

Interracial books for children bulletin.

Volume 16, No. 4 1985

New York, NY: The Council on Interracial Books for Children, Inc.,
1985

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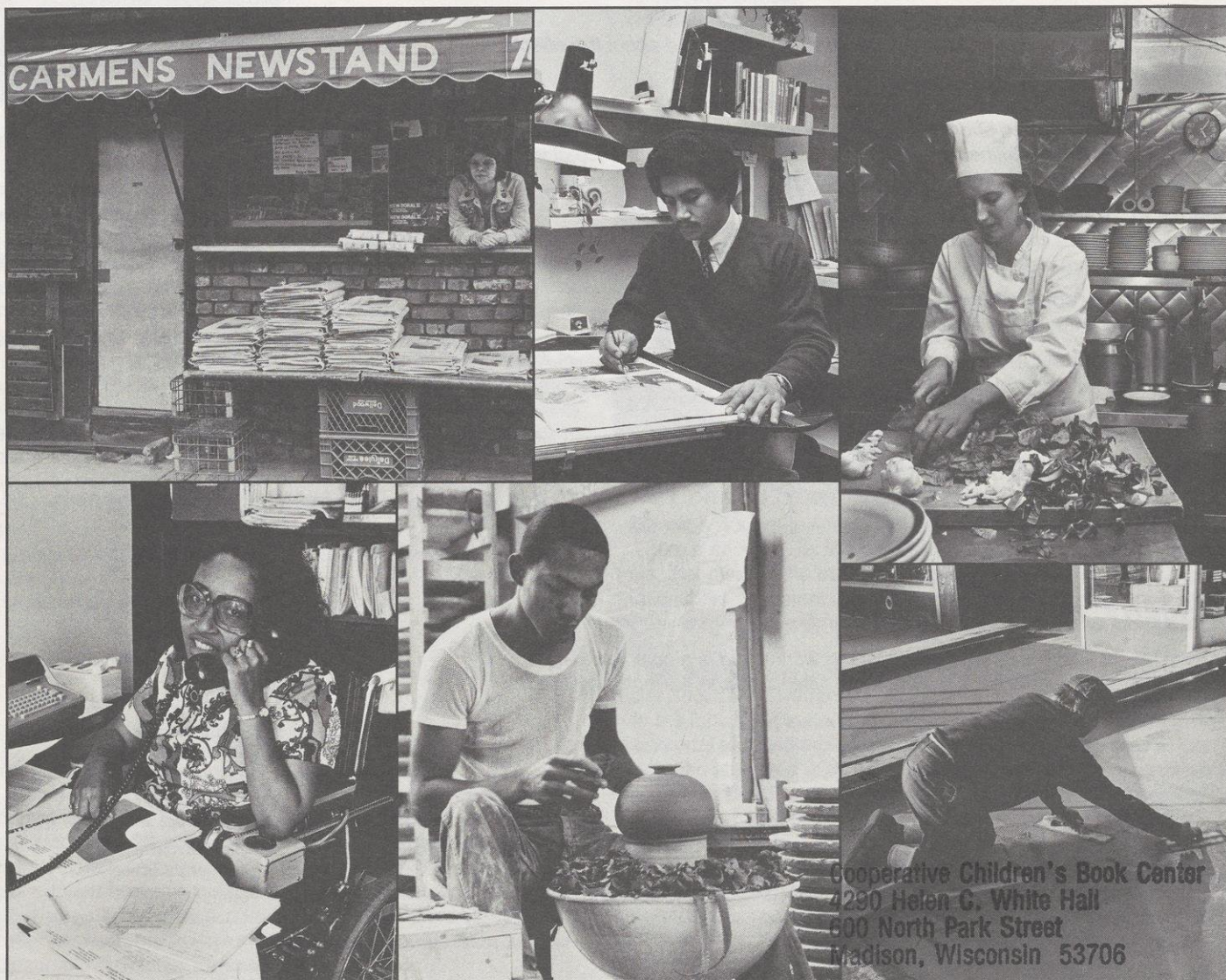
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INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

BULLETIN

VOLUME 16, NUMBER 4, 1985

ISSN 0146-5562



Curriculum Examines the World of Work

Teaching Pre-Schoolers about Work

BULLETIN

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20th Anniversary Messages

"Working People" Curriculum Examines the World of Work
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Teaching Pre-Schoolers about Work—A Complex Task
Before teaching children about work, adults should examine their own attitudes; areas of concern are outlined and suggestions for approaching the subject with pre-schoolers are given.

Books to Teach about Work
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COVER

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Indexed in
Alternative Press Index
Education Index
ERIC IRCD
Library Literature

The Bulletin is available in microform from University Microfilms International at 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106 or 18 Bedford Row, London, WC1R 4EJ, England. (Single back copies should, however, be ordered from the Council.)

INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN BULLETIN is published eight times a year by the Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1841 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023. © 1985 by the Council on Interracial Books for Children, Inc. In the U.S., institutional and contributing subscriptions are \$20 a year; individual subscriptions are \$14 a year; single copies are \$2.95 each for regular issues, \$3.95 each for special double issues plus \$1.00 handling; bulk rates available upon request. For rates outside the U.S., see back cover. A subscription form appears on the back cover.

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20th Anniversary Year



and with their classroom experiences. Children who are proud of themselves, their families and their cultures are destined to become leaders of future generations.

Even with this broadening network of enlightened people, the work of the CIBC has still only just begun to reach those adults who make decisions about children's literature, curriculum materials and daily experiences. We support your untiring and critically honest efforts on behalf of the needs and rights of all children.

Marilyn M. Smith
Executive Director

National Association for the Education of Young Children

An Effective Training Resource . . .

It is indeed a pleasure to extend Twentieth Anniversary congratulations to the Council on Interracial Books for Children, from the National Board of the YWCA of the U.S.A.

The CIBC has been one of the most valuable resources in carrying out the One Imperative of the YWCA of the U.S.A., the elimination of racism. "The Fact Sheets on Racism and Sexism," the filmstrips and the *Bulletin* have been well received by women of all ages in member YWCAs.

As you and your readers are aware, the work of the YWCA includes a major emphasis on the education and training of women to further the direct impact they have on all aspects of our society and in the world. The contributions of the Council toward the elimination of racism and sexism have been an effective training resource to the 450 community and student YWCAs.

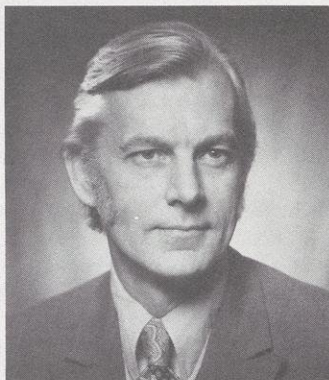
We shall look forward to your continuing efforts and publications.

Gwendolyn Calvert Baker
Executive Director
National Board
YWCA of the U.S.A.

NAEYC Commends CIBC . . .

The National Association for the Education of Young Children congratulates the Council on Interracial Books for Children for its first successful 20 years! The efforts of the late Brad Chambers and the staff and volunteers he led so enthusiastically have opened new horizons for many teachers, librarians, parents and publishers. Many more are now able to see that racism, ageism, sexism, handicapism and other *isms* keep people from fully participating in the human experience.

As a result of CIBC's efforts, an increasing number of children can identify with the people portrayed in books and illustrations



The Council Speaks the Truth . . .

Somebody's got to keep us on track.

There's so much in this world that pushes us in wrong directions, that distorts the truth, that works against the best in human relationships. So somebody has got to keep us honest, concerned for the common good, ready to speak for those who lack public voice.

That, as I see it, is precisely the function of the Council on Interracial Books for Children.

In the face of distortion the Council speaks the truth. In the face of personal and institutionalized prejudice, it dares to side with justice. In the presence of discouragement—and who among us has not experienced that some days!—it can give us the assurance that we are not alone, and that fairness and social justice are a cause worth giving ourselves to.

Such a task is never comfortable. But my experience of the Council over these 20 years leaves me to have confidence that it will stay true to its task, and in the years ahead grow even more effective in its work. Council, we need you!

Ward L. Kaiser
Executive Director
Friendship Press

An innovative curriculum teaches students about work—and about the effects of race, gender and class on the realities of the workplace

“Working People” Curriculum Examines the World of Work

By Leonore Gordon

“I had a hard day at work. Leave me alone for a while!” How many of us, as children, had a parent who demanded this of us? More often than not, we would be hurt or resentful, not understanding adults’ struggles at work until we ourselves reached adulthood. While teaching a fifth/sixth grade class in a New York City public school, it occurred to me that these children were old enough, curious enough, to be exposed to the realities of the working world.

Because I had discovered that children of this age often have a limited, sex-stereotyped and superficial view of the working world — and no idea about how people, even their parents, feel about their work — a primary goal of my *Working People* curriculum was to raise the students’ awareness of the many types of work that people do and how they feel about their jobs. Equally important, I wanted to sensitize them to the ways in which race, class and gender impact on a working person’s life.

In teaching ten-to-fourteen-year-olds about working people, one factor became startlingly clear: this age group has the capacity to empathize on a profound level with the basic dreams and frustrations of working people. They can identify with workers’ pride when skills are rewarded, their humiliation when efforts are demeaned. Students also recognize the ways in which power and powerlessness are manifested, and how feelings of powerlessness can impact on self-esteem. A curriculum on working is particularly relevant to children of this age because they desperately want to be self-sufficient, but they are made endlessly aware of the restraints imposed on them.

During a four-year period, I taught the *Working People* curriculum to Hispanic, Black and white students from a wide

range of socio-economic levels in both private and public schools. Because of the students’ fascination with the topic, the curriculum expanded each year that I taught it. The dramatic effects of racism, sexism and classism on working people were quite relevant to these pre-adolescent children — first, because many had experienced discrimination firsthand as girls and/or people of color, and second, because they saw themselves as a disenfranchised group, dependent on their families economically and bound legally to the school system. Thus, these children could be sympathetic to the anti-racist and anti-sexist struggles occurring within the working world.

I found two books particularly helpful; Studs Terkel’s *Working* (Avon, 1972) and Suzanne Seed’s *Saturday’s Child: 36 Women Talk about Their Jobs* (J. Philip O’Hara, 1973) are wonderful tools for this curriculum. Terkel’s interviewees are more varied and the interviews show far greater depth than Seed’s, but Seed’s book is easier for younger students to read and it presents women in a variety of non-traditional jobs (though some of the photos have a dated quality). Reading the Terkel interviews, my students were repeatedly struck by the frustration and powerlessness experienced by working people in dealing with the powers-that-be. For most students, it seemed to be the first recognition that many adults are not necessarily complacent in their adulthood, but instead, continue to struggle against many odds to achieve a feeling of pride and recognition. (Often in their own egocentricity, children imagine that they are the only ones facing such struggles, and they fantasize that when they reach adulthood, no one will tell them what to do.)

Almost any of the interviews in *Work-*

ing or *Saturday’s Child* can be used, and the approach discussed in this article can be applied to the interviews that seem most appropriate for each class. I began the curriculum by asking the class to sit in a circle while I read. I always began with excerpts from the first interview in *Working*, which is with a steelworker named Mike Lefevre. This interview epitomizes the struggles of working people who try to feel proud of their work but who are periodically overwhelmed by the disrespect and insensitivity of “the bosses.” The interview also poignantly demonstrates the ways that a worker’s anger at those in power is often displaced onto those who are at the same, or lower, level of the economic ladder.

Before I began reading, I asked the students to listen for the answers to a few key questions that I wrote on the board or asked students to write in the class journals used for discussion and creative writing exercises. I always tried to give a range of questions, some that all children could answer, some to challenge the brighter children. For the interview with Mike Lefevre, I asked such questions as: What makes the steelworker feel satisfied and dissatisfied? What does he want from life? How old do you think he is? Why did he purposely make a dent in a building he was completing? What does he want for his son?

All of my classes remarked on Mike’s need for pride in his work, his desire to “make a mark” (through the dent) and to not feel eclipsed by the mechanized world. They identified with his feelings of powerlessness and unimportance, but many were surprised at the degree of exhaustion Lefevre felt at the end of a working day. They also focused on his anger, which became the subject of another lesson discussed below.

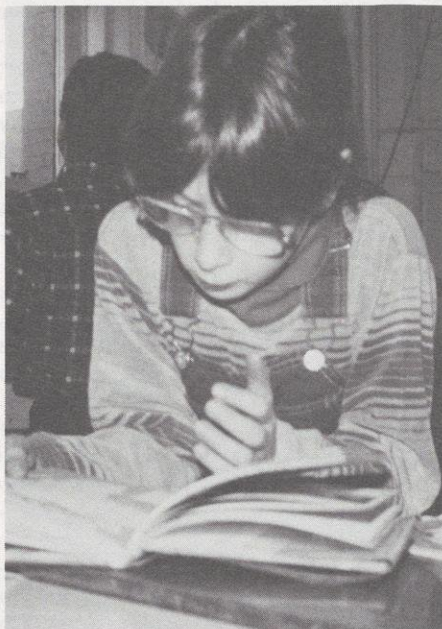
They talked about the ways in which they were treated that made them feel unimportant and powerless, and how kids also like to leave a mark (on desks, etc.) so that people know what they are capable of and what belongs to them. (In one class this led to an interesting discussion of graffiti artists who may feel unable to express themselves elsewhere because their talents are not acknowledged by the school system.) We also discussed Mike Lefevre's hope that his son would never be like him; we talked about the dreams that parents often have for their children when their own lives feel unfulfilled, and the pressure that this can place on children.

I used the Lefevre interview to discuss the concept of discrimination as something that prevents people from having their dreams fulfilled because of their race, sex or class. We discussed such questions as: What economic reasons could have prevented Mike from having his own dream fulfilled? How can someone's economic level affect their ability to pursue the career of their choice? How can one's race or sex limit career opportunities? We discussed the ways in which economic and other barriers discriminate against people, and how, as a result, their self-confidence is destroyed, compounding the external obstacles.

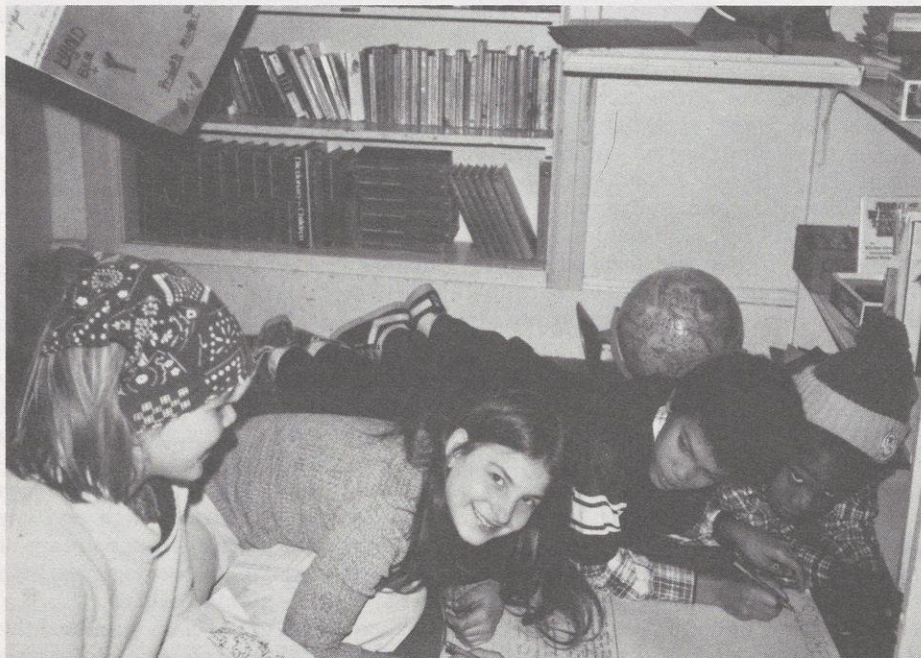
Using "A Dream Deferred"

With some classes, I used Langston Hughes' poem, "A Dream Deferred," at this point, but the poem can be used successfully at almost any place in this curriculum. I asked students for examples of dreams that were never realized, and many described their own. Students also talked about careers their parents had wanted but were unable to achieve and they considered the possibility that their parents might not be doing what they most wanted to do because of race or sex barriers. (Many learned more about this from the interviews with parents described below.)

While all of the students demonstrated an extraordinary capacity to grasp the meaning of the poem, one sixth grade boy was particularly moved by it. Disappointed each time his father broke his promise to visit him, the student described his own heart breaking "into a million pieces and dying with each broken promise." He described becoming "dumb" and unable to learn or read a book, and he told me that when a dream is put aside, "It's like a time bomb and



Members of Leonore Gordon's classes during the presentation of the "Working People" curriculum. Top: Students gather for the reading of an interview from Studs Terkel's Working. Center: A student researches information about a job that she is interested in. Bottom: Students working on group project.



can explode."

As noted above, the Lefevre interview also served as the basis for a useful exercise on anger and the ways in which anger generated on the job is displaced from the powerful to the powerless. I wrote several quotes from Mike Lefevre on the board (they could also be run off on a ditto). These excerpts describe his desire to express his rage to his foreman and his frustration at being unable to because he doesn't want to lose his job. He describes how, instead, he yells at his wife when he goes home and gets into a fight at the neighborhood bar with another working man who is dealing with unexpressed anger.

Because these quotes contain some "four-letter words" and graphic language, they have to be handled carefully, but my experience has been that students, after their initial giggles, are able to respond to the content. Students recognized the ways that they themselves "dump" on other people when they are angry at the powers in their lives (specifically parents and teachers) and they understood the experience of keeping anger "in." They felt most frustrated by rules and punishments imposed without their input. They recognized the appropriateness of being expected to attend school, for instance, but felt that adults often impose rules and "consequences" merely out of a desire to wield power. The connection between society's treatment of working people and its treatment of children can be clearly drawn here, which is one reason children respond so intently to this interview.

Discussing Rage

I also used the Lefevre interview to discuss the ways in which oppressed people vent their rage on each other. I asked the students to name groups of people most discriminated against; class lists included Blacks, Hispanics, women, gay people, children and disabled people. The students gave examples of discrimination for each group and then looked at the ways that people in these groups — particularly those people of color who are economically dependent on whites — often feel forced to turn their anger and hatred on each other or on themselves and those of their own group.

After the activities based on the initial interview, the curriculum can go in numerous directions. One possibility is to follow the Lefevre interview with that of farmworker Roberto Acuna; the piece deals with race and class struggles and

shows how organizing can channel the rage resulting from oppression. I used statistics about salaries for people of color and women from the U.S. Department of Labor with my students, but another possibility is to show the class some of the relevant charts that appeared in the last *Bulletin* (Vol. 16, Nos. 2 & 3). This will begin to educate them about ways racism and sexism are linked to economic discrimination.

The charts on income can serve as introduction to interviews in *Working* and *Saturday's Child* that deal more specifically with issues related to race and sex. Suggested interviews from *Working* include those with Barbara Herrick, writer producer; Reanult Robinson, police officer; Maggie Holmes, domestic worker; and Sharon Atkins, receptionist. From *Saturday's Child* consider Patsy Takemoto Mink, congresswoman; Jewel Lafontant, lawyer; Margaret Harris, conductor; Margaret King, cab driver; and Mary Ann Goold, telephone repairwoman.

The children particularly enjoyed the *Working* interview with Sharon Atkins, a receptionist who perceptively describes the lack of respect given to her at her job and by people she encounters socially. (She talks about a party where the people she speaks with turn to someone else as soon as she reveals her occupation.) She also wonders if her organization would ever hire a man to do her job and concludes that they wouldn't because they know they'd have to pay him more. The concept of comparable worth can be easily introduced at this point and students can refer, again, to the *Bulletin* charts.

The Atkins interview gives students a chance to examine what kinds of jobs have historically been "open" to women (receptionists, operators, teachers, secretaries, nurses) and why. It also gives them an opportunity to develop some empathy for the kinds of jobs that are demeaned precisely because they have traditionally been a "woman's job."

Here, the *Bulletin* charts regarding the number of men and women in service jobs can be used and discussed. Students can be asked to consider what is difficult about this kind of work and why women and people of color predominate in service jobs. They can list the kind of jobs they themselves consider high and low status jobs and discuss the percentage of men and women in these categories, both stereotypically and in reality.

When a fifth grade class discussed the question, "Why are most telephone

operators, school teachers and nurses women?" two girls had a furious argument concerning the relative "value" of doctors and schoolteachers. They agreed that men have generally determined what jobs are considered "important" and kept women in the less important jobs. However, one girl claimed that being a doctor far outweighed teachers who are merely "babysitters," while the other angrily declared that doctors would not know how to read if it were not for their schoolteachers. Clearly, there is a good deal of material to tap into here.

Creative Writing Exercises

The interview with Mary Ann Goold that appears in *Saturday's Child* makes a good follow-up to the one with Atkins. Goold, who had been unhappy as a telephone operator, wanted to work with her hands and was able to follow her dream and become a telephone repairwoman. The interview helped the children realize that in spite of society's attempts to limit people's options, individuals are in fact capable of transcending these limitations.

While working on this curriculum, I sometimes asked the students to write pieces in the voice of a person whose interview we had read; to imagine, for instance, the thoughts and feelings that filter through Mike Lefevre's mind as he falls asleep. Students could include memories, dreams and feelings, but I suggested they keep to the spirit of the interview. The responses were extraordinary. The Lefevre interview often became the catalyst that enabled students to first learn to empathize with working class struggles. The writing experience also often proved cathartic for them; they could use Lefevre's voice, for example, to express their own similar angers and frustrations. Students always greatly enjoyed reading their work aloud on the following day.

Students who preferred acting to creative writing dramatized scenes from various interviews. One favorite was the *Working* interview with Maggie Holmes, a Black domestic worker who confronts her white employer about her racism and quits her job as she does so. Often students competed with each other for the chance to "replay" this confrontation, attempting to combine their expression of anger with their desire to educate the white woman. Both children of color and white children grew emotionally and politically from this exercise.

To expand the discussion of sex roles and race-related issues, I handed out dozens of magazines, asking students to cut out pictures of people in all kinds of work situations. I divided the class into small groups and asked two of the groups to note how many people of color they found and to pay attention to male and female job divisions. I also asked them to examine how each of these groups was portrayed, in what kind of setting, etc. The other groups were asked to simply divide up the pictures by gender and to make observations about the jobs men and women were shown in.

When the students finished the exercise, they were horrified by the blatant sexism and racism they found. Only a very few people of color were shown working (the implication, of course, is that people of color never work). Moreover, people of color were almost always shown in racist and sexist fashion with the women as sexual objects and the men limited to selling such items as fried chicken.

The students were also distressed by the small percentage of women shown working. Relatively few were shown in professional positions; instead, women served primarily as models for cosmetics or clothes. We discussed how the media teaches stereotypes to children and adults, and we analyzed the subliminal messages in the advertisements. (For instance, ads for designer jeans are not only selling jeans; they also tell a woman that she has to be slim and her pants have to fit tightly in order for her to have any value.)

We discussed what they—as male and female and Black and white children—could conclude about people and work from the mass media and they became outraged that the media, and advertisers in particular, were attempting to limit their own career choices. Our discussions led the students to begin to grasp the concept of economic gain, and how those in power have a great deal to gain by limiting the numbers of people aspiring to high paying jobs. For most, thinking about the political motives behind advertising was an entirely new concept.

At this point, I usually introduced the concept of oral history and assigned interviews that they could do on their own. I asked them to interview two people—one person they knew well and another who worked in their neighborhood. The class drew up a list of questions to be asked, and we made up a dittoed sheet. The list included questions on whether or not the person was satisfied in her/his



One year, a class studying the *Working People* curriculum was able to visit an exhibit of Duane Hanson's work at New York City's Whitney Museum. Hanson's sculptures depict people in the midst of their daily activities, and they are so realistic that viewers frequently believe that they are "real people." Many of Hanson's figures show people at work, and the exhibit included a museum guard, a painter, a cleaning woman (see above), a construction worker, and a waitress.

My students were given a choice of several writing assignments to complete while at the museum, and once they had deposited their coats, they could be found conducting imaginary interviews with the sculptures and writing furiously. Students wrote poems about Hanson's sculptures, imagined dialogues between the various figures, and described what might happen after visitors departed and the sculptured people were left to themselves.

The students' writings and characterizations reflected their deepened sensitivity to the working people they were studying in class. In addition, the students were delighted by the museum visit, which was filled with a great deal of whimsy and humor. — L.G.

job, whether she/he ever had wanted to choose another occupation and what made that person tired in his/her job.

The results were quite gratifying. Students returned with an awareness of parents, neighbors and community storekeepers that they had never had. Parents were delighted by their children's interest and at having the chance to honestly discuss their work day. I also wrote to all parents, inviting them to speak to the class about their jobs, which many agreed to. Friends of mine also came in to be interviewed.

Some of our guests included a woman carpenter who demonstrated her craft; a woman artist who brought in some of her work and showed slides while the class asked how she got her ideas; a father who invited the class to the computer terminal he ran at a large bank; and a mother who spoke about her work as an alcoholism counselor. The students approached the interview process seriously, and the visitors were impressed with the depth of their questions, including their questions about racist and sexist working conditions. Furthermore, many stereotypes were shattered as the children saw people of color and women in a variety of professions.

In designing and carrying out the interviews, students learned the value of firsthand sources and of oral history. They discovered that "politics" and "history" occur within their own homes and neighborhoods — some students found out that their parents had been involved in early union struggles; others found that several neighborhood small businesses were battling eviction by landlords attempting to get much higher rents. They also extended their interest in firsthand sources to topics that arose

later in the school year. (For instance, during the hostage crisis in Iran, the class interviewed an Iranian student in order to gain a more balanced perspective. This approach can become part of countless study topics.)

Shoebox Models Popular

For the final project in the curriculum, each child was asked to choose a particular job that interested them. They were then to interview at least two people who did that job and to create a shoebox model of the workplace for that job in order to get a hands-on sense of what that work environment was like. They were encouraged to visit that type of workplace and to draw the details of that setting. Those interested in extra credit were to find out the percentages of people of color and women in that occupation. As part of this assignment, each student was to come to class as a person of that profession, prepared to be interviewed by the class. I encouraged them to scan *Working* and *Saturday's Child* for inspiration before they began, and, as an additional challenge, I suggested they might want to choose a profession stereotypically assigned to the opposite sex. (Only one student—a boy who designed a beauty shop—was willing to rise to this challenge, however.)

The students tackled the shoebox assignment with enormous enthusiasm, and they loved using class time to work on their models. (This age group loves working independently on projects that involve working with their hands.) They had a month to complete the project, and time passed quickly. Their boxes included a chemist's lab, a veterinarian's office, a beauty parlor, a circus, a theater complete with audience and players and a writer's studio. Some students with lower reading and writing skills gained a great deal from this concrete experience, and this project motivated them to learn more about particular occupations than they had from the readings.

When the students interviewed each other about their future jobs, they were well prepared to discuss discrimination at their jobs. They also focused a great deal on their exhaustion and tendency to yell at their kids when they returned home at night. (Some children also spontaneously acted out meetings at parties and responding to one another's occupations with respect or derision depending on the status of that job, a scenario that had been described in one of the *Working* interviews.) Students gained an enor-

mous amount from one another's projects as well as their own.

Overall, the *Working People* curriculum succeeded in teaching a vast array of skills. Through the individual and class readings of the interviews, listening and reading comprehension were increased. As we explored the emotional and political implications of the interviews and comparative data about salaries, critical and inferential thinking were sharpened. (Math skills were also utilized in studying the salary graphs.)

A great deal of creative energy emerged from the creative writing and the drama improvisations. Students learned to listen to and critique each other's work. "A Dream Deferred" introduced many to quality poetry, and students learned about the value of metaphor and symbolism, which they began to use in their own work.

Finally, perhaps the most valuable effect of the curriculum was that the students began to feel less isolated as "children" and more empowered to explore, challenge and question the adult world. For pre-adolescents approaching the developmental task of rehearsing adulthood, it is crucial that the adult world be demystified, making it less intimidating and more accessible.

As children test their capacity to function independently in the "real world" and develop their own value systems, it is vital they have some grasp on what that world is about and how to ask the right kinds of questions. This curriculum offers questions and concerns that serve to prepare and sensitize students to the political and economic realities they will confront.

A final "reward" for doing this curriculum occurred when I took members of one class to a hardware store for chicken wire during a lunch hour. The owner was, I thought, quite rude, and we waited a long time for a few feet of wire. As we walked back to school, I commented on his grouchiness. One student quickly retorted, "It's a hard job!" Another said, "He's very busy! It's probably very aggravating when all those people come in to his store at lunch hour." Not only was I put in my place, but the comments also indicated that the learning had extended beyond the classroom. □

About the Author

LEONORE GORDON is presently a certified social worker/therapist in private practice and at a residential home for adolescent girls.



Working on shoebox models of workplaces proved to be a popular classroom activity.

Before teaching children about work, adults should examine their own attitudes; areas of concern are outlined and suggestions for approaching the subject with pre-schoolers are given

Teaching Pre-Schoolers About Work— A Complex Task

By Geraldine L. Wilson

Helping young children understand work is a complex task, complex because work has many facets and aspects. Here are some of the concepts and information that teachers should take into account when they are planning curriculum projects that teach children about the nature of work in our society.

- The history of work has been suppressed. For instance, the many kinds of work that women of all races have done in our society are only beginning to be recognized. Similarly, the kinds of work done by people of color have been largely ignored.

- The media emphasize the leisure of—and glamorize the work of—the rich in programs such as “Dallas” and “Falcon Crest.” The work of “ordinary” people is virtually ignored, thus obscuring important issues related to work that children should begin to be taught at an early age.

- Another phenomenon that obscures the nature of work is the fact that people tend to confuse the meanings of “jobs,” “work” and “careers” (a traditionally male-oriented word). For instance, a person who is not employed may still do work (for example, a mother who receives welfare works to take care of her home and children).

- The Protestant Work Ethic—with its highly stratified, classbound definitions of the kinds of work and workers that are acceptable as well as those that are to be looked down on—has shaped the attitudes and perceptions of many people in the United States. As a result of our belief in and our beliefs about the Protestant Work Ethic, we have internalized much misinformation about the nature of work in this society and the people who work. The Protestant Work Ethic continues to assume some of the

following things: that only Protestants (white ones, at that) did/do honorable work and that other cultural groups had to be/have to be socialized by WASPs in order to learn how to work and how to respect work (*i.e.*, without the Protestant Work Ethic, “those people” from cultures that do not value work would not work). The assumption that only white Protestants were/are work-oriented is a dangerous myth that continues to surface, even in purportedly respectable research, particularly about African Americans and Latinos.

- Staff in early childhood programs and parents must begin to examine what children are learning about who works in the society, about why some people don’t work or can’t find work and about who does work that is considered important. Before talking to children about work, reflective thought and discussion are necessary. (Staff development meetings about work should be carefully

The Multicultural Project for Communication and Education will publish *An Early Childhood Curriculum for Teaching about Work* by Jessie Wenning and Sheli Wortis. It is designed to help young children understand the many kinds of work they see performed by their parents, teachers, neighbors and other workers; the focus is on increasing children’s knowledge of—and respect for—work in the classroom, the home and the community.

Readers interested in obtaining a manuscript copy of this curriculum should send \$5 to the Multicultural Project for Communication and Education, 71 Cherry St., Cambridge, MA 02139.

planned.) Teachers, parents, curriculum developers and librarians must examine their own attitudes and prepare to give historically accurate answers to children. Only then can we plan experiences for children that will help them to unlearn the myths and negative attitudes that they have already learned by the age of four or five.

- Examinations about issues related to work are related to considerations of racism and sexism. Ideas people have about who best does certain kinds of work are, in fact, very often racist and sexist, with a negative cultural bias. (Examples: White workers building the railroad in the West refused to set dynamite, charging it was too dangerous for white men. Chinese workers did the work, and many were killed. Until fairly recently, Black women were not considered intelligent or attractive enough to do secretarial work; they are still excluded from most executive secretarial work.) Clearly, work and its related issues is multi-dimensional, multi-faceted, a fabric with many threads.

It is important for adults to begin to convey to children that (a) work is critical to one’s self-esteem; (b) people do many kinds of work—both paid and unpaid; (c) most people work; and (d) people work because they need to do it, because they love it or the work is necessary to their survival. Children also need to learn that work is usually of an interdependent nature, requiring the participation of other people and/or dependent on other people to be completed.

The idea that “work doesn’t work” without people is also important to convey to children. The increased use of machines and high technology inspires awe, but it can also encourage attitudes that devalue people’s work. Machines,

even computers (particularly computers), require the *thought* and *action* of people.

Children must be helped to understand that styles, modes and kinds of work vary and that each cultural group produces people who have a work-orientation. In most societies, men, women and even children—to a greater or lesser degree—work for significant periods of the day, the week or the year.

In addition, children must learn about

all of the cultural groups that have a work history in this country based on traditions of work in their cultural homeland. That work history includes men, women and children. It also includes what has traditionally been called hard labor, the production of inventions to make work easier, creative approaches to work and pride in the work accomplished. Providing films, pictures and discussion that illustrate the variety

of the historical and the contemporary work force is critical.

It is through work that most people realize themselves, express themselves, actualize themselves. Work is honorable; at least most work is—work that exploits or causes pain to other people is not. It is this rich tapestry of work that we want to begin to help children understand and respect. It is, ultimately, our goal to see to it that children understand and re-

WHAT IS

MAJOR CONCEPTS

Work is what people do when they are not playing.

Work is what mothers or fathers do when they clean house and take care of children.

Work is what mothers and fathers and other grown-ups do when they leave their homes to go somewhere else to work on a job in the morning, afternoon or evening.

Some jobs are outside (farmers, meter readers, construction workers); some jobs are indoors (secretaries, computer operators, disc jockeys); some are underground, under water, in the air.

People also do work when they are not at their jobs (they paint their houses or their apartments, put up shelves, take care of the garden).

Some work is dangerous, like washing windows on the outside of high buildings.

Some work makes you very tired, like bending over to pick string beans for a long time every day.

Some work gets you tired and dirty, like working in a coal mine or digging up the street.

Some people do not get dirty at the work they do (airplane pilots, teachers, ticket takers in movies, a salesperson in a record shop).

ACTIVITIES

Read and discuss books about work with the children (see p. 14). Also show films and teach songs about work.

Visit a variety of job sites, including indoor and outdoor workplaces.

Visit a variety of work sites where the work force is racially and/or culturally diverse. Make every effort to see that children visit workplaces where people of color are in supervisory positions and/or in positions of control.

Visit a variety of work sites where women—including women of color—fill a variety of jobs, including non-traditional ones.

Prepare brief experience stories about the trips, illustrating them with figures drawn by you and/or the children.

Provide an opportunity for block building and dramatic play after visits.

Make a picture chart of work that parents do for no money at home, in the community.

Make a picture display showing parents at their jobs. If you take the photos, bring small groups of children with you when photos are taken if possible.

In general picture displays on work, be sure to include pictures of workers who are Asians/Asian Americans, Africans/African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics; also include disabled people at work, older people at work and women of all races in non-traditional jobs.

Find proverbs about work to teach the children.

Teach the children the calls that produce vendors still use in some neighborhoods; take children to visit peddlers and vendors.

spect all people who do honorable work.

"The Curriculum Quadrant" is a way of organizing the information to be conveyed to children in the implementation of a curriculum project. These quadrants state in brief conceptual form the significant information about the subject area to be included; the information is presented in sequential form in a manner

that will be understandable to children. These quadrants are divided into four related areas: (1) major concepts to be conveyed to children; (2) activities that should be developed to illustrate the major concepts; (3) resources that can be used in creating activities that will bring to life the major concepts; and (4) behaviors to be emphasized in the activities.

Below and on the following pages are

two quadrants that can be used to introduce the subject of work to young children in pre-school to third grade. These quadrants can serve as models for the development of other curriculum projects in the area of work. □

About the Author

GERALDINE L. WILSON is an early childhood and a children's literature specialist, a management consultant and a poet/writer.

WORK?

RESOURCES

People in the community.

TABS (744 Carroll Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215), which has posters and other materials related to women in the workplace.

Local library for books, photographs, films, records, pictures, etc.

Film services.

Parents, friends.

Picture file in the early childhood program.

BEHAVIORS

Cooperative Work:

Structure class activities and projects so that children work cooperatively in small groups.

Teach some cooperative "work games."

Visit work sites and point out when people are working cooperatively on an aspect of the work.

Respect for All Types of Work and Workers:

Teach respect for so-called "laborers" and be sure that garbage/sanitation workers, plumbers, carpenters, etc., get as much emphasis as workers with more status.

Include artists, writers and musicians in discussions of workers.

Good Work Habits:

1. Encourage children to think through a job or task before beginning.

2. Encourage children to focus their attention on the task they are doing.

3. Assist children in completion of their tasks, work or play, encouraging them to follow through on their activities.

A skillful teacher will provide these opportunities even as she/he considers developmental pace and the mode of play, which is the work of children.

MAJOR CONCEPTS

When people go to a job, they work; they get money in return for the work they do.

People use the money they get for working to buy food, pay rent for where they live, for clothes and other needs.

When people cannot get a job so they can work to make money to pay for what they need, they worry or get upset.

People who don't make enough money at their jobs also get angry and upset.

Some people make lots and lots of money for their work; others, who work just as hard, make very little.

Some people work hard and get lots of money; some of these people are famous (musicians, artists, movie stars, athletes).

Some people have jobs that pay them a lot of money, even though they don't work hard.

Many people do hard, dirty and/or dangerous work for people who do not pay them enough money. The workers do the work because it's the only work they can get.

Some people sell things in their homes/houses/apartments to make money.

Some people work for themselves (dressmakers, mechanics, designers) and earn their own money.

Some people have small stores or shops (a barber shop, a fruit and vegetable store); they pay themselves for the work they do and they pay the few people who work for them.

Many people (ministers, factory workers, teachers, small store owners, mail persons) make enough money to pay for food, clothing and a place to live with not much money left over.

Parents and family members who take care of children, do housework and cook, do not get paid as if they were on a job. They do the work because it is important, needs to be done and they agreed to do it.

There is a spirit, a feeling inside many people that makes them want to work hard at something, even if they do not make money. Some people like the work they do even if they do not get enough money.

People sometimes work for no money because they want to help other people. They might help sick people in a hospital, inmates in a prison, visitors to a museum, children and teachers in a school.

People often do very important work without earning very much (artists, jazz musicians, day-care and Head Start staff, coal miners).

All people should be paid enough to be able to buy what they need.

ACTIVITIES

Visit outstanding people in the community, people who work in block groups, small businesses in the neighborhood. Orient children before going. Prepare children to ask a few questions of people who work; teach them how to ask the kinds of questions that will provide them with information. They should look to see what kind of work people do. Is it hard? Does it take one or two people?

Set up a "store" in the dramatic play corner. Include one "product," rotating new "products" into the store after a week or so.

Provide small totes and attache cases with items children can "sell" during activity period; provide "play" money.

Discuss the classroom tasks children are assigned. Describe the tasks as work that the children do in order to do their share of work in the classroom.

Discuss the work that the teaching staff and other staff members do. (The classroom and center as places where people do work is a concept that can be developed for children.)

MONEY

RESOURCES

Props from different work places (fruits and vegetables; soap boxes; cosmetic containers; cans that are opened and empty and have smooth edges; boxes; cloth; electrical parts, tools).

People that will talk to children in an interesting fashion about their work.

Pictures of people who work for no money (but may not need jobs), pictures of people who don't get paid well for the work they do, pictures of parents at work.

BEHAVIORS

Earning Money for Work:

Let children make cookies in class and sell them in the community to earn money. Fill a glass bottle with the money from the sales. When the money has "grown" to a sufficient amount, let children buy a book or poster for the classroom.

Completing Projects:

Set up creative art projects, construction projects at the wood table, small and large building projects. Encourage children to start and complete projects they are interested in. Encourage them to work through problems. (Successful businesspeople and competent craftspeople and workers often have particular characteristics: ability to plan, attention to detail, and ability to focus attention and sustain it, especially while working on details. They are able to follow-through and complete tasks. Children need practice in these tasks appropriate to their age/interest/developmental level.

Learning Respect for Unpaid Workers and Poorly Paid Workers:

Visit the workers in the community who work for little or no money. Describe their work as important. (What do children of four and five understand about "not enough" money? We need to know.)

Learning to Appreciate Work of Artists and Musicians:

Ask artists or musicians to visit the class. Ask them to talk about how they work and where they work. Ask them to show children how they work.

Tile layers, stone masons, cabinetmakers (fine carpenters), contractors, plumbers, electricians, etc. can be invited to the classroom to talk about their work and show their tools. They can be asked to join the children for lunch. The children can make cookies to present as gifts for the workers.

A bulletin board showing big pictures of tools and skilled laborers can be prepared.

Children can sing work songs (see Folkways Catalog for suggestions).

Books are a good way to introduce the topic of work to pre-schoolers; some titles are recommended

Books to Teach about Work

By Geraldine L. Wilson

Airport by Byron Barton. Crowell, 1982, 32 pages, \$10.53.

A clearly — almost whimsically — illustrated, engagingly colorful book that shows the variety of work people do at airports. The workforce depicted is not numerically representative of racial groups in this country, but a significant number of Black people working at a variety of jobs, even piloting a plane, are shown.

The Brown Spices ABC Coloring Book written and illustrated by Annie and Julee. Brown Spices Publishing (P.O. Box 29397, Washington, DC 20017-0397), 1984, unpagged, \$1.75 plus \$1 p/h.

Each page of this delightful ABC book depicts and discusses a type of work, with many examples unique to and/or particularly valued in the African, Caribbean and/or African American communities. Both women and men are shown in a variety of jobs. Work and its relationship to positive family and community functioning is conveyed quite strongly.

Department Store, Fire! Fire! and New Road! written and illustrated by Gail Gibbons. *Department Store*: Harper & Row, 1984, 32 pages, \$9.89; *Fire!*: Harper & Row, 1984, 40 pages, \$9.89; *New Road!*: Harper & Row, 1983, 32 pages, \$9.89.

Tiny intricate drawings and bright colors distinguish Gibbons' illustrations. She presents "the whole picture" of a workplace as well as detailed up-close views of the various kinds of work done in that setting. Black people inhabit Gibbons' world in comparatively significant numbers, and women are shown in a variety of "male" jobs.

Don't You Remember? by Lucille Clifton, illustrated by Evalene Ness. Dutton, 1973, 32 pages, \$8.50.

Tate's daddy has a job at a plant where he works on a big machine; her mom works at a factory where people make cookies and cakes. One of Tate's older

brothers is not in school this year; the work he does for the family consists of taking care of Tate. The book makes the adults' work a reality for children.

Moja Means One: Swahili Counting Book by Muriel Feelings, illustrated by Tom Feelings. Dial, 1976, 32 pages, \$3.95 (paper).

Authentic detailed illustrations show people at work in East Africa — men working the land, women selling things in the market place (market women in West Africa have a lot of economic and political power). The book can be used to teach children about some of the work that is highly valued in Africa.

My Mommy Makes Money by Joyce Slayton Mitchell, illustrated by True Kelley. Little, Brown, 1984, 30 pages, \$9.95.

Except for the unfortunate title, this small book is well done, with humorous, detailed illustrations. The mothers are shown in a range of interesting jobs — wallpaper hanger, photo-journalist, house builder, architect, restaurant owner, etc. Men are shown taking care of babies, and one appears to be helpless in the midst of a plumbing emergency. The people are a range of various cultural and racial groups. The details of work come alive.

My Special Best Words by John Steptoe. Viking, 1974, unpagged, o.p.

Javaka and Bweela's daddy is a single parent. The book's imaginative text makes it clear that a major part of what Daddy does is take care of Javaka and Bweela. The book is one of the best "inside" looks at how young African American children learn to take care of children younger than themselves — a family work expectation.

My Street's a Morning Cool Street by Ianthe Thomas, illustrated by Emily A. McCully. Harper & Row, 1976, o.p.

Children can identify all the jobs that people are doing in a book that depicts a neighborhood just starting its workday

early one morning. A good book to help children look at the variety of work that is done in one's neighborhood.

Saturday Night Is Papa Night by Ruth A. Sonneborn. Viking, 1970, o.p.

A controversial book. The Latino family is not identified, which gives the book a "one-Latino-is-all-Latinos" quality. It is, however, one of the few books that (a) is respectful of large families and (b) treats the subject of a father who works away from home for a whole week. The book can help adults talk with children about the kinds of jobs that keep adults away from home for extended periods. In addition, children can imagine tasks/chores/work at home that children can do during an adult's absence.

Stevie by John Steptoe. Harper & Row, 1969, \$10.89.

Who are the people who take care of young children when their parents work and there is no day-care center? How do parents choose a family to take care of their child while they work? This book can be used to help children understand the preparations that parents must make before going to work.

Willie Blows a Mean Horn by Ianthe Thomas. Harper & Row, 1981, 24 pages, \$7.95.

Willie's daddy plays jazz — African American music — in a night club. The storyline is about what happens when Willie visits him at work. The concepts that music requires work, that practice on an instrument is work and that performance is work are very nicely conveyed. Parallels about the role and function of practice and getting skillful in one's work can be drawn.

NOTE: Although several of the books listed are out of print, these titles can often be found in libraries.

About the Author

GERALDINE L. WILSON is an early childhood and a children's literature specialist, a management consultant and a poet/writer.

For Sale: Stereotyped Images

A major exhibit of stereotypic and caricatured images of Black people was held last summer at The Muse, a well-known community museum in Brooklyn. On exhibit were posters, postcards, ceramic figures, food product boxes, dolls and other items. Collectors have begun to track down watermelon-toting adults, "pickaninnies" on cotton bales and other derogatory images produced in this country from about 1870 to 1940. Already costly, such items are getting more and more expensive.

We've had reports from across the country that there is a resurgence of ma-

terials with the same derogatory themes found in these "collectables." Clearly we are seeing a repeat of the earlier major assault on the physical and cultural attributes of African Americans. It is no coincidence that this is happening now, in this era of growing conservatism. (Asian Americans and African Americans report an increase in the number of attacks against them by whites; Jews report the increased appearance of swastikas and other anti-Semitic graffiti on their places of worship, as well as vandalism against their cultural centers; and last year saw the publication of sev-

eral blatantly racist and culturally disrespectful children's books.) Certainly, the disturbing events that occur in such an unhealthy atmosphere should be a signal to concerned individuals and groups.

Stereotypes and caricatures on such items as greeting cards, buttons and posters are showing up in trendy boutiques; note the greeting cards shown on this page. Have you seen similar items in your city? Elsewhere? Please let us know. And if you come across such items, you may want to discuss them with the store owner or write to the producers of the items.—G.L.W. □



Exploring Sexual Orientation

By Patricia Barthalow Koch

Purpose:

When sexual orientations are considered, homosexuality is often the only one examined. Such scrutiny tends to reinforce the idea that being gay or lesbian is "abnormal" or "strange" while heterosexuality is simply taken for granted as "the way to be." The following teaching aid is recommended in order to foster increased learning and understanding about sexual orientation in general.

By first having students examine heterosexuality, the following concepts can be explored.

1. Little is known about the cause(s) or development of any sexual orientation.
2. Stereotyping or labeling is unfair and harmful.
3. There are many more dimensions to a person than his/her sexual orientation.
4. People are people; our similarities are greater than our differences.
5. All people have feelings.

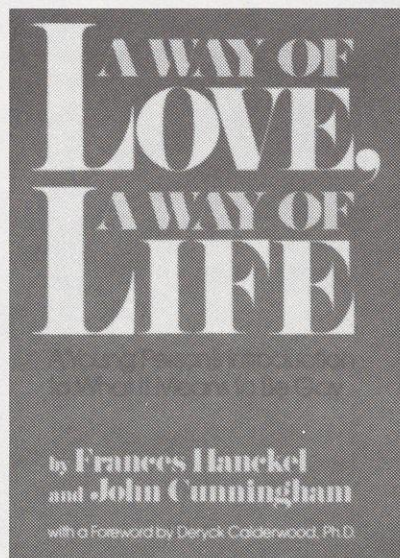
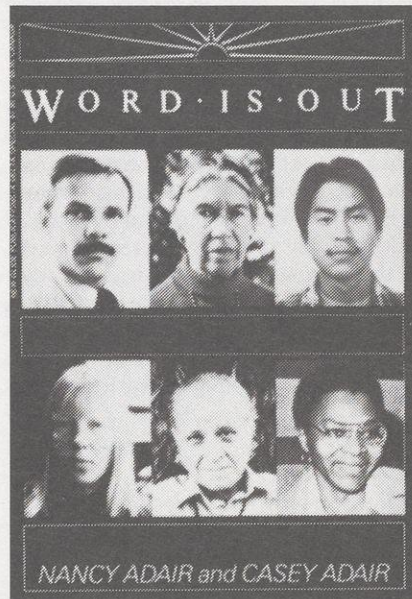
Audience: High School/College/Adult

Procedure:

The list of questions on the following page should be handed out to every individual. The exercise is most effective if students are given time to think about the questions and process their thoughts and feelings. Therefore, giving these questions in the form of a written assignment to be discussed later in a small and/or large group format is a most beneficial learning experience.*

Goals:

- To gain more information about sexual orientation, while recognizing there is lack of knowledge in this area.
- To uncover misconceptions and stereotypes about sexual orientations.
- To explore one's own feelings, beliefs



Two books on gay/lesbian themes that can be used by high school students: Word Is Out (Dell, 1978) and A Way of Love, A Way of Life (Lothrop, 1979).

and values about sexual orientations.

- To be exposed to other people's points of view, attitudes and values.
- To develop an ability to empathize with others.

***Note:** Because of the sensitive nature of the questions used in this activity, some (or all) of them may not be appropriate for use in the public high school. Check with your administrative and/or family life education advisory committee on guidelines about discussion of controversial issues.

Check the laws in your state pertaining to the teaching of family life and sex education in the public schools. It is always good practice to inform parents in a general permission letter describing the class that their students will be participating in activities or discussions in which they will be considering opinions and beliefs about sexual orientations. □

About the Author

PATRICIA BARTHALOW KOCH is Assistant Professor, Department of Nursing, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa. Dr. Koch developed the preceding activity for a course on Sexual Health Promotion.

"Exploring Sexual Orientation" is reprinted with permission from *Family Life Educator* 3:3 (Spring 1985) published by The National Family Life Education Network, Santa Cruz, Ca.

For more information on this topic, see a special double issue of the *Bulletin* on "Homophobia and Education" (Vol. 14, Nos. 3 & 4), which contains an article entitled "'Friendly Fire': Homophobia in Sex Education Literature." Copies are available for \$3.95 plus \$1 postage and handling.

Questions for Exploring Sexual Orientation

1. Define heterosexuality.
2. How can you tell if someone is heterosexual (straight)?
3. What causes heterosexuality?
4. Is it possible that heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of others of the same sex?
5. The media seems to portray straights as preoccupied with (genital) sex. Do you think this is so?
6. Do you think straights flaunt their sexuality? If so, why?
7. In a straight couple, who takes the dominant role and who takes the passive role?
8. 40 per cent of married couples get divorced. Why is it so difficult for straights to stay in long-term relationships?
9. Considering the consequences of overpopulation, could the human race survive if everyone were heterosexual?
10. 99 per cent of reported rapists are heterosexual. Why are straights so sexually aggressive?
11. The majority of child molesters are heterosexuals. Do you consider it safe to expose children to heterosexual teachers, scout leaders, coaches, etc.?
12. Are you offended when a straight person of the other sex "comes on" to you?
13. When did you choose your sexual orientation?
14. How easy would it be for you if you wanted to change your sexual orientation starting right now?
15. What have been your reactions to answering these questions? What feelings have you experienced? Why?

In the BOOKSHELF, a regular *Bulletin* department, all books that relate to minority themes are evaluated by members of the minority group depicted.—Editors.

Night Markets: Bringing Food to the City

by Joshua Horwitz,
with photos by the author.
Harper & Row, 1984,
\$11.95, 96 pages, grades 3-7

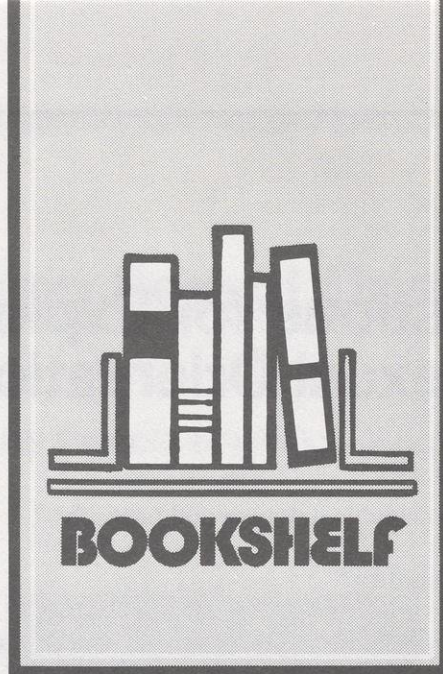
Children today, particularly those living in large cities, have little idea of where the food they eat comes from or how it gets to them. *Night Markets* reveals this hidden world of work in a series of wonderful black-and-white photographs. We see food arriving by plane, boat, train and truck to the central food markets of New York. We then stop at each market in turn to learn what's involved in preparing meat, fish, produce and even flowers for sale the next day.

The photographs make this a lively and fascinating book. They convey a real feeling of the hubbub of the markets, the seriousness of the work, and the personalities of the markets' workers. We see workers from many racial backgrounds; however, those prominent are frequently white and only one picture of a woman (who seems to be a buyer for a restaurant) is shown.

Unfortunately, though the text is generally very interesting and well written, it too is seriously marred. The author begins by telling us how the people of the city will wake up:

... hungry for their breakfast of bacon and eggs or bagels and lox. Later on they'll lunch on green salad with fresh fruit for dessert. And at dinner they'll want a thick steak, or perhaps some fresh fish. ... After all, they've had a hard day; they deserve it.

Is this the author's idea of how the seven million inhabitants of New York eat every day? This statement is culturally biased since it ignores the city's enormous variety of cultural and national cookery; it is also exceedingly elitist. Should children reading this book conclude that if their families cannot afford steak they don't deserve it? And at the book's end, who do we find at breakfast? First the commuters returning to the city, then a white family eating at an exclusive restaurant, then a young



couple lingering over coffee on their townhouse terrace!

How much better this book would be if the author had chosen instead to show us a few families shopping in some of the city's different neighborhoods, followed by pictures showing how foods are prepared by people of various cultures. The bulk of this book is an excellent resource for helping children learn about a work process very central to their lives, but I would suggest that adults critique and discuss these passages with children. [Jessie Wenning]

In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson

by Bette Bao Lord.
Harper & Row, 1984,
\$9.95, 169 pages, grades 4-7

At first glance this appears to be a perceptive and warm novel about a young Chinese American immigrant in the late 1940s. The novel is highly entertaining and well written, but its humor may mask some of the story's inherent shortcomings. The book's gravest flaw is that the young girl, originally known as Sixth Cousin, is unable to view her dual Chinese American identity in a positive perspective. Even the English name that she chooses to call herself—Shirley Temple—indicates the assimilationist thread found all through the novel.

In the beginning, Sixth Cousin copes

with the typical desires and fears of an eight-year-old living in China during the forties. As the story progresses, "Shirley" and her mother go to Brooklyn, where they join Shirley's father, who is already living there. Chinese American values—the importance of excellence in school, respect for authority, and modesty about one's achievement—are effectively presented. However, as Shirley adjusts to life in the U.S., fewer Chinese cultural values are mentioned.

Shirley is a spunky and very likeable character. Her first days at school are lonely ones as she is the only Chinese-speaking student. Because Shirley does not understand much English, her teacher does not ask her to memorize and recite various poems as her classmates are doing. But Shirley, determined to prove herself, practices a passage from a record her father had bought. One day, summoning all her courage, Shirley begins her recitation. The class laughs and laughs and even the teacher can't stop laughing. Shirley is embarrassed and hurt, not realizing that she had presented a most accurate imitation of Donald Duck, Chip and Dale, and Mickey Mouse. This is one of the most delightful segments in the novel.

Eventually Shirley becomes friends with a classmate named Mabel. Unfortunately Mabel, a Black student, is initially introduced as a big bully (she gives Shirley two black eyes). Though the girls later become great friends, our initial impression of Mabel reinforces old stereotypes.

During the last portion of the novel, Shirley's strong desire to become an "American" dominates the plot. Even the famous baseball player, Jackie Robinson, is used to reinforce the assimilationist thread. He serves as an example of a person who has been able to excel in this country despite enormous obstacles. (Institutional racism is never discussed.)

There are many funny selections in the story, but young readers may not understand the crucial identity crisis Shirley is trying to deal with. The book should therefore be used with caution. It may be helpful in conveying the insecurities of new immigrant children, but it must be introduced as historical fiction and accompanied by discussions of generational differences, stereotypes and racial self-concept. [Valerie Ooka Pang]

Ain't Gonna Study War No More

by Milton Meltzer.
Harper & Row, 1985,
\$12.50, 282 pages, grades 8-adult

An extraordinary and important service to the cause of peace has been made by Milton Meltzer in presenting the history of civil disobedience. His account is illuminating, exciting and inspiring. It illuminates the theories, thoughts and deeds of generations of heroes who bravely rejected all violence or who rejected participation in particular wars they considered unjust. It excites readers by recounting how many young people suffered and sacrificed on behalf of peace principles. It inspires youth (and old folks like me) to take action against the death dealers of today.

Meltzer tells of opposition to war during ancient times by adherents of various religions. He recounts little known examples of individual or mass opposition to all U.S. wars (up to the present U.S. involvement in Latin America) and the nuclear arms race.

But the book's usefulness goes beyond its being a superb resource for American History or Peace courses. It is uniquely valuable for thinking people of *all ages* who must come to terms with their own responsibilities and actions when faced by governmental power they deem mad, evil or irresponsible. I urge you to buy copies for your local library, local school — and local or long-distance young friends. I also urge you to write the publisher, pressing for a less expensive paperback edition. [Lyla Hoffman]

A Little Love

by Virginia Hamilton.
Philomel Books, 1984,
\$10.95, 207 pages, grades 7-up

Virginia Hamilton always creates memorable characters in her well-told stories. In *A Little Love*, she once again writes of a solitary female teenager who "comes of age" through struggle in order to face some painful realities in her life.

Sheema Hadley is a dark African American who is very heavy and not smart-in-books. Insightful, reflective and, in the end, determined, Sheema

makes progressively mature decisions — not without depression and anxiety — in preparation for her adult life which will come quickly.

As in some of Hamilton's previous books, the solitary young woman is cast opposite a strong, engaging male. This time, it's no ghost or cultural archetype. Forrest is a friendly, caring person, a fellow student who cares about Sheema and assists her in the process of learning to value herself and become self-confident. A mature young man with plans for the future and a genuine, non-exploitative relationship with Sheema, Forrest is her port in the storm. And Sheema is for him, too.

Sheema's mother died when she was young and her father is unknown to her, although he regularly sends money for her care. The money comes to Granmom and Granpop Jackson, Sheema's mother's parents, who are raising her with love and concern. Sheema's quest to find her father, the shocking recognition that her grandparents are aging and her struggles to control her appetite and depression are well-done, often moving. Such struggles should be an inspiration to teenagers.

A few worries. Sheema is a "sexually active teen-ager," and Forrest is responsible for helping her face and curb her casual sexual encounters with a number of boys. (Whenever Forrest and Sheema "make love," Hamilton writes the phrase "a little love.") Given that simply *everybody* knows that teenagers are sexually active, does one simply write about all that exists or does one pose some challenging, creative alternatives to what many consider questionable behavior for youngsters? Forrest and Sheema's sexual activity is romantic, often clearly the refuge that both teenagers feel they need emotionally. As such it almost seems appropriate, but do we really approve of sexual behavior at a young age? (Moreover, the teenagers have almost no discussion about birth control.)

The cover by the Dillons is done in their unusual stylish, stylized fashion. Sheema and Forrest occupy the front cover, with her grandparents on the back cover. Even though the text refers to Sheema on several occasions as dark, she is depicted as light. It hardly seems fair that girls/women who are dark are rarely shown as the objects of romantic affection. And, the persistent portraits of



dark men and light women have had, and continue to have, serious consequences for the self-esteem of African American youngsters: both males and females come to feel light women are more attractive. The illustration — in contradiction to the text — panders to what is tantamount to a racist societal/media rule that the man must (or ought to be) darker than the woman.

Another problem. The text, with no countering statement, notes that Sheema didn't "like blowing out her hair, although it always made it look so much better." How can Black women with tightly curled, naturally springy hair counter such assaults? Such topics would make a great story. Meantime, read *A Little Love*. [Geraldine L. Wilson]

I'm Not Your Other Half

by Caroline B. Cooney.
Pacer Books (Putnam), 1984,
\$10.95, 157 pages, grades 7-up

For a change, someone has written a book about teenage romance in which the girl is *not* satisfied when she "gets her man." Fraser, the female protagonist of this book, realizes halfway into this story that she cannot breathe when she patterns herself after the romantic

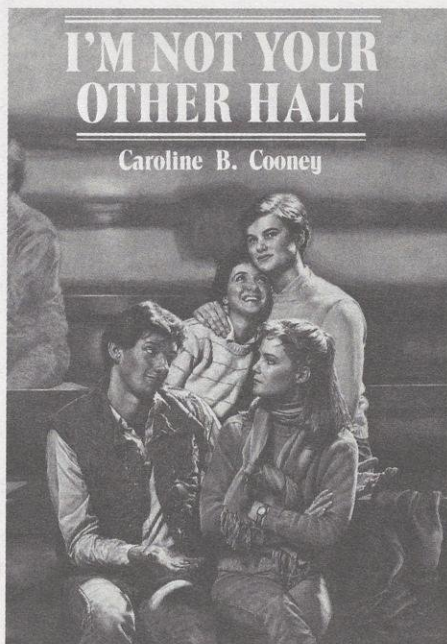
"ideal" that includes sacrificing female friendships and individual interests in order to accommodate to her boyfriend's needs.

Fraser is an appealing protagonist. Exceptionally bright and resourceful, she is a wonderful role model, crossing traditional sex-role barriers in a variety of ways. She is skilled at the sciences at school, but also values such areas as music and women's history. In addition, she and a friend have created a successful "toybrary," a lending library for toys; Fraser also organizes a fund-raising drive for a family whose little girl is in a coma.

The book shows the development of two parallel relationships—that of Fraser and her boyfriend Michael and that of Fraser's closest friend, Annie, and her boyfriend. Fraser's friendship with Annie had been a close and deep one, but as often happens in "real life," once they begin dating, their friendship suffers. And when they double date, the girls' interests are often sacrificed for the boys'. Academic interests are also undermined. While Annie seems unperturbed by this turn of events (to Fraser's chagrin), Fraser herself begins to feel "suffocated."

Fraser's struggle to resolve the conflict inherent in loving someone without becoming submerged in that person's life is a poignant one and relevant to both teenagers and adults. She is surrounded by women and girls who put men's lives before their own. One woman teacher does chastise her for trying "to suit the whims of some boy," and although Fraser is not ready to follow the teacher's advice, she is later able to hear the wisdom of a female classmate, Smedes, who has managed to successfully negotiate a relationship with a boy where self-sacrifice is not necessary for either partner.

It is unfortunate that no attention is placed at the story's end on a developing friendship between Fraser and Smedes. Somehow, the theme of female friendship loses its urgency and the issue becomes the re-establishment of a healthier relationship between Fraser and Michael. The implication is that attending to one's relationship with the opposite sex evolves into the major priority as one moves through adolescence. While this is most certainly untrue for lesbian teenagers, it is also rarely true for heterosexual girls, whose friendships often far outlast high school romances.



The story takes place in what seems to be an upper middle-class suburban white neighborhood. While a more culturally and economically diverse setting would have been preferable, the book undoubtedly will prove accessible to all youngsters struggling with relationships and sex-role expectations.

In spite of some problems, *I'm Not Your Other Half* does show that romance and the satisfaction of one's individual needs do not necessarily have to be mutually exclusive. The message is a good one. [Leonore Gordon]

Callie's Way

by Ruth Wallace-Brodeur.
Atheneum, 1984,
\$10.95, 119 pages, grades 5-7

Callie has a lot to think about. It's her first year in junior high—that traumatic leap out of childhood. At school, she is confronted with a brutal, rude, sadistic teacher. At home, she is the minister's daughter; it is assumed that she will now join the church, but how does she *really* feel? Moreover, she is the unmusical one (or so she believes), while her mother and sister are brilliant professionals.

Callie's route to school passes a nursing home, and one day she sees the word "hello" written crookedly in the dust on a

window. She investigates, and so begins her rich friendship with Megal. Megal (very old Miss Reid) sits silent and immobilized in her wheelchair. But she is wise and ingenious, and she and Callie find ways to communicate. Callie confides her doubts and triumphs; Megal basks in love and friendship. One day Callie and a friend wheel Megal out into the new-fallen snow. The next day Megal dies. And Callie begins to come to terms with her own life.

Basically, this is the same plot as *Nobody's Baby Now* by Carol Lee Benjamin and *Grace* by Liesel Moak Skorpen (see Vol. 16, No. 1). A friendless old woman is befriended by a teenage girl. Relationship enriches both of them. Old woman dies (or, in *Nobody's Baby Now*, leaves for nursing home). Girl accepts the inevitable and realizes that her life has been greatly enriched.

Moreover, say these books, it is the destiny of old women to die *alone*. The solitary fate of the old in our culture is sad, but there is nothing we can do about it. Will no one get angry? While all three books preach individual compassion and express the idea that the very old do have something to give to the young, they leave the reader drowned in pathos and unprepared to seek any kind of constructive change. [Betty Bacon]

The Handy Girls Can Fix It!

by Peggy Kahn,
illustrated by Enola Johnson.
Random House, 1984,
\$1.95, unpagged, grades p.s.-2

The Handy Girls . . . is an enjoyable non-sexist, non-racist children's book. While its agenda—to teach the inherent flexibility of sex roles—will appear somewhat obvious to adults, it can undoubtedly be enjoyed by the young readers for whom it was intended.

The Handy Girls (four white and one Black) are skilled in gardening, carpentry, sewing, painting and general repair work. They have set up a busy fix-it shop. Two little boys, impressed and intrigued by the "Handy Girls," find more and more excuses to join them in their shop; they even break toys as a pretext to visit. The girls finally recognize the boys' own

need and, to the boys' great delight, make them a clubhouse from a cardboard box. There is a feeling of warmth and friendship between the two age groups, with a realistic touch of irritability in the girls' ranks when the boys become too intrusive.

The ironic, humorous twist to the story (for adults) is the concept of boys using girls as role models (one boy even wishes he could be a girl so he could grow up to become a "handy girl" himself). This seems a little heavyhanded, but may, in fact, serve to offer young readers the notion that girls, as well as boys, can be looked up to and admired for their skills. [Leonore Gordon]

Downwind

by Louise Moeri.
Dutton, 1984,
\$10.95, 121 pages, grades 5-8

At the time of the Three-Mile Island accident, residents of California's Central Valley felt the hot breath of imminent disaster, for they lived near Rancho Seco, a twin of the Three-Mile Island nuclear power plant. Author Moeri lives in the Central Valley and she has been thinking about how it would be if Rancho Seco... Here, in the person of young Ephraim Dearborn and his parents and the so-called Isla Conejo nuclear plant, she tells of what might happen.

First there is a TV news account of the accident. But there's no meltdown—yet. There's no plan for evacuation either. What to do? Ephraim's mother is terrified, so he takes the lead in getting the family ready to get to the safety of the hills. At last his father comes home, and they start off into a nightmare of disorganized traffic. Ephraim has to look after his younger brother Bones, his sister Jocelyn, and Caleb the baby. As the truck lurches into the traffic, Jocelyn is seriously hurt.

The nightmare goes on and on. The family tries to stop at a small town in the mountains, but a posse of armed men drives them off. At last they reach a mountain resort where the owner and the arriving families organize themselves into a viable group. But by now Jocelyn is very sick indeed—perhaps dying. In the end, all turns out as well as

could be expected—the family survives, and the meltdown doesn't happen. Yet, as Ephraim says to Dad, "The world is still here—but none of us will ever be the same."

The narrative moves swiftly with almost unbearable tension, and the details of the flight are given with horrendous authenticity. The reader never has a moment to rest, as the family must deal constantly with one emergency after another. It is not a book to be put down.

But why, oh why, is the mother the only weak person in the family? Granted that she understands the danger better than the others, granted that she *somehow* manages—but she complains, cries, screams, trembles and panics. And why is it Jocelyn, the daughter, who is hurt? This simply adds to the picture of fragile females. In contrast, Ephraim and his father are two competent males who do not fuss. Even young Bones shows ingenuity and competence.

In the end, Ephraim and his father resolve that fundamental social change is required to deal with the problem of nuclear power plants, and the father admits that the frightened mother had been trying to get him to see this all along. This nearly makes everything right—but not quite.

Despite its faults, this is a strong book. Moeri writes forcefully and honestly about difficult subjects. She says, "I consider this to be a frightening book about a frightening fact of life. I also consider it essential to face frightening facts. If you don't, they'll bury you." Like its author, the book points the way to new struggles on a political level. [Betty Bacon]

The Promise of Moonstone

by Pat Engebrecht.
Beaufort Books, 1983,
\$12.95, 206 pages, grades 6-up

Sixteen-year-old Kristina and her mother, Anna, are closer than most mothers and daughters. They are particularly in tune when practicing ballet together. When Anna becomes paralyzed after a swimming accident, Kristina refuses to believe that Anna will never walk—much less, dance—again. At school, Kristina is a loner until she

meets Jill Hangtree, a "new girl" of Native American heritage. As their friendship deepens, Kristina learns to see beyond the superficial. Her growth, however, remains limited by her unrealistic attitudes to her mother's disability and her pity for her mother's "lifeless flesh." In an attempt to break this barrier, Kristina volunteers to work in a pediatric orthopedic hospital ward. There she meets a young intern whom she recruits to help Anna walk.

Kristina comes from a pampered home, a home designed by her architect father who for many years has kept his wife and daughter at a physical and emotional distance. When Anna becomes paralyzed, he builds Anna a separate room (rather than modify the kitchen) and hires a housekeeper "to take care of Anna." Ultimately, he does accept Anna and grows closer to his wife and daughter but not until the stereotype of disabled people as burdens has been exploited. (Anna has become a lackluster, unidimensional, dependent person—even to the point of attempting suicide so she will no longer be the burden she perceives herself to have become.)

Eventually, mother and daughter express their anger over the treatment each has subjected the other to, but not before readers are left with some solid handicapist stereotypes.

In addition, there are also very serious problems with the book's portrayal of the Native American Jill and her grandfather, who is brought in as a medicine man to cure Kristina's mother. There is everything from a description of Jill as having "a strangeness about her" to some stereotypical "Indian talk." And the grandfather fits right into the tradition of the all-wise, all-seeing, noble savage Shaman-guru. Cultural inaccuracies abound—from a description of Jill sitting cross-legged "Indian style" (Native women did not sit with crossed legs; it would have been thought indecent) to a scene where Jill shows Kristina the contents of her grandfather's medicine bag (one does not show one's medicine bag to another person, nor is it likely that the grandfather would have given his medicine bag to his granddaughter, though he might have made her one of her own).

All in all, not a book to be recommended. [Emily Strauss Watson and Doris Seale]

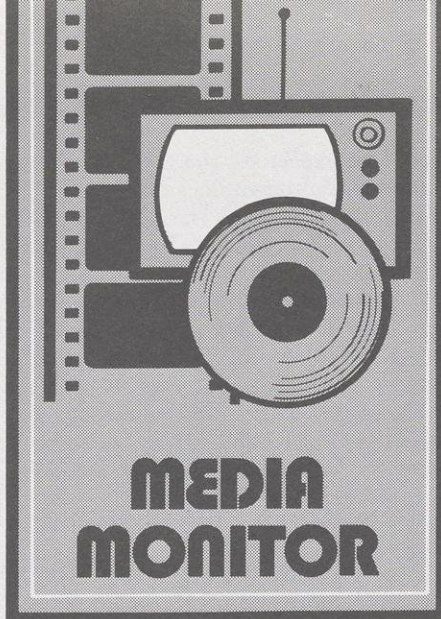
"Mask" Presents Mixed Messages

"Mask," a currently popular film with excellent performances by Cher, Eric Stoltz and Sam Elliot, is a Hollywoodized version of the true story of Rocky Dennis, an adolescent with craniodiaphyseal dysplasia, which results in a severe facial disfigurement. While parts of "Mask" made this reviewer want to stand up and cheer, others left a decidedly bitter aftertaste.

The audience meets Rocky as he is getting ready to enroll in a new junior high; the introduction is commendably straight-forward. And when Rocky and his mother Rusty are escorted to the new junior high school by an assembly of bikers, we quickly realize that Rocky hasn't exactly been raised in a typical middle-class, white-picket-fence environment. Indeed, it is the bikers' acceptance of Rocky and Rusty that brand them as outsiders, although at the same time it is the bikers who provide Rocky with support. Rusty is a strong-willed independent woman who has given Rocky the best gift of all—a positive self-image. However, her strength is mitigated by her dependency on drugs. (There are overtones of the super-crip myth when Rocky's strength and determination are the factors that enable Rusty to kick the drug habit.)

As "Mask" continues, the viewer is presented with "double messages" regarding people with disabilities. In a situation which could have been handled quite positively, the script succumbs to trite cliché when, at Rocky's graduation, a previously non-verbal biker reveals himself as a severe stutterer when he tells Rocky how proud he is of him. Another convenient cliché occurs when Rocky conveniently falls in love with a young woman who is blind. The implication: only someone who is blind, only someone with a visual impairment, could love Rocky. Rocky takes it upon himself to teach Diana about colors through temperature and texture, but a question remains—while it may be important for a person who is blind to be aware of colors, can anyone who has never seen color understand it through temperature or texture?

It is, however, the end of the movie that conveys the most serious handicapped stereotypes. Although the groundwork for Rocky's death is laid very early in the movie, when he dies it is unclear if it is by natural causes or suicide. Whatever the viewer chooses to



believe, it is clear that Hollywood has chosen to "kill off" the person with a disability.

While "Mask" does have some outstanding moments, it remains a flawed product which the viewer should approach with care. [Emily Strauss Watson and Kipp Watson]

Correction Note

We goofed. In the last issue of the *Bulletin*, a chart on page 13 showing weekly salaries for various jobs by gender contained an incorrect explanation of the symbols used. A line at the top of the chart noted that ♀ = male, ♂ = female. The opposite is, of course, correct. We hope that readers were not confused by the inaccurate "key" and went directly to the chart itself, which used the traditional symbols correctly.

And one more confusion: In noting the effect of race and gender on earnings, the box on page 9 stated that "Of the people earning \$25,000 or more, white males represent 25.2 per cent of this group; Black males, 10.8 per cent, white females, 4.1 per cent and Black females, 2.5 per cent." The sentence was incorrectly formulated. It should have read: "The percentage of persons fourteen years or older earning \$25,000 or more is: white males, 25.2 percent; Black males, 10.8 per cent; white females, 4.1 per cent; and Black females, 2.5 per cent."

Protection or Equality: Women's Rights in the U.S. Labor Force; color and black and white; 35 minutes; 1/2" or 3/4" videotape; \$265 purchase, \$35 rental; The Center for Women's Studies, University of Cincinnati, ML 164, Cincinnati, OH 45221.

This videotape is useful as an introduction to women's labor history; it successfully utilizes old drawings and photographs plus songs and a "live" narrator. It is recommended for the timeless inspiration of its brave working women, despite the reservations and criticism which follow.

First, the question of protection or equality poses a false choice. *Both* have always been important and necessary. While the presenters acknowledge that the original push for equity rather than protection came from upwardly mobile women and that the original efforts for protection came from union working women, they do not clearly acknowledge the differing class interests that led to differences in priorities. Both sides certainly had validity in the past. Today, women can press for equality without giving up the special needs of, for example, nursing mothers and pregnant women. (This is not to say that male workers do not require protection. They do, though not necessarily the same protection.)

Women labor leaders who opposed the original ERA amendment were not wrong, as is implied in this videotape. Their priority—understandable given past working conditions—was to protect the health of women workers. This could have been clearer in the presentation. The videotape is accurate in pointing out the instances in which protection was used to prevent equality. Those opposing women's rights use any means they can, just as opponents of racial equality use all possible tactics to achieve their ends.

Second, the videotape could have presented more examples of women of color who led strikes and organized women. These women are no longer "hidden from history" and their roles deserve more coverage.

Third, in a time when a presidential administration is union busting and rolling back health protection for all workers—and countering action for all types of equality, it is strange that a 1983 presentation ignores such attacks. We strongly suggest that teachers using the videotape be prepared to point out the current threats to both protection and equality, rather than pose an artificial choice between them.

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Recommended for: college classes in Women's Studies, Sociology, Urban Studies or Multicultural Education and for workshops held by church or community organizations.

Cost: Filmstrip and mini-curriculum, \$39.95.



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