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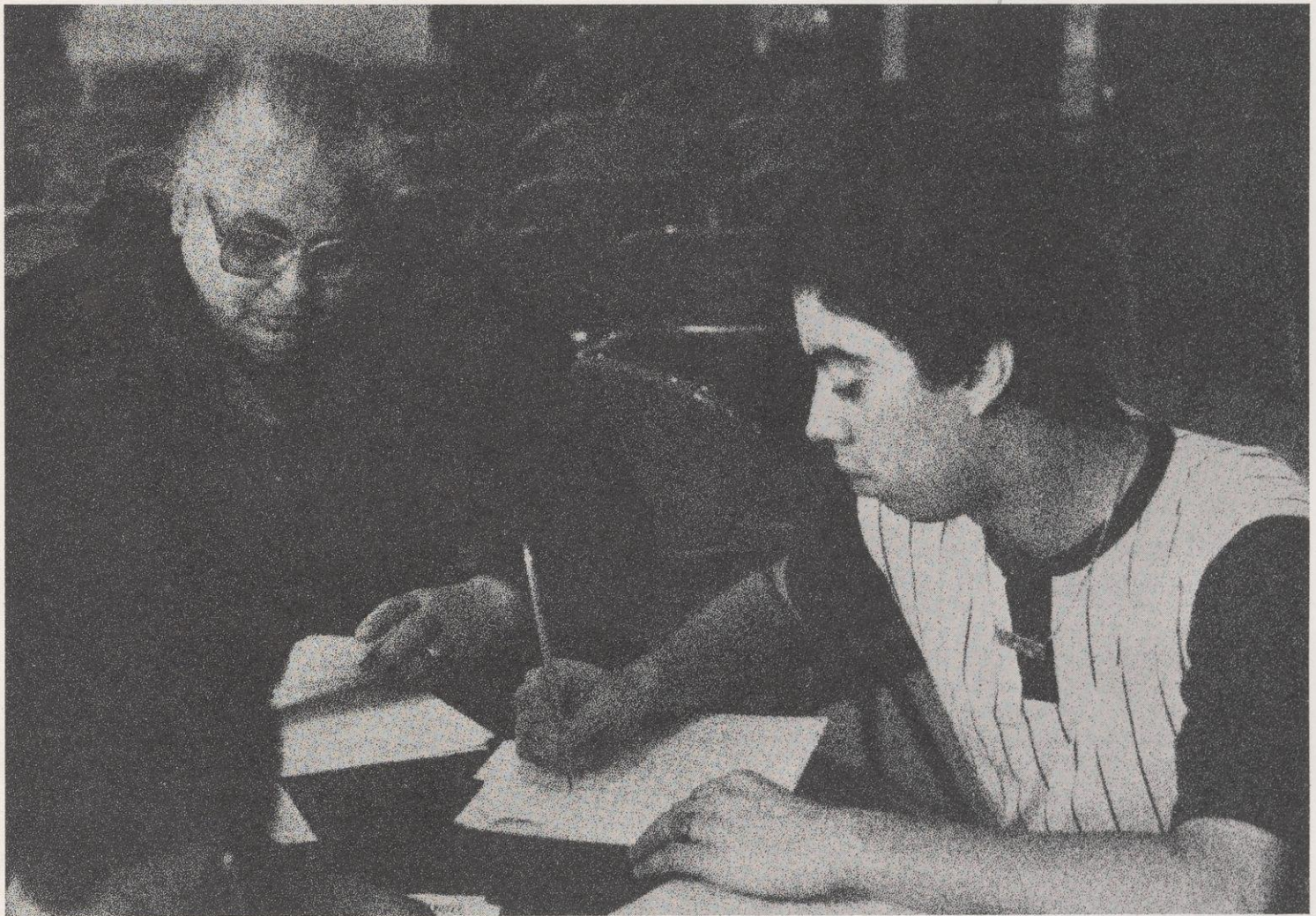
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INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

# BULLETIN

VOLUME 19, NUMBER 5 & 6 ISSN 0146-5562



**Children's Literature and Adult Literacy**  
**CIBC Resource Used with Beginning Adult Readers**  
**From Law School to Kindergarten via Asian Studies**  
**Anti Bias Curriculum Reviewed**



# BULLETIN

VOLUME 19, NUMBERS 5 & 6

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*Thus, the Parent Readers Program was conceived as a back door into adult reading as well as a way to help these parents fulfill a role they wanted to undertake: directors of their children's educational lives.*

## Children's Literature and Adult Literacy: Empowerment Through Intergenerational Learning

By Ellen Goldsmith and Ruth D. Handel

Professionals have long recognized the critical role the family plays in encouraging and developing literacy. And in fact, the recommendations of *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The report of the Commission on Reading* (1985) begin with words to parents: *Parents should read to preschool children and informally teach them about reading and writing.* (P. 117)

*Parents should support school-aged children's continued growth as readers.* (p. 117)

Again, in a publication of the U.S. Department of Education, *What Works*, as quoted in *Becoming a Nation of Readers: What Parents Can Do.* (1986):

*The best way for parents to help their children to become better readers is to read to them.* (iii)

Reading to children at home seems like magic, so much does it accomplish.

In many homes, reading to children is part of the daily routine — a bedtime ritual, a way to speed a rainy afternoon, a strategy to shorten a bus ride or the wait at a doctor's office, a way for parent and child to enjoy time together. In these homes, reading provides an academic framework and produces an emotional bond. Beautiful children's books fill these homes.

But what of the families where reading is not built into the daily routine, where there are few or no books? By implication, and there are numerous studies and test scores to bear out the effects, these children are disadvantaged both in learning to read when they come to school and in learning as they progress through school. How can we address this basic inequity? What can be done so parents who are not reading to children will do so?

At New York City Technical College of

the City University of New York, the Parent Readers Program was initiated as a way to break into the cycle of underachievement in many urban communities (Handel & Goldsmith, 1988, 1989.) As developmental reading instructors, we were struck over and over again by the concern our adult students — neither good nor frequent readers themselves — had about their children's reading. Interestingly, the concern was often in marked contrast to their lack of involvement in their own reading process. Thus, the Parent Readers Program was conceived as a back door into adult reading as well as a way to help these parents fulfill a role they wanted to undertake: directors of their children's educational lives.

Intergenerational reading is a simple idea that gives rise to powerful effects. This article will provide a brief overview of the Parent Readers Program and then discuss



some of the exciting and encouraging outcomes for parents and for children.

### **Underlying Assumptions of the Parent Readers Program**

In planning the program, we give a great deal of thought to our values with regard to reading. Not surprisingly, this process led us back into our own reading histories, into the lives in which the love of reading was embedded in a family context, enriched by talk among family members and memories of favorite stories, colorful pictures, vivid characters, and powerful language. These were the kinds of experiences we wanted to build into the Parent Readers Program. We believed that if our students experienced the pleasures of reading books and talking about them firsthand in the workshop series at the college, they would then recreate the quality of those experiences reading to their children at home.

In terms of reading to theory, we were guided by cognitive research and the active learning strategies derived from it (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; McNeil, 1987; Nolte & Singer, 1985, among others). The research into the value of reading to children (Taylor & Strickland, 1986) and recent work in intergenerational learning (Kirsch & Jungeblut, 1986) also informed our planning.

A pre-program survey provided us with a view of the family reading practices and attitudes of our students. We learned that, in general, most were not read to as children. While many did read to their own children, it was not with great frequency or with a realization of the importance of reading to children. They tended to read only one or two kinds of books; most did not have more than ten children's books in their homes; the great majority did not use the library. All wanted to learn about books and to be helpful to their children. The commitment was there but the knowledge, both about different kinds of children's books and about how to discuss these books with children so as to promote enjoyment, stimulate a desire to learn, and contribute to achievement was lacking.

### **The Program**

What emerged is an intergenerational reading program that attempts to link the worlds of school and home in ways that put the student/parents personal motivation for the welfare of their children in the service of academic achievement, both for themselves and for their children. The program consists

of a series of voluntary workshops in which children's literature is used to teach the adults how to read and discuss enjoyable books with their children at home. For example, one semester, the program included a workshop on folktales presenting the strategy of prediction, a workshop on books about science presenting the strategy of learning new information, and a workshop on poetry, presenting the strategy of rereading. Parents borrow books from the program to read to their child at home. Adult selections which parallel the children's books and reading strategies are also included.

The workshops are experiential and interactive. They are designed to tap into the participants' adult competencies as parents; family experiences related to reading are evoked; family stories are shared. We share our own reactions with the students and read stories aloud at every workshop to provide the gift of reading many did not have when young.

Key to the success of the Program is having large numbers of exciting and beautiful children's books available. Most participants had neither the time nor the resources to obtain children's books of the range and quality we provided. Workshop participants were delighted with the books, as were their children who often asked when the parent would be bringing home more. Thus, convenience and exposure to books proved to be of great importance.

Records and Adult Reading Records as well as from seven in-depth interviews conducted to explore program impact more deeply. Results indicate a high level of participation and enjoyment of the reading activities in the workshops and at home as well as powerful effects on parent-child relationships, on the nature of parental involvement, and on students' personal reading and educational identity.

**Parent-child relationship.** Children's Reading Records (simple forms that ask the parent to jot down their child's comment and reactions to the books they read) were created to provide an occasion for literacy, to link one workshop to another, and to provide a way for parents to share books their children enjoyed with each other. As we listened to these reports at the beginning of each workshop, it became clear that the home reading experience and the process of filling out the reading record provided opportunities for these parents to get to know their children better.

One parent learned of her son's great

enthusiasm for dinosaurs and other animals. Another learned her daughter loves books that make her cry. Still another learned of the daughter's wide-ranging interests.

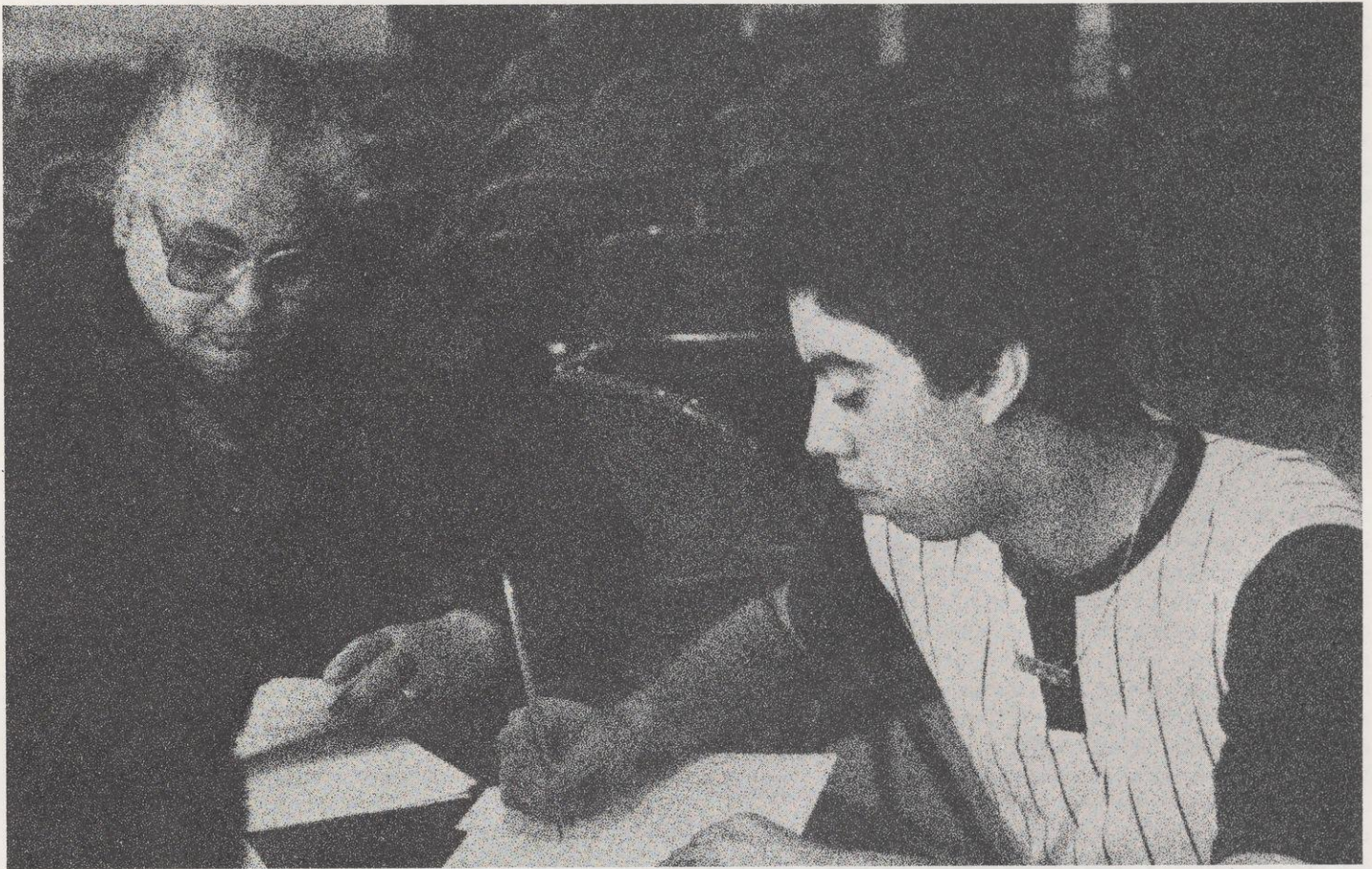
In addition, reporting on the home reading experience served to provide a public forum for these parents to take pride in their children's academic abilities. One mother of a very young child expressed great amazement at her ability to pick out all the T's in "Grandfather Twilight." A father beamed when he told everyone of his son's ability to predict what would happen in "A Chair for My Mother." Still another parent was impressed with the depth of the questions her son asked about "How My Parents Learned to Eat." Parents bragged about how quickly their children learned the stories so they could "read" them themselves.

Parents reported increased communication with their children as a result of their frequent reading-aloud sessions. Getting to know each other better, sharing more time together, and having books to talk to each other about all contributed to their feeling of greater closeness. One student, who created a family reading time during the summer, actually said, "Reading is bringing our family together." Another said: "We communicated more with a book. We talk more. We have a lot of laughs. We do some things in the kitchen. Things I never did when I was a kid."

**Parental Involvement.** Most participants live in neighborhoods where other parents are not reading to their kids or becoming involved in school activities. While many were accustomed to contact with their children's teachers, we feel the workshop experience as well as their forming relationships with other students in the same situation provided important validation of their role vis a vis the school. This validation, we suspect, encouraged and allowed a deeper and more comfortable level of involvement both with their children at home in regard to homework and with teachers and administrators at school.

For some of the participants, what they learned in the workshops gave them confidence to take the role of home educator. One student reported: "Right now I'm helping my daughter who is having assignments in literature. I'm glad I learned about the strategies of reading. She's learning from me and I'm learning from her. She helps me and I help her. I feel this way we are close. We have a better relationship between mother and daughter."





**Effect on Parent's Personal Reading and Educational Identity.** Participants reported that the workshops increased their awareness of the importance of reading. They recognized the need to have reading role models in the home if children are to become "real readers." In addition, many reported that they loved the children's books we read in the workshops and loved reading with their children. For some, this pleasure with books was a new experience, one that will shape their attitudes toward reading. A third important discovery for many participants was that applying reading strategies such as making predictions, asking questions and rereading, helps them to stay engaged and comprehend better.

Related to all the discoveries above, one student reported that her reading improved because she read often instead of not reading. "Once you get into reading, it's like a habit. So you start reading. You get in the habit of reading. All of the sudden, let me read this on the way to work, on the way back."

What kind of impact has the Program had on the children? According to participants, the children appreciate the fact that

their parents attend special workshops directed toward them and are enormously pleased that beautiful books regularly enter their homes. Parents report that their children are more interested in books, and that the school-age ones are reading more themselves. At the end of each workshop series, a family reading party offers us an opportunity to meet the children. At this event, children applaud for their parents as they receive certificates and children choose books as gifts. No matter how many books there are, and there are hundreds, they all go into the hands of the excited children.

*The Parent Readers Program*, in existence for two years, has been an important learning experience for us. We have learned and relearned the value of linking personal life and academic aspirations, the power of parents' commitment to their children, the power of children's books, and the value of a public context for validating behavior and changing attitudes. Most of all, we feel the *Parent Readers Program* demonstrates the importance of building on strengths.

1989 is the Year of the Young Reader. We look forward to the proliferation of programs that will give parents the tools to

develop readers at home. Intergenerational reading offers a way to help children while drawing parents into the reading process. One participant's words evoke the power of the experience for the adult. "Even if it's a kid's book," she said, "it brings me back into my childhood and I don't miss out on anything when I put an effort in. And that's what it's all about."

#### About the Authors

*ELLEN GOLDSMITH, Ed.D., Associate Professor of Developmental Skills at New York City Technical College of the City University of New York, is currently director of the Center for Intergenerational Reading, funded by the Aaron Diamond Foundation, the Vincent Astor Foundation, and the Robert Bowne Foundation.*

*RUTH D. HANDEL, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Education, Department of Reading and Educational Media, Montclair State College, is project director of the Partnership for Family Reading funded by the Metropolitan Life foundation.*

*The authors are co-authors of the Parent Readers Program.*



*It crossed my mind to take out *Winning Justice for All* — A Social Studies Language Arts Curriculum published by the Council on Interracial Books for Children and to read the lesson on Susan B. Anthony.*

## **“Winning Justice For All,” CIBC Resource Used in Adult Literacy Class**

**By Jane Califf**

I was teaching an adult literacy class in the Brooklyn House of Detention for men, and it was an election year. Since most of my students had never voted and were not interested, I wanted to show them in some way that voting was not necessarily a boring and meaningless activity, but was actually a hard won right.

It crossed my mind to take out *Winning Justice for All*—A Social Studies Language Arts Curriculum published by the Council on Interracial Books for Children and to read the lesson on Susan B. Anthony. I passed out the books, but was uncertain as to how her story would be received in a room full of Black and Hispanic men. Would they find the story of a white, well-to-do woman who lived over 100 years ago and who was arrested for voting of any interest at all?

As it turns out, they were fascinated. They couldn't imagine anyone being ar-

rested for voting. After all, the charges against them included assault, robbery, murder and drug dealing — not voting. They were amazed by the fact that Susan B. Anthony was not allowed to defend herself in court and began to feel and affinity with her plight since they, too, felt they were victimized by an unjust court system, albeit for different reasons. They practically cheered as we read her reply to the judge's query on whether or not she had anything to say before her sentencing: "Just as the slaves who wanted freedom had to take it, despite unjust laws, so now women who want the right to vote must take it; and I have taken mine and I mean to take it at every possible opportunity." One of my students exclaimed, "I sure wish I had her for my lawyer."

I describe this incident to illustrate how versatile and helpful I have found, *Winning Justice for All*, to be in teaching adult liter-

acy classes. I was one of the contributors to this book, and we had envisioned it to be for 4th to 6th graders. However, time and time again I have used it with adults and have gotten a very positive response.

I believe the reason is the honest and straightforward way the next step by step brings students to some understanding of racism and sexism in our society — why stereotypes are created, that not just one group has been discriminated against, but many; how harmful this has been; how this state of affairs was continually challenged over the years and who some of the individuals are that helped lead that challenge.

This is unusual in a school text. Students realize they are getting information omitted from their traditional school books. Although written in simple English, the lessons do not talk down to the adult reader. They speak to yearning adult literacy students who have to



make sense out of what they dimly perceive as history as well as current events.

I would like to describe how I have used this text to build an understanding of stereotyping by race and sex and what economic purpose this served in the development of the United States.

I begin with the first page, which shows six photos with six sentences to choose from to identify them. All the statements are stereotypes, but the students don't know this. Invariably, most say that the Chinese man has a laundry, the older woman sits in a rocking chair and watches TV etc. In reality the Chinese man is a teacher, and the older woman is a leader of the Grey Panthers. The class feels tricked at first, but they begin to see that these six people were stereotyped, and we begin a discussion of what this means.

Next I always teach about Native American stereotypes since I never have representatives of this group in my class. (When dealing with such a sensitive topic like this, it is always better, I find to begin by developing an understanding and empathy for a group other than one's own. It is less emotional and easier to deal with.) We read about the stereotypes, the important role of Indian women, and about the Indian Removal Act of 1830. It becomes clear that terms such as "warlike", "treacherous" and "unintelligent" were used to justify taking away their lands. I also use children books to show negative portrayals of Native Americans and excerpts from other books including statements by Native Americans past and present.

Next I teach about Asian stereotypes because I never have Asians in my class either. After reading words such as "sneaky" and "untrustworthy" to describe Asians, we learn from reading "The Japanese Relocation Act (1942)" that only Japanese were put in concentration camps during World War II and that they were sent to these camps with orders to take only one or two suitcases. They were forced to sell their land, homes and businesses on short notice while whites took advantage of this by buying up their possessions cheaply.

Once I invited a Japanese friend of mine whose family was incarcerated in a concentration camp to speak to my class. She brought a film, and the combination of this film and her comments had a powerful effect on my students. They wrote her sympathetic letters admiring her strength and her ability to keep working for justice for Asians as well as all people.

Continuing with the study of stereotyp-

ing, I proceed to cover Mexican-Americans, Hispanics and African-Americans. Since most of my classes are Hispanic and Black, by the time we get to stereotypes of their groups it is not embarrassing or shameful at all but part of a cruel historical pattern of racism and sexism in our country. My students see that stereotyping is not just a mat-

they were taught about Black and Hispanic history. *Winning Justice for All* helped me to put it in a perspective accessible to adult literacy students.

Due to time constraints (my classes only meet two or three times a week for three hours each) and other subjects I have to cover, we never get to read the whole book. Therefore I pick and choose articles, especially those focusing on women who organized and fought against racism and sexism. (The purpose of this book was to emphasize the role of women in challenging injustices). Whenever possible, I supplement these lessons by bringing in speakers, news articles, books and films which make the issues discussed in the book more vivid.

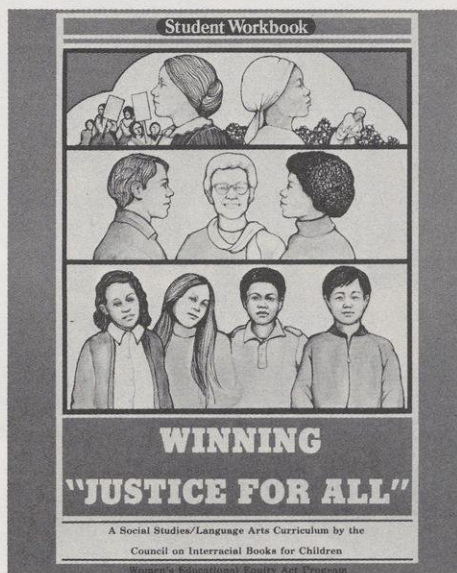
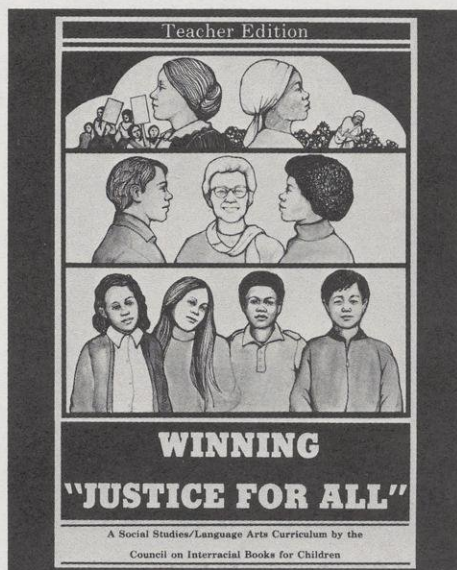
I want to emphasize that I have used the book with classes reading on a 5th to 7th grade level, but now I am finding that beginning adult readers like the book too. A non-reader sits next to students who can keep up and points to the words while I, or a student who reads on at least a 3rd grade level, read aloud. We discuss some of the questions raised at the end of the lessons, and students who feel they can do it answer one or two of them in writing in class or for homework. For example, when we read the passage about Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycott, many students who could barely write got someone at home to help them answer the question, "Do you think Rosa Parks had a right to break the law she considered unjust? Explain." And explain they did, filling up half to a full page, which was a great accomplishment! This obviously was an issue that touched them.

There is a real dearth of reading material for adult literacy students that deals with issues that will help them understand history and what it has to do with their lives. That is why I think this book can be a valuable addition to any program teaching adults to read.

I realized recently what great potential this book has for adult literacy classes when a number of people in my beginning reading class wanted to buy the book! Now I am busy collecting money, but I don't mind since I know *Winning Justice for All* will make an important contribution to my students' education.

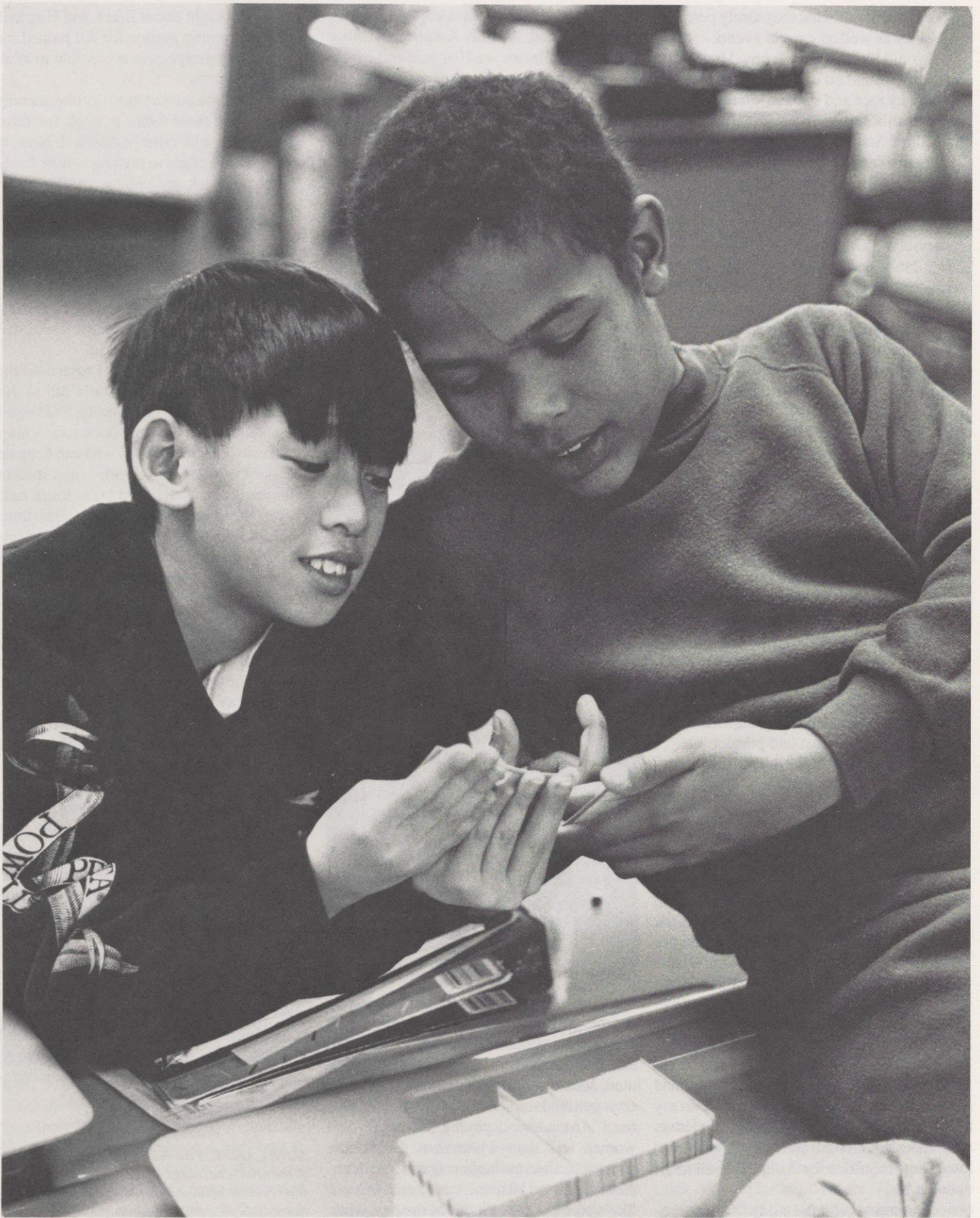
#### About the Author

JANE CALIFF is the Adult Education Instructor at the Adult Learning Center at Brooklyn College interested in multi-ethnic and non-biased education.



ter of one group being persecuted unfairly by another, but that this discrimination was fostered by economic and political forces that benefitted from it by taking away Indian, Mexican and Japanese land and property, getting hundreds of years of free labor from Africans and paying minorities and women less than white men. Using this approach, discrimination against African-Americans and Hispanics does not stick out like a sore thumb as it did in the past when







*But with political power joining hand with educational innovation and a spirit of multicultural sharing, the future for children like those at La Escuela Fratney was just beginning.*

## **From Law School to Kindergarten (Via Asian American Studies)**

**By Philip Tajitsu Nash**

As I walked into the classroom, four young hands reached up to pull me over to their activity table. "Let me read to you," said one small voice. "Look at my drawings," said another.

Smiling at the teacher across the room, I settled in for a few minutes of getting acclimated. I dropped my adult buttocks into a child's wooden chair, and chatted animatedly with my new friends.

Halfway through my introduction to the photo scrapbook that is shown to all visitors in Rita Tenorio's kindergarten class at La Escuela Fratney, an innovative two-way bilingual elementary school in Milwaukee, Rita called us all to order. "Please put away your activities and form a circle," she said. "I want you all to meet someone who came all the way from New York to speak with you."

Straining against my thighs to pull myself out of the wooden chair, I adjusted my tie and walked slowly towards the front of the room. Twenty sets of brown, blue and black eyes followed this newcomer as he gazed at the bright-colored pictures, timelines and phrases on the walls. Forty hands fidgeted with chairs, socks, and each other as I turned to face my audience. They started singing and clapping in a final group activity before my talk was to begin, so my mind raced into the past.

Over a year before, I temporarily had left the world of legal academia to attend a gathering of sixty educational activists at Lisle, Illinois, just outside Chicago. We came from all parts of the country, from all levels of instruction, and from diverse ethnic, socio-economic and experiential backgrounds.

An African-American parent organizer from Newark, New Jersey; two European-American high school teachers and critical pedagogy experts from Portland, Oregon; and Rita, a Latina kindergarten teacher from Milwaukee were just three of the interesting folks who attended. Called together by the Public Education Information Network, an informal network of education activists, we were searching for new ways to address pedagogy, values, and content issues. Despite our many differences, openness to new ideas and strategies was the common bond.

While chatting with Rita after one of the workshops, I met Bob, Betsey, Mike and other education innovators from Milwaukee who were addressing urban school problems with a multifaceted approach: introducing critical pedagogies into the classroom,



bringing parents and communities into the school process, running for office in school board and teacher union elections, and, most significantly, putting together a quarterly newspaper to put Milwaukee school issues within the context of testing, bilingual education and other national education issues. Rethinking Schools, with a circulation of over 20,000 in a school system of only 97,000 children, was both an independent voice on education issues and a vehicle for stimulating creative approaches to education among parents, students, administrators and teachers.

Upon hearing that Milwaukee was setting up La Escuela Fratney (Fratney Street School) with a focus on two-way bilingual education, whole language (not fragmented basic reader) instruction, and site-based (not centrally-controlled) management, I immediately asked if there was any way I could help this experiment take shape. Hearing that I had taught Asian American studies on the college level before entering law school teaching, Bob Peterson, another member of the founding Fratney faculty, spoke unhesitatingly. "We are creating units on African-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and others. How would you like to speak to our students on Asian American issues?"

I felt like Johnny Carson, adjusting my tie for the tenth time in the space of two minutes. While it was clear that this sea of shining eyes was not going to be as critical as a legal adversary or a classroom full of contract law students, I still sensed some sweat building along my collarline. Taking a deep breath, I started with a simple-enough introduction. "Buenos dias, ninos. Me llamo Felipe."

Scarcely had I introduced myself and said "good morning," however, when I glimpsed the first of several startling insights that day. The Latino students, especially one very shy girl hovering on the periphery of the circle to my right, suddenly became animated in a manner that can only be described as magical. While my talk was delivered in even doses of Spanish and English, the initial sense of inclusion never abated. (And when I saw that shy girl later in the day, she ran up and hugged me around the knees.)

My presentation to these five and six year olds was unremarkable in terms of content. We looked at a map and figured out where Asia was. I wrote the names of several Asian countries on the board. We looked at the Chinese ideographs for "person" and "rice fields," and discussed how they, too,

could read English ideograms (as in the common bumper sticker phrase, "I ♥ New York.") With some classes I taught them how to count from one to ten in either Japanese or Mandarin (and it sure was fun doing it trilingually by including Spanish and English). With older students, I linked their previous study of Harriet Tubman to give them a sense of when early Chinese-American gold miners came to California (both occurred in the middle 19th century), and filled them in on Asian American contributions to building this country.

Venturing into eleven other classes over the next two days, I spoke to almost 300 students from ages four to twelve (K to 5th grade) and stumbled upon a second startling insight. Despite all that the Asian American community has done over the past twenty years to remind our fellow Americans that we are Americans of Asian ancestry, that we have long roots here, and that we are a growing (now almost three percent) presence on the American scene, these youngsters still harbored many misconceptions and stereotypical impressions about us. In a school that is 42% African American, 37% Latino, and 21% other (mostly European American with a sprinkling of Native Americans and only four Asian Americans), the major sources of information about Asian Americans came from: "The Karate Kid" (a movie) and other martial arts, the local Chinese restaurant, and the familiar child's manner of pulling the eyelids into contorted shapes to approximate the epicantheal fold of Asian eyes. While it is to the Fratney faculty's credit that they were introducing real information in a whole world context at an early stage, the effects of media distortion had already hit this working class enclave on Lake Michigan long before I had arrived.

Speaking with Bob, Rita, and the other teachers after an in-service workshop I gave for the Fratney faculty, I came upon a third startling insight. Despite the faculty's obvious willingness to learn and to work hard to bring a new world view to their students, they were hampered by a lack of current, non-stereotypical Asian American materials that show the communalities as well as the many differences between the Asian American communities. While groups like the Council on Interracial Books for Children (New York), the Japanese American Curriculum Project (San Mateo), the Asian American Studies Center at UCLA, and others had joined writers like Yoshiko Uchida, Ruthann Lum McCunn, and Eleanor Wong Tele-

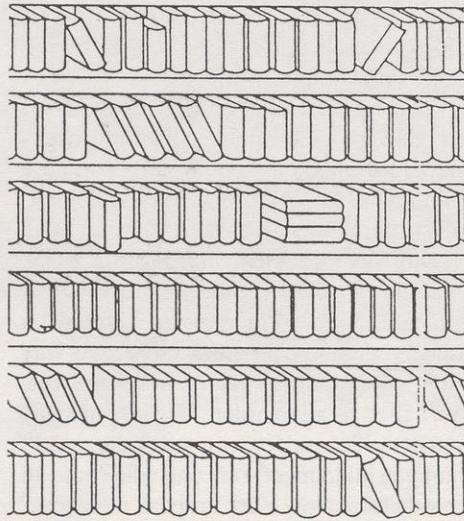
maque in producing non-sexist, non-racist materials for libraries and school systems, much more remained to be done. I looked at one filmstrip on the Japanese American experience and noticed the name of Dr. Edison Uno, one of the foremost proponents of telling our own story to children and others in a non-stereotypical way. While it was heartening to be reminded of his pioneering work, Dr. Uno has been dead for over a decade now, and the Japanese American experience, like that of all Asian Americans, has changed immensely.

Lounging after my last day of elementary school teaching in an adult chair at Rita's house, I looked around me and saw another sea of shining brown, black and blue eyes. The Fratney faculty and their innovative educator friends were holding a party to celebrate Rita's election as Vice President of the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, as well as the election of other critical educators to the union board of directors.

Thinking back to my experiences of the previous few days, I smiled even as I wiped back an unseen tear. My small contribution — being a positive role model and giving encouragement to more non-stereotypical learning about Asia and the Asian Americans — was drawing to a close. But with political power joining hands with educational innovation and a spirit of multicultural sharing, the future for children like those at La Escuela Fratney was just beginning.

### About the Author

*PHILIP TAJITSU NASH teaches at the CUNY Law School and has taught Asian Americans Studies at Yale University and the City College of New York. He presently serves on the board of the Asian American Legal Defence and Education*



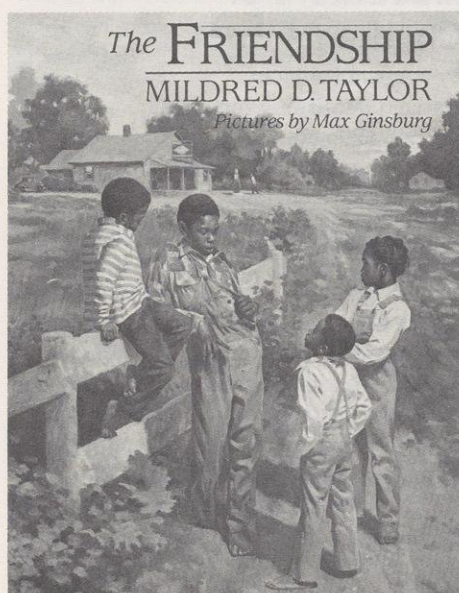


In the BOOKSHELF, a regular *Bulletin* Feature, all books that relate to minority themes are evaluated by members of the minority group depicted — Editors.

## The Friendship

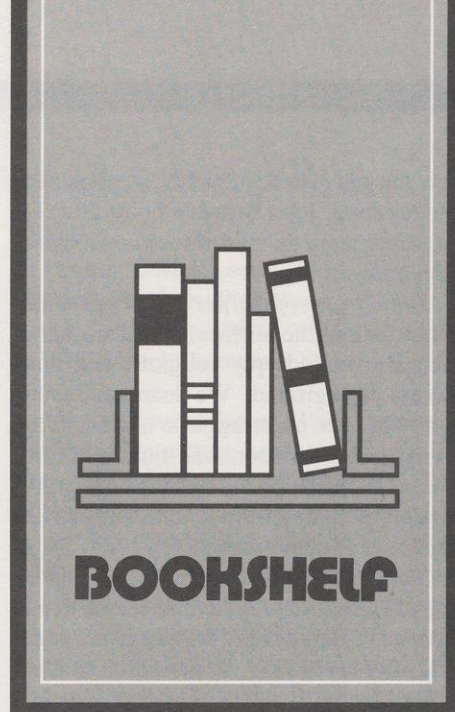
by Mildred D. Taylor,  
Illustrated by Max Ginsburg,  
Dial Press, 1987,  
\$11.89, 53 pages, ages 9-12

Mildred D. Taylor, winner of CIBC new writers award for *Song of the Trees*, has concentrated on producing works that will enable young readers to better understand the experiences of African Americans who lived in a rigidly segregated southern society prior to the Civil Rights movement. She continues the tradition in *The Friendship*. Once again the impact of dealing with racism on a daily basis is revealed through the words of Cassie Logan who shares the experience with her



brothers, Stacey, Christopher-John and Little Man. The story, based on a true incident related by Ms. Taylor's father, is a graphic and sensitive detailing of the strictly enforced codes that governed relationships between whites and blacks and the severe penalties inflicted for any violations of these codes. The central figure is an African American elder respectfully called Mr. Tom Bee by the black community. Mr. Tom Bee had once befriended a fifteen year old white youth by saving his life and then giving him food and shelter. Mr. Tom Bee cared for the young boy "like a daddy" until pressure from the white community forces the youth to leave. Now a grown man with two grown sons, Mr. Tom Bee's former ward, owns and operates a general store avoided by the black community because of the blatantly racist treatment of blacks. When Mr. Tom Bee acting on a presumption of friendship toward his former ward, violates a rigid social taboo, the result is a shocking violent response.

This is an important book for young readers. It effectively portrays the dehumanizing effects of racism on blacks and whites alike. Also, most importantly, it will evoke young readers to understand the courage of civil rights activists like Fannie Lou Hamer and Medgar Evers who lived in such a society and worked to change it.  
[Beryl Banfield Ph.D.]



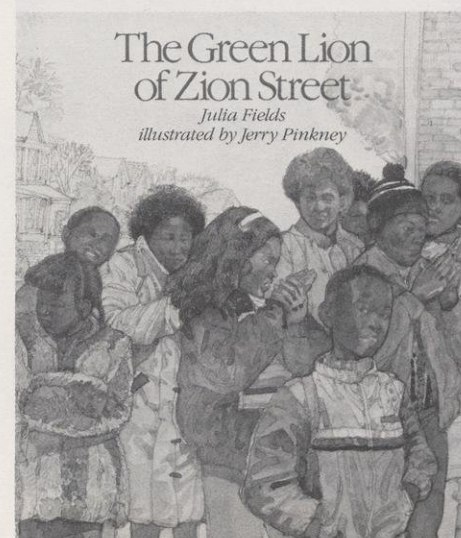
## The Green Lion of Zion Street

by Julia Fields,  
Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney,  
Margaret K. McEderly Books, 1988,  
\$13.95, 32 pages, grades K-3

While waiting for a school bus on a foggy morning that is "colder than a roller skate", a group of children journey across a high bridge. There they meet the green, green lion who is fierce and mighty proud. Crouched high above the city lane, the green, arrogant and stern beast awaits them. Stopped in their tracks, they do not wait for a fierce, loud roar, for the children are frightened off by the "declarative and wide jaws", the yellow mane and one paw. When the second paw appears, their courage shatters like a summer window pane" and they trample the streets like pounding grain". When they take a second look, the fog has lifted, and there stands a lion of stone, "the greenest lion you ever could meet". The school bus has gone, too, but what an adventure this has been for boys and girls who enjoy being frightened out of their wits at times.

In her first book for children, Julia Childs, a poet and creative writing professor, has brought to life an imaginative experience with lively, rhythmic verse, described beautifully in the Black English vernacular.

Jerry Pinkney's exquisite full color pictures are perfect for the striking, original





narrative poem. He captures brilliantly the varying moods of the boys and girls as well as the lion. Among the children are the lovable faces of the boys and girls who have appeared in his stunning illustrations for books since 1964, many of them prize-winning publications. Mr. Pinkney is a friend of the Council, and has been featured in the illustrator's showcase of the *Bulletin*.

This excellent narrative verse in picture-book format should be made available to children of all ages. This very special book is for sharing, for reading aloud, for pondering over and over again.

Highly recommended for children of all ages.

[Jean St-Clair]

## John Brown at Harper's Ferry

by John Anthony Scott and Robert Alan Scott,

Facts on File Publications, 1988,

\$16.95, 184 pages, grade High School

In high school textbooks we may find a paragraph about how John Brown "raided" a munitions factory in Harper's ferry to help

free the slaves. Sometimes we hear the famous song, John Brown's body. But few of us have more than a surface knowledge of John Brown.

*John Brown of Harper's Ferry* provides a look below the surface. We learn about John Brown's deeply religious and anti-slavery background. We learn about his family life and his struggle to make a living during turbulent economic times. His numerous business adventures (including production of some of the finest wool) failed, like those of many others.

The authors provide the historical setting of John Brown's lifelong efforts to end slavery. We learn about the first phase of the industrial revolution, "a period of reckless growth in the nation's economy", a time when machines were being brought together in sheds called manufactories, a time when settlers were moving west. We read about the need for transportation in the frontier areas, and so the development of the railroads, roads, bridges, and canals, leading to an influx of immigrants. This westward expansion sparked great debates over whether slavery should be allowed in the new territories.

John Brown did not work in isolation. We learn about the people who influenced John Brown, such as the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, and Frederick Douglass.

A major drawback of this book comes when the authors suddenly make value judgments about John Brown's actions. The first comes when the author tells us about a series of raids on towns in Kansas which were home to Free-State settlers, who believed that Kansas should not allow slavery. The Border Ruffians, armed advocates of slavery, levelled towns, robbed, bullied, and killed Free-State leaders. After Lawrence, Kansas and other towns had been leveled by the Border Ruffians, John Brown's men went to Pottawatomie Creek and were said to have killed some of the Border Ruffians.

The authors cast judgement on John Brown, saying, "The Pottawatomie murders were senseless. Armed struggle is a tragic and cruel thing, but there are ways to check and restrain an enemy without dragging unarmed men from their beds and butchering them in cold blood. the massacre on

Pottawatomie Creek was an indefensible act". (p.109) It is interesting that the authors do not condemn the numerous slaughters of the Border Ruffians!

A more scholarly reporting of this Pottawatomie is in the book *John Brown*, by W.E.B. Du Bois (International Publishers, 1967) in which Du Bois tells of the character of the Border Ruffians and the history of that event at Pottawatomie. He says, "To this day men differ as to the effect of John Brown's blow. Some say it freed Kansas, while others say it plunged the land back into civil war. Truth lies in both statements. The blow freed Kansas by plunging it into civil war, and compelling men to fight for freedom which they had vainly hoped to gain by political diplomacy." Du Bois continues by quoting various opinions about this event.

It is an important experience for students to compare how various scholars deal with such controversial events.

Perhaps what we can learn from reading *John Brown of Harper's Ferry* is that when we want to learn about events in history, we must use more than one text. While I recommend that high school students read this book, it is urgent that students be made aware of its drawbacks.

[Paula R. Bower]

## Black Authors and Illustrators of Children's Books

by Barbara Rollock

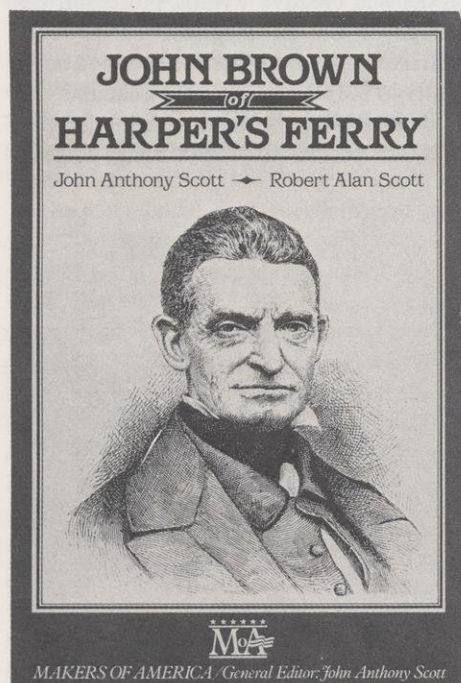
Garland Publishing Inc., 1988

\$27.00, 129 pages,

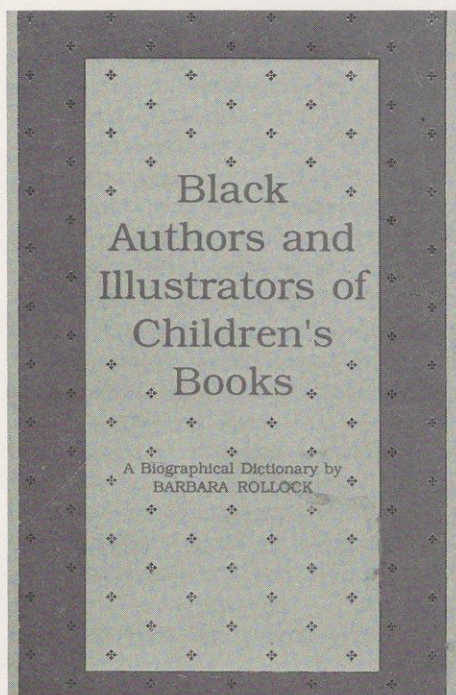
High School reference book

The collection of 115 biographical sketches in *Black Authors and Illustrators of Children's Books* was compiled by a former Coordinator of Children's Service for the New York Public Library. It includes the work of African-American, African and Caribbean authors and illustrators whose materials have been published in the United States during the twentieth century.

This invaluable reference tool highlights the talents and contributions of a broad







spectrum of literary giants as well as some lesser-known authors and illustrators. In the process, the proud heritage of the African-American is woven into the fabric of children's literature.

The authors and illustrators included in this work represent the past as well as the present, and all facets of the literary genre. Among them are the distinguished historian, Carter G. Woodson. Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks and Romare Bearden as well as the Council on Interracial Books for Children's contest winners Kristin Hunter, Sharon Bell Mathis, Walter Dean Myers and Mildred Taylor.

*Black Authors and Illustrators of Children's Books* is lavishly illustrated with photographs, and includes a preface, introduction, author/illustrator bibliographies and a general bibliography. Authors and illustrators are listed alphabetically.

This reference resource is geared towards students and parents as well as librarians and educators. It is therefore highly recommended for school, academic, public library and Black Heritage collections.

[Jean St.-Clair]

## Mirandy And Brother Wind

by Patricia C McKissack,  
Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney,  
Knopf Publishing, 1988,  
\$13.99, 32 pages, grades 1-6

*Mirandy and Brother Wind* is a marvelously written picture book rooted in Afro-American culture with very expressive illustrations which successfully capture the characters' various emotional moods and recreated with artistic delight the social and physical settings of the time. The story was inspired by a picture of the author's grandparents, who in 1906, won a cakewalk contest as teenagers before they were married.

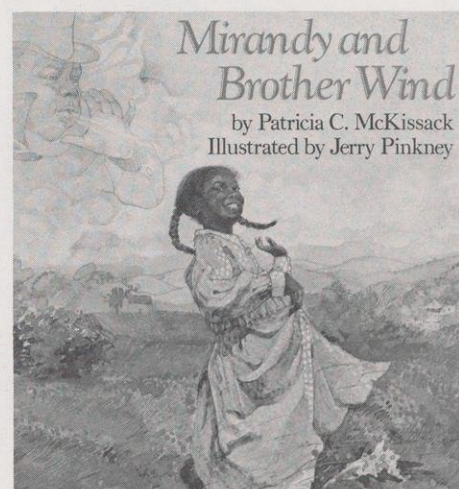
The illustrator offered a realistic portrayal of the characters in a very non-stereotyping fashion, showing for example the children wearing casual clothes most of the time but dressed at the appropriate moment in their best apparel, which includes fancy bows and a change of hairdo for girls and for boys, a nicely tailored suit. Despite this emphasis on realism, Pinkney does not lose the sense of "marvelous" presence in the story: the girl's various attempts to capture the Wind are pictured in a most colorful and vivid manner.

The captivating story line will make children anxious to discover more about cakewalks. The author's note at the beginning of the book is a useful introduction about the role played by cakewalks in Afro-American life. Originally, the dance was performed on plantations by slave couples who competed for a prize, usually a cake, doing complicated swirls and high kicking steps. Soon the dance reached Black social circles throughout the country and the Grand Finale of an all-Black-extravaganza was often a cakewalk contest. Also, at the turn of the century, syncopated music—then called ragtime and later jazz—made its most impressive showing in partnership with cakewalk dances.

This book is a happy compromise between cultural reality and fantasy. Mirandy, a young adolescent, wins the junior cakewalk because she was able to capture "Brother Wind", as he is referred to. The hoisting

world view commonly found commonly among Afro-Americans may explain why forces of nature—the wind, in this instance—are often perceived as close to home, as community members, as the appellation "Brother" suggests.

Mirandy consults with Ma dear, her mother, her grandmother, her neighbors, and even Miss Poinsettia, the conjure lady, about capturing Brother Wind so that he can be her partner in the cakewalk competition. She is advised to sprinkle pepper and to cover the wind with a quilt while he is busy sneezing or to try to have him jump in a bottle of cider. The conjure lady gives Mirandy two scarves to wear at the dance. Finally, Brother Wind is captured in the barn, from which he cannot escape because grandpa has stopped up all the holes. In the end, Mirandy dances with her friend, Ezel, who seems to have been empowered by the Wind, their very special ally. The couple danced with grace and style, arching their backs, kicking up their heels, spinning and moving like shadows. Long after the event, folks still talked about how Mirandy and Ezel had won the contest. Grandma Beasley's words of wisdom suggest that there may be two sides to many events and that, sometimes, the impossible does occur. Though she had told her grandchild that "Can't nobody capture Brother Wind, Chile. He be free. He be special", she also admitted during the dance: "Them chullin is dancing with the Wind". Remarks of this nature are found throughout the text; the story-telling style adds to the narrative





by preserving the authenticity of the dialogue.

Ms. McKissacks's story focuses on an important Afro-American socio-historical fact, which she presented in a very compelling fashion, without over-burdening her young audience. *Mirandy and Brother Wind* offers Black children an occasion to learn about the life style of their grandparents and the experience of empathizing with Black characters who think and feel like them. To all, this piece opens new avenues, affording the readers the opportunity to share and appreciate an all Afro-American experience. Definitely, a must. [Claudine Michel, Ph. D]

## Hats, Hats, Hats

by Ann Morris,  
photographer Ken Heyman,  
Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1989,  
\$12.95, 29 pages, ages 3-8

The theme of this book is not nearly as simple as its title suggests. Ken Heyman's photographs show people of many cultures, most of them children; all of them wearing hats. Ann Morris's words are spare. Early in

the book we see three photographs: a mature Asian woman smiling warmly towards the camera, wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat; a fair-skinned "Western" boy in a baseball cap; two Middle-Eastern boys wearing yarmulkes, reading a Hebrew text in a classroom. These are heavily-laden images, full of cultural messages; yet the text says only, "The world is full of hats." Could I sit down with my small daughter, show her these rich photographs, read, "The world is full of hats," and just turn the page? No.

I know she would ask me questions about the details in each picture, especially the expressions on the faces. Focusing on the fact that all of the people shown wearing hats seems almost frivolous.

The index names the country and gives some details, next to a small version of each photo, and this helps, but there are issues the photographs bring to our attention that are not addressed. Children notice many things that are unspoken, and these things must be articulated and interpreted for them, particularly subtle messages in the portrayal of race. For example, although thirteen of the 33 photographs are from the United States, not one U.S. photograph shows a person of African descent, except for two children in

the background of a photograph of a policewoman. This omission reminds us of old American movies in which people of color are rarely seen. Indeed, there is only one photograph of the 33 that focuses on Africans. It shows young Nigerian dancers wearing ceremonial hats crowned with feathers, looking proudly, curiously into the camera at a celebration of their country's independence. Interestingly, this one photograph appears twice, at the very beginning and second from the end. Why aren't there other African images? What are the values of these persons who chose these photographs? These questions must be raised and discussed with children.

For the most part, this is a conventional presentation on the theme "people around the world," in what is articulated and what is left unsaid.

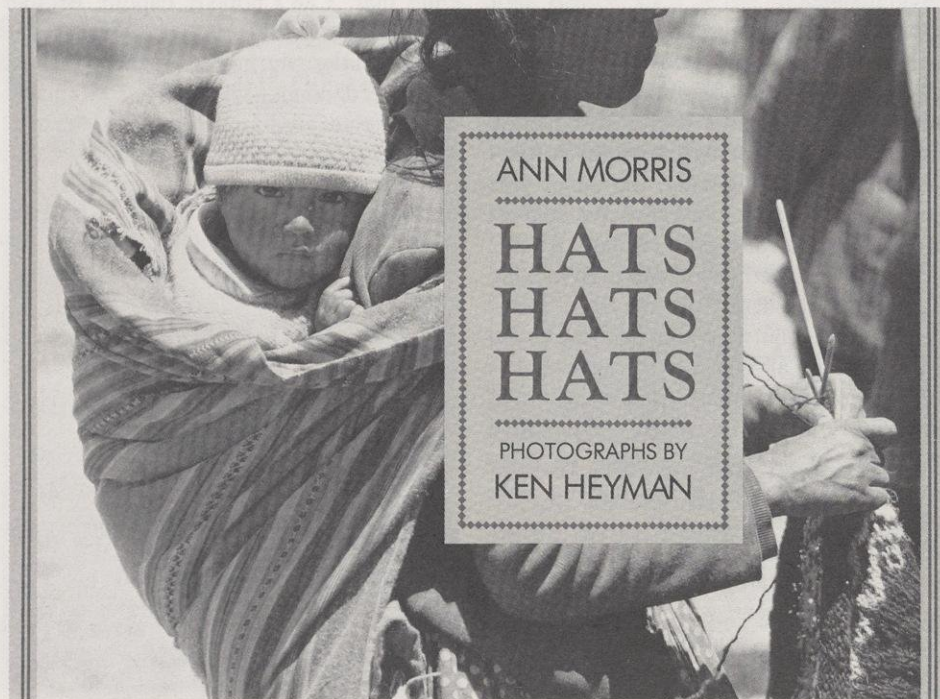
There are photographs of women with heads covered, in a crowded market place in India; small children bundled up, with warm hats, in El Salvador, Peru, and Denmark; men wearing hard hats in the United States for road work, motorcycling, and firefighting; Egyptian men wearing the Kaffiyeh; Americans in the bleachers wearing sun hats. "Work hats" are those of French chefs, an American policewoman, and Indonesians gathering wheat. Americans wear play hats, fun hats, scarfs and hoods; English horse guards wear helmets; Peruvian women wear bowler hats. A small Japanese girl wears a ceremonial hat with golden ornaments.

It is an interesting book for a child, as long as one is prepared to use it as a tool for teaching about the realities of the world. [Ruth C. Curtis]

## We Adopted You, Benjamin Koo

by Linda W. Conrad,  
Illustrator Linda Shute,  
Albert Whitman & Company, 1989  
\$ 10.50, 29 pages, ages 7-12

This book, written to help adopted children, is a first-person narrative told by nine year old adoptee Benjamin Koo. Starting from birth in Korea, Benjamin's story chron-





icles his abandonment by his birthmother at an orphanage, his trip to the United States as an infant, his adoption by a loving European-American family, his first realization in second grade that he did not look like his adoptive parents, his adjustment difficulties in elementary school, his participation in his parents' subsequent adoption of a Brazilian girl, and his development of a Korean-American identity.

Benjamin is presented as a non-stereotypical Asian-American youngster, with positive comments about his athletic abilities balanced by his insecurities about his identity and heritage and his having to cope with racist taunts. Through him we get a positive personal perspective on interracial adoption, with loving adoptive parents who are sensitive to his need for a map of Korea on his wall, who let him participate in the adoption of his new Brazilian sister, and who help him to cope with less sensitive neighbors and schoolmates. He ends the book by exhorting other adoptees to ask questions, to feel positive about their birth parents, and to accept the love of adoptive parents—even if they look different or have a different name.

As a personal narrative, this book avoids a thicket of national and global issues that continue to surround adoption generally and cross-racial specifically, such as: (1) whether, and how to reveal to adopted children the identities of birth parents; (2) the global ramifications of the poor, Third World women being forced to give up babies for adoption in the United States; and (3) the century of United States aggression in several countries in Asia that has resulted in many children of soldier-fathers and Asian mothers who have become either social outcasts there or adoptees here. This avoidance seems appropriate for younger, less worldly readers, although one would hope that a companion book for young adults could be developed which would explore some of these issues. In addition, given the real sensitivity of the author and illustrator, the title, *We Adopted You, Benjamin Koo*, is an unfortunate reminder about the patronizing missionary attitude ("saving the souls of the heathen") that has contributed to the racial problems of all people of color in this

country and overseas.

Overall, however, this book uses humor and warmth to bring us important insights about identity development, parenting and the Asian-American experience.  
[Philip Tajitsu Nash]

## The Lincoln Brigade; A Picture History

by William Loren Katz and  
Marc Crawford,  
Athenum Publishers, 1989,  
\$14.95, 84 pages, ages 10-up

"One of the major obstacles in the way of human progress, of human understanding, is cynicism. The cynicism that states that people only act in their own self-interest or what they believe to be their self interest, that says within every seemingly altruistic act there lurks a dark core of greed or hatred or fear. To make people behave, the cynics say, to make society work, you have to know how to exploit and manipulate that dark core. That's life, the cynics say, that's just the way people are. And you can listen to this for a while and maybe agree up to a point, but then you say, what about the guys in the Lincoln Brigade."

So begins the graceful introduction to this precious work by the protean film maker and writer John Sayles, he of *Matawan*,

*Lianna*, *Eight Men Out* (a baseball classic), and *Brother from Another Planet*.

"During the Spanish Civil war (1936-39) some twenty-eight hundred enthusiastic young American men and women left home to help save the republic of Spain from a military takeover. Joined by thirty-five thousand volunteers from fifty-two other countries, they formed a unique army. It was the only time in history a global volunteer force assembled to fight for an ideal-democracy." This might be slightly overstated but the majesty and pathos of Spain in the 1930's still sends a frisson of anticipation of worlds yet to conquer.

The rise of fascism and the concomitant effort to squash socialism and foist colonialism on the rest of the world was the key event of the decade. The authors make clear that many African-Americans, who had been serving in Jim Crow armies for decades in the U.S., received their initial opportunity in commanding troops and leading battles with the Abraham Lincoln brigade, the volunteer band that travelled to Spain in an attempt to halt the spread of the virus of fascism.

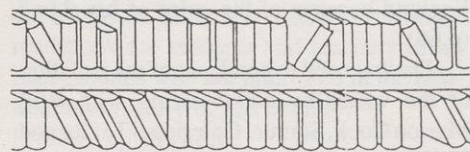
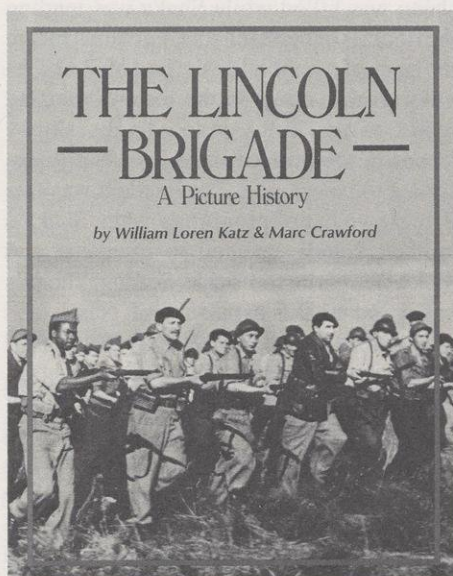
Oliver Law "became the first Afro-American in history to lead an integrated U.S. army. He died at Brunete, leading his men into battle." (p.33)

The brigade fought for the losing side militarily but the winning side politically and morally. The U.S. government played an unfortunate role in this conflict, per usual, lagging in the fight against fascism initially and trying to play catch up ball until the end of World War II. In Spain dictator General Franco "began a roundup of republican supporters, which took 200,000 lives and imprisoned another 200,000." (p.66)

It took forty years for Spain to overcome Franco and his legacy and wounds still run deep.

This brief work has a number of poetic and informative photographs and basic language. Teenagers and young adults would find it interesting.

[Gerald Horne, Ph.D.]





## Paul Lawrence Dunbar

by Tony Gentry

Chelsea House, 1989,

\$16.95, 110 pages, grades 7-9

Though it ignores the revelations in the recently published diary of his wife Alice Ruth Moore, this is a useful biography suitable for children and adults alike. It has striking photographs, large print and simple prose.

Born in Dayton, Ohio, Dunbar began writing poetry at 12, inspired by Keats and Shelly. His father had been a slave. Young Paul wanted to be a professional writer but college was out of the question for Dunbar. There was no way he could afford to go." (p.15) Racism too was a bar: "the editor told him plainly that the other reporters might get upset if he hired a black man." Like so many literate Black males of that era, he took a job in what they called indoor aviation." He was an elevator operator; but like Amilcar Cabral in Guinea-Bissau doing a census of his nation as a tool to overthrow colonialism, Dunbar used his service there to study the way people talk. His "ear" for this enhanced his writing immeasurably. Ironically, given his occupation, he was close friends growing up with Orville Wright, a pivotal figure in the evolution of aviation and airplanes. One can only imagine the flights of fancy of their conversations.

Dunbar served as assistant to Frederick Douglas and was not indifferent to social and political concerns. His signature poem "We Wear the Mask," is worth repeating: "We wear the mask that grins and lies, It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes, - this debt we pay to human guile..." Dunbar goes on to weave a rich tapestry of words highlighting a particular condition in the African-American community at the turn of the 20th century. Like many blacks of that era, he felt more comfortable in Europe at times though the author may overstate a bit by averring, "No one looked down on him in England because of the color of his skin." (p.65)

Dunbar tried to break out of the isolation of the writer by collaborating with Will Marion Cook, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and

other talented Black artists.

Like too many African-Americans, Dunbar had poor health. He contracted pneumonia. Allegedly he had a nervous breakdown. He had an escalating drinking problem. He died in his mother's arms at the tender age of 33. The death of Lorraine Hansberry at 34 reminds us of what we have missed because of the noxious combination of racism and poor health.

This book has an Introduction by Coretta Scott King and Nathan Irwin Huggins serves as Senior Consulting Editor of this series, "Black Americans of Achievement." Tony Gentry should be hailed for this effort. [Gerald Horne Ph.D.]

## Shaka: The King of the Zulus

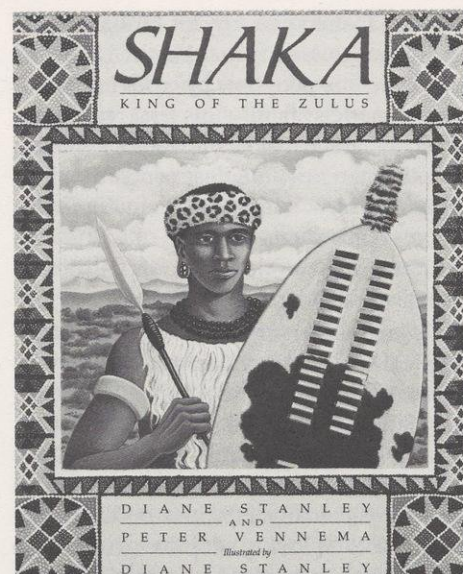
by Dianne Stanley and Peter Vennema

Illustrated by Dianne Stanley

Morrow Junior Books, 1988,

\$13.95, 50 pages, ages 5-up

The authors of this book portray Shaka's life with a stride that traces his troubled youth from the time he was herding his father's cattle and sheep. It is worth noting that the value of cattle and sheep lies beyond just being the source of food and clothing. They were an expression of a man's worth and identity. Hence the fury of his father, king Senzangakona, when he learns that a sheep was killed while Shaka was tending the flock, is understandable. For him it meant the lapse of manhood on the part of Shaka, an unforgivable crime in the male-dominated world of the Zulus. Accordingly, sloppy lapses in the protection of his identity deserved to be scorned. The incident was further blown out of proportion when Shaka's mother, Nandi, decided to intervene and took her favorite son's side. Senzangakhona's anger led to the expulsion of Nandi and Shaka from his kraal. They wandered in the hillsides of the present day Zululand, starting by going back to Nandi's family. However, Shaka was not happy there. He was constantly being mocked by other boys as a coward and a weakling. Furthermore, while they were there with Nandi's family, a severe drought broke out, forcing Nandi and



Shaka to move to chief Dingiswayo's kraal.

Throughout his boyhood, Shaka was determined that one day he would prove to his peers that he was not a weakling. An opportunity availed itself when Shaka was out herding the cattle. He noticed that they were restless, as if they were sensing danger. He scanned the field and saw a leopard sitting on a tree, ready to attack. Shaka approached the animal, knowing the danger he was confronting. The leopard leapt from the tree and attacked the young boy. Shaka stabbed it with his assegai and killed it. The news spread throughout chief Dingiswayo's kraal and Shaka became a young hero. The incident also helped Shaka regain confidence in himself. From there, he was determined to push his reputation even further. As a young man he was required to join the army of chief Dingiswayo, like all the other young men of the clan. In the army, Shaka distinguished himself as a brave warrior and later, as a commander of the troops of chief Dingiswayo.

When Senzangakhona died, chief Dingiswayo sent Shaka back to rule in his father's clan, the Zulu's. Shaka inherited a throne that was neither impressive in terms of power or wealth. He became the chief commander of his battalions and trained them under rigorous conditions. He built his battalions into a massive army by attacking other tribes and consolidating his empire. Within ten



years Shaka had managed to build one of the mightiest armies and empires that southern Africa had seen. His troops left an impressive military history for South Africa, especially when looked at in the context of his time. This was the time when the British colonizers, backed by their armies, were continually attacking and clearly fighting to dominate the present day South Africa. Shaka was assassinated by his two step brothers shortly after the death of his beloved mother, Nandi. As a military genius and strategist of his time, Shaka had no match. He stands on an even par with the recognized military geniuses of the world. Shaka's life and legend is an important clue to understanding the history of that time. An early start can be achieved through *Shaka: The King of the Zulus*, by Dianne Stanley and Peter Venema, for children from five to twelve. This book is beautifully and strikingly illustrated by Dianne Stanley. These vivid images enhance the true value of the text. [Philemon Wakashe]

## Nathaniel Talking

by Eloise Greenfield

Illustrated by Jan Spivey Gilchrist,  
Black Butterfly Children's Books, 1988,  
\$11.95, 32 pages, ages 5-11

This little book has an easy, inviting quality about it. Inspired by the popular "rap" idiom, the author presents Nathaniel as the boy raconteur-philosopher moving through his neighborhood, seeing more

deeply than others would imagine. Part of the peaceful aura of the book derives from the blue rhythms which characterize Nathaniel's rapping. The author even teaches the reader the basic structure of a twelve bar blues poem. With this instruction, young readers could write their own poems; but most certainly, they would have a greater appreciation of the lovely blues, "My Daddy," which Nathaniel sings:

*he sings 'Thaniel, 'Thaniel, 'Thaniel  
boy I love you deed I do  
he sings 'Thaniel, 'Thaniel, 'Thaniel  
boy I love you deed I do  
well you're a mighty fine fella  
and son I'm so proud of you.*

Friends, Grandma, an overburdened neighbor, Uncle Eddie, estranged Aunt Lavinia are some of Nathaniel's rap subjects — each commented upon in a short, easy-to-read poem. In two of the most delightful poems, Nathaniel muses on the value that will guide his life. he rejects material things, knowing that he is a "mighty fine fella/ and I don't need things to prove it." When he dreams about his future, he sees:

*My serious man face  
thinking  
my laughing man face  
my big Nathaniel me  
moving through the world  
doing good and unusual  
things.*

The illustrations are the other source of the book's tranquility. The artist's love of the black children — their facial expressions, their stances — emanates from the drawings. Children will be attracted to these familiar faces and sites so lovingly rendered, and identify with them. The art, and Nathaniel's "philosophy," will leave young readers in a very positive frame of mind. [Gloria House, Ph.D.]

## Chinese American Portraits: Personal Histories, 1828-1988

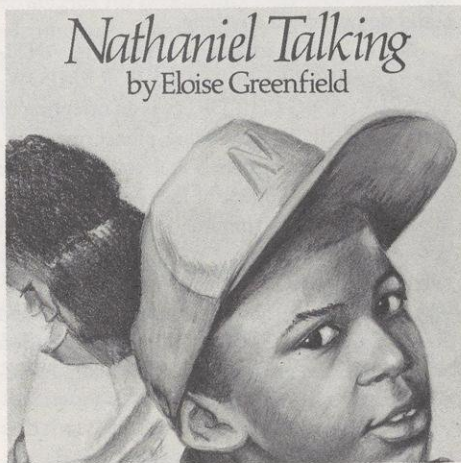
by Ruthanne Lum McCunn,  
Chronicle Books, 1988,  
\$16.95, 176 pages, grades High School  
and up

Readers of this fascinating new book are forewarned, once the first page is opened, it is impossible to put it down. Drawing upon the rich but largely unknown history of Chinese in this country since 1828, Ms. McCunn, an Amerasian teacher, librarian and author who was born in San Francisco and educated in Hong Kong and California, weaves a complex tapestry of people, places and events. Ah Yuen, a frontierswoman from Wyoming, is celebrated alongside educator Yung Wing, Yale University, class of 1854. The legacy of lynchings and discriminatory laws is presented alongside successes in aviation, ballet and horticulture. Families as well as individuals are featured, including Black Chinese from Mississippi Delta, a restaurant-owning family from Albert Lea, Minnesota, and a working-class garment factory family from San Francisco. Finally, a short distillation of major legislation affecting Chinese in America and a generous bibliography add scholarly material for teacher or students who want to study any topic in greater depth.

While the entire field of Asian American studies has produced many scholarly and literary work over the past twenty years, few can match this book for its combination of detailed research, sensitivity to the "isms," and sheer readability. For example, any stereotypes one might harbor about shy, retiring Asian woman are dashed by the story of Mary Tape, who fought against segregation to enroll her children in San Francisco's public schools in the 1880s, or Mary Bong, who worked in the Pacific Northwest and the turn of the century as a hunter, fisher, miner and fur breeder. The mythology about the "model minority" is dashed by inclusion of those who returned to China without finding the "mountain of gold" and those who continue to work as underpaid and overworked restaurant, laundry or garment factory workers up until the present day.

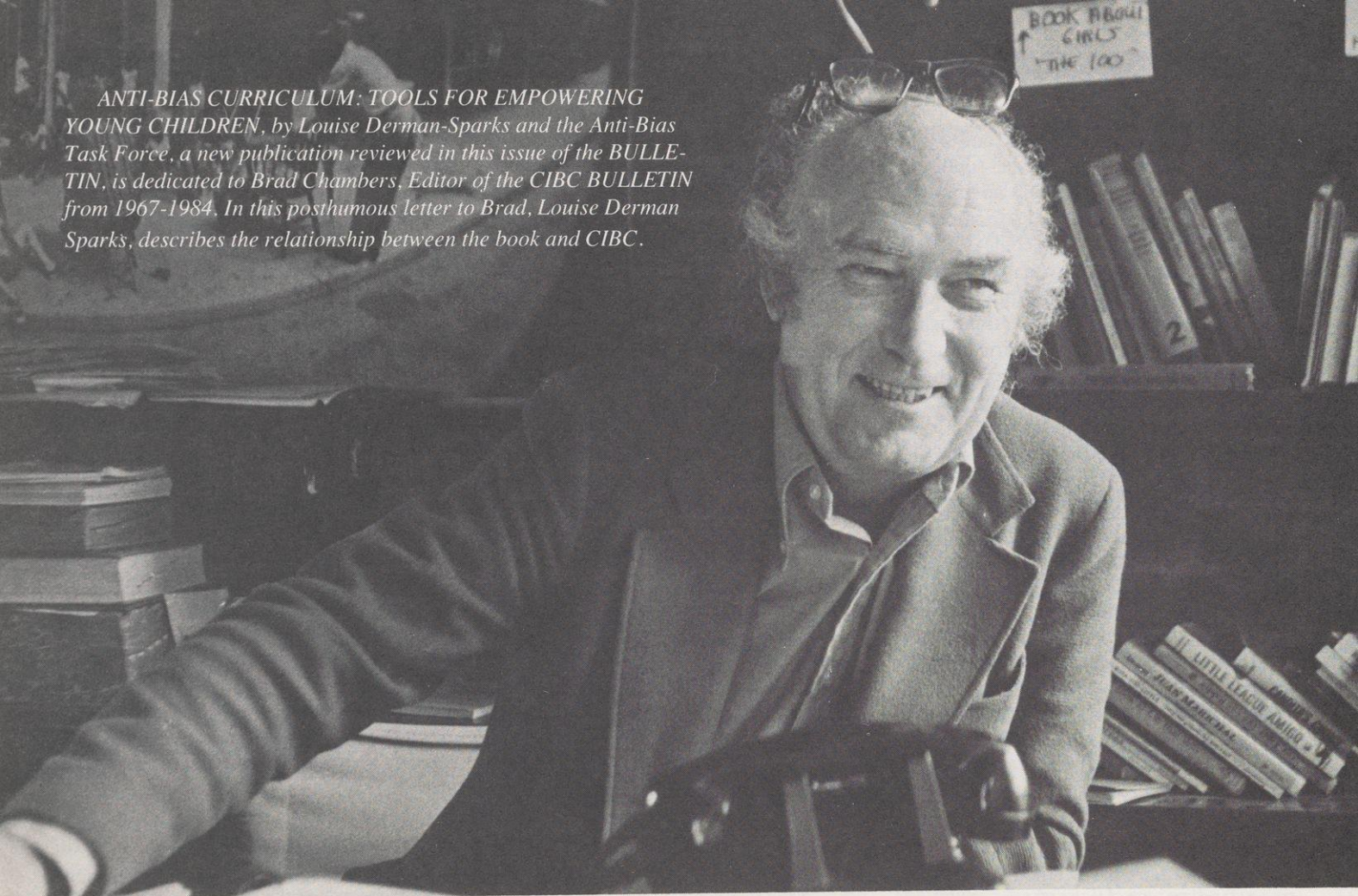
Historical and contemporary photos are found on almost every page of *Chinese Americans Portraits*, and they add a lot to the stories. In sum, therefore, this is a must-read book for students and teachers of all backgrounds who are interested in the multicultural history of this country.

[Philip Tajitsu Nash]





*ANTI-BIAS CURRICULUM: TOOLS FOR EMPOWERING YOUNG CHILDREN*, by Louise Derman-Sparks and the Anti-Bias Task Force, a new publication reviewed in this issue of the *BULLETIN*, is dedicated to Brad Chambers, Editor of the *CIBC BULLETIN* from 1967-1984. In this posthumous letter to Brad, Louise Derman Sparks, describes the relationship between the book and CIBC.



Dear Brad,

Ten years ago I walked into the CIBC office without an appointment: "I am interested in writing an article for the Bulletin." I nervously related to the receptionist. She took me to Lyla's (Hoffman's) office. After a brief chat Lyla said, "You must be Brad," and ushered me into an office where every inch of desk, table, and counter tops and a good part of the floor, was covered with books, folders and papers. You and I talked for a long time. I told you about my great respect for CIBC's work, and how, since first discovering the Bulletin, I had wanted to contribute an article. I described my recently completed research about children's development of racial identity and attitudes. You asked wonderful questions, and then said, "Write it!"

Thus began my association with the CIBC. Many rewrites later, *CHILDREN, RACE AND RACISM: HOW RACE AWARENESS DEVELOPS* (BULLETIN, 11, NO.3 & 4, 1980) came out. Numerous other activities followed: disseminating CIBC materials to people in early childhood

education, consulting on filmstrips ("Childcare Shapes the Future: Anti-Sexism, Anti-Racism"), working with you on an article for the LA Times op-ed page on the "hot" issue of a San Francisco librarian's decision to not reorder certain volumes of the *MARY POPPINS* series. Through the CIBC filmstrips, books and BULLETIN articles and many discussions with you and other CIBC members - Lyla, Bob Moore, Gerry Wilson - my understanding deepened. I learned about what it means to do penetrating analyses of the ways the institutional and ideological "isms" in our society infect children's literature and other aspects of education. In particular, the CIBC's insistence on the interconnectedness of social justice issues, and its careful attention to every detail pushed me to keep improving my own work. Most important of all was (is) the inspiration and support that comes from CIBC's passion and persistence in struggling against all forms of injustice.

Then came the conversation with you that culminated in the writing of *ANTI-BIAS CURRICULUM: TOOLS FOR EMPOWERING*

*YOUNG CHILDREN*. "Why don't you do a curriculum for young children along the lines of *WINNING JUSTICE FOR ALL?*," you remarked casually over dinner during a visit from you and Lyla to my family in Pasadena. "I don't know, that would be a big undertaking," I gasped. "You can do it," you replied, with the twinkle in your eye and smile that always made me feel like I could do just about anything.

So, — five years later — here it is. *ANTI-BIAS CURRICULUM: TOOLS FOR EMPOWERING YOUNG CHILDREN* is an offspring of your's and CIBC's outstanding, pioneering work. One of my great sorrows is that you did not live to see how your wonderful idea became reality. Your sudden and still mourned death occurred just before I received a grant to begin the anti-bias curriculum project. But your influence was always with me. I think you would have found encouraging The Early Childhood Education community's very positive and welcoming response to the book.

Love,  
Louise (Derman-Sparks)



Hits & Misses reviews material intended to assist adults working with children in the classroom, the library and at home. Professional literature, parenting materials and other resources are reviewed. Readers are invited to submit materials that should be considered for this new column.

## Anti Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children

by Louise Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force  
National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1989,  
\$7.00, 149 pages

Educators are hungry for information, strategies, and techniques to support efforts to respond to biased remarks in the school environment and promote equity in the classroom.

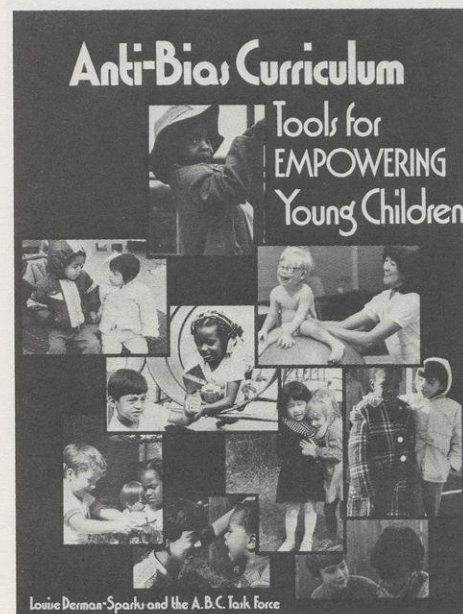
Unfortunately, as the author asserts, the discomfort adults often feel when responding to questions of where babies come from is similar to their discomfort in talking to children about race, ethnicity and disabilities. The danger of an "ostrich in the sand" attitude toward this issue is at least as dangerous.

Despite the lasting social and economic effects of historical segregation and discrimination against racial minorities, the poor, women, and the disabled in the United States, teacher education programs rarely present strategies for promoting bias-free school environments. Thus teachers are often left on their own to work out strategies for fulfilling equity goals. Fortunately the Anti Bias Curriculum is a resource which fills the void in a substantial way.

The Anti Bias Curriculum by Louise Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force presents a comprehensive approach to promoting equity in preschool classroom settings. This curriculum is described as a tool for empowering children. Asserting that young children aged 2-5 are aware of color and language and gender and physical ability and that they are aware that these differences are connected to privilege and power, the

book discusses how this process occurs. The impact on children of bias which declares them inferior is addressed. Fighting such bias saps energy and undermines their full development. The important, yet often ignored, reverse aspect of this issue is the impact of bias on children which declares them superior. Such bias is dehumanizing and distorts reality. Thus, the main point of this work is that bias hampers the full development of all children.

This book represents the work of a multi-racial group of early childhood educators,



male and female, with a range of class backgrounds and physical abilities. Dissatisfied with existing curricula and working over two years in California, this group conceptualized and implemented the anti bias curriculum.

*Anti Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children* presents principles and methodology which teachers must absorb and recreate in their particular setting to fit the specific population of children and families with which they work. To facilitate this process, developmental information about children, supported by actual comments, questions and behavior supplements suggested activities. Thus, the curriculum empowers teachers as well, requiring them to fine tune their own critical thinking and problem solving skills.

The goals of the curriculum are to enable every child to:

- 1) construct a knowledgeably, confident self-identity;
- 2) develop comfortable, empathetic and just interaction with diversity,
- 3) develop critical thinking and the skills for standing up for oneself and others in the face of injustice.

Tasks for achieving these goals are defined in accordance with the degree to which each child is affected by prevailing bias in U.S. society.

The process described by the author in learning to identify and struggle against bias is a collective one. Teachers may need more information about how to work among their colleagues and with parents and the school administration to develop that collective concern before they are able to implement the curriculum at the level described by the book.

While I was greatly impressed by the level of commitment to this issue evidenced by the sophisticated presentation of the curriculum, I am concerned that teachers and parents who do not find themselves in settings where a collective with a developed sense of mission in promoting equity already exists may feel overwhelmed by, or unable to implement, the curriculum as it is described. It is even more important to reiterate the author's perspective on work on anti bias issues as a process with no preset timetable

[Walteen Grady Truely]



# MO SAIC

## My Grandmother's Stories Are My Own



Stories and Photographs by Students at South Boston High

Edited by Katie Singer

Photography Editor Judith Sedwick

### Mosaic: Knowing The Light Will Come Stories and Photographs by Students at South Boston High

Edited by Katie Singer,  
Photographs by Judith Sedwick  
Published by Mosaic, 1987,  
\$3.00, 50 pages, ages 12-18

The "Mosaic" anthology grew out of the South Boston Foxfire Project, in which students recorded oral histories from their neigh-

borhoods. This led to a desire for a more personal view and thereby a new collaboration came into being. The present students write and photograph their own lives.

The writing in this anthology draws upon the personal experiences of these young adults either as memory pieces or as comments on their own lives right now. The narratives share their times of anguish which come out in simple, strong and vibrant voices. These voices are not shrill; they are positive, and full of new hope, and come out of a belief that the "light will come" regardless of the confusion they might be in. For example, in the introduction to the section,

"Under these conditions I was born," Rina Deth says:

*The country that I come from is Cambodia. I come from the time when the innocent people of Cambodia cried out and begged to be considered as human beings by the Khmer Rouge regime. As one of the survivors, I feel like a piece of cloud with no direction. I am flowing back and forth in a mysterious world.*

These words epitomize the spirit of the anthology. One hears the optimistic detachment of someone who has experienced suffering but is not bogged down by bitterness. The reader is bound to empathize with this "floating cloud" that will someday fix itself to a future whose meaning embodies hope.

This hope can also be found in the treatment of difficult and painful subjects such as death and sexual abuse. These topics are treated with therapeutic candor... In her "Dona in my heart," Maria Estelita Cabral has this to say of her separation from her grandmother:

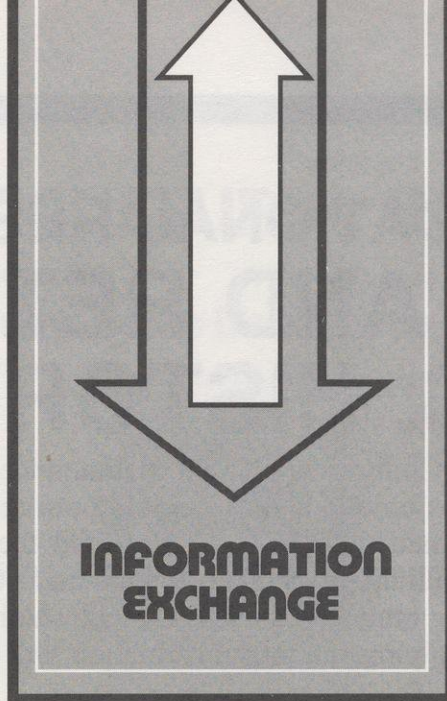
*I looked up into Grandma's soft dark eyes and just as that first feeling had come. I suddenly had another. Only this one wasn't frightening. I felt warm and wanted. I felt like everything was going to be okay...*

This demonstrates the acceptance, which the young somehow seem to possess, that separation is finite. Her ability to deal with this without rancor gives testimony to her maturity in coming to terms with her emotions, an attribute which pervades most of the writings in this anthology.

The writing in this anthology offers a freshness not found in a more published work. The journal entries that appear in each section detail the confusion of growing up in a complex, multicultural, inner city environment. The photographs are sensitive views of that life and capture an exuberance and joy and innocence that comes with the writer's age. "Mosaic" is an apt title because it is composed of bright pieces of hope that add up to a picture of small treasures of life. This anthology should be used as a resource for reading and writing classes.

[Edward Dladla]





## Educators Against Apartheid

*Educators Against Apartheid* is pleased to announce its new curriculum, *Apartheid Is Wrong: A Curriculum For Young People*, written by Paula Rogovin Bower. Ms. Bowers has taught elementary school in District 6 in New York City of 17 years. She is the Co-chairperson of Educators Against Apartheid.

The curriculum is a hands-on, multi-disciplinary curriculum for grades one through twelve. The math lessons in the curriculum were developed by Claudia Zaslavsky, author of *Africa Counts*, *Count On Your Fingers Africa Style*, and several other books for young people. The curriculum is part of a Curriculum Kit, which includes a filmstrip and cassette narrated by Ruby Dee.

Contact Educators Against Apartheid for workshops on how to use the Curriculum Kit (New York Area only.) Please call (212) 836-6644

## NATIVE AMERICAN BOOKS...

"Here are some books I suggest you review for the *BULLETIN*. I've noted with an asterisk which ones we've reviewed in our book, *Through Indian Eyes*.

Armstrong, Jeannette, *Neekna and Chemai*. Theytus Books, Penticton, B.C.\*

Awaikta, Marilou, *Rising Fawn and the Fire Mystery*. St. Luke's Press.\*

Broker, Ignatia, *Night Flying Woman: An Ojibway Narrative*. Minnesota Historical Society Press.\*

Bruchac, Joe, *The Faithful Hunter, Abenaki Stories*. Bowman Books, Greenfield Review Press.

Bruchac, Joe, *Iroquois Stories: Heroes and Heroines, Monsters and Magic*. Crossing Press, Freedom, CA 95019.\*

Bruchac, Joe, *Return of the Sun: Native American Tales from the Northeast Woodlands*. The crossing Press, Freedom, CA 95019.

Bruchac, Joe, *The Wind Eagle and Other Abenaki Stories*. Bowman Books, Greenfield Review Press.\*

Caduto, Michael J., and Joseph Bruchac, *Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children*. Fulcrum Press.

Costo, Rupert, and Jeannette Henry, *The Missions: A Legacy of Genocide*. Indian Historian Press, San Francisco.

Okanagan Tribal Council, *How Food Was Given; How Names Were Given; How Turtle Set the Animals Free*. Theytus Books, Penticton, B.C.\*

University of Arizona Press, *Between Sacred Mountains: Navajo Stories and Lessons from the Land*.\*

Goble, Paul, *Death of the Iron Horse*. Bradbury.\*

LeSueur, Meridel, *Sparrow Hawk*. Holy Cow! Press.\*

Munsch, Robert, and Michel Kusugak, *A Promise is a Promise*. Annick Press, Ltd.\*

Nabakov, Peter, editor, *Native American Testimony*. Crowell.\*

New Mexico People and Energy Collective, *Red Ribbons for Emma*. New Seed Press.\*

Norman, Howard, *Who-Paddled-Backward-With-Trout*. Little, Brown.\*

Steptoe, John, *The Story of Jumping Mouse*. Lothrop.\*"

Beverly Slapin

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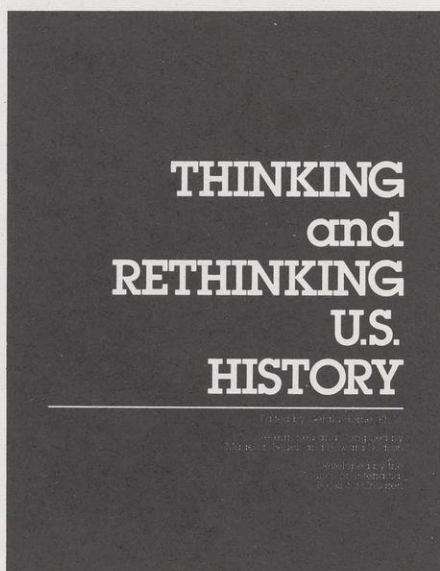


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The Council on Interracial Books for Children is pleased to announce a new title: "THINKING AND RETHINKING U.S. HISTORY". This unique book is a classroom resource for teachers, administrators, parents and all citizens concerned with U.S. History and the question of bias. Know what textbooks teach about colonialism, militarism, racism, sexism and other areas of social justice. This valuable teaching manual will, among other things, assist social studies teachers and their students in identifying bias in history texts, supplying missing information and countering distortions.

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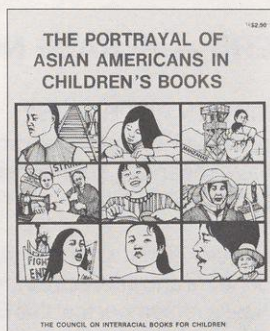
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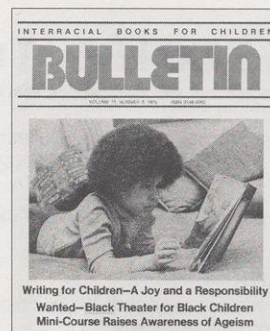
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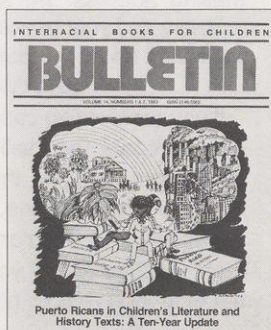
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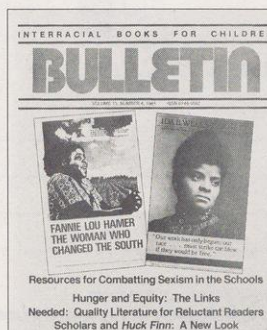
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CIBC is a non-profit organization founded by writers, librarians, teachers and parents in 1966. It promotes anti-racist and anti-sexist children's literature and teaching materials in the following ways: (1) by publishing the *Interracial Books for Children BULLETIN*, which regularly analyzes learning materials for stereotypes and other forms of bias, recommends new books and provides consciousness-raising articles and alternative resources; (2) by operating the Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators, which publishes reference books, lesson plans and audio-visual material designs to challenge and counteract stereotypes and to develop pluralism in schools and in society; and (3) by conducting workshops on racism and sexism awareness for librarians, teachers and parents. For more information about CIBC and a free catalog of its Resource Center materials, write us at 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10023

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