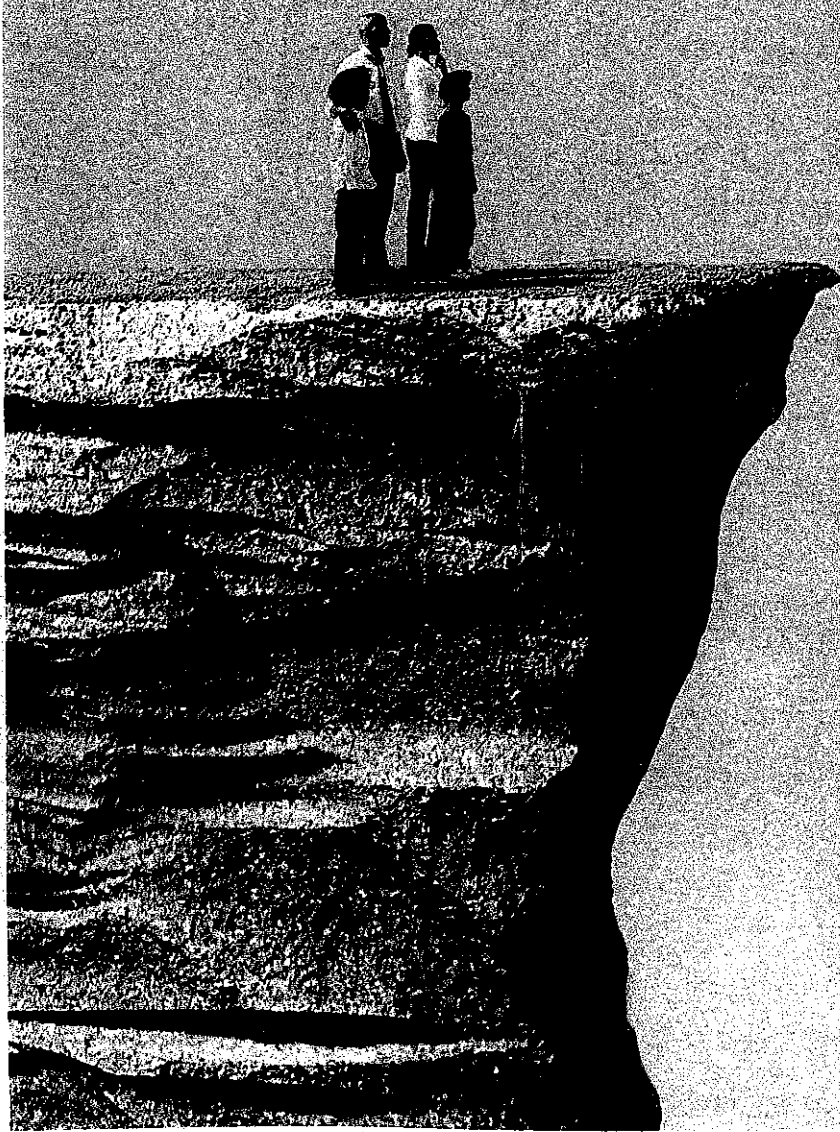


# YOU CAN'T LIVE HERE ... (unless you're white)



In April 2000, Stephen Ruffin, 43, got an offer he couldn't refuse: a yearlong stint as a visiting faculty member at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he'd studied for his master's degree. "We were so excited," says his wife, Karen, 42, an interior designer. "We're the type of people who like to take on different challenges." Steve and Karen flew from Atlanta, where Steve taught aerospace engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology, to Boston to look for a rental home. With the help of a local broker, they found a place for \$2,300 a month, a tidy white ranch with a beautiful tree-lined yard on a quiet street in suburban Belmont.

The Ruffins put in their application and gave their broker a deposit, authorization for a credit report, employment verification, and references, including one for their dog, Ebony. "The broker did a credit check, and it came back perfect," recalls Steve. "The owner contacted the colleague I was going to be working with at MIT, and he gave a glowing reference." Soon after, the broker called and confirmed that the homeowner had received the documents. "She also told us that everything looked good," says Steve, "so we took it to mean we were in." The Ruffins described the house in glowing terms

**E**

**It's illegal to refuse to sell or rent a house to someone because of race. But that doesn't mean it's not happening all over the country. BY K.C. BAKER**

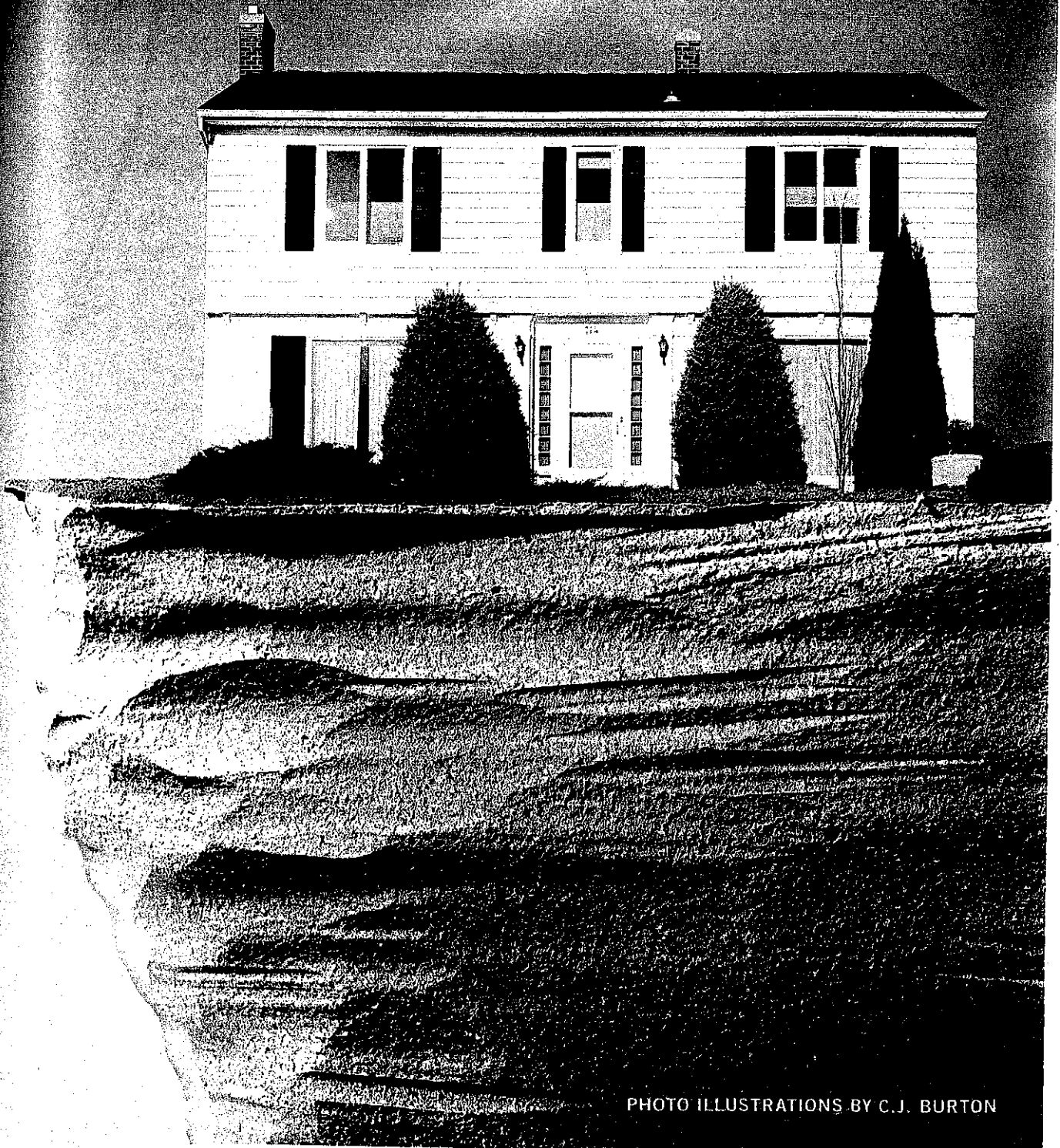


PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY C.J. BURTON

e)

in, 43,  
fuse: a  
aculty  
usetts  
where  
ster's  
ys his  
igner.  
like to  
e and  
Steve  
t the  
y, to  
With  
nd a  
white  
yard  
ont.  
tion  
tho-  
nent  
ling  
aker  
ack  
on-  
be  
re a  
the  
the  
cu-  
ing  
ok  
ins  
ms

# THOUGH VIOLATORS FACE STIFF PENALTIES, HOUSING

to their two sons, then 8 and 11: "The boys memorized the new address so they could tell their friends where to write them," says Karen.

But one afternoon, only two weeks before the family was due to move, the broker called back. "She didn't sound right," Karen recalls. "She said something like, 'The owner has decided not to give you the house.' I said, 'What happened?' Because she was mumbling, I finally said to her, 'Is this because we're black?' There was silence on the other end. And that's how I knew." Karen hung up and told her husband. "I was stunned by how blatant the discrimination was," she says now.

In a subsequent call, the broker told the Ruffins that she had stood up for them, Karen reports, but that the owner wouldn't budge. The broker quoted the owner as saying, "Don't you know what kind of neighborhood this is?" and "What are my neighbors going to say?"

## Shut out of the market

Housing discrimination "strikes at the heart of the American dream," says Bernard Kleina, executive director of the HOPE Fair Housing Center in Wheaton, IL. "It's one of this country's most intractable problems." In 2006, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) received some 5,000 complaints of housing discrimination based on race and national origin, a record high. In addition to HUD, such complaints can go through state or local agencies or federal court. Yet only 1 percent of violations are ever reported, according to the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA), a private advocacy group, which estimates that there are at least 3.7 million instances of rental and housing-sales discrimination each year against African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and other ethnic groups. "It's happening all the time, all over the country," says Kim Kendrick, an assistant secretary of HUD. "We see it in New York, and we see it in South Dakota."

Housing discrimination has been illegal since April

1968, when Congress passed the Federal Fair Housing Act. The law protects all Americans from discrimination based on race or color, and national origin, among other categories. Those who violate the act are liable for damages to the victim, which can be steep. In addition, there may be civil penalties: Housing discrimination charges heard before an administrative law judge at HUD carry penalties ranging from \$11,000 for a first offense to \$60,000 for a third (if it's within seven years of the first). Charges can also be heard in federal court, where there is no limit on punitive damages. Violators are often required to attend fair-housing classes; brokers may have their license revoked.

But despite these stern measures, housing discrimination can be hard to prove and, as a result, hard to prosecute. One of the toughest obstacles to overcome is the general public's disbelief. "When I take these cases to court, people on the jury come in with the idea that this doesn't really go on anymore," says Elizabeth Brancart, a lawyer in Pescadero, CA, who has handled housing discrimination cases for more than 15 years. "It's like a double burden. First we have to change people's mindsets. Then we have to prove that the event really happened."



Steve and Karen Ruffin with their sons

Testers can help. Sent by the investigating agency, these are people from different racial backgrounds who pose as potential buyers (or renters) and report on how they were treated. If the tester's experience is similar to that of the accuser, then an administrative complaint or a lawsuit can be filed. "Testing introduces objective facts into the dispute," says Shanna Smith, president and CEO of the NFHA, adding that when confronted with evidence from testers, defendants are sometimes moved to settle a complaint rather than go to trial "because their liability is clear." Agencies investigating discrimination complaints will also look into real estate ads, as well as sales, rental, and lending records in an effort to find hard evidence to use against those accused of breaking the law.



USING

r Housing  
rimination  
n, among  
e liable for  
e addition,  
mination  
judge at  
for a first  
in seven  
n federal  
damages.  
housing

crimina-  
and, as  
te. One  
to over-  
ublic's  
e these  
he jury  
at this  
more,"  
lawyer  
s han-  
tation  
s. "It's  
rst we  
nind-  
e that

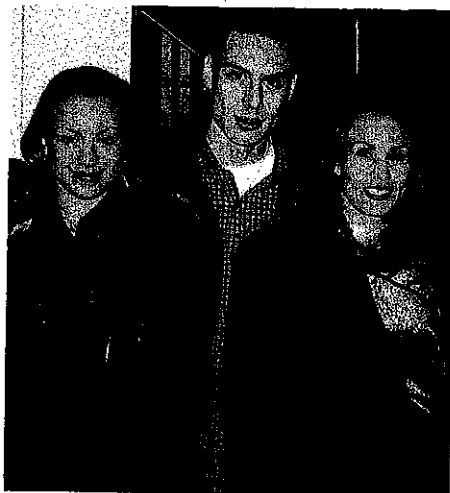
y the  
erent  
s (or  
f the  
then  
iled.  
says  
add-  
ters,  
aint  
ear."  
will  
and  
use

## DISCRIMINATION CAN BE HARD TO PROVE

Proven or not, housing discrimination takes a huge toll on its victims. "Where you live determines what type of school your children will go to and whether they'll be introduced to good role models," says Sheryll Cashin, a professor at Georgetown University Law Center and author of *The Failures of Integration: How Race and Class Are Undermining the American Dream*. "It determines how many choices you'll have." Adds attorney Brancart: "Today, minorities, especially younger people, don't expect to be discriminated against. They've been taught we live in a color-blind world. Then to have their race be the basis of being denied something as important as housing is devastating."

### Not just black and white

In addition to African Americans, the ethnic groups most vulnerable to discrimination are Hispanics and Asians, says Kendrick of HUD. Raquel Rios, 49, a widow with two children, believes that she and her family were denied a rental in Sherwood, AR, in 2002 after she and her daughter spoke to each other in Spanish in front of the landlord. "She looked at me weird," says Rios. "And that's when she started changing her mind." The landlord, according



Raquel Rios (right) with her children

to Rios, started saying over and over that it was hard to find a job in Arkansas. "I said, 'Excuse me, I already have a job,'" recalls Rios, who was employed as a nurse's aide in a hospital. "But she kept repeating the same thing."

When Rios told the landlord that she wanted to rent the place, the landlord refused. "She said, 'No, I don't think so; this is not the house for you. I know how you people are—you come and rent the house and bring the whole family from Mexico.' I got very upset and said, 'You don't want to rent the house to me because I'm Hispanic?'" The landlord denied the accusation, but Rios remembers her saying again, "I know about your people." The worst part, Rios says now, "was that she said those awful words in front of my kids."

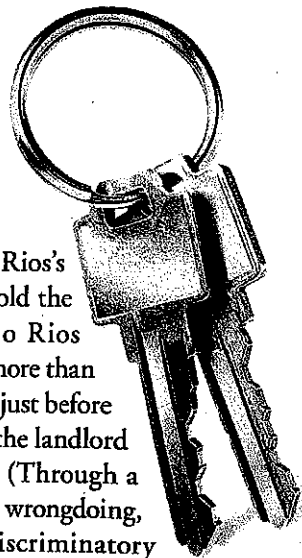
Later that day, a friend of Rios's called the landlord and was told the house was still available. So Rios reported the incident. It took more than three years, but in early 2006, just before the case was set to go to trial, the landlord paid a settlement of \$15,500. (Through a lawyer, the landlord denies any wrongdoing, saying she had "valid, nondiscriminatory reasons" for not renting the property to Rios and her family.) Unable to find another suitable house in Sherwood, Rios eventually wound up renting in a neighboring town. As a result, she says, her daughter, Brenda, had to "leave her friends behind" and transfer to a different high school "with a lot of troublemakers."

### Don't even look here

Discrimination doesn't just happen in the buying or renting process; it also takes place when people are hunting for places to live. In a subtle practice called racial steering, a real estate professional shows homes to people only in certain neighborhoods, depending on their race. With steering, "whites end up seeing homes in predominantly white areas, Latinos in Latino areas, and

African Americans in African-American neighborhoods," says Smith, explaining that the fair-housing law prohibits even mentioning the demographics or racial makeup of a neighborhood. People of color are also steered into less desirable neighborhoods: "There is a practice that blacks are told they can get a better deal, that they don't need to spend so much on a house," explains Anne Houghtaling, director of enforcement for NFHA. "Whites are asked if they can go up in price."

Steering made national headlines in October 2006, when the NFHA alleged that the Brooklyn Heights office of the Corcoran Group, New York City's largest residential brokerage firm, had engaged in racial steering. Referring to "the investigation's (CONTINUED ON PAGE 231)



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE RUIFFEN FAMILY

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE RIOS FAMILY

**YOU CAN'T LIVE HERE...**  
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 177)

most egregious act," the NFHA charges that when a white tester visited the office, a Corcoran broker produced a map of Brooklyn and drew red lines around predominantly white areas, instructing the tester to consider just those areas. The NFHA plans to file a lawsuit this month. (Pamela Liebman, president and CEO of the Corcoran Group, maintains her company would "never condone such actions.... The Corcoran Group is committed to the principles of fair housing.")

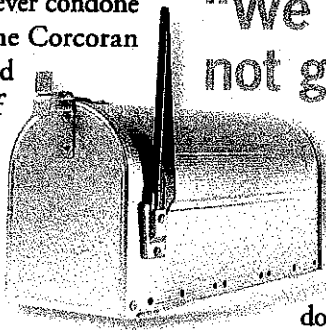
Deborah Post, 57, who is African-American, believes she was steered by a different agency when she was looking for a new house on Long Island, NY, in the spring of 2003. Post was finishing a fellowship at Stanford University in California and was about to return to her job as a professor at the Touro Law Center in Huntington when she contacted a real estate agent she'd met through a colleague. Divorced, with a grown son, Post hoped to find a cozy, three-bedroom house in a decent neighborhood with a nice-size backyard for her two energetic grandkids.

The house hunt looked promising. One of the listings the agent had sent her was in Smithtown, NY, which appealed to her because it had good shopping and was close to the school. "I liked the feel of the town," says Post, who'd previously lived in nearby Northport. But when the broker picked her up at the train station, he didn't take her to Smithtown, which is mostly white. He took her to Huntington Station, to neighborhoods

that were mostly black and Latino. "I didn't understand why we were there," Post says.

Trying to be polite, she just "went with the flow to see what he had in mind." But as the day wore on, she became increasingly disappointed with what she says she saw—tired houses in run-down neighborhoods. "I saw at least two homes that stood out as being absolutely unacceptable,"

**"We assured our boys we were not going to allow the owner to get away with this"**



she says. "I had a sinking feeling about what was going on. I don't have a problem living with people of color, but I do have a problem being directed to a particular community." (The agent and his company could not be reached for comment.)

Post never brought suit, but she did allow her story to be used in a groundbreaking report issued by a local advocacy group called Erase Racism. The report led to the passage of new fair-housing laws in both Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island. "These laws offer stronger protections with civil penalties that can be as high as \$50,000," says Elaine Gross, president of Erase Racism. "The law also provides more accessible services for the victims of housing discrimination."

## The Ruffins fight back

After getting the news from their broker, Steve and Karen Ruffin realized that their whole year in Boston

was in jeopardy. Time was now running out, and, says Karen, "we couldn't go if we couldn't find a place to live." Then there were the kids to consider. "One of the first things we were thinking was, What were we going to tell the boys?" says Steve. "I felt angry that my kids had to deal with this." That night, the couple called the kids into their bedroom and told them that they weren't going

to be moving to the new house after all. "Stevie, the little one, asked why," Karen recalls. "We said, 'The woman who owns the house decided she doesn't want us there because we are African-American.'"

The boys got quiet. "Stevie said, 'That's really stupid,'" Karen remembers. "And I said, 'Yes. Racism is always stupid.' My older son, Aaron, said, 'Isn't that illegal?'" The question hardened Karen's resolve to teach her sons about standing up for their rights. "We assured them that we were not going to allow the owner to get away with this. People can't be allowed to think they can do that to other people for no good reason," she says. The Ruffins contacted the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination.

The family was able to find another rental through a new broker—but they weren't able to see it before they moved in because they were so pressed for time. As it turned out, the house (which cost them \$2,200 a month) had a leaky ceiling, a broken stove, and soiled carpets on the entrance stairs. "The boys were ►

Good Housekeeping  
SHOPPING  
*by mail*

For Mail Order Ad Rates, Write or Phone:  
**GOOD HOUSEKEEPING  
DIRECT RESPONSE ADVERTISING**  
300 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019  
TARA TORINO (212) 649-2928  
For Subscriptions Call: 1-800-888-7788  
JULY 2007 ISSUE CLOSES APRIL 17



**All Name Brands!**  
Blinds • Wallpaper • Rugs  
Curtains • Framed Art • Sofas  
**GUARANTEED LOW PRICE!**

Hunter Douglas® Levolor® Bali®  
Blonder® Seabrook® & More

**American**  
BLINDS, WALLPAPER & MORE  
**800-718-0156**  
americanblinds.com

**GUARDIAN CUSTOM PRODUCTS**

**"Custom Tailored" Table Pads**

*Elegantly handcrafted to fit any type table.*

- ◆ Priced 20% to 50% below retail stores!
- ◆ Shipped directly to your home.
- ◆ Your satisfaction guaranteed!
- ◆ Lifetime Warranty.
- ◆ Made in the USA.



Get the protection your table deserves.  
Request your **FREE CATALOG** for more details.

Call Toll Free: **1-800-444-0778** Ext.600  
Visit online: [www.guardian-tablepad.com](http://www.guardian-tablepad.com)

**ADDRESS LABELS by FAMILY LABELS®**  
*Putting Smiles on Faces... Since 1996*

**THE MILLER FAMILY**  
168 Rock Creek Drive • Orlando, FL 32809



Visit us on the web: [www.FamilyLabels.com](http://www.FamilyLabels.com)  
Call for a Free Color Catalog: 1-800-609-7079

**YOU CAN'T LIVE HERE...**  
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 231)

disappointed at the size of the bedrooms and wondered where we were going to put the things we'd brought," says Steve. "But they liked the town and the fact that there were parks and pizza places in walking distance. We helped them focus on that."

Meanwhile, then Attorney General Tom Reilly of Massachusetts filed a complaint on the Ruffins' behalf in October 2001, alleging that the owner of the first house had refused to rent her home to the family after she learned that Stephen had been named a Martin Luther King Jr. Visiting Associate Professor of Aeronautics and Astronautics at MIT, which led her to assume that the family was African-American. The complaint also alleged that the owner violated the state's fair-housing laws "when she told the [Ruffins'] broker...about her discriminatory racial preferences," according to a press release issued by the attorney general's office.

After a two-year battle, the case was settled out of court. The Ruffins were awarded \$50,000 from the owner, who admitted to no wrongdoing under the settlement. She was required to attend fair-housing training and to keep records of all rentals and sales for the next five years. (In an e-mailed statement, the owner's attorney said the owner "regretted any misunderstanding," adding that "the Ruffins were assured their race wasn't an issue.")

The Ruffins are glad they took on the homeowner. "Our sons learned that when people act out of hate and ignorance, there are consequences," says Karen. "They also learned there are many constructive ways to fight back when those things happen." ■

**Your AD Here  
Contact  
Tara Torino  
212-649-2928**

WHEN CONTACTING  
ADVERTISERS ...  
PLEASE MENTION THAT  
YOU SAW THEIR AD IN  
**Good Housekeeping**

# 'They're playing Indians.'

How to talk to kids about stereotypes on television

Television. In my house, I call it the root of all evil.

It is where my 6-year-old learns phrases like, "Whatever, Mom." It is usually the real culprit in a bedtime battle ("But Mom, can I just watch five more minutes?"). It is the source of endless requests for any toy the latest commercial lauds as awesome, new or exciting. And, most disturbingly, it is where my son soaks up stereotypes like a sponge.

The super-smart Asian; the black gang-banger or basketball player; the mysterious villain in a turban; the tomahawk-wielding Native American — television is full of them.

Recently, while the two of us watched an episode of ABC's hit sitcom, "My Wife and Kids," I was reminded how blatant and disturbing such stereotypes can be.

This episode featured the children "playing Indian." They paraded around the back yard dressed in buckskin, feathers and war paint, while cupping their hands over their mouths to imitate Native American chants. The father, played by Damon Wayans, proclaimed himself the "Big Chief" and donned a war bonnet while setting up tee-pees in the backyard.

My first instinct was to change the station. But instead, I left it on and decided to engage my son in a dialogue about what we were watching.

"What are they doing?" I asked.

"Being silly — doing a rain dance or something," he said.

"Why are they doing that?" I prodded.

"Because it's pretend," he shrugged. "They're playing Indians."

Back and forth we went — me asking questions, him explaining what he saw, until the show was over and we talked in greater detail about who Indians are and decided that it isn't a very good thing to "play" someone else's culture.

The average American child spends more time in front of the television set than in the classroom — racking up more than 18,000 hours of TV by high school graduation and 13,000 hours in a classroom.

That's 5,000 more hours spent soaking up stereotypes and misinformation than hours reading, discussing and learning about real people and cultures.

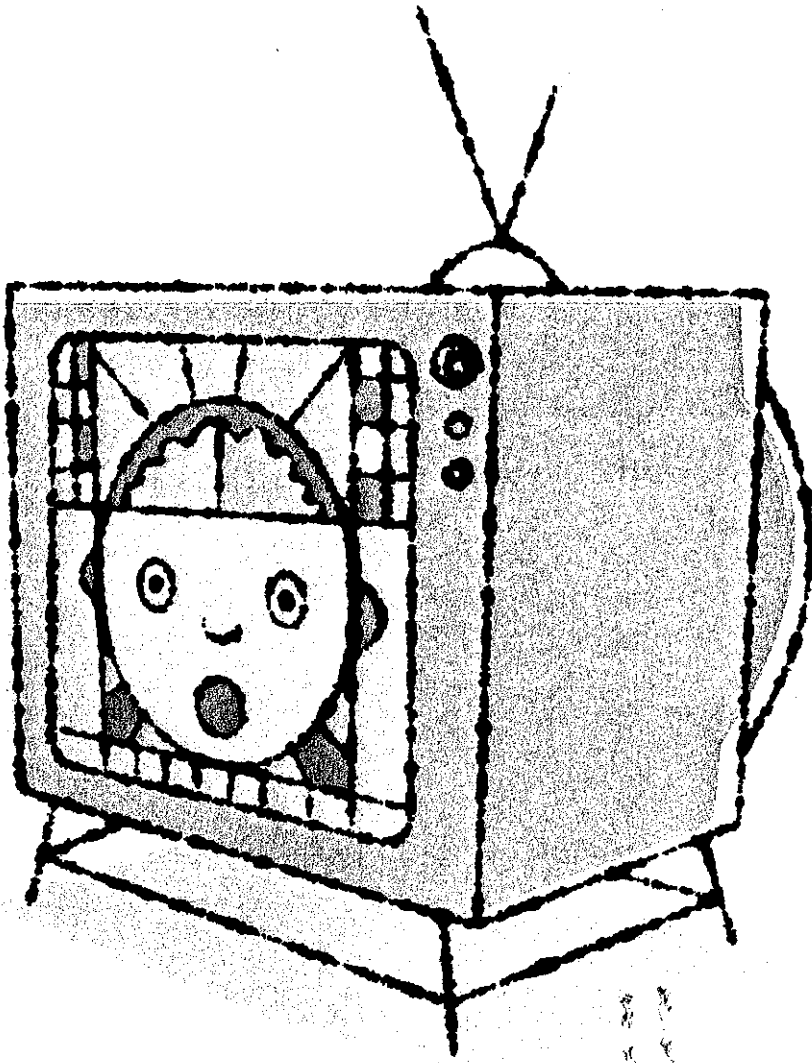
But, according to the Media Awareness Network ([www.media-awareness.ca/eng/](http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/)), there are ways

parents can tame the television — and the stereotypes. Here are some tips:

**LOOK CLOSELY AT THE CHARACTERS YOUR CHILD SEES.** What messages do they send concerning race, gender, culture and roles? Voice your disapproval of stereotyped characters, and explain to your child why you disapprove. Ask your child to compare the images of race they see on television with the people they know in real life. How are they different?

**LISTEN CLOSELY, WITH YOUR CHILD, TO THE VOICES OF THE BAD CHARACTERS IN CARTOONS.** Do they have accents? What about the good, kind, sweet characters?

**DECONSTRUCT THE 'MEDIA REALITY.'** Talk with your kids about the people behind the programs they watch. Children can realize that TV shows, like books, are written and created by people with their own biases and experiences. When you watch a program with your kids, ask them to think about who created the show.



Did the writers and producers really understand the types of people they are portraying? Or, have they based characters on preconceived notions about other groups?

**CRITIQUE OTHER MEDIA.** Look at the ads in newspapers, magazines and billboards for cars, clothing and sports equipment. Talk to your child about how the products are glamorized and which audiences are targeted. Who is represented as the consumer? Why are certain ethnic groups linked to certain products? Take a look at running shoe ads, for example: Why are black athletes often portrayed “shooting

hoops” and goofing around the gym, while white athletes are shown doing serious training?

**USE HISTORY AS A TOOL.** Help your child understand the real-life history behind many fictionalized stories. While it is true there was a real-life Pocahontas, she was a 13-year-old girl when she met John Smith, not a grown woman, and she didn't look anything like the small-waisted, long-haired character that appeared in the Disney film. Seek out books or videos that recount the history behind popularized stories, and then compare the real-life story to the movie version.

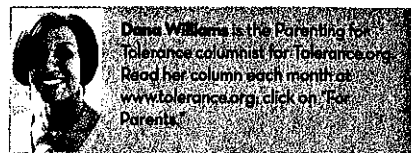
Just turning the television off can go a long way in limiting your child's exposure to stereotypes, cultural misinformation and other “TV side effects.”

“We assume what we see on TV is the world, rather than going out to live and experience the world,” said Frank Vespe, executive director of TV Turnoff Network ([www.tvturnoff.org](http://www.tvturnoff.org)), an organization that encourages children and adults to watch less television in order to promote healthier lives and communities.

Vespe's group will hold its annual “TV-Turnoff Week” from April 19-25. Since 1995, millions of households all over the world have participated in the event.

This year, I plan to join those millions in “turning off the TV and turning on life.”

Until then, I'll keep doing my part to help my family deconstruct stereotypes by watching and  *talking about*  what's on television. ♦





# TALKING RACE

Making a space where teachers  
can talk about difference

BY JENEE DARDEN

**N**uri Vargas knows how it feels to be silenced. Not long ago, while working in a school near San Diego, Calif., Vargas was talking with another teacher when the conversation randomly led to the topic of dental health.

“She said to me, ‘Have you noticed that the Latino kids’ teeth are all rotten? It’s cultural because Latino parents give their kids lots of candy and they don’t brush their teeth.’”

Vargas told her colleague that a lack of health insurance would be a more likely explanation. The other teacher brushed her off with “not all kids, but most of them.”

Although Vargas was concerned that her colleague’s beliefs would trickle over to her treatment of Latino students, she never expressed her concerns to the administration.

“I don’t think I was comfortable with talking to the principal — because what if the principal thought just like her?” she said.

In many classrooms across America, race and ethnicity are very much on the table. Teachers dream of seeing their students discuss difference in a constructive way. Some educators actively encourage their classes to get outside their comfort zones and confront the country’s racial history.

But in many faculty rooms, there’s little to no talk about race. Whether the topic is a racial disparity in students’ academic achievement, a teacher who feels victim to racial discrimination or even simply a question about a black student’s hair, teachers often elect to keep their

mouths shut. If teachers can't have the race talk with each other, how can schools effectively educate their students about difference?

"It's important for teachers to discuss race with each other for a number of reasons," said Christine Sleeter, a professor emerita of education at California State University, Monterey Bay and editor of the book *Facing*

## "Food, folklore and festivals are not the same as an analysis of race in America."

*Accountability in Education: Democracy and Equity at Risk.* Sleeter said teachers and principals need to open the door to dialogue "so schools are able to confront issues of race that have to do with student learning, such as how tracking systems work, who ends up in which tracks and why...And teachers [need to recognize] their own beliefs about the learning abilities of kids and how they overlap with race."

That teacher sitting next to you in the break room — the one who is too worried to say what she really thinks — may hold the key to higher student achievement. Teachers often fret about their struggles to reach their students and their difficulties in getting parents involved. An honest and collegial dialogue about race, Sleeter says, can help teachers self-analyze their comfort with parents and students and its connection with teachers' own attitudes about race.

### CONFRONTING RACE

These days, Nuri Vargas doesn't have nearly as much trouble talking about race and ethnicity with her colleagues. As a first-grade teacher at EJE Elementary in El Cajon, Calif. — where students learn in a dual-language environment — Vargas feels more open. In the dual-language setting, Latino heritage is always out in the open as a topic

for discussion. And Vargas isn't the only person on the faculty who understands that heritage.

"I'm really comfortable because the majority of us are Hispanic and our principal is Hispanic," said Vargas. She says she's no longer dogged by the feeling that anything she says about race or ethnicity will be interpreted in a negative light.

Speaking out can be a lot harder when you're one of only a handful of teachers of color in your school.

"There is still a pretty high penalty for even going near the topic of race," said Carmen Van Kerckhove, co-founder and president of New Demographic, a diversity education firm. "There's always the possibility that you'll be perceived as playing the 'race card.'"

In an age of budget cuts and teacher layoffs, teachers often worry that speaking out will lead to a pink slip at the end of the year — or will get them moved into less-desirable position within the district.

"The teacher who's causing trouble, the principal can displace them," said Hilton Kelly, a professor of education at Davidson College in North Carolina and a former high school teacher. Kelly studies the experiences of black teachers with a focus on those who work in overwhelmingly white schools. Kelly has spoken with teachers of color in the South who feel they're suffering the consequences for speaking up about race.

"These teachers are being punished, and a lot of times people are living with it," he said.

Another barrier to racial dialogue, Van Kerckhove said, is the idea that America is a "post-racial" society. The term "post-racial" seems to have gained prominence during the 2008 presidential campaign, as a way of describing the broad appeal of then-candidate Barack Obama. After Obama's election, the term morphed into the notion that America has completely gotten beyond racism.

"A lot of people feel like racism is now over, especially with President Obama in office, and that anyone who brings up race is doing it as a shady tactic to get ahead career-wise," Van Kerckhove said. "So it doesn't surprise me that even in educational settings, teachers of color are having a hard time broaching the subject."

### THE PINK POODLE

For some teachers, putting race into context is a challenge because they don't understand the situation, or can't explain it. White people often lack experience in talking about race, largely because they don't feel marginalized because of race. They fear saying something ignorant or offensive.

"Whites usually don't have the tools to be able to talk about it very knowledgeably," explained Sleeter. "We grow

up learning that it's impolite to talk about race."

White people often don't even know where to begin the conversation, Sleeter says. "[The reaction is,] 'What am I supposed to be talking about? What should I even be saying, that's not going to be totally impolite?'"

Even for teachers of color, labeling an incident or comment as racist is sometimes hard to do.

Hilton Kelly recalls encountering this resistance during his research, when he interviewed black K-12 teachers at predominately white schools.

Timothy, 30, is the only black teacher at his high school. When Kelly asked Timothy if he experienced racism at work, he said "yes." But Timothy found it difficult to even utter the word "racism."

**Timothy:** ...I have had a couple of incidents with the administration that I have felt [pause] like racism — the pink poodle syndrome.

**Kelly:** What is the "pink poodle syndrome?"

**Timothy:** The pink poodle — you are standing among a crowd of people and you are almost a mascot or a wild one. This is what I get from faculty a lot. It is more annoying than oppressive. "Hey," somebody might say, "I saw the 60 Minutes report on the war in Africa, what do you think about that?" ... I must say that I struggle to say racism only because I don't want to cheapen the word... I would not want to attach my experiences with a term that I use to describe systemic degradation and deprivation....

— From "Racial Tokenism in the School Workplace: An Exploratory Study of Black Teachers in Overwhelmingly White Schools."

## RACE 101

The dialogue about race should start in the classroom — the teacher-prep classroom, that is. Preservice teachers should be exploring multiculturalism and discussing ways to honor diversity in their future classrooms.

But in many cases, Kelly said, the coursework isn't giving preservice teachers the tools to speak about race. Even when future teachers take courses on diversity and multiculturalism, Kelly said, those courses don't take the critical approach to race that future teachers truly need.

"Food, folklore and festivals are not the same as an analysis of race in America," Kelly argued.

Nor do preservice teachers have the words to explain the racial, ethnic and culturally-based experiences of others.

Tambra Jackson, a professor at the University of South Carolina's College of Education, used to be one of those silent teachers.

In the beginning of her teacher preparation, Jackson felt silenced in class because, in many cases, she was the only person of color in a predominantly white institu-

tion. Race was just not part of the curriculum, she says.

"I was not very vocal in bringing up issues of race in teacher prep," recalled Jackson. "No one ever discouraged me if I wanted to focus my projects and papers around black culture or other ethnicities, but no one ever encouraged it. And no one ever made that the focus in their teaching."

Then Jackson experienced a pivotal moment during a summer internship in Cincinnati with the Children's Defense Fund Freedom School. She gained in-depth knowledge on inequality and education through teaching a social-justice-oriented curriculum.

"That program really helped me to find my voice as an advocate. When I came back that year to do student teaching my professors said, 'What happened to you?'"

Jackson continued to stay vocal during her professional career. Even as the sole teacher of color at Washington Center Elementary in suburban Fort Wayne, Indiana, she brought race to her colleagues' attention.

"Because I was the only teacher of color, it got to a point where, I think, my colleagues expected everything that came out of my mouth was going to be about race, diversity, or social justice," Jackson said.

## 'IT STARTS AT THE TOP'

Jackson also felt comfortable talking freely because she had support from administrators. She came to Washington Center Elementary with a sense of mandate:

"There is still a pretty high penalty for even going near the topic of race. There's always the possibility that you'll be perceived as playing the 'race card.'"

the area superintendent had encouraged her to apply there. A desegregation order had allowed for children of color to be bussed into the suburban school. While the student body was growing more diverse, Jackson was the only teacher of color.

Jackson was appointed to be the Diversity Index teacher at her school, which meant that she regularly convened a group of students to have explicit conversations about diversity in the school. Working with students on these issues inevitably entailed discussing race with their teachers.

"I knew that I had administrative support outside of the school," Jackson said about the area superintendent of the school district. "I knew, should I have any issues, I had someone I could go to... I think the administrator knew that also."

Administrator support or willingness to encourage racial discourse can have a huge impact in the work environment for teachers.

"This is one of those things that definitely starts at the top," said Carmen Van Kerckhove of New Demographic. "When the leadership is on board and really understands the issues, it makes it a lot easier to trickle down."

Van Kerckhove advises administrators not to rush head-on into complicated discussions of racial inequality because some may not be ready to handle it. Take into account your staff's and school's comfort level with race, she says, and go from there.

Jackson suggests principals break the ice by telling groups, especially diverse groups, from the start that the discussion will be hard, but that having these talks is a commitment the school needs to make. Then principals need to follow up with action.

"Frame the discussion in terms of starting with basics people can get their heads around," recommends Christine Sleeter. She uses the example of an elementary school administrator, who told Sleeter how she used data to get teachers talking about race and ethnicity.

"It took her a lot of work just to get the teachers to begin to say we have a racial achievement gap in this school," Sleeter says. The administrator opened up conversation by simply giving teachers test scores and asking them to look at them. "She asked the teachers, 'What do you see is the pattern there?' When teachers were starting to say, 'I see the white students are achieving better than the Latino students,' for them that was a step forward."

*To access the resources available through the Teaching Diverse Students Initiative, visit [www.tolerance.org/tdsi](http://www.tolerance.org/tdsi)*

## WHY TDSi?

The most significant educational challenge facing the United States is the tragically low academic achievement of many students of color. The Teaching Diverse Students Initiative helps educators meet this challenge by providing them with research-based resources for improving the teaching of racially and ethnically diverse students. Here is what some of the esteemed educational researchers who have lent their talents to the initiative have to say about why TDSi is important.



"Grouping by achievement is a very complex, imprecise practice... It turns out that there's very little evidence that this theory is effective in the way we practice it."

— JEANNIE OAKES





"It's really important for teachers to realize their own power. What they do, or what they do not do, has a tremendous effect on their students."

— DOROTHY STRICKLAND



"[TDSi] asks teachers to confront their biases and their misperceptions and be brutally honest about what brought them to teaching. . . . Before you can get to know your students, you really have to know yourself."

— SONIA NIETO

"You need to have the courage to ask how kids get sorted across what, in our country, is a highly tracked system."

— LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND



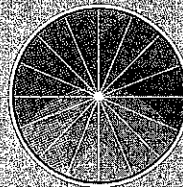
"There's an abundance of resources in families' households. . . . They are more than willing to tell us about their histories and about their experiences so we can learn from them."

— LUIS MOLL



"In education, 'race' becomes another four-letter word. Educators just want to avoid any discussion of it."

— JACQUELINE JORDAN IRVINE

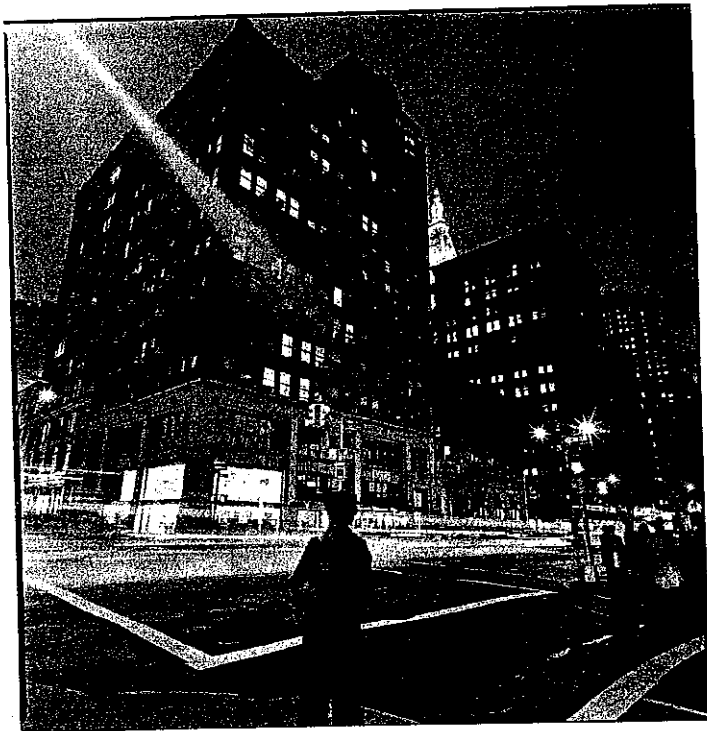


**TDSi**

the TEACHING DIVERSE STUDENTS INITIATIVE

A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center





# UNDER ONE ROOF

**SHE WAS BROUGHT TO THE U.S. ILLEGALLY AS A CHILD. HER BROTHER WAS BORN HERE AND IS A CITIZEN: A LOOK AT LIFE IN A 'MIXED STATUS' FAMILY.**

By David Gonzalez in New York

**T**he father, an engineer, saw no future for his daughter and son in their struggling country, Ecuador. In 2001, he made his way to Mexico and paid smugglers known as “coyotes” to help him sneak across the border into Texas. Then he headed to New York, where his wife and children flew in as tourists and stayed.

But the consequences of that decision—an immigrant’s uprooting his family for the sake of the next generation—have been anything but simple.

His daughter, now 22, graduated from college with honors,

and is still living in the U.S. illegally. While her classmates have good corporate jobs and take foreign vacations, she’s a bookkeeper for a small immigrant-run business. She fears venturing outside New York City and can’t even get a driver’s license.

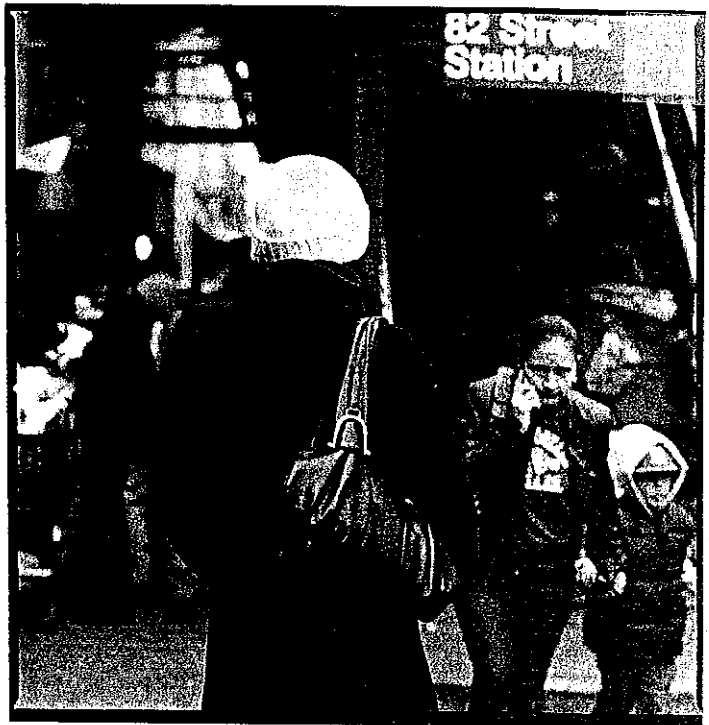
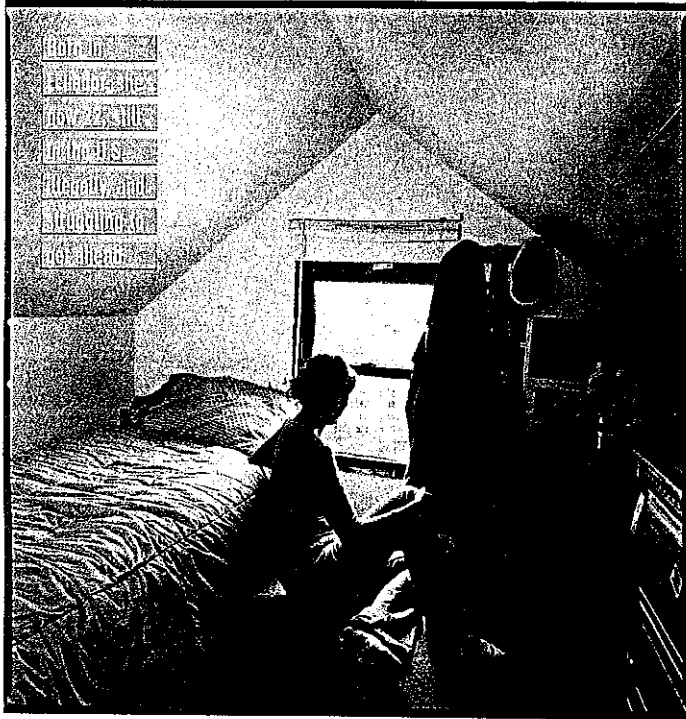
Meanwhile, her 17-year-old brother—who was born in the U.S. and is therefore an American citizen—can do things his family cannot, like spending summers in Ecuador with his cousins. But he’s lonely during the school year here and would like to move back to Ecuador.

“How can he even think that?” asks his mother. “We’re sacrificing ourselves so he can get a better education and better job. After giving up everything to come here, he—the only one with papers—wants to go back?”

## CITIZEN & NON-CITIZEN CHILDREN

This family of four—who let a reporter and a photographer spend time with them only if they were not identified, for fear of being deported—is part of a growing group of what are often called mixed-status families.

Nearly 2.3 million undocumented families—about three quarters of those that are in the U.S. illegally—have at least one child who is a U.S. citizen, according to the Pew Hispanic



# LEGAL & ILLEGAL

Center in Washington, D.C.; nearly 400,000 families have both citizen and non-citizen children.

The increase in mixed-status families is due to a tide of illegal immigration and federal laws that deny legal status to illegal immigrants' foreign-born children—who had no say in coming here—while granting citizenship to their American-born siblings.

And as their numbers rise, they are challenging three of the biggest stereotypes of immigrants today.

The first stereotype is that immigrant families are either legal or illegal. The second stereotype is that they either know they're here to stay or bent on returning home. The third is that most immigrants are men on their own, without wives and children.

In fact, most immigrants live in families, and with a blend of legal statuses, opportunities, and plans. This family, in Queens, New York, shows how such disparities within immigrant homes can pull family members in such different directions.

Mother, father, son, and daughter are now split between two households, and between those who expect to stay in the U.S. and those who want to return to Ecuador. The daughter, despite tireless efforts to get ahead, feels she is losing ground and that her brother—who carries the weight of his family's

highest hopes—takes his citizenship for granted.

The mother, 47, who gave up her job in Ecuador as a computer systems analyst and now babysits for a living, has tried in vain to leverage her son's citizenship to get a green card, which would grant her permanent legal residency.

## PASSING INTO ILLEGALITY

Still, they are better off than many illegal immigrants. They have built a comfortable life in New York, a city that has traditionally welcomed foreigners, regardless of whether they have immigration papers. And the parents are among a rising proportion of illegal immigrants with higher educations—about 25 percent have had some college—abandoning careers back home to come to the U.S. to vault their children into the American middle class.

The daughter showed promise at age 7, when she was already working the cash register at her parents' office-supply shop in Ecuador, and by the time she was 9, she was absorbed in math. As she neared her 14th birthday, her father began to think about taking his family back to the

*David Gonzalez is a reporter for The New York Times.*

## U.S. IMMIGRATION MILESTONES

### 1860s–1920s

A potato famine in Ireland, along with poor economic conditions and religious discrimination in Eastern and Southern Europe, spur a huge wave of Irish, Polish, Russian, Jewish, and Italian immigrants to the U.S.



### 1882

Congress passes the Chinese Exclusion Act, suspending the immigration of Chinese laborers.

### 1892

Ellis Island (above), the main entry point for immigrants, opens in New York Harbor. One million immigrants pass through in 1907.

### 1921

Congress passes the National Origins Act, setting immigration quotas according to nationality. The quotas allow fewer immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, and more from Northern Europe.

### 1965

The Immigration & Nationality Act ends quotas based on national origin, giving preference to skilled workers, family reunification, and refugees. More immigrants from Asia and Latin America begin arriving.

### 2009

President Obama calls for Congress to consider immigration reform next year. He says that all options are on the table, including a guest-worker program and the possibility of a pathway to citizenship for some illegal immigrants.

United States so she could go to college here.

The family had been here before. After graduating at the top of his class from the polytechnic university in Quito, Ecuador's capital, the father moved to New York in 1986—legally, on a student visa—to study for a graduate degree in engineering. He planned to return home to his wife.

But when he learned that she was expecting their first child, he quit school and took a factory job—which violated the terms of his visa—and arranged to have his wife and baby daughter smuggled into Texas and travel to New York.

“I knew I was passing into illegality,” he says. “It was a very difficult decision to make. But I had to support them.”

They all eventually moved to Miami, where their son was born. But hopes of a prosperous American life eluded them, and in 1992 they returned to Ecuador.

As their daughter raced through school, skipping two grades and outpacing her classmates, her father worried about the quality of schooling in Ecuador, where the economy was slipping into chaos. He resolved to give her, and her brother, the American education he never completed.

### NO SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

When they arrived in New York in 2001, the father found work as a draftsman with a construction company. He earns more than he would in Ecuador, and enjoys the chance to showcase his skills and move around the city, working in nice office and apartment buildings. The mother, on the other hand, cares

for other people's children in cramped apartments.

These discrepancies put a strain on their relationship, and four years ago they separated. The children spend most weekdays with their father, in the attic of a house in Queens owned by his brother, who is a legal resident. On weekends, they visit their mother in her basement apartment in another neighborhood.

The daughter is among 65,000 young people who graduate from American high schools each year without immigration papers, according to the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. She began to understand just what that meant when she talked to a guidance counselor about college.

### OCCUPATIONS WITH THE HIGHEST SHARES

### OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS

(PERCENTAGE OF WORKERS IN OCCUPATION WHO ARE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS)

AGRICULTURE	25%
BUILDING & GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	19%
CONSTRUCTION	17%
FOOD PREPARATION & SERVICE	12%
MANUFACTURING	10%

SOURCE: PEW HISPANIC CENTER

"She asked me for my Social Security number," the daughter recalls. "She said she couldn't help me with applications without one."

She quickly learned the other things she couldn't have, like scholarships and the chance to attend college outside New York. And it is nearly impossible for illegal-immigrant children to become legal residents without going back to their native country, and then waiting 10 years to apply.

For the daughter, going back to Ecuador is out of the question. "All my friends are here," she says. "All I know is here. If I returned, I'd be lost."

Luckily, she lives in New York, one of 10 states that allow illegal immigrants to pay resident tuition rates at public universities. With \$5,000 a year from her father and a babysitting job, she attended a highly ranked college in the City University of New York, earning a 3.8 GPA in accounting.

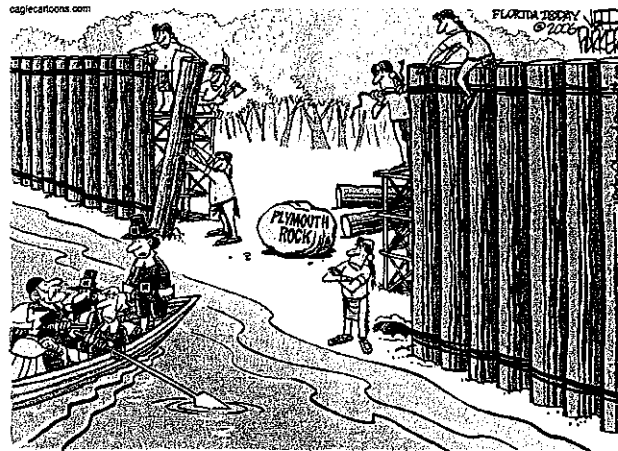
**OVERQUALIFIED AND UNDERPAID**

But she still lacked the Social Security number needed to apply for jobs and internships. While friends—many of them children of legal immigrants—landed \$70,000-a-year jobs, she sought out small businesses willing to risk hiring her for half that.

"Sometimes I felt like crying or screaming," she says. "Some of my friends knew why I didn't apply for corporate jobs. But other people who didn't know would criticize and judge me. They thought I was lazy or stupid."

She was eventually hired as a bookkeeper by a small company that, ironically, provides immigrants with information on visas and citizenship. She is paid on the books—and pays taxes—thanks to the tax-identification number the federal government gives people without Social Security numbers.

Though overqualified and underpaid, she rarely com-



"THEY SAY THEY'RE BUILDING A WALL BECAUSE TOO MANY OF US ENTER ILLEGALLY AND DON'T LEARN THEIR LANGUAGE OR ASSIMILATE INTO THEIR CULTURE..."

American. At first, the daughter was shocked at the idea of marrying for reasons other than love. But she's begun to waver. "I'm thinking it might be worth a try because this is so frustrating," she says.

Her brother, on the other hand, is tightly tied to Ecuador. As the only family member who can travel freely, he's spent three summers there with his cousins. Back in New York, he's in touch with them by e-mail and on Facebook.

He seems much less connected to New York, where he comes home after school to an empty apartment to do homework. But his family insists he stay in the U.S.

His father doesn't want him to go for the quick money that leads other boys in the neighborhood to drop out of school to work at delis or construction sites for \$500 a week. He closely follows his son's schoolwork, and meets often with his teachers.

The daughter thinks that her brother "doesn't see how difficult it is for us not having documents. And he sees how it is for me—I can't go back to Ecuador

or get a better job."

For now, her brother has stopped talking about going back to Ecuador and started thinking about going to college in the U.S. to study architecture. But he still feels the pressure that many citizen-children of illegal immigrants experience.

"Maybe they expect too much of me," he says. "But my family wanted me to come here. It's better for me, and better for my sister." ☺



# The Importance of Multicultural Education

*It's not just an add-on or an afterthought. Curriculums infused with multicultural education boost academic success and prepare students for roles as productive citizens.*

**Geneva Gay**

**M**ulticulturalism in U.S. schools and society is taking on new dimensions of complexity and practicality as demographics, social conditions, and political circumstances change. Domestic diversity and unprecedented immigration have created a vibrant mixture of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and experiential plurality.

Effectively managing such diversity in U.S. society and schools is at once a very old and a very new challenge. Benjamin Barber (1992) eloquently makes the point that

America has always been a tale of peoples trying to be a People, a tale of diversity and plurality in search of unity. Cleavages among [diverse groups] . . . have irked and divided Americans from the start, making unity a civic imperative as well as an elusive challenge. (p. 41)

Accomplishing this end is becoming increasingly important as the 21st century unfolds. People coming from Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa differ greatly from earlier generations of immigrants who came primarily from western and

northern Europe. These unfamiliar groups, cultures, traditions, and languages can produce anxieties, hostilities, prejudices, and racist behaviors among those who do not understand the newcomers or who perceive them as threats to their safety and security. These issues have profound implications for developing instructional programs and practices at all levels of education that respond positively and constructively to diversity.

A hundred years ago, W. E. B. Du Bois (1994) proposed that the problem of the 20th century was conflict and controversy among racial groups, particularly between African and European Americans. He concluded that

Between these two worlds [black and white], despite much physical contact and daily intermingling, there is almost no community of intellectual life or point of transference where the thoughts and feelings of one race can come into direct contact and sympathy with the thoughts and feelings of the other.

Although much has changed since Du Bois's declarations, too much has not changed nearly enough. Of course,

the color line has become more complex and diverse, and legal barriers against racial intermingling have been dismantled. People from different ethnic, racial, and cultural groups live in close physical proximity. But coexistence does not mean that people create genuine communities in which they know, relate to, and care deeply about one another. The lack of a genuine community of diversity is particularly evident in school curriculums that still do not regularly and systematically include important information and deep study about a wide range of diverse ethnic groups. As disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes among ethnic groups continue to grow, the resulting achievement gap has reached crisis proportions.

Multicultural education is integral to improving the academic success of students of color and preparing all youths for democratic citizenship in a pluralistic society. Students need to understand how multicultural issues shape the social, political, economic, and cultural fabric of the United States as well as how such issues fundamentally influence their personal lives.





teachers who are more accepting of multicultural education are nevertheless skeptical about the feasibility of its implementation. "I would do it if I could," they say, "but I don't know how." "Preparing students to meet standards takes up all my time," others point out. "School curriculums are already overburdened. What do I take out to make room for multicultural education?"

A fallacy underlies these conceptions and the instructional behaviors that they generate: the perception of multicultural education as separate content that educators must append to existing curriculums as separate lessons, units, or courses. Quite the contrary is true. Multicultural education is more than content; it includes policy, learning climate, instructional delivery, leadership, and evaluation (see Banks, 1994; Bennett, 2003; Grant & Gomez, 2000). In its comprehensive form, it must be an

© Mel Yates/Crete Images

## Conceptions of Multicultural Education

Even though some theorists (Banks & Banks, 2002) have argued that multicultural education is a necessary ingredient of quality education, in actual practice, educators most often perceive it either as an addendum prompted by some crisis or as a luxury. Multicultural education has not yet become a central part of the curriculum regularly offered to all students; instead, educators have relegated it primarily to social studies, language arts, and the fine arts and have generally targeted instruction for students of color.

These attitudes distort multicultural education and make it susceptible to sporadic and superficial implementation, if any. Textbooks provide a compelling illustration of such an atti-

**Classroom teachers and educators must provide students from all ethnic groups with the education they deserve.**

tude: The little multicultural content that they offer is often presented in sidebars and special-events sections (Loewen, 1995).

Another obstacle to implementing multicultural education lies with teachers themselves. Many are unconvinced of its worth or its value in developing academic skills and building a unified national community. Even those

integral part of everything that happens in the education enterprise, whether it is assessing the academic competencies of students or teaching math, reading, writing, science, social studies, or computer science. Making explicit connections between multicultural education and subject- and skill-based curriculum and instruction is imperative.

It is not pragmatic for K-12 educators to think of multicultural education as a discrete entity, separated from the commonly accepted components of teaching and learning. These conceptions may be fine for higher education, where specialization is the rule. But in K-12 schools, where the education process focuses on teaching eclectic bodies of knowledge and skills, teachers need to use multicultural education to promote such highly valued outcomes

as human development, education equality, academic excellence, and democratic citizenship (see Banks & Banks, 2001; Nieto, 2000).

To translate these theoretical conceptions into practice, educators must systematically weave multicultural education into the central core of curriculum, instruction, school leadership, policymaking, counseling, classroom climate, and performance assessment. Teachers should use multicultural content, perspectives, and experiences to teach reading, math, science, and social studies.

For example, teachers could demonstrate mathematical concepts, such as less than/greater than, percentages, ratios, and probabilities using ethnic demographics. Younger children could consider the ethnic and racial distributions in their own classrooms, discussing which group's representation is greater than, less than, or equal to another's. Older students could collect statistics about ethnic distributions on a larger scale and use them to make more sophisticated calculations, such as converting numbers to percentages and displaying ethnic demographics on graphs.

Students need to apply such major academic skills as data analysis, problem solving, comprehension, inquiry, and effective communication as they study multicultural issues and events. For instance, students should not simply memorize facts about major events involving ethnic groups, such as civil rights movements, social justice efforts, and cultural accomplishments. Instead, educators should teach students how to think critically and analytically about these events, propose alternative solutions to social problems, and demonstrate understanding through such forms of communication as poetry, personal correspondence, debate, editorials, and photo essays.

Irvine and Armento (2001) provide specific examples for incorporating multicultural education into planning language arts, math, science, and social studies lessons for elementary and middle school students and connecting

these lessons to general curriculum standards. One set of lessons demonstrates how to use Navajo rugs to explain the geometric concepts of perimeter and area and to teach students how to calculate the areas of squares, rectangles, triangles, and parallelograms.

These suggestions indicate that teachers need to use systematic decision-making approaches to accomplish multicultural curriculum integration. In practice, this means developing intentional and orderly processes for including multicultural content. The

■ Including several examples from different ethnic experiences to explain subject matter concepts, facts, and skills.

■ Showing how multicultural content, goals, and activities intersect with subject-specific curricular standards.

Virtually all aspects of multicultural education are interdisciplinary. As such, they cannot be adequately understood through a single discipline. For example, teaching students about the causes, expressions, and consequences of racism and how to combat racism requires the application of information



© Lawrence Migdale/Getty Images

decision-making process might involve the following steps:

■ Creating learning goals and objectives that incorporate multicultural aspects, such as "Developing students' ability to write persuasively about social justice concerns."

■ Using a frequency matrix to ensure that the teacher includes a wide variety of ethnic groups in a wide variety of ways in curriculum materials and instructional activities.

■ Introducing different ethnic groups and their contributions on a rotating basis.

and techniques from such disciplines as history, economics, sociology, psychology, mathematics, literature, science, art, politics, music, and health care. Theoretical scholarship already affirms this interdisciplinary need; now, teachers need to model good curricular and instructional practice in elementary and secondary classrooms. Putting this principle into practice will elevate multicultural education from impulse, disciplinary isolation, and simplistic and haphazard guesswork to a level of significance, complexity, and connectedness across disciplines.

## Multiculturalism and Curriculum Development

How can teachers establish linkages between multicultural education and the disciplines and subject matter content taught in schools? One approach is to filter multicultural education through two categories of curriculum development: *reality/representation* and *relevance*.

### **Reality/Representation**

A persistent concern of curriculum development in all subjects is helping students understand the *realities* of the social condition and how they came to be as well as adequately representing those realities. Historically, curriculum designers have been more exclusive than inclusive of the wide range of ethnic and cultural diversity that exists within society. In the haste to promote harmony and avoid controversy and conflict, they gloss over social problems and the realities of ethnic and racial identities, romanticize racial relations, and ignore the challenges of poverty and urban living in favor of middle-class and suburban experiences. The reality is distorted and the representations incomplete (Loewen, 1995).

An inescapable reality is that diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural groups and individuals have made contributions to every area of human endeavor and to all aspects of U.S. history, life, and culture. When students study food resources in the United States, for example, they often learn about production and distribution by large-scale agribusiness and processing corporations. The curriculum virtually overlooks the contributions of the many ethnically diverse people involved in planting and harvesting vegetables and fruits (with the Mexican and Mexican American farm labor unionization movement a possible exception). School curriculums that incorporate comprehensive multicultural education do not perpetuate these exclusions. Instead, they teach students the reality—how large corporations and the food industry are directly connected to the migrant workers who

harvest vegetables and pick fruits. If we are going to tell the true story of the United States, multicultural education must be a central feature of telling it.

School curriculums need to reverse these trends by also including equitable *representations* of diversity. For example, the study of American literature, art, and music should include contributions of males and females from different ethnic groups in all genres and in different expressive styles. Thus, the study of jazz will examine various forms and techniques produced not just by

Yet most educators will agree that learning is more interesting and easier to accomplish when it has personal meaning for students.

Students from different ethnic groups are more likely to be interested and engaged in learning situations that occur in familiar and friendly frameworks than in those occurring in strange and hostile ones. A key factor in establishing educational relevance for these students is cultural similarity and responsiveness (see Bruner, 1996; Hollins, 1996; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg,

Multicultural education is much more than a few lessons about ethnically diverse individuals and events or a component that operates on the periphery of the education enterprise.

African Americans but also by Asian, European, and Latino Americans.

Moreover, educators should represent ethnically diverse individuals and groups in all strata of human accomplishment instead of typecasting particular groups as dependent and helpless victims who make limited contributions of significance. Even under the most oppressive conditions, diverse groups in the United States have been creative, activist, and productive on broad scales. The way in which Japanese Americans handled their internment during World War II provides an excellent example. Although schools must not overlook or minimize the atrocities this group endured, students should also learn how interned Japanese Americans led dignified lives under the most undignified circumstances and elevated their humanity above the circumstances. The curriculum should include both issues.

### **Relevance**

Many ethnically diverse students do not find schooling exciting or inviting; they often feel unwelcome, insignificant, and alienated. Too much of what is taught has no immediate value to these students. It does not reflect who they are.

1995). For example, immigrant Vietnamese, Jamaican, and Mexican students who were members of majority populations in their home countries initially may have difficulty understanding what it means to be members of minority groups in the United States. Students who come from education environments that encourage active participatory learning will not be intellectually stimulated by passive instruction that involves lecturing and completing worksheets. Many students of color are bombarded with irrelevant learning experiences, which dampen their academic interest, engagement, and achievement. Multicultural education mediates these situations by teaching content about the cultures and contributions of many ethnic groups and by using a variety of teaching techniques that are culturally responsive to different ethnic learning styles.

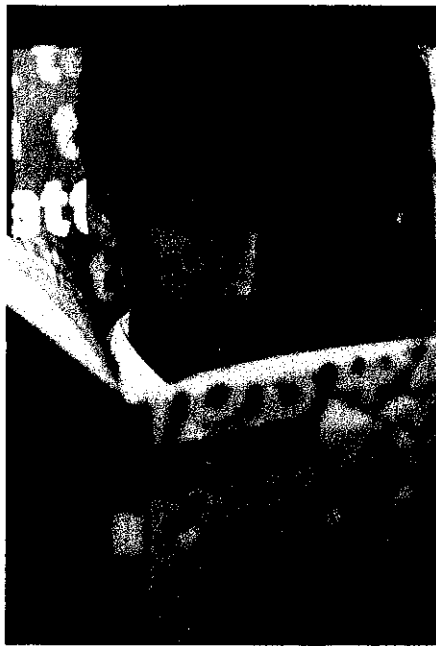
Using a variety of strategies may seem a tall order in a classroom that includes students from many different ethnic groups. Research indicates, however, that several ethnic groups share some learning style attributes (Shade, 1989). Teachers need to understand the distinguishing characteristics of different

learning styles and use the instructional techniques best suited to each style. In this scenario, teachers would provide alternative teaching techniques for clusters of students instead of for individual students. In any given lesson, the teacher might offer three or four ways for students to learn, helping to equalize learning advantages and disadvantages among the different ethnic groups in the classroom.

Scholars are producing powerful descriptions of culturally relevant teaching for multiethnic students and its effects on achievement. Lipka and Mohatt (1998) describe how a group of teachers, working closely with Native Alaskan (Yup'ik) elders, made school structure, climate, curriculum, and instruction more reflective of and meaningful to students from the community. For 10 years, the teachers translated, adapted, and embedded Yup'ik cultural knowledge in math, literacy, and science curriculums. The elders served as resources and quality-control monitors of traditional knowledge, and they provided the inspiration and moral strength for the teachers to persist in their efforts to center the schooling of Yup'ik students around the students' own cultural orientations. In math, for instance, the teachers now habitually make connections among the Yup'ik numeration system, body measurements, simple and complex computations, geometry, pattern designs, and tessellations.

Similar attributes apply to the work of such scholars as Moses and Cobb (2001), Lee (1993), and Boykin and Bailey (2000), who are studying the effects of culturally relevant curriculum and instruction on the school performance of African American students.

Moses and his colleagues are making higher-order math knowledge accessible to African American middle school students by teaching this material through the students' own cultural orientations and experiences. To teach algebra, they emphasize the experiences and familiar environments of urban and rural low-income students,



© Geoff Franklin/Getty Images

**Multicultural education may be the solution to problems that currently appear insolvable.**

many of whom are at high risk for academic failure. A key feature of their approach is making students conscious of how algebraic principles and formulas operate in their daily lives and getting students to understand how to explain these connections in nonalgebraic language before converting this knowledge into the technical notations and calculations of algebra. Students previously considered by some teachers as incapable of learning algebra are performing at high levels—better, in fact, than many of their advantaged peers.

Evidence increasingly indicates that multicultural education makes schooling more relevant and effective for Latino American, Native American, Asian American, and Native Hawaiian students as well (see McCarty, 2002; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Park, Goodwin, & Lee, 2001; Sharp &

Gallimore, 1988). Students perform more successfully on all levels when there is greater congruence between their cultural backgrounds and such school experiences as task interest, effort, academic achievement, and feelings of personal efficacy or social accountability.

As the challenge to better educate underachieving students intensifies and diversity among student populations expands, the need for multicultural education grows exponentially. Multicultural education may be the solution to problems that currently appear insolvable: closing the achievement gap; genuinely not leaving any children behind academically; revitalizing faith and trust in the promises of democracy, equality, and justice; building education systems that reflect the diverse cultural, ethnic, racial, and social contributions that forge society; and providing better opportunities for all students.

Multicultural education is crucial. Classroom teachers and educators must answer its clarion call to provide students from all ethnic groups with the education they deserve. ■

## References

- Banks, J. A. (1994). *Multicultural education: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (Eds.). (2001). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (Eds.). (2002). *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Barber, B. R. (1992). *An aristocracy of everyone: The politics of education and the future of America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bennett, C. I. (2003). *Comprehensive multicultural education: Theory and practice*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Boykin, A. W., & Bailey, C. T. (2000). *The role of cultural factors in school relevant cognitive functioning: Synthesis of findings on cultural context, cultural orientations, and individual differences*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 441 880)
- Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.