

Raising Young Children to Embrace Differences... and to Resist Bias

In October, the Network sponsored a program designed to give parents, caregivers, educators, and grandparents the tools they need to help young children become open and accepting of differences and to resist bias. Heidi Given of the Eliot Pearson School, which is part of the Early Childhood program there, outlined four objectives for implementing an anti-bias approach to bringing up children. Given uses the work of Louise Derman Sparks as the basis for these objectives:

- To nurture the construction of a knowledgeable, confident identity as an individual and as a member of multiple cultural groups (gender, race, ethnicity, class, etc.);
- To promote comfortable, empathic interactions with people from diverse backgrounds;
- To foster each child's ability to recognize bias and injustice;
- To cultivate each child's ability to stand up—individually and in cooperation with others—against bias or injustice directed at her/himself or others.

The Network has copies of helpful handouts from the program, as well as multiple copies of the wonderful brochure *Raising Young Children to Resist Bias*, published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. We would love to share these materials with anyone interested! Just email office@wmcn.org or call 781-729-7100.

And, check out the website, www.tolerance.org and click on "parents." There is a wealth of information on this site!

April is Fair Housing Month

The Fair Housing Center of Boston reminds us that:

"Where we live determines the quality of our children's education, our access to jobs and social networks, as well as aspects of our health and well-being. Housing discrimination is illegal, immoral and debilitating to thousands of Massachusetts residents seeking housing, whether to rent, buy or finance a safe place to raise their family, or simply a roof over their head."

Research done by the Center shows that:

- People of color experience discrimination in at least half of their attempts to secure housing in Greater Boston;
- Families with children and people receiving housing subsidies experience discrimination in roughly two-thirds of their attempts to rent in the region.

For more information, contact the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston, 58 Temple Place #1105, Boston, MA 02111 (617-399-0491) or go to www.bostonfairhousing.org

Names in the News

Congratulations to Estela Serafini, an active member of our International Connections Committee, for a very successful and well-received display of her fine tapestry work at the Winchester Library, and to Alessandra Siniscalco of Cafe Piazza Dolce for the excellent review of her café, which appeared in *The Boston Globe*. Alessandra has provided a warm and welcoming venue for our International Connections drop-in coffees during the past year.

Winchester Multicultural Network

P.O. Box 346

Winchester, MA 01890

A SPECIAL REQUEST

We have a wonderful new way to let you know about Multicultural Network events via email. This helps us to keep you informed between newsletters or to notify you of important issues. We use this method sparingly, so that you won't be bombarded! If you would like to receive notices of Multicultural Network events, please send your email address to us at office@wmcn.org

Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Winchester, MA
Permit No. 70

Address Service Requested

The Journey

THE WINCHESTER MULTICULTURAL NETWORK NEWSLETTER



WINCHESTER
MULTICULTURAL
NETWORK

We Educate, Advocate and Respond.

EDITORS:

DOTTY BURSTEIN AND
SANDY THOMPSON

Winchester Multicultural Network 2006-2007 Board Members

Maura Albert
Sandy Baer
Dotty Burstein
Anna Buxton
Selma Guru Genc
Caroline Hirschfeld
Gloria Legvold
Fran McClintock
Kaye Nash
Christopher Palmer
Robin Smith
Sandy Thompson
Hillary Turkewitz
Marvin Williamson
Jane Lynch (emeritus)

WINCHESTER MULTICULTURAL NETWORK

P.O. Box 346
Winchester MA 01890
781-729-7100
www.wmcn.org

The Face of Winchester is Changing— a Global Perspective

While many of our readers do not have children in the schools, we think it's important for everyone to stay informed about what's going on in education around multicultural issues. An important movement is taking place nationwide and here in Winchester: the infusion of global education into all aspects of learning. During the past few months, teachers Laurie Schmidt and Ellie Stroud have been taking stock of what is already happening in the Winchester school system, the current demographics of its students, and Winchester educators' views on global education. The teachers' research resulted in the following information:

- 7.3% of Winchester students' first language is not English and 1.6% of students are not yet proficient;
- 5.8% of the student population is Asian, 1.8% is Hispanic, 0.8% is African-American, and 1.8% identifies as multi-race.

From these demographics, the teachers concluded that the face of Winchester is changing! Schmidt and Stroud also wished to investigate how the curriculum in Winchester's schools prepares students for a global outlook. They collected the following information:

- In elementary grades, geography is introduced. Africa and Kenya are studied in first grade, and Japanese culture is introduced in some second grades. In fourth grade, Canada is introduced and, in some classrooms, China is also studied;
- In the middle school, over 500 students take a foreign language. World geography and ancient civilizations are studied, and international literature is part of the language arts curriculum;
- French, Spanish, Italian, and Latin are offered at the high school;
- World history, economics, and the humanities are part of the curriculum;
- Exchange programs and cultural trips are offered at the middle school and high school during school vacations;
- Faculty members at all levels have traveled and studied abroad in Asia, Latin America, and Europe.

continued on page 3

Looking Ahead

Clarence Darrow: The Search for Justice

Friday, March 30 at 7:30 p.m.
Winchester Unitarian Church, 478 Main St., Winchester

Actor Gary Anderson, America's renowned portrayal of Clarence Darrow, will present his full-length play at Winchester's Unitarian church on Friday evening, March 30. Darrow, alleged to be the most hated and celebrated lawyer in American history, fought social injustice in many forms. In the play, according to Anderson's website, "Darrow recounts the greatest trials of his career, including the Scopes 'Monkey' Trial, Leopold and Loeb, the struggles of the unions and others, while providing personal insights into his character and philosophies through often humorous and moving anecdotes and trial excerpts...With a national debate focused on the preservation of civil liberties amid concerns for the public safety from terrorism, this powerful and absorbing portrayal of a remarkable American is uniquely appropriate to our current national state of mind." The play touches on issues such as the death penalty (Darrow never lost a death penalty case), civil rights, child labor, legal ethics, and trial strategies. Anderson's performance should provide an entertaining and thought-provoking evening!

International Connections

ENGLISH CONVERSATION GROUPS

English conversation groups are offered on Monday or Tuesday mornings, or Wednesday evenings, with priority given to Winchester residents.

For questions or more information call Liz Sayre at 781-729-9242.

DROP-IN COFFEE

Anyone is welcome to stop in at Café Dolce, 831 Main St., on Thursday mornings between 8:30 and 9:30 or 10:00 a.m. for informal coffee and conversation.

EATING OUT

Join us for monthly lunches at ethnic restaurants in the area. Just email office@wmcn.org or call 781-729-7100 and let us know if you would like to be included. We'll email you with the date and place where we'll meet next. We hope to alternate between lunch and dinner to include those who can't participate during the day so let us know which time is better for you.

Hatred and dogma arise from a certain kind of ignorance about how other people experience their lives.

***Mary Pipher
from her book Writing to Change the World***

Teaching About Differences by Sahar Ahmed Awerbuch

Today, more and more teachers recognize that teaching tolerance is fundamental to any curriculum. Research has shown that between the ages of two and five children become aware of gender, culture, ethnicity, family differences, and disabilities. Every day new differences arise and children should be encouraged to discover and adapt to these differences. A child's experiences in the classroom will inevitably affect his/her ideas and expectations for a lifetime.

Bias based on gender, race, disability, type of family, social standing in the community, or other difference creates serious obstacles to a child's healthy development. What can we do as adults? Let's begin with ourselves. We may, at times, deny the reality or significance of differences. Yet avoiding these topics around difference does not give children the kind of information they need to learn. Children by nature are curious, so they will ask questions. If we answer selectively, we convey the message that certain differences are not acceptable, since we choose not to talk about them. If we fail to attach positive values to differences, children are left to absorb the prevalent biases of society—biases that may remain throughout their adulthood.

The following guidelines from the National Association for the Education of Young Children may be helpful for teachers and parents:

- Provide books, toys, and other materials that reflect diverse images in a positive manner;
- Create an environment at home and school that deliberately contrasts with the prevailing biased messages of the wider society;
- Show that you yourself value diversity;
- Make it a firm rule that a person's identity is never an acceptable reason to tease or reject him or her;
- Initiate activities and discussions to build positive self-identity and to teach the value of differences among people;
- Talk positively about each child's physical characteristics and cultural heritage;
- Provide opportunities for children to interact with other children who are different from themselves;
- Respectfully listen to and answer children's questions about themselves and others;
- Teach children how to challenge biases of who they are;
- Teach children to recognize stereotypes and caricatures of different groups;
- Use accurate and fair images in contrast to stereotypical ones.

Sources and further reading:

"Starting Small: Teaching Tolerance in Pre-school and the Early Grades" from: The Teaching Tolerance Project, Montgomery, Alabama, 1997.

"Responding to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity: recommendations for effective early childhood education," NAEYC, Washington, D.C. 1995.
www.naeyc.org/resources

Texts of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; U.N. Publications, New York, NY 10017.
Tel: 1-800-253-9646

The Caring Child by Nancy Eisenberg, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Winchester as a Multicultural Community

- The high school Spanish Club sponsored a toy and clothing drive during December to benefit Spanish-speaking children who had just arrived in the Washington D.C. area.
- Members of Connect and Commit, the Community Service Club at Winchester High School, served dinner at Rosie's place in January and helped paint rooms and corridors at Roxbury Prep Charter School, among other projects.
- An interfaith dialogue, facilitated by the Rev. Robert Trache of Parish of the Epiphany, Mr. Sal Cariviello of St. Mary's, and Rabbi Rim Meiorwitz of Temple Shir Tikvah, was held in February and early March as a continuation of the "Open Doors, Open Minds" series started last year.
- McCall Middle School held an assembly to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday and the legacy of Rosa Parks. The event involved McCall student council members, the school choruses, and guest speaker Mr. Jamele Adams, Assistant Dean for Diversity and Student Life at Brandeis University. Retired Assistant Principal Matilda Ligon was an honored guest.
- St. Mary's Church held a memorial service in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Members of the Multicultural Issues Group viewed the documentary *God Grew Tired of Us*, about the Lost Boys of Sudan—children who fled their country's civil war in the 1980s. Members also saw the film, *Freedom Writers*, and met a group of students from Wales for a dinner get-together.
- The Ruth Group at the First Congregational Church read *The Lemon Tree: An Arab, A Jew and the Heart of the Middle East* by Sandy Tolan.
- The Jenks Center hosted a concert by Celtic singer Aine Minogue.
- The Friends of the Winchester Public Library and the Multicultural Network sponsored an evening with Robert Shetterly, the creator of the portraits and programs: "Americans Who Tell the Truth."
- The First Congregational Church hosted a series: "The Many Faces of God," which began with a representative from the Pluralism Project at Harvard, and continued with speakers discussing Judaism, Islam, Unitarianism, and Camp IF, an interfaith camp for teenagers, designed to foster understanding across religious differences.
- The seventh grade geography classes at McCall have been writing children's books set in various countries around the world. They are reading these books to elementary school students in March.
- The McCall International Club recently participated in several projects concerned with the ongoing genocide in Darfur. The Club traveled to Kendall Square to view the movie *God Grew Tired of Us*, about young Sudanese refugees, and also sold hand-made jewelry in the cafeteria to raise money for the organization Doctors Without Borders.
- Language and humanities students at Winchester High School enjoyed a performance of Italian medieval flag throwing, traditionally performed at a medieval joust, by a group from Sulmona, Italy.
- About 70 students from the seventh grade geography classes at McCall participated in an evening viewing of the movie *Hotel Rwanda*. Afterwards, they discussed the Rwanda case and its similarities with the ongoing genocide in Darfur.
- Members of Winchester High School's Spanish Club and French Club celebrated Mardi Gras/Carnival as a combined group. Students created masks, piñatas, and foods from many lands for one last feast/fiesta/fete before the traditional Lenten season began.
- McCall sixth grade All-Stars celebrated Chinese New Year with Ambrose second graders, and the Lynch elementary school also celebrated the holiday.
- Several Winchester High School senior language students traveled to Italy during February vacation and several Spanish students visited Costa Rica.

Continued from page 1

The Face of Winchester is Changing—a Global Perspective

Reflecting the importance placed on global education, plans are already under way for a professional development day next September that will focus on all aspects of this topic. If you have ideas for speakers for this important day, contact Laurie Schmidt (lschmidt@winchester.k12.ma.us) or Assistant Superintendent Marc Kerble (mkerble@winchester.k12.ma.us).

And if you don't think global education is important, consider our global economy. Businessman Bill Judy, writing in the magazine *China Connection* asserts, "It is not only large multinational companies that operate in the global environment. All businesses

need and want employees (especially future employees) who bring with them a global perspective and a significant level of international knowledge. Global competition in business is getting tougher every day and preparing our next generation to succeed in the global economy requires new skills, attitudes, and approaches."

We'll be writing more about the topic of global education in future newsletters.

Help Us Bring Multicultural Issues to Your Home!

Our local cable TV station, WinCam, generously posts events to the Community Calendar, and we recently participated in their program "An Evening of Civic Conversation." However, we need someone to take the WinCam training so that our events and forums can be televised. WinCam will customize classes to fit your needs.

If you would like to contribute to the Network in a special way, let us know or call Don Cronan, Station Manager, at 781-721-2050.

The character of a society is the cumulative result of countless small actions, day in and day out, of millions of people.

Duane Elgin from Mary Pipher's book Writing to Change the World

NAACP

The Rev. Dorothy Emerson, newly elected President of the Mystic Valley Area Branch of the NAACP, is working to bring together members from Arlington, Everett, Malden, Winchester, and Woburn.

If you are a member or interested in becoming one and want to be notified of events and meetings, contact The Rev. Emerson at 781-391-6455 or email RevEmerson@aol.com

Making a Difference: Justice in Darfur

On Sunday, December 3, the Multicultural Network, the Second Congregational Church, the First Congregational Church, Temple Shir Tikvah, and the Unitarian Church co-sponsored a panel discussion on the crisis in Darfur: "Making a Difference: Justice in Darfur". The speakers included Karen Hirschfeld, Sudan Coordinator for Physicians for Human Rights; Panther Alier, one of the "Lost Boys" of Sudan; Katie Fallon, a nurse who spent six months in Darfur setting up a mobile health unit; and Omer Ismael, a refugee from Darfur and a Fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights at Harvard.

The panelists spoke of the horrific situation there, ongoing since February, 2003. More than 400,000 people have died and over 2.5 million others have been displaced. At the conclusion of the program, audience members were urged to take action, whether by making calls and writing letters to government officials, working to raise awareness about this genocide, and/or donating money or time to the effort. You can make a difference! For information, background, and news, the following websites are helpful: www.savedarfurma.org, www.SaveDarfur.org, www.CrisisGroup.org, www.hrw.org (Human Rights Watch).

After the program, Panther Alier wrote to Karen Hirschfeld:

"I do this because I realized the need for someone like me to speak up on behalf of the suffering people of Sudan. Besides, I believe if someone had done this when I was the victim, things 'might' have been different. God would never forgive me if I remain silent given my insider experience! I do this for me, my people, and the world, at least those that care for humanity: people like you . . . Again, thank you!"

What's in a Stereotype?

by Sahar Ahmed Awerbuch

Stereotypes of people, no matter who they are or where they're from, do exist. However, when the stereotypes become the norm of a certain group, there must be some kind of intervention. The appropriate intervention is education and public awareness.

I was asked to participate on a panel discussion, "Middle Eastern Women's Voices in the United States Since 9/11", at Lesley University in Cambridge on November 30, 2006. The panel was chaired by Lesley University professors Arlene Dallal and Rose Marie Knickles. The panel was sponsored by the Lesley University Women's Study Resource Group and the Social Sciences Division of Lesley College. I gladly accepted this invitation because I knew this was a good opportunity for people to see the many faces of women from the Middle East. They were not oppressed, they did not all wear veils, and those who did were not women who were uneducated or forced to do things against their will. The panel consisted of a diverse group of women, each of whom had a chance to express her own views and discuss her experiences pre-and post 9/11. Everyone's story was different and each conveyed an important message.

I myself was affected by the events of 9/11, and I was happy to have a chance to tell the audience about my experience. I am an Egyptian American. As such, I was educated and raised in America. I love this country. I never experienced prejudice as a child; however, my own child became a victim of it. After the terrorist attacks, she was harassed at school and referred to as a "terrorist." I was shocked and my daughter was devastated. As an eleven-year-old, she didn't understand why other children would refer to her in that way. Where was all this coming from? Was this because she had lived in Egypt? Was it because others thought she was so different? Actually, my daughter really wasn't that different; she was a kid like any other kid. I realized, however, that horrific events happening in the world and the way they are being portrayed in the media are the main problem. Can we really blame children for their prejudices? I don't believe we can hold children accountable if we don't teach them other ways of thinking and talking about these events.

I am happy to say that my daughter's experience has made her a stronger person. I also can say that, although painful, her experience taught her that stereotyping people can be destructive and hateful. This is a valuable lesson for any human being to learn.

Some Thoughts on Immigration by Dotty Burstein

In decisions spanning more than a century, the Supreme Court has ruled that non-citizens, including those who are undocumented, are “persons” and entitled to the Constitution’s guarantees of the right to freedom of speech and religion, the right to be treated fairly, the right to privacy, and all the other fundamental rights that U.S. citizens enjoy. However, according to a recent report by The American Civil Liberties Union, “the notion that immigrants have constitutional and human rights has been all but forgotten in the heated rhetoric surrounding immigration.” The reasons are many and complex, but often they are rooted in racist and nativistic outlooks that stem from fear and resentment.

The current debate around immigration has several origins:

- (1) fear in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001,
- (2) resentment for what is seen as immigrants taking jobs away from U.S. citizens and driving down wages, and
- (3) the increasing influx of Mexican workers crossing the border into California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

According to some reports, approximately 3,000 Mexicans are apprehended daily as they try to cross U.S. borders. Some have endured temperatures of 120 degrees as they crossed the desert; others have sustained beatings and sexual assaults at the U.S.-Mexican border; still others have become victims of fatal shootings by border vigilantes. Nevertheless, hundreds do succeed in making it to safety each day. These “illegals” have risked their lives to reach what most of us would agree is a reasonable goal—a better life for themselves and their children. While there is bound to be resentment of people who appear to take away jobs and drive down wages—employers prefer to hire undocumented immigrants because they will accept lower wages in cash and are reticent to report workplace abuses—it is important to understand why Mexicans have immigrated in the first place. They are a desperate people from a failed economy and a corrupt, often brutal, government. Why else would a people give up the stabilizing effects of their language, traditions, good friends, and close relatives? In the Fall 2005 publication of *Teaching Tolerance*, Mitali Perkins described the immigrant experience this way: “You lose the chance to disappear into the majority anywhere in your new world. In the new neighborhood, you draw reactions common to minorities—outright racism, patronizing tokenism, enthusiasm from curious culture-seekers.” Nevertheless, the losses, like those of our own immigrant ancestors, are mitigated by an opportunity to escape persecution, find work, and become citizens.

Since Congress has not yet passed legislation that would provide a path for undocumented immigrants to become legal, it is important for citizens to urge their legislators to vote for such legislation. As stated in an article published by the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition, “Immigration reform that increases opportunities for legal immigration and allows undocumented immigrants the opportunity to get in line for citizenship is a realistic and responsible policy approach.” Remember that all immigrants pay sales, property, and income taxes. Therefore, they, along with U.S. citizens, deserve fair wages and safe working conditions. It is also good public policy to provide access to health care and housing to all residents, regardless of their status, and to allow children born in the U.S. to undocumented residents to attend the state’s colleges and universities at the in-state rate of tuition. This kind of investment in a state’s residents is key to America’s diversity, prosperity, and security.

The way that Americans treat non-citizens, regardless of status, is a reflection of who we are as a people. Once immigrants ourselves, we must find ways to avoid the kind of ‘us-them’ thinking and use of language, e.g., aliens, illegals, that is so divisive. Keep in mind that those who have fled their country of origin have undergone persecution or fear it. In addition, many seek refuge in a place where it is possible to make a living for themselves and members of their families, who may still reside in their home country. If we treasure our own status as citizens, it is our responsibility to advocate for immigration reform that creates a path to citizenship for all immigrants.

Note: To read more about this important topic, you may find the following titles in your public library:

Human Cargo: A Journey Among Refugees by Caroline Moorehead, Henry Holt & Co., NY, 2005.

Enrique’s Journey: The Story of a Boy’s Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with his Mother by Sonia Hazario, Random House, NY, 2006.

Dying to Cross: The Worst Immigrant Tragedy in American History by Jorge Ramos, Harper Collins Publishers, NY, 2005.

Other Resources on Immigration include the following organizations:

- Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (www.miracoalition.org)
- International Institute (www.iiboston.org)
- Centro Presente (cpresente.org)
- American Immigration Law Foundation (www.aifl.org)
- Catholic Charities Refugee and Immigration Services (www.ccab.org)
- Immigration Lawyers Weekly (www.ILW.com)
- American Immigration Lawyers Association (www.AILA.com)
- National Immigration Project (www.nationalimmigrationproject.org)
- National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (www.nnirr.org)
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (www.uscis.gov)

Book Recommendation for Teenagers and Adults

Cross-X: The Amazing True Story of How the Most Unlikely Team From the Most Unlikely of Places Overcame Staggering Obstacles at Home and at School to Challenge the Debate Community on Race, Power, and Education by Joe Miller.

This is the story of how an African-American debate team from a failing inner-city high school won, against all odds, a top-ten place in the national debate championships. Journalist Joe Miller followed the team for a year and became its coach. He tells the compelling story of the team members, who view winning as their ticket to college, and the woman, Jane Rinehart, who dedicates herself to helping the team find the proper resources and fights the state and school district, which are trying to terminate the debate program because of its cost.