **41%** has been in California. The state's Hispanic population now *exceeds* the total population of all but **8** states. *[Source: Los Angeles Times, 2/25/91]*

In 1990, Asian Pacific Islanders constituted **2.85 million** of California's population. Of all Asian Pacific Islanders in the U.S., **40%** now live in California. Asian Pacific Islanders have grown to at least **one-fifth** the total population in **39** California cities, including **13** in the Bay Area. *[San Francisco Chronicle, 2/27/91]*

In 1990, African Americans constituted **2 million** of the state's residents. California ranks **second** only to New York in its African American population.

During the past decade, Asian Pacific Islanders, the fastest growing racial group, increased by **127%** in California. Latinos grew by **69%**. The African American population rose by **21%** and whites increased by **13%**.

[From the Census Bureau 2/91 release and SF Examiner 2/26/91, unless otherwise noted]

San Francisco. Indeed, California was the most undercounted of any state. Civil rights groups called attention to the disproportionately high undercounts of communities of color: fewer than 2% of the nation's whites were missed, compared to 5.2% of the Latinos, 4.8% of African Americans, and 3.1% of Asian Americans. The Department of Commerce has decided not to adjust its earlier figures, however, despite the PES findings.

As the figures stand, California will gain seven U.S. Congressional seats for a total of 52 beginning in the 1992 election—the largest for a state in U.S. history.

Whether any people of color fill these seats remains to be seen. To date, the state's growth of racial minorities has not been reflected in the California legislature and other political institutions. Of the state's 120 lawmakers in Sacramento, 7 are Latino, 9 are African American, and none is Asian Pacific Islander. Local politics offer equally disheartening numbers. Asian Americans make up 44% of Daly City, but none has ever won a seat on the city council.

Such disparities cause Avila and others to fear that California is developing into a "two-tiered society" in which most people of color lack power and control over resources.

"Unless we correct this situation," Avila warned, it will become a "recipe for social and political disaster."

To rectify the lack of representation for disenfranchised communities, Avila suggests that people begin participating in politics at the local level—from school boards to city councils and county boards of supervisors. By establishing this "political base" and "nurturing and developing" leadership, he said, ethnic communities can begin to make regional and statewide impact on educational policies and other areas of public life—a necessity if people of color are to share equally in California's future.

Here, we present selected statistics from the 1990 Census figures and media analyses of census information.

Youth and Education

Who Is In the Classroom?

A look at California's K-12 public school enrollment in 1990:

Ethnic Group	California Percentage	Total K-12 Enrollment
White	45.6	2,259,317
Hispanic	34.3	1,702,363
African American	8.6	426,356
Asian American	7.8	387,734
Filipino	2.2	109,650
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	0.8	38,112
Pacific Islander	0.5	26,942

Total Students: **4,950,474**
Total Students of Color: **2,691,157 (54.4%)**

[Source: CA Department of Education]

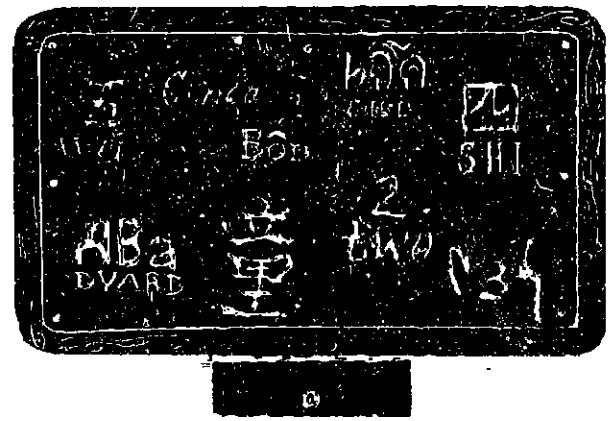
...And What Languages Do They Speak?

Primary languages among Limited English-Proficient Students in California public schools in 1990:

1. Spanish	76.0%	
2. Vietnamese	4.0	
3. Cantonese	2.5	
4. Cambodian	2.2	
5. Hmong	2.1	(106% increase between 1986 and 1990)
6. Filipino	1.9	
7. Korean	1.6	
8. Lao	1.4	
9. Armenian	1.0	(274% increase between 1986 and 1990)
10. Mandarin	0.8	
11. Japanese	0.6	
12. Farsi	0.6	
13. Portuguese	0.3	
14. Arabic	0.3	
15. All others	4.5	

Total Number of LEP Students in CA: **861,531**

[Source: CA Department of Education]



Limited English-Proficient Students Compared to California's Total School Population, 1990

Grade	Percentage of LEP out of total enrollment
Kindergarten - Grade 3	24.4
Grades 4 - 8	16.3
Grades 9 -12	12.9

[Source: CA Dept. of Education, 1990 Language Census Report for California Public Schools]

The "Minority" No Longer

In these California counties, students of color make up a majority in the schools.

County	Percentage of Students of Color	Total Number of Students
1. San Francisco	86.0	62,236
2. Imperial	82.4	29,019
3. Los Angeles	75.1	1,406,718
4. Fresno	62.6	152,308
5. Monterey	62.1	60,635
6. San Benito	58.7	7,505
7. Alameda	57.4	184,241
8. Tulare	56.3	73,524
9. Merced	56.2	42,359
10. Santa Clara	55.3	226,748
11. Kings	54.2	21,049
12. San Joaquin	51.8	94,795

[Source: CA Department of Education]

Crisis: California's Dropout Rates

Roughly one in three California students — or **34.1%** — drops out of public school. Which ethnic communities are at greatest risk?

Ethnic Group	Dropout Rate*
African American	32.8
Hispanic	29.2
Pacific Islander	22.8
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	21.1
White	14.4
Filipino	12.9
Asian	10.9

* Based on a dropout rate for Grades 10 to 12 in CA public schools, 1989-90. The actual rate is higher because students who dropped out before 10th grade are not counted.

[Source: CA Department of Education]

Political Representation

Unequal Representation

Percentage of racial minorities among California's total population: **43%**

Percentage of racial minorities among California's elected officials: **12%***

Percentage of racial minorities among California's county supervisors: **7%**

Percentage of racial minorities among California's city council members: **13%**

* (Among the state's elected officials, **88%** are white, **7.6%** Latino; **3%** African American; and **1.6%** Asian American.)

[Source: Sacramento Bee, 3/31/91]

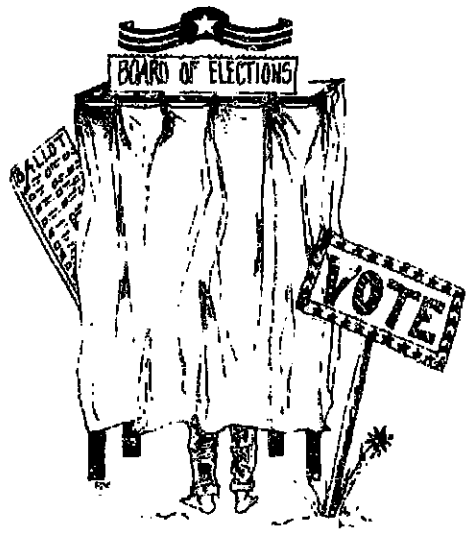
California County Supervisors

Total number of county supervisors: **296**
Supervisors who are people of color: **20**
Total number of county boards of supervisors: **58**
County boards with no minority members: **44**
County boards with one minority member: **11**
County boards with more than one minority member: **3**

Examples of California counties with no people of color on their boards of supervisors:

	Percentage of countywide "minority" population
Imperial	71%
Fresno	49%
Monterey	48%
Kings	46%
Merced	46%

[Sacramento Bee, 3/31/91]



At the Ballot Box

Racial makeup of voters in the 1990 California gubernatorial primary:

White	83%
African American	7%
Latino	7%
Asian	3%

[Source: California Poll]

Regional Dynamics: North and South

Growth: San Francisco Versus Los Angeles

The **San Francisco/Oakland/San Jose** Metropolitan Area, the nation's **fourth** largest, had **6.25 million** residents in 1990.

Percentage increase in population from 1980 to 1990: **16.5%**

The **Los Angeles/Anaheim/Riverside** Metropolitan Area, the nation's **second** largest, had **14.5 million** residents in 1990.

Percentage growth in population from 1980 to 1990: **26.4%**

[Source: Census Bureau]

Largest Latino Communities (1990)

NORTH

City	Number of Latinos	Percentage of Citywide Population
San Jose	208,388	27
San Francisco	100,717	14
Sacramento	60,007	16
Oakland	51,711	14

SOUTH

City	Number of Latinos	Percentage of Citywide Population
Los Angeles	1,391,411	40
San Diego	229,519	21
Santa Ana	191,383	65
East Los Angeles*	119,684	95

*Census Designated Place; not actual city
[Source: Census Bureau]

Largest Asian Pacific Islander Communities (1990)

NORTH

City	Number of Asians/Pacific Islanders	Percentage of Citywide Population
San Francisco	210,876	29
San Jose	152,815	19
Oakland	54,931	15
Daly City	40,466	44

SOUTH

City	Number of Asians/Pacific Islanders	Percentage of Citywide Population
Los Angeles	341,807	10
San Diego	130,945	12
Monterey Park	34,898	57
Alhambra	31,313	38

Largest African American Communities (1990)

NORTH

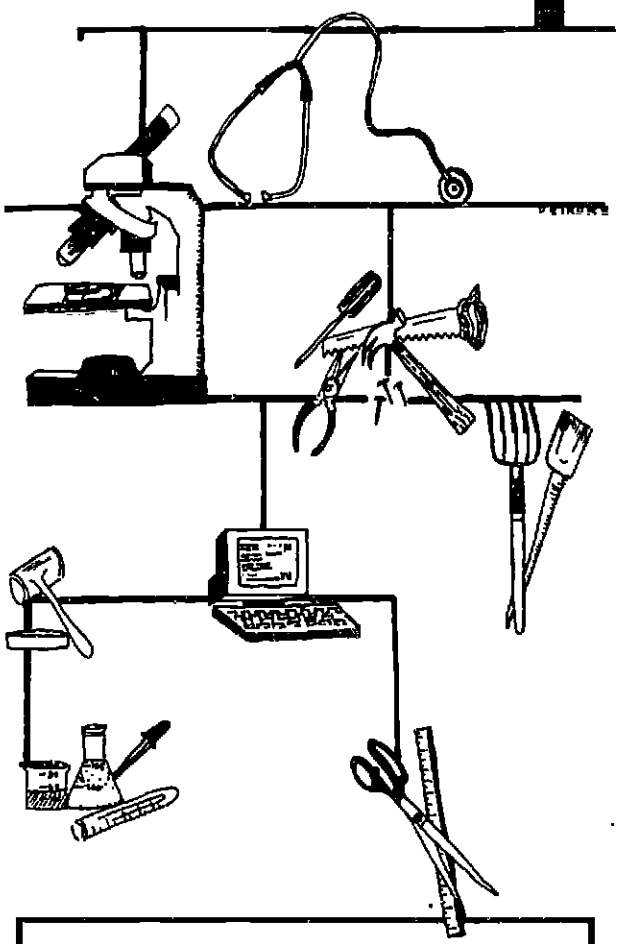
City	Number of African Americans	Percentage of Citywide Population
Oakland	163,335	44
San Francisco	79,039	11
Richmond	38,260	44
Vallejo	23,098	21

SOUTH

City	Number of African Americans	Percentage of Citywide Population
Los Angeles	487,674	14
San Diego	104,261	9
Long Beach	58,761	14
Inglewood	56,861	52

[Source: Census Bureau]

The Workplace of Tomorrow



California Labor

California's labor force is expected to grow by **3 million** this decade.

- More than **85%** of these new workers will be people of color. Immigrants will play a large part in the growth.
- In the 1990s, more than **1 in 2** new workers will be Latino, and **1 in 4** will be Asian.
- More than half the state's new workers will be **women.**
- Nearly all new workers will be in the **35-54** age group.

[Source: Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy]

Black and Latino Workers

Job areas in which Latinos are overrepresented: **craft, laborer and farm-related occupations**

Job areas in which African Americans are overrepresented: **sales, administrative support, and service occupations**

Job areas in which Latinos and Blacks are heavily underrepresented: **managerial and professional occupations**

[Source: Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy, 1990]

Eric Mar, a former California Tomorrow fellow, is a San Francisco attorney. He produces programs for KPOO Radio and works with the Chinese Progressive Association in San Francisco's Chinatown.

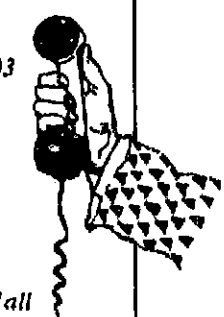
FOR MORE INFORMATION

On census publications and resources, contact the U.S. Census Bureau Customer Service: (301) 763-4100.

On community-based advocacy and education to increase political participation among disenfranchised groups, contact:

Southwest Voter Registration Education Project
c/o Rita Moreno or Richard Martinez
1712 West Beverly Boulevard, Suite 203
Montebello, CA 90640
(213) 728-2706

Coalition of Asian Pacific Americans for Fair Reapportionment
c/o Tania Azores
Asian American Studies Center, UCLA
405 Hilgard Avenue, 3232 Campbell Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90024-1546
(213) 206-8889



THE MASTERS

A JOURNEY AMONG CALIFORNIA'S FOLK ARTISTS

ALVINO SIVA, ROBERT LEVI AND SATURNINO TORRES
Cahuilla Bird Singers
Banning and Riverside

"Bird Songs and the spontaneous dancing they generate...tell the story of how the first people, our ancestors, came here."

Photographs by John Bishop. All artists' photos and quotations © 1991 by John Melville Bishop. From California Artists: At the Crossroads.

California Artists: At the Crossroads
By John Bishop
Published for the California Arts Council, Traditional Folk Arts Program

Look over the shoulder of Marn Seng Sae Chao as she teaches her young daughter the tiny stitches and patterns of Lao Iu Mien hill tribe embroidery. Gather the bark of redbud, bull pine and willow trees with Dorothy Stanley for basketweaving in the tradition of her Miwuk Indian ancestors. Listen to Harvey "Harmonica Fats" Blackston recall his southern childhood when every Christmas his grandfather put a harmonica in a shoebox under the tree.

These master artisans and thirty-three of their fellows invite you to experience their worlds in a book of photographs and interviews, *California Artists: At the Crossroads*, excerpts from which appear here. The subjects are all recipients of small grants from the Traditional Folk Arts Program of the California Arts Council which have enabled them to teach their craft to an apprentice. John Bishop, a writer and documentary filmmaker, and Barbara LaPan Rahm, a folklorist and manager of the CAC traditional folk arts program, spent six weeks crisscrossing California, recording the stories and images of the artists, whose studios are their homes, streets, backyards and nature beyond. Bishop's pristine and unpretentious photographs, printed in luscious duotone, allow readers to respectfully tag along with their welcoming hosts as they practice their crafts.

The book pays a visit on a Cambodian Classical Dancer, a Paiute Singer, a Mexican Altarista, a Carifuna Drummer, a Ukrainian Embroiderer, a Japanese Carpenter, a Cajun Accordionist. "Exotic" musical instruments are happily employed that some

MARN SENG SAE CHAO
Iu Mien Embroiderer
With daughter Mey Chiem
Richmond

"Parents try to raise a responsible daughter. (In Laos) a girl who cannot make beautiful embroidery is not neat, orderly, or a good worker and will not make a good daughter-in-law or wife."

might otherwise place in a museum case. A Japanese seamstress sculpts a fine kimono without ever cutting the silk. These pictures are the kind that children of all ages may enter, explore and reenter again. The stories are simple and telling, and ripe for launching discussions about diverse cultures, art, nature and family generations.

The book's short introduction is also thought-provoking for adults and older teenagers. Ruhm and Bishop write, "Folk arts are not simple things done by simple people, but fully elaborated aesthetic and technological systems practiced by people who are, at the same time, part of the modern world. ...The master artists, in large measure, are displaced people; some in the concrete sense of being a refugee or immigrant, others in the more abstract sense of being alientated from their land and resources. Their art provides pride and self-identity, not only for themselves, but for their community as well."

California Artists: At the Crossroads has been distributed to most California libraries and some schools. Ruhm hopes there will be enough positive response to the book to merit another printing. As soon as word gets out about this valuable resource, many eager readers should emerge.

—Carol Dowell

MARIKA PSIHOUNTAS
Greek Musician and Dancer
Los Angeles

"Every region of Greece has distinctive music, and that pluralism is reflected in the Greek community in Los Angeles."

RACHEL D.K. CLARK
African American Quilter
Watsonville

"Fabrics talk to me. Quilting has given me a wonderful sense of belonging to a continuous line of women with something in common besides color."

JOSE "PEPE" SILVA
Mexican Norteño Accordionist
With apprentice
Esteban Ceniceros
Los Angeles

"Esteban has the ability and commitment to make it work. Most people would drop out after a lesson or two when they find out how hard it really is."

ANITA MARTINEZ
Garifuna Singer and Dancer
Los Angeles

"By the time I was eight, I became fascinated by the sometimes mournful yet joyful sounds and movements."

Stopping Bias In Its Tracks

An intensive course equips child care workers for a crucial mission: to teach a new generation to combat prejudice

By Laurie Olsen and Nina Mullen

Photographs by Bill Lovejoy

A little girl runs toward the swings, braids flying, but stops short. Two boys perched on the structure taunt, "No girls on the tire swing! You can't play here."

Two young friends in the play corner prepare to play house. The taller girl, standing sturdily with her hands on her hips, insists to the one in the wheelchair, "You'll have to be the baby because you can't walk."

A four-year-old boy, new to the day care center, shrinks against the blonde, rosy-faced teacher leading him on a grand tour. A Latina teacher has just greeted him with a Spanish accent. "I don't like her," the boy says. "She talks funny. Tell her to go away."

Three preschoolers race around making war whoops and pretending to scalp the other children. They insist to their inquiring teacher that this is how real Indians behave. They know, because they just saw "Peter Pan."

These kinds of incidents occur every day in early childhood programs. They are examples of "preprejudice," the seeds that for young children may bloom into real racism and sexism through societal reinforcement—or become internalized by children in the form of shame and self-hatred as they grow, says Julie Olsen Edwards, a Santa Cruz educator.

Edwards is among a vanguard of teachers dedicated to helping transform children's budding prejudices into appreciation for humankind's differences. She teaches Cabrillo Community College's Anti-Bias Curriculum course, structured for people who work with young children. Edwards and other teachers in a growing number of institutions as far-flung as Santa Barbara City College, Michigan State University, and the University of Minnesota use this innovative program, pioneered by Louise Derman Sparks, an expert in diversity and social justice. A multicultural team of educators led by Derman-Sparks, a faculty member at Pacific Oaks College in Southern California, wrote one of the texts used in Edwards's course. The book, *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children*, has sold more than 49,000 copies since its publication in 1989 by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

The Anti-Bias course's basic premise is that very young children absorb society's spoken and unspoken biases against people of different skin tones, cultures and lifestyles. An essential role of early childhood education should be, then, to help children talk about and understand the differences among people, to develop the skills for naming prejudice when it occurs, and to gain the strength to stand up for oneself and others in the face of injustice.

Last spring 34 students, aged 17 to 54, enrolled in Edwards's class, which meets no state credential or community college graduation requirements. All the students were working with youngsters from various cultures in myriad child care, early childhood education, and children's services settings. Many of the students had children of their own. Coming to school one night a week and for a full-day Saturday workshop required major effort. The

Student Tanya Wagner, a preschool teacher, arrays pictures of faces to highlight the beauty of human diversity.

normal drop-out rate in community college courses is about 40%. Only two people dropped this course, which was being taught at Cabrillo for the first time ever.

Identifying Our Own Cultures First

The course began in a highly personal manner—focusing on the students rather than on children. All class members identified their own cultures—their individual ethnicities, religions, socioeconomic classes, etc. As the students struggled through the intense process of arriving at definitions of personal culture, Edwards drew them out.

Said one woman, "I don't have any ethnicity really. There's not much in my background worth mentioning."

"Well, where did you grow up?" Edwards queried.

"Just in a white family of southern racist bigots. That's why I moved out here to California, to get away from them," the student responded disparagingly. Recognizing the pain in that statement, the teacher encouraged the student to talk more. "It's hard to cut yourself off from family," Edwards said. "What was there in your background that built that kind of strength and sense of self?"

After several minutes, the student declared with pride, "I guess I am truly my grandmother's granddaughter! She was an amazing woman. A strong, stubborn Southern woman. In the midst of that narrowness and bigotry, she taught me to act on my own convictions and to strike out on my own."

Such an exercise is crucial, Edwards said, because an anti-bias curriculum for children *must* begin with an anti-bias curriculum for adults. "When an adult works with a young child, in many ways the adult *is* the curriculum. There is no way to work with children without the basic

Socialization is strong, and one of its key components is the attachment of meaning and position to racial, gender, class or cultural groups.

messages of what you teach coming from who you are as a human being. Without deep pride in your own heritage, you'll be unable to help children develop pride and self-esteem. So in course we have to explore ourselves—our own experiences and biases and fears—on an intellectual and emotional level. I try to personalize for each of my students the concepts of ethnicity, of culture and gender, and of prejudice and pride."

Dealing with such issues can be "heavy material," Edwards added. "But the students are committed to the kids they teach, and truly want to keep another generation of children from growing up hurt by prejudice. I really admire that commitment, and it keeps the students going through the very difficult consciousness-raising stage in the first weeks of this course."

Edwards tries to model what she hopes her students will learn to do with the children they teach: to help them feel connected to their families and pasts, to build a sense of identity and pride, and to use that awareness to build positive concepts of others' ethnicity, identity, class and culture.

Edwards recognizes that her course needs to be as concrete and pragmatic as possible so that students can transfer classroom learning directly into their work with children. The term project in this course is not a paper, it is a curriculum. Students not only listen to Edwards lecture on California's diversity, but they also learn how to create puzzles and laminated books with those positive and diverse images. They learn, too, about the social conditions of California's children, and how to discuss key issues sensitively with their young charges.

Faces of Diversity

In the second week, the class witnessed the beauty of diversity through the first of many group projects. Students wandered into the classroom straight from work, eating dinners

from brown bags and fast food restaurants. They spread huge sheets of butcher paper across the floor. Edwards had asked the class to bring in pictures of faces they were drawn to—one of a person from their own culture or ethnic group, and one from another group.

Somewhat self-consciously, students began gluing pictures to their own section of paper. As the collage took shape, lively conversation broke out. The students, oohing and aahing and remarking on images the others had chosen, began to help shape each other's work. A student reached across to glue an image of a white bearded Mediterranean man next to a laughing Tibetan infant. Another posed a picture of a strikingly beautiful, thin African-American model in designer clothing next to an Irish grandfather cradling a baby. Many brought snapshots of their own family members. As the group relaxed, students identified these family faces to each other.

Edwards was satisfied. The activity had engaged students with one another—and in the activity of really looking at and appreciating the varieties of the human face. Furthermore, building collages is an activity students can do equally well with their preschoolers. The completed collage would hang in the class all semester long, a reminder of the real human diversity in the world outside.

Later in the course, students wrote about their own cultural heritage. They were to include a story from their family history that demonstrated resistance to societal oppression, whether it caused family members to suffer for their ethnicity, language or culture—or turned them into oppressors of others. Every family has such a story, Edwards said, and uncovering that knowledge helps students to understand systemic oppression, a formidable force with which they will grapple during the semester.

The Nature of Systemic Oppression

Systemic oppression, according to Edwards, is how one power group dominates another through direct control and pervasive misinformation about race, ethnicity or other aspects of the target group. Edwards tried to distinguish between systemic oppression and the kind of human hurts that occur between any two people. She contrasted an African-American child, teased because her hair is nappy, to a blond child, teased because her hair is colorless. Both children feel hurt by the ridicule. But for the African-American child, the whole world echoes the message that her hair, her person, is unacceptable. The books she sees in the library, the billboards, the television commercials, seldom show girls with nappy hair. Rather, they extol the virtues of loose, long and light-colored hair. The African-American child "internalizes" those messages and begs her mother to spend hours trying to straighten her "ugly" hair.

To further illuminate the concept of systemic oppression, Edwards introduced Uri Bronfenbrenner's ecological

"I was shocked," one student said. "You should *never* ask Jews to stand out of line alone."

model of child development, which teaches, essentially, that children are raised by society as well as by their parents. This is an important message—that parents are not wholly responsible for what their children learn and how they develop. Societal socialization is strong, and one of its key components is the attachment of meaning and position to specific racial, gender, class or cultural groups. And everyone, she stressed, has been on both the oppressor and target sides of systemic oppression.

Edwards, well aware that the heady nature of this material can easily become lost in rhetoric, immediately organized the class for another activity that has become a common feature of workshops on race and prejudice. She drew an imaginary line down the center of the classroom. Pushing chairs aside, she named one side of the room the "Target Population." Students were instructed to move to one side or the other, depending on whether they had been targeted by the systemic oppressions she named.

"People of color." Two people moved across the line. "Women." Most of the class now shifted sides.

"Those whose first language is other than English." "People with physical disabilities including obesity." "People under age 18." "People over 50." "People who grew up in families where parents worked with their hands for a living."

As students moved back and forth across the line, the emotion in the room was palpable. Students were shaken—some by the public acknowledgment of being a target of prejudice, some by the pain of seeing themselves on the side of oppressors.

Later, in pairs, students had the chance to react. Then Edwards asked the class, "What did this exercise feel like to you? What was it like to be on the target population side? On the other side? What memories were engendered? What did you learn?"

"I was shocked when you called out, 'People who are Jewish,'" one student said. "You should *never* ask Jews to stand out of line alone." The pain of the Holocaust spilled forth in the agony of her voice.

Another protested, "Why did the fact that my father worked with his hands mean I was a target group? I didn't belong over there the same way those other groups did."

Said another still: "I hated being in the non-target group. I never have hurt anyone. I don't like being blamed for what others have done. It seemed like looking across that line that I was to blame."

And a fourth proclaimed, "It was amazing to move back

Guest panelist Toni Nagle discusses racially mixed ancestry.

and forth, and to realize that I can be on either side and still be the same person. It's not a matter of being a good person or a bad person. I realized that we all have experiences on both sides. It really helped me feel less guilty."

The discussion turned to the difference between blame and guilt on the one hand, and responsibility on the other. Edwards insisted that the point was not to feel guilty, but to recognize and take responsibility for changing the systemic nature of oppression. She asserted that few people willingly or knowingly oppress others. Feeling guilty because one is in a group that reaps the privileges of others who are oppressed changes nothing. Action does. Recognizing how oppression works, acknowledging one's privileges, and then making a decision to *change* the system of oppression—that is taking responsibility.

Next, Edwards attempted to shed light on the methods of systemic oppression. The class broke into six groups. "You are being sent to Mars with 10,000 other Earthlings," Edwards said. "There are 200,000 Martians. They are green, although they look generally like us (two eyes, a nose, a mouth, two legs, etc.) We can interbreed. You, as Earthlings, are outnumbered 20 to 1, but your job is to maintain control of the Martians and of their planet. You have to get the Martians to capitulate, because force alone clearly won't do it."

Then she asked the groups to select one area—education, housing, health care, justice, economics, the media—and to design the system so that Earthlings would be able to maintain control.

For fifteen minutes, the groups wrote plans on large sheets of paper mounted around the room. Silence filled the room as students read one plan after another. A housing system advertised as available to everyone, but priced so that only those with Earthling salaries can buy houses. A school system that teaches only the history of Earth and ignores Mars. An educational hierarchy that selects a few Martians who look and act the most like Earthlings and gives them rewards, but punishes the other Martians for speaking their own language.

One student finally ventured, "I feel so terrible." Another said she hated the exercise. "Why?" Edwards asked.

"I don't like to know that we all knew how to design this kind of system," the student replied. "How *do* you know?" Edwards pressed on. In a low voice, the student answered, "Because that's the way the world really is."

Edwards sympathized. "It is frightening and painful to realize how deep in all of us runs the knowledge of how oppression works," she said. People learn to feel ashamed of their accents, hair, or other signs of belonging to a target group—or many become blinded to the reality of their own privilege and to the pain of the target groups to which they don't belong.

"We become distanced from people and live with fear about them," Edwards said—fear that can rage into overt hatred, violence and attempts to control other groups. "But none of us were born with that knowledge and misinformation. It is *learned* behavior," she persisted, "and we can take responsibility for changing it."

What Children See in Their World

Students were also asked to focus on what children are being taught about the nature of human experience by performing one of the following exercises:

1. Watch three hours of children's television. Tally how many males, females, people of color, and people with disabilities you see. Note the status and character assigned to each type.

2. Look through the children's section at a local video store. Tally the main characters according to sex, race, and disabilities.

3. See any movie advertised as a children's film. Evaluate the covert and overt messages about males and females, people of color, and people with disabilities.

4. Go to the children's section of a library or bookstore. List all the books you can find with Hispanic-American children in them.

5. Analyze your own classroom's physical environment—the dolls, books, pictures on the walls. Remember absence is also a message. What does your classroom teach children?

Students stormed into the next class outraged. "I couldn't believe it! I have been watching Saturday morning cartoons for years, and I never noticed how awful it is for girls!" "I can't believe it, with all the Hispanic kids in this county, I only found three young children's books in the whole library that had Hispanics in them." "I ended up getting angry at the manager of the video store about the selection that was there. I came back later and apologized and we had a good conversation."

Claudia, a family day care home provider, had chosen to analyze her own program's physical environment. She was shocked by what she found, and asked the children in her care to look at the pictures on the wall with her. "Something is wrong with the pictures on our wall," she explained. "Help me figure out what's wrong. In what ways do these pictures show children the way they really are, and in what ways don't they?"

"The much harder task is helping my students to intervene. What to do when an Anglo child says her skin is 'regular' color, how to help boys who exclude girls from the tire swing."

The children piped in immediately. "No one is going to the bathroom," declared one child, sending the group into gales of appreciative laughter. "No one has my skin color." "None of those kids have holes in their knees." After a litany of recognizing what was missing, the children went through a pile of magazines and made a collage. They labeled it "What kids *really* look like" and proudly took turns taking it home to show their families.

In Edwards's class, students are assigned to bring in age-appropriate children's books depicting each target group discussed, for example, children in working-class homes, or children in families that are not the traditional nuclear model. For the first few minutes of each class, the students placed chairs in a big circle and mounted the books they had brought. During the semester, the class developed a bibliography of children's books that speak to the diversity of human experience.

The next seven sessions were each devoted to a specific kind of oppression and its impact on children: racism, ethnocentrism, the power of language and culture, bilingual and bicultural children, class, family structure, "Holy Days, Holidays, Wholly-dazed," or "Curriculum in a world of religious diversity." Readings and lectures provided a conceptual framework for exploring these issues.

For each topic introduced to the class, a representative panel visited—including biracial people, Jews, people with physical disabilities, and people who grew up in homes where English was not the family language. Each panel was asked a standard series of questions:

1. What was wonderful for you about growing up Mexican American (or with a physical disability, or as an immigrant child, or as a Muslim, etc.)?

2. What was hard for you?

3. How did your schools hurt or help your sense of yourself as a Mexican-American? Buddhist? Etc.?

4. What is one thing you never want to hear again?

5. If child care workers or teachers wanted to be allies to

Instructor Julie Olsen Edwards cradles valuable teaching tools: "Persona Dolls."

The anti-bias class offers a safe forum for discussing sometimes painful issues.

your children or to the child you were, what would they need to do?

Unanimously, students spoke of the power of these panels. Cap, one of the three men in the class, is an intern at the Cabrillo Child Development Center. Through the post-panel discussions, he said, he and his classmates learned to take personal risks by discussing issues that people fear will alienate or anger others. "I can begin to define what came up for me after listening to the panels and to share it with just one other person," he said. "It changes from a passing thought to something more concrete."

Sometimes he was surprised by his own reactions. One panel prompted him to remember a Jewish family from his youth. "I was good friends with the son after school, but not in school," he said. "I acted different towards him at school. I felt guilty. This class brings that stuff up."

Four Steps for Fighting Bias

In talking about bias and diversity, students also share their strategies for dealing with children. One session, for example, focused on different family structures: gay and lesbian families, families of divorce, foster families, blended families and communal families. "There is no one universal form," Edwards commented. "In a diverse society, the job of the teacher is to help children understand that spectrum of diversity and to feel a sense of dignity about their own family arrangement."

One of the younger students in the class sheepishly raised her hand. "I think I just blew it. I just sent out a bunch of letters to my kids' parents, and I just assumed it should be to 'Mr. and Mrs. So and So'. I'm not sure what I should have done." Another student offered, "How about, 'to the Family of X'?" Edwards pulled out a book, *Irene's Idea*, about a young girl who doesn't want to go to school because it is Father's Day, and everyone will make cards. But Irene doesn't have a father. She decides to go to school and make a card that says how happy she is to have a mother and a sister and a cat. Edwards asked her students to talk about what they do in their children's programs on Mother's and Father's Days. The class constructed on the chalkboard the four steps of an anti-bias curriculum as relates to this problem:

Step 1: Help children develop a solid sense of self-esteem and self-awareness. Help each child make a card appropriate to his or her own family situation.

Step 2: Help children recognize and name the diversity in human experience, and attain an accurate knowledge of human difference. Talk about the different kinds of families that exist. Read a book such as *Irene's Idea*.

Resources for Anti-Bias Curriculum

Derman-Sparks, Louise and the ABC Task Force. *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children*. National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1989. Available from: NAEYC, 1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20009.

To help other teachers start a course similar to Edwards's, Louise Derman-Sparks plans to conduct seminars on "Leadership Training in Anti-Bias Work" through the California Association for the Education of Young Children. She is also publishing a manual for facilitating anti-bias curriculum support groups. Derman-Sparks is on the faculty of Pacific Oaks College, 5 Westmoreland Place, Pasadena, CA 91103.

The *People of Every Stripe* catalog is a source of persona dolls. Dolls may be selected from almost fifty pre-made models, or custom ordered in a variety of skin shades, facial features, physical proportions, hair textures and styles, and clothing. For more information, or to obtain catalog, contact: People of Every Stripe, P.O. Box 12505, Portland, Oregon 97212, (505) 282-0612.

Making Multicultural Dolls and Books

On a sunny spring Saturday, students in Cabrillo Community College's Anti-Bias Curriculum course are scattered onto pillows, a soft rug meant for toddlers to crawl upon, and chairs built for small children. Everyone's attention focuses upon class member Claudia Vestal, who sits on a low chair with her legs stretched out. Her hair is piled loosely on top of her head. A calm smile warms her face as she molds a light brown sock on her lap into the shape of a torso. At her side sits a box of completed sock dolls, each dyed a different skin tone. Step by step, she shows how she makes these dolls.

Next she passes around some of her finished products for students to examine, cuddle, stroke and admire enthusiastically. But these are not just ordinary dolls. They are "Persona" dolls that represent children from various cultures and also youngsters with disabilities. Persona dolls bring diversity into classrooms and day care centers where it might not exist and help children to understand and appreciate human variety. The dolls are among the tools that class members will learn to create during this special day-long workshop.

Claudia introduces the dolls one by one as she would to the preschool class she teaches every day.

Picture book workshop: creating products that reflect the reality of society.

First, there's Ned, with blond hair that falls closely around his ears. He wears jeans and a bright red turtle neck. Freckles dot his cheeks. Claudia begins the story of Ned, a doll who lives alone with his grandmother. Other children teased him because he talked so loudly. One day, Ned's teacher suggested that he get his hearing checked. The nice doctor found out that Ned had trouble hearing. So Ned got a hearing aid, and if one pulls back his hair, it can be seen wrapped around the back part of his ear.

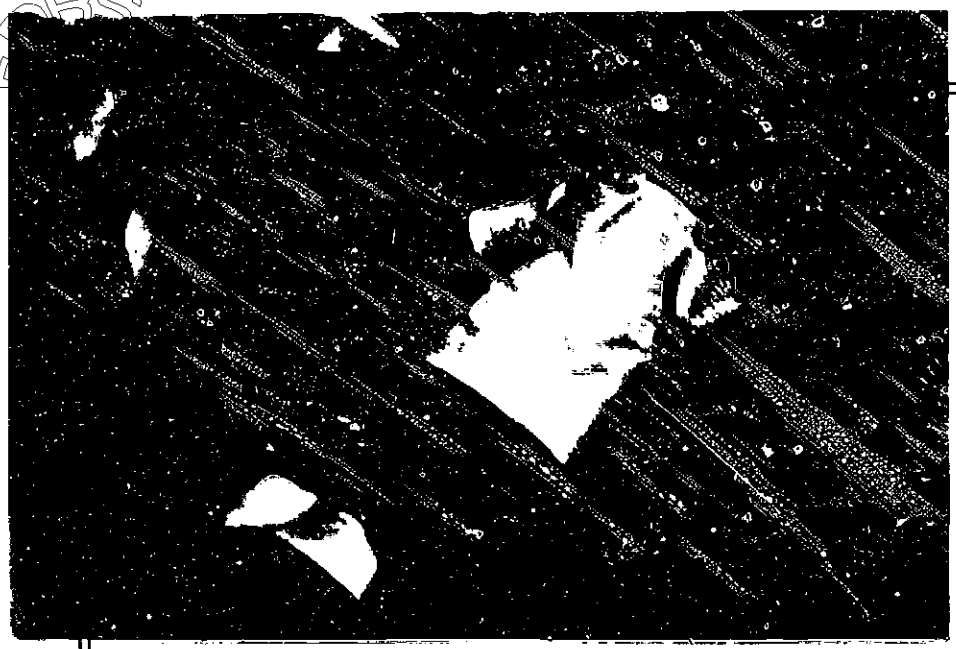
Step 3: Develop the ability to recognize injustice, both overt and covert. Show children a collection of Hallmark "Father's Day" cards. Ask them "What is wrong with these cards? Are they for all families?" Bring out multicultural "Persona" dolls [see accompanying story] and imagine the different kinds of families they might have. Ask the children to discuss what kinds of cards each doll might make.

Step 4: Develop a sense of empowerment, and the skills to act alone or with others against injustice. Brainstorm with children for a new name for Father's Day which might be more appropriate to all families, for example, "People Who Love Us Day." Assist the children in writing a letter to a card company with their suggestions.

Often, appropriate teaching materials for an Anti-Bias approach don't exist. So, it becomes each teacher's responsibility to make them—skills that are taught in the course during a daylong Saturday workshop.

Making books, dolls, and collages is important to giving the class a sense of being able to *do* something. "The easier task for me is getting my students to see ways to support children's sense of identity and pride," Edwards said. "The much harder task is helping my students figure out how to intervene. What to do when an Anglo child says her skin is 'regular' color. What to say when an Hispanic child says his skin is white or black. How to address misinformation which builds and perpetuates stereotypes. How to help boys who exclude girls from the tire swing, and children who believe war whoops are how Indians behave. We do a lot of problem solving in our class. But I constantly think about how to do it more effectively."

The last stage in the Anti-Bias approach is "empowerment." Effective early childhood education pedagogy includes really listening to children, encouraging them to



Persona dolls of various races help teach about diversity in classrooms where it might not exist.

Claudia describes how the hearing aid works and what it's like when a person can't hear well and about people who can't hear at all and use their hands to talk.

In Claudia's preschool class, the children all know Ned now. They often talk about how they would feel if they were teased as Ned had been, or imagine what it might be like to be hard of hearing, as Ned is. Through Ned, Claudia can set her students at ease about their upcoming hearing tests, as well as talk about the different ways that families are organized.

Ned shares a box with other dolls that Claudia has created. There is Samantha, an African American girl who lives with her mother and stepfather; Maria, a Mexican American girl who speaks Spanish at home with her family; John, a Native American of the Ohlone Tribe, the inhabitants of the Santa Cruz area when Europeans first arrived; and Yee, a Vietnamese girl with long black hair. These are not dolls that the children play with, but rather, characters in the lives of the children. Each doll is given a history, a life and a family. They are not stereotypes, for each has concrete likes and dislikes, pets, experiences, personalities. Perhaps one doll lives with just one parent and visits the other, opening up opportunities

(continued next page)

speak up, giving them language that allows them to describe their feelings, and helping them to analyze issues and solve problems. "It is important we help children think about what they hear and not just accept everything as fact," Edwards said. "We need to give them tools for asking questions, and provide a lot of adult support when they take stands on issues of fairness and accuracy."

Fortunately for Edwards, her entire department supports her course, often offering lively and collegial input when she solicits advice. It is a department that for 20 years has been actively committed to curbing biases. Collaboration is essential—and isolation deadly—Edwards said, because the class deals with such hard, emotional issues. "It's scary as a teacher to do things that may be painful for my students, or that they might resist. I constantly worry about whether and how I can move them to a positive place of feeling confident and able to move forward."

It is impossible to teach such a course without making mistakes, she acknowledged. "If I waited until I felt 'safe' dealing with issues of racism and culture and gender and class with my students, I would never get around to teaching the course. I need people around me who understand what I'm trying to do, to help me laugh at my mistakes and brainstorm new ways to do things."

She also understands that her students will need support as they implement an anti-bias approach. The last two sessions focus on helping them begin their own anti-bias programs: "Parents and Stuff: Making Changes Together" and "Getting Started, Keeping Going."

At the end of the course, elementary school teacher's aide Sue Kissell spoke with Edwards about how the class had affected her. She talked about finding books that portray diversity. Kissell had been the only person all year long to check out a school library book on Black inventors. One day, she overheard a fourth-grade teacher planning a lesson on inventions. When Kissell suggested the book on

(continued from previous page)
for children in the class to talk about their own family experiences. The Persona dolls are a central part of the Anti-Bias Curriculum approach, but there are other avenues to introducing diversity. Later in the day, the students move from Claudia's doll demonstration to another room where they learn to laminate pictures and construct books. Spread out on tables are magazines and piles of clippings.

One student, Caroline Flores, leans over a table cutting out photos for a book she is making for the day care center she directs. She wears a triumphant look on her face. "Look what I found, a picture of an Hispanic woman in a wheelchair," she marvels. "I can't believe it, this is great!" There are some photos of men in wheelchairs because of sports such as wheelchair basketball or racing, she explains, but it is difficult to find photos of women in wheelchairs. And to find a Hispanic woman in the media is tough, too. Here, she has found one who is professionally dressed and looks really nice.

Flores grew up among Hispanics in Watsonville and became interested as a child in how people relate to other cultures. She had been looking for an anti-bias course for a long time. "I guess I resent the fact of the invisibility of brown people so I always look for things I can do," she says.

Initially, Flores began looking for positive images of Latinos in magazines to use in her work because of her Mexican-American husband and children. "I wanted positive images in my home with my kids and then I wanted them in my classroom." People gave her their old magazines. More recently, she has been encouraged by new books and magazines, such as *La Familia de Hoy* ("Today's Family") that show positive Hispanic role models. "Maybe times are finally changing," she says.

Caroline even showed Anti-Bias materials to parents at her day care center, with favorable results. She asked them what they felt should be reflected in the classroom about the family. Each parent also wrote a short paper about his or her own child's family: who were the caregivers; where the family came from; its roots (half of them are new immigrants); and something that was special about the child in the family. Now, Caroline's class is making a book with pictures the youngsters have brought from home.

Another student, Carol Rodriguez, proudly shows off a book she has already made for La Fonda Day Care Center. Titled *Hair*, it is filled with heads of long silky black hair, curly blond hair, kinky brown hair, wavy red hair. There are pictures of kids from Japan with straight bangs, a tribal man with a huge mat of hair decorated with straw and cloth.

Carol got her day care charges involved in book-making, too. She asked them to look into a mirror and finish three sentences describing their colors. "My hair is ____. My eyes are ____. My skin is ____." Carol wrote the sentences, photographed each child, and mounted the two elements on an individual page. One Anglo girl describes her skin color as "gray," another as "regular." Three Latino kids describe their skin as "black," "white" and "plain." Carol says the book is one of the most popular in the class.

Carol grew up reading *Dick and Jane*, but she knew her family was different. Her father was disabled and her mother worked long hours away from home. Now, even though there are books that show different types of family structures, Carol still likes for her charges to create their own products. The hands-on work, she says, combined with the beautiful and diverse finished products, give "my kids a sense of their validity and a sense of self."

—Laurie Olsen and Nina Mullen

Black inventors, the teacher said she did not need it. "I was upset," Kissell said. "I realized that this was an example of misinformation by omission. So I went down to the library and got the book out for her, and *showed* her what a neat book it was and all the wonderful inventions in it.

"This is something I wouldn't have done before, to get involved that way, to see it as so important that there be images of Black inventors," she added. But her new perspective—and the impact it will have on children—is really what the course is all about. "I'm not a political person, and I never thought of myself as an activist, or at least I didn't used to be," Kissell said. "But I find myself changing. It's clearer to me that I need to do certain things." ❑

Laurie Olsen, executive director of California Tomorrow, is author of Crossing the Schoolhouse Border, Bridges *and* Embracing Diversity. *Nina Mullen, former project coordinator for California Tomorrow and co-author of* Embracing Diversity, *is a board member of Refugee Transitions in San Francisco.*

Decent Housing Comes Home

The groundbreaking of a new affordable-housing complex in beleaguered South Central Los Angeles is a victory for neighborhood advocates and families.

PHOTO BY NARESHIMAH OSEI

The July groundbreaking of Roberta Stephens Villas

By SUSAN ANDERSON

Boxy, graffiti-scarred buildings line Central Avenue just south of downtown Los Angeles. Small, single-family homes dominate the side streets of the neighborhood, punctuated by vacant lots, wood-frame churches and boarded-up stores. What was fifty years ago the prosperous main drag of Black Los Angeles has become a community battered by job loss, violence and dismal housing. A few blocks away is the landmark home of Ralph Bunche, the distinguished Black Angeleno who was U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Southward is the restored Dunbar Hotel, now housing low-income senior tenants above a Black cultural museum. But these are scant reminders of the heyday of Central Avenue. And they are nearly invisible amid the heavy traffic, smog-filled skies, weed-choked streets and wandering homeless.

But there are those who have not given up on their neighborhood, nor upon the thousands of families there in need of decent, safe housing. The area called Vernon Central is about to undergo what some believe will be a major revitalization, beginning with plans for two shabby abandoned lots at the intersection of Central Avenue and 27th Street. Ground was broken July 12 for the first affordable family housing built in the area in more than 20 years—Roberta Stephens Villas. At the time, there were already 98 hopeful prospective tenants on the waiting list for the Villas, which are not scheduled for completion until next year.

The architectural drawings for the complex of 40 two- and three-bedroom apartments reveal garden spots scattered throughout the buildings, with benches and large potted plants, shared recreation areas and laundry facilities. "It's a family building," explains Joanita Tate, one of the project spearheads. "We have quite a mix of cultures in our community. We want people to be able to sit down and talk to each other, so we made sure there was plenty of sitting space." A centerpiece of the development is its unique plans to help children succeed in school and make friends.

Roberta Stephens Villas is the fruit of six years of organizing and the growing sophistication of an unusual community group, Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles. Tate is executive director of CCSCLA, which has developed the complex and will manage it. One of the first African American environmental groups in the country, Concerned Citizens became nationally known for its victory in preventing the LANCER refuse incinerator from being placed in South Central Los Angeles in 1987. Since then, members have moved on to other fights, including city planning issues, toxic waste dumping, accountable reinvestment by banks and job training. In 1989 they set their energies into replacing some of the family housing that they saw being rapidly destroyed in the community.

Their concerted organizing and fundraising culminated in joint financing of Roberta Stephens Villas which includes the State of California Housing and Community Development Department Century Freeway Program, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and Bank of America. Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley calls the effort "a showcase for the shared concerns of community, government and corporate leaders...(and) a catalyst for welcome changes which can be expected in this neighborhood."

On a larger scale, Concerned Citizens has become part of a growing movement across the country of community-based groups developing housing for those who need it most—poor and moderate income residents of some of the most economically distressed neighborhoods. Called community development corporations or CDCs, these groups are the major source of affordable housing in the country. Their efforts began during the Reagan administration, when housing spending was cut more than any other program—by 80 percent—and the much-touted marketplace failed to build housing for the poor. The CDC movement evolved to fill the gap and create, in effect, an alternative real estate industry.

As Concerned Citizens struggled through real estate financing, building design, and contractor bidding, they also

hammered out a vision for what kind of housing would really make a difference for residents. Tate says, "We asked the daughter of one of our members: 'Gail, if you had the opportunity to design a program for the community, what

"We saw a way to help the young as well as help senior citizens utilize their wisdom, knowledge and understanding to support our goal of family development."

would you do?' She surveyed her friends and most of the youngsters felt they had no place to go to do homework, to study. There is overcrowding at the house, no quiet place, no quiet time."

Other children expressed that they had no friends to associate with around school issues because more than half of the children in the community are bused to other schools. Some of the Spanish-speaking children said there was little assistance with homework in their households because of the language barrier. "Many of the children in South Central Los Angeles are translators for their families," Tate says.

The result: Roberta Stephens Villas will offer tenants a child-centered program, including a "Buddy Study" program and an After School Nanny Program using senior citizens trained by the Los Angeles City Department of Aging. With parents often away at jobs, the seniors will be in the common areas when youngsters get home to provide a supportive atmosphere for studying.

"We didn't want any latchkey kids and it's true that idle minds are the devil's workshop," Tate says. "A lot of the parents who will be in our building will be minimum wage and they have to work overtime, and even then they can't afford childcare. We like to promote the family. We saw a way to help the young as well as help senior citizens utilize their wisdom, knowledge and understanding to support our goal of family development."

In this spirit, Roberta Stephens Villas are named after a beloved South Central community leader who was the first fulltime teacher in the Los Angeles adult schools, training hundreds, mostly women, in garment manufacturing production methods. The recipient of the Los Angeles NAACP humanitarian award for community service in 1990, Stephens worked in church, civic and civil rights efforts for 46 years. She traveled from Albany, Georgia, to participate in the Villas' groundbreaking ceremony last July.

Roberta Stephens Villas, like its namesake, will help young residents plan for the future. A mandatory recycling program for tenants will use teams of young people to collect and sort the materials. Half the proceeds will be deposited in a South Central Community Development Credit Union. The Credit Union plans to solicit businesses to match these funds, so that young people who fulfill a writ-

PHOTO BY NARESHMAH OSEI

Neighborhood residents turn out in support of affordable family housing.

ten commitment to save a certain amount before high school graduation may receive a match to use for college or to go into business.

In keeping with Concerned Citizens' continued environmentalist commitment, the Roberta Stephens Villas apartments will be energy efficient, with special heating units and water-saving devices. Tenants who finds themselves out of work must report to an in-house job referral service, which will also provide information about various social services. "The residence association membership will be stressed very firmly to all residents because it is important that we have a healthy, lasting development for years to come," says Tate. "There must be something in place that addresses the need and concerns of all that reside."

Tate says the group has loads of ideas for the future. She is enlisting her law student son to devise a mentor program that matches business and professional people with youngsters. She is also investigating the possibility of involving secondary school students in a child advocacy program for their younger peers. An informal group of volunteer teachers, and social service and child development specialists will be assisting in the refinement of the Buddy Study program to ensure it provides the kind of at-home help and environment the young residents need. ❑

Susan Anderson, a former California Tomorrow fellow, is Public Affairs Manager for Local Initiatives Support Corporation's California Programs.

On Becoming a Teacher

Journals reveal life in one of California's most ethnically diverse and impoverished elementary schools.

By WENDY TANABE AND ANNIE ALCOTT

Introduction by Della Peretti

As a supervisor in the Developmental Teacher Education Program at UC Berkeley, one of my goals was to devise a more meaningful multicultural practicum for our student teachers. While I pondered this, I had the opportunity last fall to supervise Wendy Tanabe in her first semester student teaching placement at Garfield Year-Round School in Oakland. This is one of the most poverty-stricken and linguistically diverse schools in the Bay Area. In 1989-90, Garfield had 1,077 students: 404 Asian, 396 Hispanic, 261 African American, 12 white and 4 "other." Like many prospective teachers, Wendy had grown up in a middle class neighborhood and attended schools with little cultural diversity. At Garfield she found it is possible to suffer profound culture shock in the midst of one's own country.

I secretly worried that perhaps I had pushed gentle Wendy into too challenging a situation. So, imagine my surprise when I entered her classroom in her third week at Garfield to find her perched on a tall stool in front of 32 fifth-graders, calmly conducting a discussion of the *The Midnight Fox* story. The students were raptly engaged. There were no discipline problems. And everyone in the class, whatever his or her English level, was able to participate in the language-free follow-up activity Wendy had devised and modeled at the chalkboard: "writing with pictures" the different characters' points of view. Wendy looked as though she had been teaching this class all her life. Of course, not every lesson went so smoothly.

Wendy struggled to reconcile her daily student teaching experiences with her prior conception of Truth. In her journals and our lengthy conversations, Wendy asked all the important questions as we pushed the limits of what is known about how to educate immigrants and economically disadvantaged children. During her whirlwind eight-week placement, Wendy regretfully abandoned the notion that all problems have solutions that are apparent or accessible, and discovered that she had embarked on a lifelong quest.

After Wendy's experience, the next semester I placed eight student teachers at Garfield for full sessions. Assignments encouraged them to fully investigate the school and surrounding community. The group also took the initiative to observe one another, to team teach, and to share their experiences in an effective program of peer supervision.

Never had our student teachers been so tired at the end of a school day. During the course of their work at Garfield, some decided to steer their careers towards immigrant education while others learned they did not want to teach in the inner city. At least three of the students changed their M.A. theses to include aspects of their experiences at Garfield. All eight left Garfield with an altered awareness of what it means to teach in California.

Annie Alcott's journals reflect the same eager quest as Wendy's, but as a second-year student, she was more equipped to move beyond her initial feeling of being overwhelmed to begin problem-solving in earnest. For example, Annie struggled hard to come up with a social studies curriculum on the concept of family relationships in a classroom where family and clan were the highest cultural value, yet many of the children had been orphaned by the ravages of war, refugee camps and poverty. Annie's inspired solution was to construct a family tree that drew all the children in the class into one big family. Everyone belonged, all were interconnected. She expanded this unit by taking the class on neighborhood walks to every child's house. This took two school days, but the time was more than justified by the learning that took place.

Excerpted on the following pages are the journals written by Wendy Tanabe and Annie Alcott while student teaching at Garfield. The journals offer an honest glimpse into the reality of hundreds of classrooms today, and the kind of thinking that educators must pursue to develop a knowledge base for teaching California's diverse children.

How Can I Arm My Students to Succeed?

By Wendy Tanabe

Gnawing Questions

On Monday I visited my new placement at Garfield, as it was the first day of a new session. I was overwhelmed by all the kids and chaos and by the sheer size of this school. It took me five minutes to find my classroom. I'm going to be utterly frank and admit that my first impression from Monday was rather disheartening. I just left wondering, "How do all these kids learn in this chaotic environment?"

Don, my supervising teacher, is an extremely relaxed, friendly man, with a good rapport with the kids, acting more like a "buddy" with them than the traditional authoritative teacher. The fifth-grade class is mostly Chinese and Chinese-Vietnamese kids whose first language is Cantonese. There are also six African Americans and a Samoan student. Don is very casual and I found it interesting that he sometimes spoke in the kind of slang that the kids used. There seemed to be a different kind of "teacher-student" relationship in this classroom than I've usually seen. I suppose the question foremost in my mind is, do the students respect a teacher who maintains this very informal relationship with them? Perhaps it works better with older kids? What is obvious, though, is that the kids adore Don.

I noticed a high level of noise in the classroom, which didn't seem to stop Don from teaching. During one lesson, I scanned the room and saw a table of kids who were singing to themselves and rapping while others were carrying on private conversations. Occasionally Don said, "Shhh" and "Hey, guys, cut that out over there," but that was about it, at least in this case. All of this unsettled me because I thought, how am I going to get them to listen to me when they don't always listen to Don?

I can see already that communicating with the kids who aren't too proficient in English is going to be a major challenge. I asked Don, who doesn't speak Cantonese, how he manages to communicate with all these kids who are at such different levels of English proficiency. He responded that it is very difficult and he just does the best he can. He said he often has a hard time discerning if the kids understand, because they are good at acting as if they do.

Don did oral language when I was there; he put up incorrectly written sentences on the board and the kids had to write them down and correct them. I saw this program at my last placement, but the contrast between the Garfield kids and the kids in affluent Piedmont was amazing. Don's fifth-graders could not recognize many grammatical mistakes that the Piedmont third-graders could recognize and correct easily. They really struggled, even the kids who are not learning English as a Second Language.

The kids also played "Around the World" with basic multiplication fact cards. Two kids would compete against each other and the one who said the right answer would move on to the next seat and compete against that student. It seemed as though a lot of the kids who couldn't speak as well as the others were always beaten, not because they didn't know the answer, but because they couldn't articulate the answer as quickly. It seemed to me that a lot of students expected to be beaten so they didn't really try.

After visiting Garfield, I can't help feeling a bit of guilt. Is it wrong of me to want to teach in an area like Piedmont, rather than in a more "challenging" area like Garfield's? I've been struggling with this for a long time. I know I haven't been teaching long enough and in enough different environments to make a decision, but this is what I'm feeling. And at the same time, I'm feeling terribly guilty for not really "wanting" an inner city, ESL school like many of my fellow student teachers do. Am I bucking "real life" schools, "wimping" out by thinking I'd prefer a small suburban school rather than a huge urban school?

I guess a lot of it has to do with what I've been used to and what I'm comfortable with. Perhaps that definition will change as I accumulate different experiences. When I requested an Asian population, I suppose in a very naive way, I was thinking that I could "relate to" and "reach" the Garfield kids, by virtue of my Asian heritage—I hoped to bond with them and positively influence their learning. Now, I'm not so sure I can. My first day there altered the rosy hues of my expectations. I have less in common with these Asian immigrant children than I do with the kids in Piedmont. Sure, I share an Asian heritage with them, but my experience growing up as a third-generation Japanese-American in a largely white suburban neighborhood is worlds apart from their experiences growing up in a new and strange culture, learning a new language, and living in a low-income urban area.

The first girl I met at Garfield came up to me, looked me over from head to toe, and asked me what language I spoke. "Just English," I responded, suddenly feeling very inept. "Oh," the girl exclaimed, "I knew you looked like an 'American' girl!" For the first time, I wished I could take away some of my "haaaaa-ish" qualities. I didn't want to seem so different from these kids. On my first morning, a group of girls stood and pointed to my jewelry and my clothes, talking loudly about me in Cantonese. I felt a bit funky and wondered if I shouldn't get so dressed up at Garfield. Am I just being paranoid about every little thing?

In a nutshell, two big questions are gnawing at me: (1) How can I get these new kids to relate to me and I to them? and (2) Should I feel so guilty for wanting to teach in a school like Piedmont's? Am I desiring an "easy-out" or "cushy" teaching assignment? Should I want to go where the kids most solely need caring teachers? I'm struggling

PHOTOGRAPH BY DEXTER DONG

Wendy Tanabe on the Garfield playground

between my own perhaps selfish feeling and my sense of responsibility as a teacher. I am wondering whether the Piedmont kids "need" good teachers as much as East Oakland kids. I suspect that the Piedmont kids will all go to college and get good jobs, even if they have a few less-than-wonderful teachers. They have college-educated parents who will push them to achieve, plus the financial means to go to college. But for inner-city kids, having one conscientious teacher could make all the difference to them. They have a lot of environmental influences exerting pressure on them away from school and so in a sense really "need" strong influential teachers.

"I-just-do-the-best-I-can"

This week I saw a bit more clearly the incredible challenges Don faces in his class and the necessity of his "I-just-do-the-best-I-can" attitude. I especially like his candor about not having all the answers, but I do think he's also being modest. It seems that we will be learning together as a kind of team. I'd like to make a real effort to learn each student's name; I'm finding it much more difficult to do this in this class, since most of the kids have Asian names that are foreign to me in pronunciation and appearance.

On Thursday Don did a FOSS science lesson on sound, with the kids rotating to different stations in the room. I had expected the groups to operate in utter chaos, but the kids actually worked pretty well by themselves and were having a lot of fun with the FOSS (Full Option Science System) activities. They made telephones out of cardboard tubes and listened to different sounds under water. Don had assigned the kids roles according to FOSS cooperative learning suggestions—recorder, reader, getter, and starter. He had tried to assign the reader role to the best reader at the table, but I did notice some strains of arguing within the groups anyway, for instance, "He can't be the reader. He can't read!" Maybe we should try assigning some kids to the reader roles even if they aren't the "best" readers in the group. Or would they just feel self-conscious and embarrassed in front of the others? It seems that the less advanced readers could benefit from the practice, even if it does slow down the activity pace a bit.

I found it warming to see how a new boy, Wen (who can barely speak a word of English), participated and enjoyed the science. While he didn't contribute verbally to the group's observations and answers, he was able to take part and I believe draw the same kinds of insights about sound that the English speaking kids did. I feel frustrated whenever I think about this child. He needs individual instruction that I'm wondering whether the school can give him. Don is going to send him to the ESL specialist but I don't know if the child will get the amount of one-on-one instruction he needs. Is he going to be totally lost and bewildered when Don is teaching? A lot of what is done in class can't be geared to reach all language proficiency levels. I know that Don sometimes feels at a loss as I do.

I'd like to work with Wen myself, but the thought utterly terrifies me. What does he know of the English alphabet? Of sounds? How does one teach a child to speak, write, read English if one doesn't speak his native language? Where does a teacher start? The challenges seem monumental. I don't have the faintest idea what to do or how I would start. Shouldn't such a child be given specialized instruction before being put into a classroom like Don's? It seems as though the poor boy is being thrust into a strange and scary environment and left to fend for himself.

I'm curious about the controversy over teaching immigrant kids in their native language or in English. I just read an article and I'm a bit confused—I see the merits of each argument, but don't know which is "best." Some of the critics say that teaching children in their native languages "under-educates" them and restricts their opportunities for economic and social advancement; that what is meant to promote multiculturalism actually succeeds in segregating these children and alienating them from the larger society. I am sure of one thing—immigrant children need to either learn to speak, read and write English, or else face discrimination and limited economic and job opportunities.

Getting Comfortable

I'm starting to get more comfortable with these students and vice versa. They seem to be less trusting and comfortable with new people than my kids were in Piedmont, who became attached to me very early on. My Garfield kids had

a wall of reserve the first week or two and I've been trying to break through a bit by talking to them more like a friend than an adult. It's funny but behind their boisterous and garrulous behavior in class, they really are a bit shy in front of people they don't know well. I'm also realizing that my preconception that the Chinese kids would be quiet and obedient in class was stereotypical thinking on my part—how wrong I was!

Andrew, a Chinese student in my class, has concerned me since I started the placement. He is constantly disruptive in class, shouting out, insulting kids, hitting, talking back—I could go on forever. Don tries to get Andrew to settle down by talking to him, making him take time-outs,

What does he know of the English alphabet? Of sounds? How does one teach a child to speak, write, read English if one doesn't speak his native language? Where does the teacher start?

ignoring him, using humor, talking to his mother. I've seen Don try everything, but it doesn't seem to affect Andrew's behavior, although I do think he is more responsive to Don than he is to me. When I say responsive, I mean that he listens somewhat to Don and will occasionally stop his behavior for a bit, while he doesn't even pay attention to me. I wonder why this child is so troubled.

I got the chance to meet some parents, and now I'm wondering, how does one forge an effective, two-way relationship between a non-Chinese speaking teacher and these intimidated, non-English-speaking parents? How can we encourage parents to work with us to foster positive attitudes toward school and to reinforce behavior in their children that will work toward greater English skills?

Don has been fun to watch in the classroom and although he often jokingly claims that he doesn't know what he's doing, I think he is a good teacher. Most importantly, he is so eager to improve and try out new things. He even takes kids on impromptu field trips on weekends and he has invited me along—all his present and former students have his phone number and some of them call him when they are bored or want to talk.

One-on-One

I did some one-on-one reading with some students this week. The class is reading *Sadako and the Thousand Cranes*, a story about a Japanese girl during World War II who becomes ill with radiation sickness. Don pointed out a few kids who need extra reading help, so I pulled them aside and listened to them read, intervening only when they paused and didn't know how to pronounce a word, or when they really "butchered" a word. I would like to know whether this is the best way to work with them—should I just let them read without interrupting and go over words they misread after they finish? Should I go over unfamiliar word meanings when they appear, or wait until they are finished reading to discuss words? I feel the former method disrupts the flow of reading, and I worry that the kids will become too preoccupied with the mechanics of reading rather than comprehension. I did try to stop every so often and discuss the content and ask questions, for example if he/she had ever been in the hospital, what he/she thought Sadako might have felt that night in the hospital, etc.

I enjoyed reading with the kids not only for academic reasons, but also for the kinds of personal insights I gained in respect to their lives. Several times we'd go off in different directions and talk about family, school, friends. One boy told me about going to Chinese school every day from 4 to 7, and I was surprised to later discover how many of the kids attended this school. I'm beginning to understand Don's tolerance of classroom chaos a bit more—he tells me that the kids sit in rows with their hands in their laps in Chinese school and so he figures they have a lot of energy to vent and need a chance to be active and talkative at Garfield. Also, many of the kids' parents work at night and sleep during the day so the kids have to be quiet at home.

"What is a Bagel?"

I did a math activity with some of the kids this week which involved using restaurant menus to plan meals, given a certain budget. I thought the activity, which I found in the Family Math book from EMST 235, would be a fun way for the kids to deal with numbers, money, adding decimals. A few kids looked at the menus and did not know what they were, which took me by surprise. I think that they either don't eat out at sit-down restaurants too often or that they only go to Chinese restaurants where their parents just order for them in Chinese. One of the menus I used was from a bagel place, and the first question Daisy asked me was, "What is a bagel?" It had not occurred to me that they might not have any idea what a bagel was!

Anna's Initiation

This week we welcomed yet another new student into our class, a Chinese girl transferring from another school. Our class total now stands at 31; Don had to create another

table. We're getting pretty cramped! I really felt for Anna, coming to a new school in the middle of a session, and having to acclimate to a new teacher, new procedures, and new peers. I was pleased to see that she knew one girl in our class already through church, and I urged Jenny to show her around and include her in recess games. Jenny, however, inadvertently deserted Anna to do her own socializing. At one point during the lunch period, I saw Anna wandering around by herself, so I took her and approached Ghia, one of the more friendly and sociable girls in the class, and asked Ghia to include Anna in her game. I'm not sure if my interference might have made Anna feel more uncomfortable. Should I have refrained from imposing my "authority" on the girls' game? It's difficult for me not to do anything when I see a lonely child. I know that with time, Anna will make friends and adjust, but I couldn't resist trying to hasten her inclusion.

Wen's English Lesson

I'm still doing a little one-on-one each week with Wen. I took him outside of the class and used picture cards with him. I still feel pretty inept about how to work with him when he doesn't understand 99% of what I say (I really wish I could speak Cantonese right now!) but I'm trying my best. I began with the boring picture cards with him—showing him the picture on the card, saying the word, and then having him repeat it. After about two cards, I realized how monotonous and out of context it all was, so I started teaching him body parts. I would point to my mouth, then point to his mouth and say "mouth" and have him repeat, take off my shoe and say "shoe," point to his shoe and say "shoe," etc., etc. I felt as though we were accomplishing more now because Wen seemed to understand the connection between whatever I was pointing to and what I said.

It's so frustrating to see him sitting in class. I don't know what he is thinking but I know he can't be understanding anything. Is it good for him just to hear and see the language being used? The kids had a spelling test on Friday and he had to take it like the rest of them. It appeared that he had studied the words; his test was a mixture of inventive spelling and apparent attempts to recall the letter patterns. I guess his ESL lessons are teaching him something. Don and I are talking about me taking him outside the school for a walk and just introducing him to concrete things such as trees, walls, cars, and also trying to show him things such as walk, run, hop, throw. Maybe I'll read him some simple books with pictures.

Hand Signals

Today a teacher from Project Seed came to Garfield to do math lessons with a few different classes. I observed one of the lessons in a fifth- and sixth-grade Spanish bilingual class. Project Seed uses a system of hand signals instead of having kids shout out answers and raise their hands for everything. There are signals to show agree, disagree, yes, no, "I'm thinking" and more. The lesson was on exponents and the kids loved it—they were interested and eager. The teacher told me he uses the hand signals outside Project Seed because the kids love them so much.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DEXTER DONG

"One teacher could make a difference." —Wendy Tanabe

Utterly Lost

I have been working with a few kids who need extra help in math. Larry, an African-American student, is having considerable trouble. It's been obvious to me that he is utterly lost in what the class is working on (three digit multiplication) because he sits there and does nothing. It's really hard for Don because I know that he knows some kids like Larry are really struggling, but he just doesn't have all the time he wants to give them the extra attention they need. Some of them don't even know basic addition, subtraction, and multiplication facts, don't know how to borrow and carry. How have these students slipped through the grades without learning these essential building block math components? Have their struggles gone unnoticed by frazzled past teachers, do they have learning disabilities, what is going on here? I am frustrated for Larry and angry. He started crying when I tried to push him to try problems he felt he couldn't do. He seems to believe he cannot learn. Teachers are so busy, but kids like this should be getting extra attention, because if they do not, the disparity between them and the other kids will only grow with time—and then what?

Math Anxiety

Don lost his cool a few times this week when he became frustrated with the class; he yelled and spoke sharply to a few students. I didn't see this as reprehensible, but rather as human. I suppose seeing Don's fallibility made me feel better about my own occasional frustrations with the class.

This week I did another math activity from the Family Math book. The kids were to color in multiples of a certain number on a chart and compare patterns. The lesson did not start off well at all—the kids were really restless and boisterous and I had a sinking feeling from the start that they were not going to be engaged. However, I plunged in and

floundered most of the lesson. Right away, I began to see the kids did not completely understand the concept of multiples, and I found myself "giving" them most of the answers. I was disturbed to find that I was "lecturing" to an uncomprehending audience, and I felt as though I was failing. I'm realizing how important it is to model everything in front of them. Next time I'll use the kids themselves to model the numbers. It is sometimes difficult to gauge how much they understand until they actually start working and I am bombarded with, "What do we do?" or "I don't get it." I know I shouldn't take it personally when the kids don't love every lesson I do, but I really do feel that I've failed when they are not engaged in whatever I'm trying to teach.

"We'll Work on This Together"

I really like how Don writes copious comments on the kids' work, always coupling constructive criticism with praise. Even the less satisfactory papers say "I know you can do better" or "Keep working at it—you can get it" or "We'll work on this together." He is such a supportive teacher. I was glad to see the effort he made to make Anna, our newest student, feel welcome and part of the class. She seems to really like to hang around him during recess and she has become quite talkative with both Don and me.

An Instinct to Protect

Every week a volunteer from the Coast Guard comes and spends the morning in Don's class as part of a new program intended, I think, to provide kids with male role models. It's interesting how the kids respond to a "man in uniform." They are obviously enamored with all the ideas that a uniform connotes—power, prestige, and unfortunately, skill and access to arms. This week, quite a few of the kids wanted to know what kinds of guns Tom had and could use and how powerful the various weapons were.

Don also told me that on Wednesday a teenage mother came to talk to the class as part of the health education unit. The girl said that she became pregnant at 15 and the baby's father was killed in a drive-by, gang-related shooting when she was only two months pregnant. Don said the kids were relatively uninterested in the girl's pregnancy and the consequences of early motherhood; rather they wanted to know all the details of her boyfriend's shooting—what kind of gun the killer used, where the bullet hit the victim, etc.

The students' preoccupation with violence really disturbs me. Don and I discussed the grim reality of the middle and high schools our kids will go to, with their gangs and violence and drugs. I worry for our kids, especially those like Andrew, who I am sorry to say I can already picture joining gangs. Many of the boys at Garfield are already so incredibly hardened and tough. Then I also worry for the timid kids like whisper-soft Li Yiu who is afraid of even asking Don for an eraser. What could I as a teacher do to better equip these children for the challenges, demands and problems to come—and I am not even thinking now about the academic challenges. My instinct is to enfold them forever within the relatively safe arms of elementary school—impossible I know. What kinds of psychological "weapons" can I as a teacher give these children? I hope that as a teacher I will be able to do something for my own students, in the one short year we have together, to arm them to succeed. I really want to help these kids make it.

Small Triumphs

I finally got the chance to help out in some social studies—the kids are learning about Native Americans and doing reports on a tribe of their choice. I also had a small triumph which made me happy—I worked with a student a few days in a row on math and actually felt as though I had done some good. I felt so frustrated in the beginning; we were working on long division and I realized this student didn't even understand the concept of multiplication. She had to count on her fingers to figure out 7 minus 6. Despite my pleasure at helping her a tiny bit, I couldn't help once again feeling angry that another student has and probably will continue to slip though the grades without understanding much of what goes on. Would this problem be solved with class sizes of 15? I guess I'm raging at the system again. I alternate from utter despair and disillusionment to fierce determination that I can and will make a difference, in my classroom at least. There is something inside of me that refuses to relent to a frustrating system. I don't want to admit defeat until I've gone into battle.

"We Have Traveled a Long Way"

Following is a passage from the farewell thank-you letter I wrote to Don today:

The time I have spent in your class has been incredibly rich with new experiences and opportunities. I am glad that we now can both chuckle to recall the initial ambivalence and fear that engulfed me the first week or so—we have traveled a long way. You showed me that all this questioning does not cease after a few years of teaching and probably should never cease if one is to continually evolve and grow as a teacher. I felt so lucky to be included with you and your fellow teachers in your weekly Saturday "rap sessions." Our candid conversations about the purpose of education, the role of the teacher, and our individual philosophies as teachers, enlightened me to views outside my experience. You said recently that you were afraid that our heated discussions would convince me not to go into teaching—quite the contrary. I would not have wanted you and your friends to shield me from your doubts and questions and angst as teachers; your sharing has filled me with a greater sense of purpose. I do not want to give up on teaching before I even start, rather I'm more determined to try to make a difference and work toward changing these conditions that cause us anguish.

Kindergarten Becomes Ellis Island

By Annie Alcott

"How Can I Communicate?"

My first encounter with the students of Room 3 occurred before I even crossed the threshold. I turned the corner and began to walk down the corridor toward the Kindergarten room when I realized I was entering a sea of faces as unfamiliar to me as I was to them. Mothers with babies strapped to their backs in traditional Mien fashion, created in mountain climes where a mother must protect her child from the harsh elements—the weather, hunger, the unknown. I can see why this traditional way of toting a baby has not given way to American strollers—here mothers still have much from which to protect their babies, even more so because there is nothing familiar in this environment, save a few faces that look like their own, brought together by difficult circumstances. I smiled and said hello as I walked past them on my way into the room, not really knowing what else to do. I felt huge as they watched me, some redhaired giant passing among them.

During the first 45 minutes, a period of free exploration, I supervised the painting table. I was astonished to realize that I could not understand what the children were saying to one another. And it was hard to tell how well they understood me. They were quiet around me and if they answered at all, which most did not, it was almost indistinguishable. I have worked with children who couldn't understand English very well, but never with 30 of them at once. By the end of the day I was reeling. How can I communicate?

As it turns out, much of my communication is done with gestures and modeling. When I wanted them to mix the paint with water I showed them and explained as I did it. They are very eager to follow and get it right, to try it themselves, often for their own satisfaction.

I want to be aware of the differences between problems or strengths that are cognitively based and those that are language based. That is, if a child cannot build a tower of fives out of unifix cubes, and then five towers of five, is it because she does not have a concept of number or because she doesn't understand the language the teacher is using in her instructions? Junn, my master teacher, says the line becomes more clear with practice. I can see why teachers grasp at language ability as a measure of cognitive development but I just don't think this is fair or accurate.

As time goes by I'm sure I, like Junn, will find ways to communicate and gauge how much the children understand. Already it is clear that the five Lao children understand more English and are more willing to try out what they know. Junn said that in Laos, the Lao are of a higher social class than the Mien, who are an illiterate hill people. The Lao have a written language and are more diversified in their education, economic and social activities. All of the Lao children in the class were born in the U.S. and thus may have had more experience with English. Some of the Mien children were born here, too, though. The rest were born in Thai refugee camps.

Separations

I have been struck, as I am sure everyone has, by the true multicultural nature of Garfield. Multicultural has become one of those buzzwords which, while relevant and descriptive, runs the risk of becoming flat and meaningless through overuse. I think there is a lot more to it than a mix of ethnicities. It implies an awareness of the cultures and some attempt at learning from a culture different from one's own. At Garfield, teachers and administrators cannot help but learn more about, for example, Mien, Lao, Cambodian, Vietnamese students, because there they are, on their doorstep, and the school has a responsibility to serve them. Fortunately many teachers at Garfield put a lot into understanding their children and their cultures.

> ***I am sure I am even stranger to these children than they are to me as far as culture and language are concerned, but somehow they accept me. Maybe they just have to throw up their hands and try to make sense of whatever comes their way.***

Still, the majority of the children remain isolated in their culture group throughout their elementary school experience. I guess I figured that separation by language group was a perfectly normal and necessary thing at the kindergarten level. As I go to other classes of all grade levels, however, I see that this separation is standard throughout. Maybe it is too much to ask one school to take responsibility for integrating so many people speaking very different languages. I wonder what it would take to set up a school-wide mechanism to integrate cultural/linguistic groups.

Maybe you don't teach English in the same way to people of different backgrounds. Maybe you can. I guess I don't know enough about how a person learns another language.

Susan's Ski Mask

Susan, a little girl in our class, came to school wearing a beautiful red silk betassled hat complete with traditional Mien designs and silver adornments. Jann told me that Susan had been sick and the hat was intended to keep the good spirits in and the bad ones out. After a couple of days the child turned up in a ski mask that completely covered her entire head save her little face. That afternoon, as I did a hearing discrimination test as part of the K-checklist, I pulled back the ski mask just far enough to reveal her ear so that Susan could hear the sound of a zipper. I saw that all of her hair had been shaved off. As it turned out, her "sickness" was lice. She had had long jet-black hair. Now she wears a ski mask to cover her clean-shorn head. Of course the lice could have been gotten rid of with a special shampoo. But her mother did not know.

I wonder how the child feels. I cannot imagine. These situations and others are indications of the kind of isolation wrought by poverty and language barriers that these kids live with. It brings up all sorts of issues about the role of school, the place of the teacher, emotional distance the teacher has to maintain. I continue to wonder how I would fit in as a teacher here.

Garfield, Television and McDonalds

I am sure I am even stranger to these children than they are to me as far as culture and language are concerned, but somehow they accept me. Maybe they just have to throw up their hands and try to make sense of whatever comes their way. I am no stranger than Garfield or television or McDonalds or whatever else they encounter here in the U.S. Still I think that in trying to make sense of this new world, the children have a definite advantage over their parents. I know the kids can identify the difference between "us" and "them," but as children they are more accepting and adaptive than their parents. Thus they incorporate graham crackers and white teachers and nursery rhymes into their cognitive schema. It is a part of their view of the world that their parents do not necessarily share.

I now think of the United States and of "American Culture" (the title of my tenth-grade social studies class) in a different way than I used to. I just don't think it is possible that we as a nation will ever share "multiculture." What is it that we share: public school, McDonalds, television. How did these things become the great equalizers? What are the implications for the sustenance of cultural life? Will various cultural groups turn inward, grasping for something familiar? Will various cultural groups continue to reinvent and chase their own updated version of the American dream? Will we as a nation become so fragmented that we will have nothing to do with one another, nothing to say? Or will we somehow find a way to share and preserve and regroup? Does President Bush know what he has on his hands? I want him to come to Garfield.

Leonard jumped up, pride and assurance full on his face, and waxed eloquent for two or three minutes on the injustices caused by war.

Standard English

Should African-American kids learn standard English? The question I think is how will its knowledge serve them in their lives? Will it help them to get jobs they might not be able to get otherwise? It very well could. People, rightly or wrongly, are judged by the way they speak, write, look, dress, etc. I wonder how the community and parents feel about the need to teach/learn standard English. I would imagine there are very divided camps.

Leonard's Shining Moment

I observed a fifth-grade class where children were writing letters to President Bush (or Colin Powell, or Dick Cheney) about their feelings regarding the gulf war. Most of the students were engaged in the exercise but, as always, the children who have a hard time writing were having a hard time writing even if they had things to say. One such child was an African-American boy named Leonard. The teacher many times said, "Leonard, sit down," or "Leonard, quit screwing around." He would sit down but would not get anything written, only to pop up three minutes later to see what the people behind him were talking about, to argue with them—about a missing pencil, about the war, about missiles. The teacher would again call his name. As I watched this I was thinking that Leonard is a pain in the neck and I was a little wary of him, because while I was wondering if perhaps the teacher was quick to reprimand him, I was also aware that I did not know if I could control him or help him to become engaged were that my full-time task. I know how hard it is to have one child, or two or three, who constantly disrupts the class and your work.

But then something remarkable happened. The principal appeared in the doorway with an assistant superintendent in tow. He introduced his guest to the class and asked Leonard to stand up and "give his speech." Leonard literally jumped up, pride and assurance full on his face, and waxed eloquent for two or three minutes on the injustices caused by

Making sense of it all: Annie Alcott and Lao Mien Kindergarteners

war and the responsibility of government, of President Bush specifically, to attend the situation. It was a beautiful moment. The kid shone. At last there was a forum for Leonard to be heard. But where was it in the classroom? As soon as the guests left, the class went right back to the task at hand. Here is this child who has so much personality and so much energy and so much to say, but who is so difficult to teach—and from what I saw, he is difficult. The whole thing projected into the future seems more than a little tragic. I would not imagine that a kid like Leonard is going to sustain much interest in school.

What about the kids who would never even take the chance Leonard did, those who the system has already lost? The kids who spend a lot of the day out in the hall, not allowed to come back in, in effect physically excluded from the experience of learning. The class is learning to write, the kid in the hall is learning to hate white teachers to hate school, to hate the dominant society. I know that Leonard's teacher tries hard to impress on the children the concept of democracy and the responsibilities of the citizenry in that democracy. But is the classroom a place of democracy, of shared control? Can it be? Can it be in inner-city schools? How does management change its shape in this place? How do teachers cope?

When War Broke Out

I am feeling overwhelmed by the inhumanity of this world because of the war. I have been thinking a lot about what it would have been like to have had my own class when the war was declared. It is one of those issues which is too close to home for everyone—students and teachers alike—but controversial enough to be concerned with its place in the classroom. The teachers said they did not even have to bring it up because the kids did. It is important to be sensitive to the variety of responses kids might have and to what they are hearing at home. In a neighborhood such as this one, the military recruits very heavily. I was surprised to see them in an elementary school. They seemed so out of place. I never saw the Coast Guard in Moraga or in Albany elementary schools. In this area, military service presents an opportunity for young people to get out, to learn and have a chance. Until, of course, war happens to break out. I would think it would be really important to understand and respect that as a teacher. But with an issue so close to my heart it would be hard. I would want to give kids a place to talk about the war, express their feelings and hopefully provide something constructive to do. Draw. Write. Something bigger, maybe at the community level.

A Father's Alienation

Jann has a real quarrel over retention. She says she does not believe in it at all and if she had her druthers would not retain anyone because she believes it is detrimental to a child's self-esteem and thus to his development. But the first grade teacher who gets Jann's kids has approached her about retaining children whom she does not feel are ready, because she does not want to set them up for failure there. Their behavior and lack of readiness causes disruption in class and has an impact on all the children. She feels if children are not successful in the first grade, their self-esteem suffers and contributes to negative attitudes toward schools. Clearly there are troubling implications to both scenarios.

Jann respects the first-grade teacher's point of view and so has identified a few kids for retention. She discussed it with the parents at the parent conferences this week.

In the case of one Mien child, Jann asked the father how

It seems that school has become a very important means of gaining status and self-esteem for many newcomer families. Anything that seems different from the norm—like retention—must seem wrong.

he felt about his son being retained. The father seemed confused and Jann explained, through an interpreter, that she did not feel his son could listen for any length of time and that he was not progressing as other children were, as she would like him to. She thought it would be best to keep him in kindergarten for one more year. Without asking any questions or making any comments, the father consented.

In contrast, the mother of an African-American child in the class came in for a conference on the same day and Jann asked her how she felt about the idea of her daughter being retained. The mother responded in a surprised voice, "Do you think she needs to stay back?" Jann explained that from the daughter's immature drawings and her lack of understanding of number conservation that she thought it would be a good option, that first grade would very demanding. She said she wasn't sure the girl was ready to sit and work all day as would be expected in the first grade.

The mother immediately responded that she thought her daughter would be ready. To the issue of having to sit all day, she pointed out that her daughter attends 3-4 hours of church service and Sunday school every week. She defended her daughter's maturity by describing the responsibility she took with her two younger siblings. The mother promised that she would work more with her daughter on her drawing and her reading.

After hearing what the mother had to say, Jann said that there were several months before the decision needed to be made, and that there was indeed time for the girl to develop and be ready. She encouraged her mother's plans to work with her and take her to the library.

Clearly this mother was ready and able to fight for her daughter's promotion. Her ability to speak English, her personal history with American institutions, and her access to the channels of discussion in the context of school gave her the confidence and empowerment to make her feelings known and to succeed in keeping her daughter from being retained. The Mien boy's father, on the other hand, cannot speak English, does not come from this culture, does not have experience with American institutions, including the schools. Thus, he does not feel that he can express concern, ask questions, or even take a stand on his son's school experience. And this problem is not only limited to non-English speakers but to all parents who for whatever numerous reasons feel alienated from the schools.

For such parents, it is the school's responsibility to make every effort to communicate. This particular boy's family, for example, needs to know that there is no shame in retention, that their son is very well-behaved and cooperative, truly an important part of the class, but that retention will be a chance to foster further development. It seems that school has become a very important means of gaining status and self-esteem for many newcomer families. It is one part of the American mainstream to which they are connected. Anything that seems different from the norm—like retention—must seem wrong, hard to understand or worse yet shameful. The schools must clear up these misunderstandings and make sure parents understand they have a strong say in decisions directly affecting their children.

Peace March

On Saturday, a group of us from Garfield went on the peace march in Oakland. This march was different from other marches I have been on since the gulf war started because it didn't go to City Hall, not through the financial district, but through a community filled with people of mixed ethnicity, of differing opinions, ideas and feelings. The march went right past Garfield School.

Some 2,000 people carrying signs, chanting and singing through a neighborhood like that makes a big impression. It was an intimate gathering of community. Some people were not happy we were there, many cheered and flashed peace signs, a few joined us. People everywhere in the neighborhood watched.

As we passed Clinica de la Raza, patients and staff stood out on the porch and cheered us as we chanted, "Guerra no! Raza, Si!" Later we turned onto Foothill and passed the home of an African-American woman who stood with two younger women on their front steps. Each of the younger women held up her hand in peace and welcome while their mother held an 8x10 photograph of a young man in a Marine's uniform. When marchers around me caught sight of this there was a visible and visceral reaction. All at once, out of a need to do something for ourselves as much as for her, everyone cheered her. As the swell waned, a man called, "Let's bring him home today!" She raised the photo higher and nodded her head as if all her heart were given to that motion. I felt tears well in my eyes.

Within ten blocks of Garfield the crowd of onlooking neighbors expanded from African Americans and Latinos to include a huge number of Southeast Asians. I saw a few kids from the school, all of whom seemed amused and a little bit embarrassed to see me. Maybe teachers don't march in the streets. Suddenly I began to see more familiar

faces—children from Jann's class, mothers and siblings I have seen everyday in the hallway at Garfield. I held back from calling out to my students, though I really had an urge to. It did not feel right—I don't really know why. Most of the Southeast Asian people just watched. They did not cheer or seem to protest our presence, but they did not take their eyes off of us. I wondered as I have so many times since I came to Garfield, what they must think of this country. Many of us marching down their streets were white and there were also a good number of Blacks and Latinos. I wonder what their conception of our role in society is. Did people march in Laos? As far as I know most in this crowd lived under repressive regimes most of their lives. Do they think us brave or foolish or strange or crazy? I wish I knew. I want to ask my kids what they thought of what they saw, what their perspective on the whole thing was. I felt both welcome and anomalous.

Two-Way Gate

I found out this week that Terri, a child who seems very immature both emotionally and cognitively, did not speak even in Mien until she was five. No wonder the child is behind her peers in speaking English. What a difference it makes to have information like that. It came among the treasure trove of information Jann got from the parent conferences she held.

Another major upshot since the parent interviews seems to be that parents now see the classroom door as one that is open not only to their children but to them. The difference in parent visibility between this week and last is remarkable. On the day of the field trip to the public library, parents did not hover in the hallway catching glimpses of the interior, never crossing the threshold. Instead, they filled two tables.

Off we went—28 children, seven parents and one teacher, one student teacher, one instructional aid, and one researcher marching down Foothill to the library. Fourteen pairs in two not-so-straight lines. Mothers with babies strapped to their backs chatted and laughed with one another, held the hands of toddlers, talked to grandmothers and the one lone father as we made our way. As we walked along with the parents, it was suddenly clear to me that we are in the same business, taking care of kids. So there doesn't need to be a stone wall to mark the boundary between home and school. The wall can have a gate. And the responsibility for seeing that the gate has a two-way hinge is that of the teacher. The parents are not going to cross the boundary uninvited and in order for a teacher to extend that invitation there must be a purpose.

When we finally reached the library, we gathered on a large rug to listen to a librarian tell some stories. It was a warm day and though the library was cooler than it had been outdoors, it was still warm inside too. Susan was there in the circle, still wearing her now familiar ski mask. Before we had a chance to react, the librarian pulled off the hat, exposing Susan's shorn head. She wasn't bald anymore but her hair was only about half an inch long. The children all were silent, then burst out laughing. Jann shushed everyone and the librarian began the story, without realizing I think, what she'd done. Susan's mother was sitting right there but made no move toward her daughter. I felt incredibly uncomfortable. What a horrible thing. Once the story had begun, Jann moved quietly over to Susan and asked if she wanted to put her hat back on. Susan shook her head,

There doesn't need to be a stone wall to mark the boundary between home and school. The wall can have a gate.

her face still red and flushed from embarrassment. By the time the stories were over, though, and we all began to look for books, Susan's hat was back on.

I can understand why the librarian did not know why Susan might have had a hat like that one—but I don't think it's right to yank something away from a child, something he or she is wearing, without asking first. I know she was embarrassed but it seemed worse than that. Maybe I am just projecting but as it was happening it seemed as if it were one of those scenes she would never forget, enlarged in her mind, something that will make her face feel hot just to think about it. But, just as a follow-up: in the days that followed, Susan was her old smiling, socializing self.

They're Crazy

Whoever said teaching Kindergarten was easy was crazy and has never done it. It is deceptive because it seems like play, like less than a day's work, like the children are easy to manage because of their young age. Think again. I am finding that it takes a lot of planning and coordination of resources and materials and timing. For example on Wednesday, we did the following things: sign-in, printmaking, puzzles, drawing, legos, touch table, duck-duck-goose game, junk boxes, sharing circle, 7-step dance, "Wheels on the Bus," learning a new song and recording it, rotating centers, taste station, physics of sound, literature/dictation, homework discussion and dismissal.

A Blossoming

When a new girl, Mey Fahm, came to our class, she would not say a word, not even her own name. Jann had to spell it out as it was not written anywhere. Kindergarten becomes Ellis/Angel Island. Mey Fahm would talk to other children

in Mien only if she absolutely had to and even then she whispered almost inaudibly with her head down. The look on her face was a mix of terror and shock. It took her three weeks to even let us catch her eye.

On Mey Fahm's first day, Jann passed out walking slips and library cards to be signed at home. I asked one of the children to tell Mey Fahm what the papers were for and to have her mother sign the paper. "Mother dead," was the matter of fact reply. I knew these kids had been through a lot but somehow I was not prepared for the swell of sadness that made my heart rise weightless like a cork inside my chest. Without thinking or really knowing what else to say I said, "Oh, have her father sign." A few words passed quickly in Mien. "Father dead," came the reply. I wanted to take her in my arms but I knew that I could never help this child. Not now anyway. My face fell hot and my whole teacherly body felt weak and out of place. "Who does she live with? Just tell her to have someone at home sign," I said, motioning to the signature lines at the bottom of the pages. Mey Fahm never looked up.

Initially, Mey Fahm's only link to the classroom was a boy named Danny with whose family she lives. In those first few weeks, Danny looked out for her and she hung around only with him and a large group of boys. Rarely did she choose to be around the other girls. The best time to watch her was during Discovery Time when, whether she realized it or not, she could make her own decision about how to spend her time. At first she just watched but as a few days passed she did whatever Danny did, mostly played with Legos.

After the presenter from the State Department of Education came to the university to talk about sheltered English, I became very conscious of my interactions with Mey Fahm and all the kids. Am I doing it? Is it helping? Are they understanding me better? At all? I could feel myself growing more expressive, my actions more exaggerated.

One day during Discovery Time I noticed for the first time that Mey Fahm was in the midst of several girls who were gathered around a table drawing on pink pages. All the girls were talking away, many of them drawing beautiful girls with heart-shaped bodies and dangling earrings and sweet faces. Mey Fahm alone did not have a piece of paper or any colored pencils. She was watching. "Do you want to draw?" I asked, pointing to the drawing by Muong Lio, who was standing next to her. She did not respond except to look at me. I said to the group, "Will someone please show Mey Fahm where you got paper? She might want a piece." With that I walked away, but not before I saw Fahm Ian turn and reach for a piece of paper for Mey Fahm and hand it to her.

I focused my attention on the other side of the room, wanting to allow Mey Fahm to take the plunge if she was ready, or not take it if she wasn't, without feeling my prying eyes on her. After a few minutes, I circled slowly around the room to a spot from which I could watch Mey

"Gimme that!" Hooray! The first English words we ever heard her utter. Talk about language use predicated on necessity!

Fahm without her knowing. By this time she had removed herself from the group and was at the next table drawing all by herself. After a moment she went over to the girls' table, colored pencil in hand, and exchanged it for another color, then returned to her private table and continued drawing. Hoping not to be too conspicuous, I stood up to see what she was drawing. I was surprised and delighted to see a beautiful drawing of a girl, not unlike those her of classmates'. Hers, though, had tremendous detail and revealed a good understanding of proportion, shape and space.

This past week while we were making Touch Books I found that Mey Fahm had no trouble following along. The only trouble she had was with asserting herself to get a fair shake at using the glue. I watched her grow frustrated as she waited and waited to glue down her cotton. Finally Mey Fahm leaned up on her chair reached across the table to one of the boys who was hogging the glue and said "Gimme that!" Hooray! The first English words we ever heard her utter. Talk about language use predicated on necessity!

Later in the week, I saw Mey Fahm select a book to look at all on her own for the very first time, one we had read earlier at Story Time together. First she would gaze at the pages, then peer down at her chest, then gaze at the pages again. I peeked over her shoulder and saw that the girl in the book had bows on her dress, just like the little bows on Mey Fahm's shirt!

Why do I feel so incredibly elated? Because one little girl is learning. Because school is not as frightening for her as it was. Because she is actually having fun. Because the horrible wrenching look of sadness and fear was gone from her eyes. I am hooked. I know it was one of those rare and wonderful weeks but truly it was very, very wonderful.

Missing the Messenger

Unfortunately, Pao the instructional aid was only able to be here on Monday this week. We can get along okay without him in class but it is next to impossible to relay logistical information to the parents. This week Jann had a third-grade sibling translate information about the cycle change day schedule. It would be difficult to teach under these circumstances and I can see how Jann's frustration level affected her feeling about teaching this week. High stress.

Neighborhood walk: Alcott and class rest up during a snapshot break

A Perfect Walking Day

What a day. I don't know if I can do this field trip justice in my journal. I mapped out the route the night before, no easy task, but the old city planner in me rose to the occasion. The plan was to walk through the neighborhood to visit every student's home. The day of the trip was sunny and clear—a perfect walking day. Five or six parents began the trip with us. The children walked in pairs and were flanked by mothers and teachers, student teachers and guests. As we approached a student's house, she and her partner were allowed to walk at the front of the line to lead the way. When we got close, the child could run up to the house to invite the family out to be in a picture if they wanted to. We didn't go inside, even if invited, so as not to invade the privacy of the families. Then off we'd go to the next house, new faces at the head of the line. In this fashion we wove a snaky path through the neighborhood for the better part of three hours.

The kids were very proud to show off their houses and their families. Many of the kids really knew the neighborhood. The area is indisputably poor but many of the Mien families have managed to rent large houses and there are usually many people living under each roof. All the kids seemed to know where each other's families lived. "There's Johnny's house!" "We no go to Lai Mey's house," They were right—I had skipped Lai Mey's house accidentally. Phew. I am so glad someone pointed it out—we retraced our steps.

At one point during the walk, we stood in front of a barbershop next door to one of the children's houses. As we waited for him to go upstairs and call his family, several of the children peered into the barbershop window. Sarah remarked, "Cut Black people hair." "Yeah," I said, "They're having their hair cut." "No," she clarified, "only Black people go there." "Anyone could go there. It's a barbershop," I said. "No," she told me. In point of fact she is probably right. I would not go there to have my hair cut. That is the reality of it.

A Distressing Departure

The scene at the barbershop relates to a very difficult incident that I have not been able to stop thinking about. The mother of an African-American girl came to school this week and requested that her daughter be removed from our class and placed in another kindergarten because she was repeatedly experiencing racism in the classroom. During the earlier parent conferences, Sharon's mother had reported that her daughter had been called "nigger" by one child in the room. We were shocked and spoke seriously to the girl in question, hoping this would be the end of it. But apparently it only got worse and more children started calling Sharon "nigger" and saying that they didn't like Black children. They began excluding her and finally one child told her that no one in the class would play with her.

After the earlier parent conference, I had listened and watched for this but I really didn't see anything. I did believe that as a native-English speaking child in a class with so many non-native speakers, our classroom was probably not the best learning environment for Sharon, but we were doing our best to work with her and hoped she would benefit from the developmental curriculum. On Sharon's last day in our classroom, Jann and I wandered around during Free Expression in a state of semi-shock. How could this happen in this class which we view as so loving and nurturing and wonderful? And yet it happened. Sharon was refusing to come to school—that's how bad it was for her. I am just glad her mother had the gumption to get her daughter out of the situation.

With the influx of Southeast Asians into a predominantly Black and Hispanic neighborhood also has come resentment, territoriality, and all the negative energy that can be associated with this sort of change. These "strange" people were a threat to the neighborhood—culturally and economically. And the Southeast Asian society is not without prejudice. It is true there has been harassment and violence against Southeast Asians in Oakland and other cities. Since this girl's departure, I have found that the Southeast Asian children acutely think of African Americans as a cultural group to fear and thus to hate. They have generalized all African Americans, and it directly affected a little five-

year-old girl in her first year of school. Everybody loses. We have to figure out a way to try to address this critical issue of prejudice at a very early age with the children in our Kindergarten.

Realities

I will be very sad to leave these kids. To leave Jann, and yes, to leave Garfield.

It is tiring in huge way to work in the inner city. If you let it get too enormous, which it will, you can't do your job. In kindergarten a teacher can afford to have a lot of hope. But along the way, as the years go on, the kids begin to lose ground, stifled by the system. Teachers stop believing in them, they lose their confidence in themselves, they begin to turn against school and cease to believe it is a place that is there for them. If schools aren't there for kids, why are they there at all?

There is a debate going on among the Berkeley students, some of whom were student teachers at Garfield this year. Some are saying that the Garfield placements seem like an anthropological study in which children, school, parents and community become objectified. This shocked me at first, but I can see where this is a very valid concern. Still there is the question of how can we, as mostly white, mostly middle-class, teachers-to-be, come into a school as sensitively and unobtrusively as possible, without seeming like the big white overeducated university students? Teachers after all are part of a school community and thus of the larger community. That should never be denied or underemphasized.

Underlying this is a very disturbing question which has been raised and reraised in a myriad of subtle and not-too-subtle ways since I first came in this program. That is, the role and efficacy of a white teacher in what is politely called urban education. What is really at issue here is whether or not it is appropriate for white teachers to be teaching non-white kids in non-white neighborhoods. My answer is yes, but this is not everyone's answer. One reason that is given is that white teachers are taking jobs away from teachers of color. I understand that it would be most beneficial, for example, for Spanish-speaking children to be taught by a teacher who is a native-Spanish speaker who shares a common culture. I can understand the fierce determination to retain one's native culture and to be spared the demoralization/deculturization that commonly occurs in the American public school system. But I don't like it that some people think I don't understand anything about these children, purely because of the color of my skin and the circumstance of my upbringing. I am not claiming to know everything or to want to be in control of everything, but I am doing everything I can to learn. I believe that I and people like me can be a part of the process, part of the "revolution" to change the structure of American schools—and of American society. But it is going to be a painstaking process. Unless I underestimate the powers that be and the

I am a teacher. And I have not changed into something new, I have simply, miraculously become more what I have always been.

composition of this society.

The more I see what's going on in education, the more I think the "beauty and richness" of multiculturalism is a crock. What it is is a reality. The circumstance of so many cultures, living, working, being educated side by side, is confused and confusing. It is what we as teachers will have to contend with in the classroom, and this can be incredibly wonderful and rewarding but also traumatic.
Multicultural-ism is a jumbled mass of ideas, ideologies and strategies, a political miasma. At its roots are a wide-ranging assortment of people with vastly different, often opposing world views brought together in the U.S. largely under false pretenses.

Disturbing as all this is, I am a teacher. I don't know where or for whom but the reality is fast approaching. I see that I have changed tremendously. And I have not changed into something new, I have simply, miraculously become more what I have always been. I have become more myself. I have a tremendous amount to learn. About curriculum. About other cultures. About myself. But I know that I will be a good teacher. I know that I have a lot to give to children who don't share my culture. And they have a lot to give me. ❑

Annie and company

An innovative new resource
points the way
to excellent public education
in every community.

the good common school

By The National Coalition of Advocates for Students

IMAGINE an urban elementary school with 600 students, slightly more than half African-American and half fairly even numbers of Latinos, whites and Asians, with a sprinkling of Haitians. The principal, an African American woman, oversees a teaching staff that is three-quarters white, but the school is making efforts to hire faculty that more closely reflect the student composition.

Several years ago, the teachers divided the K-6 school into House One, House Two, and House Three, located in separate parts of the building. Teachers felt that these smaller educational units would enable them to individualize the learning process and allow each student to become well-known. They also felt that the smaller schools would make parents more comfortable with getting involved, plus foster a stronger sense of community. This hope has proven true.

Teachers in each unit plan together based on a shared philosophical perspective. For instance, House One's faculty have agreed upon multi-age groupings; breaking down rigid subject matter divisions in favor of more integrated learning; keeping children with teachers for at least two years; consciously promoting multiculturalism; and working closely with parents.

The school also operates enrichment and tutorial programs after classes and during the summer—integral to the school's commitment to the children and their families. One more unusual aspect: the school is governed mostly by parents. Six of them sit on a local council along with two citizens, two teachers, and the principal.

This is a fictional description of a traditional, urban elementary school transforming itself into a Good Common School—a school with the foremost goal of providing all its students access to educational excellence. The account appears in an important new resource, *The Good Common School: Making the Vision Work for All Children*, published recently by the National Coalition of Advocates for Students. NCAS, a network of child advocacy organizations, including California Tomorrow, works to give greater opportunities for quality public education to all children, especially those at highest risk of school failure.

Prior to the 1987 conception of The Good Common School Project, NCAS member organizations were engaged in piecemeal efforts to make schools in their own communities more responsive to the most vulnerable students. Some gains had been made, but the advocates agreed these were inadequate, particularly when U.S. society was becoming increasingly characterized by economic stratification, a failing safety net of social programs, and what they saw as growing violence and abuse of human and civil rights.

From this discouraging assessment sprang the thesis

"All schools strive to become superior, thereby replacing the more common pattern of superior ones and magnet programs intermingled with mediocre schools."

for The Good Common School Project—at once honest and optimistic: parents, advocates, and educators must work together to fundamentally restructure schools to serve all students well. The report asserts that only comprehensive, advocacy-driven, bottom-up efforts that define the role of parents in bold, new ways will result in schools that support the academic success of all students.

The Good Common School **contains no casually taken positions on school restructuring issues.** Each stand is rooted in the consensus view of advocates working in many communities. Through NCAS public hearings and focus groups, more than 1,000 parents, students, educators, policy makers, and activists contributed a wealth of insight to the book.

The project identified ten school functions that must be carried out differently, including: governance, admitting and placing students, developing curriculum, teaching methods, assessing student progress, providing student support services, maintaining positive school climate, empowering teachers, allocating resources, and connecting with the larger school system.

The report is organized around ten vital student entitlements. Each chapter opens with a fictional vignette about the imaginary 600-student elementary school on its way to becoming a Good Common School. The second half of each chapter supports the need for fundamental change by documenting problems found within most public elementary schools. Chapters include advocacy strategies, followed by descriptions of promising practices implemented with success in real schools. Finally, each chapter closes with a summary of education research related to the chapter's topics.

There are many ways to use *The Good Common School*. Parents and community leaders may wish to read only the vignettes for a comprehensive description of the struggles of a fictional school community transforming itself into a Good Common School. Activists will appreciate the boxed, step-by-step instructions for achieving advocacy-driven school reform.

Other readers—policymakers, teachers, and administrators—may wish to read the second half of each chapter to contrast the vision of the Good Common School with current policies and practices in most U.S. public elementary schools.

Researchers, educators, and those engaged in the professional preparation of teachers may find the research appendices and exhaustive bibliographies at the close of each chapter of special interest.

Here, then, are *The Good Common School*'s ten entitlements for all children:

ENTITLEMENT 1: Children are entitled to have parents, advocates, and concerned educators included in all decisions affecting their education.

Parents hold a majority of seats on the local school council and work with administrators and teachers to set policies about fundamental matters, such as school staffing, resource allocation, and curriculum.

Conversely, the school values each family's hopes for its children and works to see these hopes attained. It speaks to parents in many languages—the language of caring, which takes into consideration the social and economic hardships some families must endure; the language of competency, which tries many ways of teaching a child before declaring failure; and the parent's own native language, which expresses the school's commitment to inclusiveness. The district follows suit.

When parents move comfortably through a school's physical and social structures, their contributions help to close large gaps between culture, language, and life experience. Genuine parental participation also brings students many benefits—improved attendance and academic achievement and more positive attitudes towards school, including higher expectations.

ENTITLEMENT 2: Children are entitled to learn in an integrated, heterogeneous setting responsive to different learning styles and abilities.

The Good Common School highly values equal educational opportunity, a basic promise of U.S. public education. Administrators and teachers measure every decision about the placement of an individual student

"The Good Common School values each family's hopes for its children and works to see these hopes attained."

against the single standard of student benefit. At the district level, all schools strive to become superior, thereby replacing the more common pattern of superior ones and magnet programs intermingled with mediocre schools.

The Good Common School does not sort students for instruction; it groups together children of differing needs, abilities, and interests. Children who are "different"—racially, economically, linguistically, or otherwise—are not prepared for less satisfying futures. Because heterogeneous grouping creates greater complexities for teachers, the school provides them with supports such as classroom aides, appropriate books and materials, and resource consulting teachers.

ENTITLEMENT 3: Children are entitled to comprehensible, culturally supportive, and developmentally appropriate curriculum and teaching strategies.

At the Good Common School, fluency in a second language is prized, whether learned before or after English; in fact, multiple language and cultural literacies for every child is a school goal. Limited proficiency in English is not viewed as a deficit, nor English language instruction as remediation.

Multiculturalism is a primary goal. Students learn how others live and receive a strong foundation of skills for inhabiting a global community. Students are taught to understand economic and social power imbalances that limit the opportunities of many and to consider how these imbalances can be corrected.

ENTITLEMENT 4: Children are entitled to have access to a common body of knowledge and the opportunity to acquire higher-order skills.

Every teacher at the Good Common School shares a strong belief in and commitment to the academic success of every student.

The school curriculum is powerful, complex and rich with meaning, challenging the capacity of children to think deeply. It is organized around central themes and concepts, providing multiple entry points so that children of differing abilities may have access to the same body of knowledge. Teacher-made materials are encouraged. The role of the arts in enriching the lives of children and adults is acknowledged. Teachers urge children to apply all that they learn to their daily lives.

Children interact freely in the classroom. They work frequently in small group settings to strengthen social skills. This approach supports development of basic and higher-order skills, including the capacity to analyze one's own learning and to challenge oneself and others. Peer tutoring, including cross-age tutoring, is used.

ENTITLEMENT 5: Children are entitled to a broadly based assessment of their academic progress, plus grade structures that enhance individual strengths and potential.

At the Good Common School, teachers assume every child has special talents and strengths, along with weaknesses. Human growth is viewed as an uneven, highly individualized process. When a child lags behind peers, time and teacher ingenuity usually hold the solution. Teachers identify and build on individual strengths.

This works because parents and educators base a child's future instruction on information gained through curriculum-based assessments of the youngster's academic progress, including student portfolios, performance tasks, student exhibitions, structured classroom observations, and parent conferences. No important educational decisions about a child or the curriculum are made solely on the basis of a standardized test score, as they are in traditional elementary schools.

The Good Common School's flexible, cross-age grade structure not only acknowledges that children progress at different rates, but also guards against tracking and encourages teachers to work with each pupil as an individual. Children who need more time to complete work can do so without "flunking" a grade, and no child is "pushed ahead" by skipping a grade.

ENTITLEMENT 6: Children are entitled to a broad range of individualized support services.

The Good Common School has a well-developed guidance and counseling program. School counselors help teachers design classroom activities that strengthen students' academic, social, personal, and career develop-

ment skills. Counselors meet individually or in small groups with students referred by parents or teachers—or who just need to talk with someone.

Counselors establish strong linkages with community service providers to connect students and their families with a variety of services not available at the school.

Care is taken that counseling staff either speak the languages of the students and families, or seek out appropriate translators so that all may be served.

ENTITLEMENT 7: Children are entitled to attend a school that is safe, attractive, and free from prejudice.

The Good Common School prides itself on being an inclusive, democratic community of children and adults—quite different from the often exclusionary neighborhoods that surround it.

At the school, diversity is the norm. The principal models respectful treatment of adults and children and expects all members of the community to do the same. Clear consequences exist for abusive treatment of others, whether by students or staff.

ENTITLEMENT 8: Children are entitled to attend school every day unless they pose a danger to other children or school staff.

The principal expresses to parents and students that children cannot learn if they do not attend school. As disciplinarian, she sets firm limits but will not suspend a student for a trivial offense, particularly an attendance offense. When a student misses school frequently, the principal or a counselor calls the parent to find out if the school can help correct the situation.

The principal is committed to preserving a safe school environment. The discipline code, developed by a committee with broad community representation, spells out behavioral offenses and specific consequences with appropriate severity of punishment. It also states that students with drugs and weapons cannot stay at school. The code is enforced fairly and consistently. Students' due process rights are observed. Overall, disciplinary referrals and school suspensions are low.

ENTITLEMENT 9: Children are entitled to instruction by teachers who hold high expectations for all students and who are fully prepared to meet the challenges inherent in diverse classrooms.

At the Good Common School, teachers permit students a fresh start each year, rather than prejudging capacities on the basis of previous years' reports, grades, or teacher conversations. They seek out students who may need help but do not assertively ask for it. All children are called on in the classroom and receive equal praise. Children's successes are celebrated, even the small ones.

The Good Common School encourages teachers to continue their own education and allows them time with one another to reflect on practice, to share information, and to engage in team-building activities.

ENTITLEMENT 10: Children are entitled to an equal education opportunity supported by provision of greater resources to schools serving low-income, minority, handicapped, or immigrant students.

The Good Common School Council makes important decisions about how funds are spent. The principal provides multilingual materials for parents and advocates well in advance of public meetings. Program budgets relate expenditures to school improvement goals.

A key tenet of the Good Common School's philosophy is that no child's school success should be limited by where he or she lives. Equity is achieved by increasing funding for poor districts, rather than by forcing wealthy districts to lower expenditures.

Because the district that administers the Good Common School shares this view, it allocates funds according to student needs. For instance, schools get extra money if they have greater numbers of low-income youths or children in special educational programs.

This fair and common-sense approach to resource allocation is supported by state laws that have as their goal equalization of educational opportunity, and which do not permit "reforms" that spread an even layer of extra resources over an uneven foundation. ❑

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