

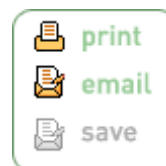
Home > Resources

## Radical Math: Creating Balance in An Unjust World, Conference Report

**Type:** Horace Feature

**Author(s):** [Jill Davidson](#)

**Source:** *Horace* Spring 2007, Vol. 23 No. 2



Founded in 2006 by Jonathan Osler, Math and Community Organizing teacher at El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, a public CES high school in Brooklyn, New York, Radical Math is an organization for educators working to integrate issues of political, economic, and social justice into math education. The Radical Math website, [www.radicalmath.org](http://www.radicalmath.org), is an evolving exploration of teaching and learning focused on both math skills and social justice issues.

In April 2007, Radical Math cosponsored "Creating Balance in an Unjust World" a conference on math education and social justice. Following school visits to several schools, including CES schools Fannie Lou Hamer High School, Institute for Collaborative Education, East Side Community High School, and El Puente Academy, the conference opened at El Puente. The opening session featured young people from around the United States talking about their experiences of understanding their world more completely through mathematical analysis. Students also participated in workshops the following day; Levon Kirkpatrick, conference participant and student at Vanguard High School, another New York City CES school, highlighted the necessity of mathematical literacy and the connection to real world contexts. "It allows you to know that math isn't stuff you do with just a piece of paper and a pencil. It has to do with life. I'm not asking my teacher 'Why do I have to know this?'"

With the urgent need for mathematical literacy and the current lack of equity in math education paramount in the consciousness of facilitators and participants, conference sessions included a variety of 28 workshops, two panels, and a keynote address delivered by civil rights activist Bob Moses, founder of The Algebra Project, a program that prepares underserved youth with high-level math skills. Moses is also co-author of *Radical Equations: Math Literacy and Civil Rights*. He spoke about the parallels between his prior work building demand for and securing voting rights in the 1960s and his more recent work building demand for high quality, equitable education through a focus on mathematics skills. "What's radical is doing math with the kids at the bottom of society and getting them to demand their educational rights," observed Moses. "When students begin to make a demand on themselves, they start to make demands on their schools and communities." Moses spoke about parallel efforts to build demand for a Constitutional amendment for quality education for all, mentioning the work of groups such as Quality Education as a Civil Right.

The conference closed with participants gathered in a variety of action groups, and a planning session for a subsequent 2008 conference. Initially, Osler and other organizers didn't plan on the conference becoming an annual event. "I had a naive idea that we could spend time at the conference and then it would end. Instead, there has been an enormous amount of interest in this approach to math education," says Osler. "It would be great to make it happen in another city so other schools could be highlighted. That's what a good organizer does - we pass on those skills and keep it going." For those unable to attend, Radical Math will be issuing a DVD that offers conference highlights and handouts.

---

For more, please visit:

**Radical Math**

[www.radicalmath.org](http://www.radicalmath.org)

---

**The Algebra Project**

[www.algebra.org](http://www.algebra.org)

---

**Quality Education as a Civil Right**

[www.qecr.org](http://www.qecr.org)

---

**Related Resource**

*Horace* Volume 20, Issue 22 (Winter 2004) featured "Working the Demand Side: An Interview with the Algebra Project's Robert Moses." [www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces\\_res/322](http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/322)

This resource last updated: March 04, 2008

Database Information:

<p><b>Source:</b> <i>Horace</i> Spring 2007, Vol. 23 No. 2 <b>Publication Year:</b> 2007 <b>Publisher:</b> CES National <b>School Level:</b> All <b>Audience:</b> New to CES, Teacher, Parent <b>Issue:</b> 23.2</p>
--