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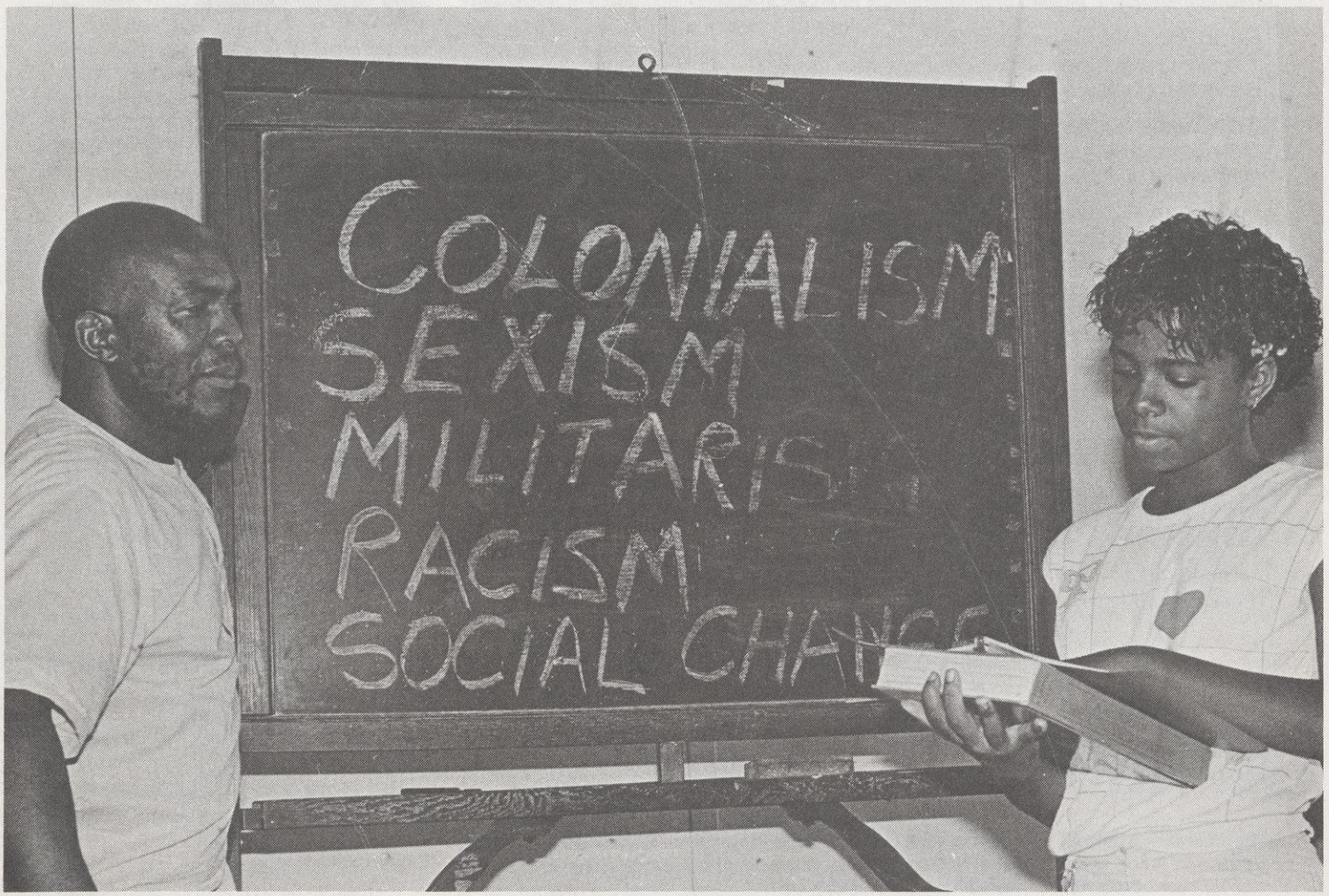

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CIBC undertakes a major study to find what textbooks teach about colonialism, militarism, racism, sexism and other areas of social justice

U.S. History Textbooks: Help or Hindrance to Social Justice?

By Ruth Charnes

History textbooks are making headlines again. After decades of debate between right-wing forces (Mel and Norma Gabler et al.) and progressive forces (primarily feminists and people of color), the fray has been joined by those who—like Secretary of Education T. H. Bell—castigate publishers for "dumbing down" texts. A new CIBC study of U.S. history texts, however, reveals an even more serious problem: Today's texts so misrepresent the basic nature of U.S. history that they discourage students from becoming truly responsible citizens. As Madelon Bedell, co-director of the CIBC History Project on Social Justice and U.S. History Textbooks, observes: "People who do not know their history are deprived of the tools by which they may change their own lives and the society in which they live."

The History Project was launched some two years ago to analyze the ways in which U.S. history texts treat social justice issues. A staff headed by two historians—author and biographer Madelon Bedell and Howard Dodson, former director of the Institute for the Black World—is presently studying new history texts on both elementary and secondary levels. Ultimately, the Project will publish a teaching manual that will, among other things, assist social studies teachers and their students to identify bias in history texts and to supply missing information and counter distortions (see box, page 5).

Most educators agree that history texts—even if they are despised as boring or their details soon forgotten—stamp an indelible imprint on students' minds. For the majority of young people, the two or three history texts they are required to read in 12 years of schooling are the only formal history of their country they will ever read. What specific messages are today's texts giving students? To find out, the History Project surveyed the several hundred such books now in print and selected a representative sampling of 12 texts (listed at the end of this article), all copyrighted 1980 or later. They include elementary, junior high and high school histories, with the largest number in the latter category; the five best-selling textbooks; texts from major publishers, smaller and special-interest houses; texts that represent the two ends of the available political/social spectrum with the majority in the "middle"; texts written by prestigious U.S. historians as well as by experts in the social studies education field; texts of advanced and low-level literacy; and texts included on the major state adoption lists.

What are these textbooks of the 1980s like? Physically, the typical book is big—about 10″ high by 8″ wide and over an inch thick. It is long, up to 900 pages for senior high texts. Handsomely packaged with bold cover designs of gold and black or red, white and blue, it opens to reveal page after page of large print. It is crammed with four-color reproductions of paintings, portraits and photographs, plentifully sprinkled with graphs, tables and charts and other "learning aids." Nearly every educational "aid" devised within the last 20 years seems to have found its way into these books. They are a far cry from the old closely printed, hard-to-read textbook of the days before the medium became the message.

But looks—and educational aids or gimmicks—are not the issue. Of greater significance is what messages the content conveys. The History Project focuses on issues of social justice, those areas that express and give content to the ideas embodied in the constitutional and democratic heritage of the U.S. "Our concept of social justice," notes Dodson, "is grounded in the assumption that every human person, regardless of race, class, sex or national origin, is endowed with dignity and worth, the promotion and defense of which should guide human affairs. Basic human rights—of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—have been denied to various groups throughout our history, but people's struggles to secure these rights constitute one of the central themes of our history. Popular concern and action for social justice is a deeply American and deeply patriotic tradition; children need to learn the history of these struggles to give them a grounding for future efforts."

The Project is analyzing the following specific issues:

Colonialism: How do books treat *external* colonialism (a society that dominates and exploits a people beyond its borders) and *internal* colonialism, wherein a group exploits people(s) within commonly shared borders? Colonialism, notes the Project, has been a driving force in shaping U.S. history. Do textbooks recognize this theme? How do they interpret acts of invasion, conquest,

On Terminology

The *Bulletin* refers to this country as the United States (or U.S.) rather than America because the latter term actually covers this entire hemisphere. It is "presumptuous and inaccurate," as William Safire recently noted, to use the term America unless Central and South America and Canada are included. Still, it would be confusing at this point to refer to the events of 1776 as anything other than the American Revolution. We will therefore continue to utilize that term — at least for the present.

domination? Are U.S. racial minorities recognized as colonized peoples?

Militarism: Militarism is an ideology that legitimizes the use of institutionalized killing—*i.e.*, war or the threat of war—to maintain control of populations and to amass or extend national and/or imperial power. In contemporary societies like the U.S., militarism provides the main support for a vast panoply of scientific/industrial/social institutions. Do textbooks recognize the existence of militarism in U.S. history and discuss its expression in national policies and actions? Equally important, do they also discuss its opposite—the long traditions of both anti-militarism and pacifism?

Class: Class is used in the traditional sense to refer to social and/or economic status. Do texts tell the history of both rich and poor? Do they shrink from, or gloss over, the class conflict that constitutes so much of U.S. history? From whose perspective is an event or concept reported?

Racial Groups: Are the perspectives and experiences of Native Americans, Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and Asian Americans presented as integral aspects of U.S. history—or do texts reflect the viewpoint of only one group, the dominant Euro-Americans? Is the racism that these groups have experienced at the hands of Euro-Americans recognized and explained?

Ethnic and Religious Groups: The Project looks at white groups that have been victims of ethnic and/or religious bias. How do texts present the history of various non-English Europeans and other immigrant groups? Do they explore the unique historical and cultural dimensions of each group? Do they discuss the effects of society's Anglo-Saxon Protestant bias on these groups?

Women: Women's history is not covered by the addition of a handful of "famous" women. It is social history, the history of families and communities, the history of work (especially household and domestic work), and many other topics. It is also primarily the history of the poor rather than of the rich. In the long view, women's history is popular history because of its focus on ordinary life. How much of this is reflected in the texts?

Social Change Movements: Mass-based, organized protest groups that exist outside of the legislative/governmental structure are a constant theme in U.S. history, from the uprisings and insurgencies of the colonial era and the American Revolution through the labor movement to today's civil rights movement, feminism, nuclear freeze movement, Gray Panthers and other activist groups. How do textbooks treat this crucial aspect of U.S. history?[1]

Although the analysis of texts will not be completed for several months, several major themes have already become clear. Current texts, the Project finds, present a series of events and personalities with no continuity and little relationship to a dynamic social, economic, political or historical context. They give students little or no sense of the historical process and fail to convey major historical themes and patterns. Indeed, note the analysts, history itself hardly exists any more; the texts themselves reject history. Instead of an historical process, many books present history as psychology: things happen for emotional reasons. In these texts, for instance, King George gets "angry" at the colonists and they, in turn, are "angered" by the Stamp Act. And so things go until the present, when some Americans are "deeply disturbed" by rising poverty.

In many other texts, geography is presented as the major force. Native Americans were slaughtered because the "empty lands" required settlement, not because Europeans benefitted from the conquest. Similarly, slavery is presented as a system dictated by the needs of the land itself and of the types of crops grown on it, not as a system employed by planters to reap greater profits.

Impersonal History Presented

Students reading these texts hear what scholar Jacques Barzun has called the "impersonal voice of history"—a voice without significance or meaning. This bland and meaningless voice will not teach a student to reason sharply, to think critically, to question seriously, to assume independence. What this interpretation does instead (aside from boring the student) is to inculcate the notion that historical events are inevitable. History is presented as an impersonal force, not a product of human activity. Real human conflict and meaningful political strife do not exist. This is the message the U.S. history textbooks of the 1980s convey to elementary and secondary school students; if they conclude that history is irrelevant to their lives and struggles, who can blame them?

It is already clear that the texts' treatment of the specific issues under examination is not only ahistorical but also biased. How textbooks present the history of different racial groups in this country is certainly of crucial importance. While current texts avoid the blatant racism of the past, they still convey an overwhelmingly Eurocentric perspective. The foundation is laid with the treatment of prehistoric times. While texts now acknowledge that the history of this country began prior to Columbus' arrival, they nonetheless manage to

[1] The Project is indebted to the study of the treatment of social change movements in high school textbooks currently being conducted by Serge Herscovici, who has been a researcher in political science at the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York.

deny Native Americans' claim to the continent. They commonly depict the U.S. as a nation of immigrants, with Native Americans merely the first wave of immigrants in the scenario. In addition to ignoring Native Americans' belief that they originated on this continent, this approach glosses over the thousands of years during which Native peoples were the first and sole occupiers of the land. Moreover, it ignores the fact that European exploration and colonization involved more than peaceful "migration." European colonization caused the "greatest destruction of lives in history,"[2] yet it is typically described in a "balanced" approach that lauds the "achievements" of the *conquistadores* (they built "aquaducts, theaters, bookstores") while minimizing the cost in human lives. *The History of the United States* (Ginn), one of the more conservative texts, is even more contemptuous. Although the text reports that the number of Indians "fell" from 50 million to some 4 million, the book's sole concern is that the *conquistadores*' lands "naturally lost their value without Indians to work them." All pity to the poor conquerors who lost their labor supply and, therefore, their source of profits!

Moreover, texts frequently report the racist biases of the European colonizers as fact. *The History of a Free People* (Macmillan) states: "The Indian was often unreliable. He might or might not fight on a particular day according to his mood, or omens, or dreams; he did not cooperate with others...." These few sentences, in addition to being sexist, pack a wealth of racist misinformation.

While it is true that "colonists" frequently maintained that "The Indian" was "unreliable," their assessment was from a purely European perspective. Usually, such charges were made when individuals or groups of Native American peoples "failed" to do what Europeans wanted them to or "failed" to live up to European colonial expectations. And it is an injustice to Native Americans to suggest that moods, omens or dreams determined their behavior; complex religious and philosophical values usually guided all aspects of Native American life. The generalization about "cooperation" is also ludicrous. Native American societies were far more cooperative, far more "community" oriented — and far more democratic — than European and colonial societies. There are countless examples of "cooperation" between different Native nations. In fact, the colonists borrowed from the political organization of the six nations in the Iroquois Confederation when designing their central authority.

The history of Black people on this continent is similarly misrepresented. Although there is strong archeological and anthropological evidence that Africans carried on independent trade and commerce with Native Americans in Central and South America prior to Columbus' voyage, not a single textbook mentions this. Instead, the emphasis is on the "first" Blacks who came with — or were brought by — Europeans.

Indeed, texts misrepresent the multicultural nature of U.S. society from the beginning. In text discussions of colonial demographics, Native Americans are not counted at all and Blacks, though acknowledged, are also not included. Texts suggest that an English population majority "explains" an English domination of the colonies. The reality was that

> ... the colonial period of our history is the story of a *minority* [emphasis added] of Englishmen [and women] interacting with a majority of Iroquois, Delawares, Narragansetts, Pequots, Mahicans, Catawbas, Tuscaroras, Creeks, Cherokees, Choctaws, Ibos, Mandingos, Fulas, Yorubas, Ashantis, Germans, French, Spaniards, Swedes, and Scotch-Irish....[3]

Texts continue in the same vein. Slavery, a crucial facet of U.S. history, is treated very superficially. Almost all texts concentrate on the horrors of the experience, though they do so in a way that minimizes the reality of that experience. Stating, for instance, that 13 or even 30 or 33 per cent of the African captives died during the Middle Passage does not make it clear that *millions* of men, women and children perished on the ships. Nor does this approach make it clear that millions of others were killed in the slave-trade wars. Finally, it doesn't explain how the 67-87 per cent survived.

Racism Ignored

Texts do not adequately explain the racist causes of the slave trade nor do they place it in a broad economic and political context. (As noted previously, many texts blame slavery on geographical factors. "Empty land creates slavery"

Why do young people show such little interest in issues of peace and social justice? Why do they believe they have little or no role to play in effecting social change? In 1980 these questions had become the subject of intensive dialog and continuing research conducted by the Maryknoll Fathers and the Maryknoll Sisters. Their conclusion was that part of the answer lay in the content of school textbooks.

In 1982, the Maryknoll Fathers (The Catholic Foreign Mission Society of the U.S.) asked CIBC to analyze the content of history texts and develop teaching strategies and educational aids to help students understand issues of peace and social justice. (These would be of use to both public and private religious schools, since today the same history textbooks are generally used in both systems.)

The Maryknolls wanted the project—described on these pages—to be ecumenical in both scope and readership. CIBC, which had just been invited to join the Racial Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches (NCC), welcomed the opportunity to become part of an ecumenical effort for bias-free textbooks. Both the NCC Division of Church and Society and the NCC Division of Education and Ministry are now co-sponsors of the project titled "Social Justice and U.S. History Textbooks," and representatives of these groups are part of its Advisory Board. The United Ministries in Education, the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends are also sponsoring the project and are on its Advisory Board.

Among the project's educational aids will be a teaching manual to be published in 1985 by Orbis Books. It will help parents, teachers and students to (1) analyze the treatment of social justice issues in U.S. history textbooks; (2) understand why textbook bias is harmful to society; (3) learn about information and perspectives not presented in history textbooks; and, finally, (4) develop strategies for influencing textbook adoption processes in their localities. The manual will be field-tested in different regions of the U.S. in early 1985.

[2] Murdo J. MacLeod in *Spanish Central America: A Socioeconomic History, 1520-1720,* University of California Press, 1973. (The indigenous population was reduced from perhaps 80 million people to 3.5 to 4 million, with the populations of some areas reduced by as much as 90 per cent or more.)

[3] Gary B. Nash in *Red, White and Black: Peoples of Early America,* Prentice-Hall, 1974.

Textbook illustrations are often problematic. The drawing above, for example, which illustrates several text discussions of Shays Rebellion, suggests a brawl between two unruly individuals being cheered on by a pack of country bumpkins rather than a major social change movement. Captions are equally problematic. The caption that accompanies this illustration in This Great Nation *reads: "Shays Rebellion failed to stop Massachusetts from imprisoning debtors. Shays—who was sentenced to die for his crimes—was later pardoned." In actuality, Shays Rebellion of 1782 was a major episode in the long and ongoing struggle between financial/merchant interests and farmers. Captain Shays and the farmers he led succeeded in closing down courts that were preparing to evict debt-ridden farmers from their lands. The group also stormed the Springfield arsenal in their attempt to take over the government of Massachusetts.*

reads a subhead in *The History of the United States*.) While some texts recognize that slave traders made enormous profits, they do not say that it was a global enterprise involving "traders" on four continents — Europe, Africa and North and South America. Nor do they report that profits from the slave trade were invested in banking, insurance, ship building and heavy industry in old and New England, financing the industrial revolution in England and prompting the commercial and industrial development of New England and the middle colonies — two areas that all texts imply were free of any relation to slavery, a Southern institution.

Women receive similar short shrift. Native American women are represented by stories about Pocahontas and Sacajawea, two collaborators who were more victims than heroes. There is nothing about the position of Native women in their own societies, usually far freer of sexism than other cultures. White women — or at least the minority of white women who were not indentured servants — are usually given a nod; one text calls colonial women "fortunate" because they could "easily" find husbands. The oppression suffered by free white women, the even worse lot of indentured white women and of all Black women (free, indentured or enslaved) is barely suggested. Moreover, women's dynamic role in social history is unrecognized. Thus women and the conjugal family as the prime producer before the Industrial Revolution, women as resisters and organizers against British imperialism (The Daughters of Liberty), and as the chief organizers and fund-raisers of the abolition movement are barely acknowledged.

Social Justice—The Link

Linking all of the Project's other concerns is the question of social justice and the struggle to obtain it. The texts' treatment of social change movements is key, since much of U.S. history consists of the struggles of various groups seeking equity. Such struggles, however, are either misrepresented or ignored in today's texts. The Project has found, for example, that texts can't even seem to bring themselves to mention that the American Revolution was, in large part, a mass movement of people that challenged the colonial system of social and economic injustice. If anything, current texts are even more conservative than those of the past. Texts used to describe the Boston Massacre as a terrible event in which vicious British soldiers fired on innocent protesting citizens; it was regarded as the symbolic spark that lit the fires of the Revolution. Current histories seem more concerned with criticizing the "unruly" behavior of the protestors than with analyzing the causes of the protest. Texts now suggest that "an angry mob" provoked the British soldiers to justifiable violence, and they approvingly cite John Adams, who successfully defended the soldiers when they were put on trial.

Significantly, texts seem to make a deliberate attempt to suggest that after the American Revolution, legitimate change occurs *only* through the ballot. In fact, most changes occur because of mass efforts and protests; these changes may or may not be formally legitimized by the legislative and/or electoral process.

In a similar fashion, texts legitimize war as *the* way to settle conflict. They endorse military solutions without suggesting that other alternatives are available.

"Much of our history," notes Bedell, "is the struggle between the haves and the have nots, but you would never know this from the texts. You would also never know that there have always been mass protest movements through which

people have attempted to attain social justice." She cites as an example farmers' protests against domination by financial and merchant interests that go back to colonial days and continue through the pre-Civil War era up to the present day. These encompass the dramatic stories of the North Carolina "Regulators"; the Massachusetts rebellion led by Revolutionary War veteran Captain Daniel Shays; the guerrilla armies of the "Calico Indians" in the New York anti-rent strikes of the early nineteenth century; the formation of the Farmers Alliance and other rural protest groups at the turn of the century; the farmer-labor parties during the depression of the 1930s and the Farmer's Alliance of the 1980s. "These protests have everything going for them — drama, popular democracy, good guys on horses against city slickers in striped suits," says Bedell, "but there is hardly a word about them in these texts."

Such omissions may be due to ignorance and to the fact that there is an almost incestuous body of knowledge that gets transmitted from edition to edition and from one text to another. When discussing the American Revolution, for instance, almost every text quotes John Adams as stating that one-third of the people were for the Revolution, one-third were against it and one-third were neutral. In reality, however, Adams made this statement when discussing public sentiment about the *French* Revolution.

Textbook errors and omissions are also related to the process by which texts are produced. Even though authorship is credited to prominent historians or social studies teachers and administrators, much of the actual work is done by the publishers' overworked and underpaid editorial staff, which edits and modifies the original manuscript to create a work that will be acceptable in the marketplace, particularly in large markets like Texas and California (see Vol. 14, No. 5). In the process, both style and content suffer. "Their mindlessness boggles the mind," says Bedell. "It has been said that textbook publishers are responding to teachers' demands for materials at lower and lower literacy levels, but it's shocking that leading historians put their names to these books."

Stylistic qualities aside, the contents often seem completely divorced from their purported author's concerns. Merle Curti, for instance, is the author of *Peace or War, The American Struggle* (Norton, 1936), one of the best histories of the U.S. peace movement, says Bedell, who uses his book as a major reference in determining how well a particular textbook treats that topic. She was therefore startled to find, when evaluating *Rise of the American Nation*, which Curti co-authored, that it says next to nothing on the subject. The only reference to the movement against the Vietnam War, for instance, is a bland paragraph noting that "growing numbers of Americans" were "critical" of the war; it gives no indication of the massive nature of the resistance to the war. (In fact, the space all books give to the anti-Vietnam war movement seems to be diminishing as we move further into the 1980s.)

The illustrations in these books often emphasize the texts' misleading messages. Consider, for example, the illustrations for the chapters on slavery in

Textbook illustrations frequently misrepresent historical realities. Two illustrations from chapters on slavery in This Is America's Story *are a case in point. The caption for the bucolic picture above states that "[l]arge numbers of slaves worked the cotton fields" but it shows two pensive young women who look more like models; it's worth noting too that this scene was in fact painted by Winslow Homer in 1876, more than a decade after slavery ended. The illustration below, purportedly of a slave auction at which "family members could be sold to different buyers," looks more like a depiction of a family outing.*

The illustration above, labeled "The Impact of Reconstruction," could have come from Gone with the Wind, *but it is a chapter opening from* The Challenge of Freedom. *Students seeing this melodramatic picture—a somber study in browns and greys—would never guess that Reconstruction was a time, however brief, when important efforts were made for racial equality and social progress.*

This Is America's Story, which would convince children that slavery was just one big technicolor extravaganza. One illustration, a painting in a "realistic" style, shows two comely Black teenagers (who look more like models for the latest high-fashion "peasant look") working alone in a picturesque cotton field. Another picture directly contradicts its caption, which reads: "One of the worst fears of slaves was that their families would be broken up. At slave auctions family members could be sold to different buyers. Here a family waits to be sold at a slave market." The family looks, however, as if it is waiting for a movie theater to open. Most of the women—all immaculately and fetchingly dressed—seem rather bored; one woman smiles pleasantly at her child. At the side sits a Black man looking, at most, somewhat annoyed. The section is further illuminated by a charming four-color depiction of a "plantation house." As Frances FitzGerald notes in her provocative study of textbooks (*America Revised*, Atlantic-Little, Brown, 1979), the texts' lavish use of four-color "art" often leads to some irony: "The color photographs of junkyards or polluted rivers look as enticing as *Gourmet*'s photographs of food."

The texts of the past—racist, sexist and classist as they were—had a definite narrative, an underlying ideology, Dodson reports. America was the land of the free, the home of the brave, a Utopia that was also in the process of "progressing." Events of the 1960s and early 70s—the Civil Rights movement, Vietnam, Watergate, political assassinations, the women's movement—made it clear that this ideology does not reflect a reality in which various classes and groups struggle to attain the opportunities promised in the basic documents of U.S. history, especially the Declaration of Independence. Instead of rethinking basic concepts, however, textbook authors and editors have resorted to a bandaid approach, tacking on a bit about women here, a bit about Blacks, Asian Americans, Native Americans and Hispanics there. These patches look—and are—extraneous to the central story, which remains primarily that of a "mainstream" U.S. whose most visible—and important—inhabitants are white males, or at least those who are powerful and rich.

"This may be the best of all possible times to look at textbooks' messages," notes Bedell. "History textbooks are at a point of transition because they are reflecting this country's current crisis of national identity, of national purpose. What direction will they take? They can go back to the nationalistic, monolithic Anglo-Saxon view of history that existed before the 1960s or they can go forward to embrace a broader concern for issues of social justice that reflect the most idealistic aspects of our history." □

Books Analyzed

Bednarz, Robert S. et al. *The Americans*, Riverside, 1982. Elementary text.

Boorstin, Daniel et al. *History of the United States*, Ginn, 1983. A leading conservative textbook written by the Librarian of Congress, the most prestigious historian in the country.

Bragdon, Henry W. el al. *History of a Free People,* Macmillan, revised 1981. This the #2 best-seller.

Cangemi, Joann. *Our History*, Holt, 1983. A leading elementary text.

Curti, Merle and Lewis Paul Todd. *Rise of the American Nation*, Harcourt, 1981. The #1 seller; in print since 1954.

Graff, Henry F. *This Great Nation*, Riverside, 1983. An important "new" book from a leading educational press by the author of *The Free and the Brave*, which it replaces. One of the five top sellers.

Risjord, Norman and Jerry L. Haywood. *History of the U.S.* (two volumes), Holt, 1983. One of the five top sellers.

Schwartz, Melvin and John O'Connor. *The New Exploring American History*, Globe, 1981. A fifth-grade book which sells for low-level literacy students in senior high. Marketed for inner-city schools.

Smith, Lew. *The American Dream*, Scott, Foresman, 1983. Middle-level, middle-seller.

Sobel, Robert et al. *The Challenges of Freedom*, Laidlaw, 1981. An important "new" book from a leading educational press.

Ver Steeg, Clarence and Richard Hofstadter. *A People and a Nation*, Harper & Row, 1981. An important book that has sold well over the years.

Wilder, Howard et al. *This Is America's Story*, Houghton Mifflin, 1983, 5th ed. One of the nation's five top-sellers.

About the Author

RUTH CHARNES, managing editor of this Bulletin, *is aghast to consider what the messages were in the textbooks she read.*

A family's painful experiences with the school use of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn *are detailed*

Huck Finn: Two Generations of Pain

By Margot Allen

My adventure with *Huckleberry Finn* has been a stinging and bitter one, one which has left a dull pain that spans two generations, mine and my son's.

Today, during the book's centenary, while Mark Twain specialists and scholars laud this book as one of the "most profound, most transcendent literary images the human imagination has ever come up with,"* it is easy for me to recall a time nearly 30 years ago, a time that seemed like an eternity of teeth-clenching and inner contortions that threatened to betray my extreme discomfort when reading this book in the ninth grade. Had I shared my tension and stress with my teacher or classmates, I would have literally frightened them, and my Blackness would have stood out even more than it did as I read the book along with everyone else and kept my feelings in check.

But such negative experiences with *Huck Finn* are not a thing of the past. Just three years ago, when my son was thirteen, he too was victimized by those same negative images. I am sharing our story with you now in the hopes that teachers, school administrators and parents will be more sensitive to the negative racial elements of this book and will begin to question, research and speak out regarding how and when this book can best be taught.

My story begins with two different classroom experiences some 30 years apart. In both accounts I focus on feelings and reactions because I believe these represent the very foundation upon which most complaints about the book rest. They are personal but real, and to ignore these feelings, to intellectualize them or to misconstrue them as an excuse to charge censorship, would be to continue with a status quo that oppresses people of color. We need to come to grips with *Huck Finn*'s powerful imagery and the *feelings* evoked by those images.

An Introduction to *Huck*

I was first introduced to *Huck Finn* in 1957. I was thirteen and in the ninth grade of a large, middle-class, suburban, predominantly white high school in Portland, Oregon. I was the only Black student in the class. When *Huck Finn* was assigned, there was no advance preparation; we simply started to read the book, a classic whose name held a familiar—and friendly—ring for most students. As we began to get into the story, however, the dialect alone made me feel uneasy. And as we continued, I began to be apprehensive, to fear being singled out, being put on the spot, being ridiculed or made fun of because of my color, and only because of my color! It was the exact same feeling I'd had as a child when a supposedly "fun game" turned into a hurting one. The feelings that I had as a ninth grader reading *Huck Finn* very much resembled those that I had as a child playing "eenie, meenie, minie, moe: catch a ___ by the toe." While it never occurred to me to refuse to play such games, I would pray like the dickens that no one would use that awful word—the very word my parents had taught me was used only by people who were ignorant or of low moral character. And there it was, in print, that word, staring me in the face over and over again throughout the entire book.

I need not tell you that I hated the book! Yet, while we read it, I pretended that it didn't bother me. I hid, from my teacher and my classmates, the tension, discomfort and hurt I would feel every time I heard that word or watched the class laugh at Jim and felt some white youngster's stare being directed my way, as if to say, "Hey, it's you and your kind we're talking about in this book." I think the hardest part was keeping my composure while being stared at. Somehow I thought that a blank face would protect me from not only this book's offensiveness and open insults, but the silent indicting, accusing and sometimes apologetic stares of my classmates. After all, the very last thing I wanted anyone to think was that I was ashamed of being Black, even though I could not identify with Jim or other Blacks in the novel.

I suffered silently through the reading of *Huck Finn*; at times, I attempted to fake a certain easiness with the book that I thought my classmates had. I learned very little from this experience about literature, the antebellum South or slavery. I leaned precious little, if anything, about the novel as a form and the elements of irony and satire.

I was so glad to move on to something else that I completely suppressed the experience (a not uncommon experience for Black people)—until my son ran into *Huck Finn* in his English class three years ago. (*Huck Finn* was one of the core books in the ninth-grade English curriculum of the State College Area Intermediate High School in State College, Pa., a small college town that is, incidentally, the home of Penn State University.) My son, the only Black youngster

*The comment of novelist John Barth at the Conference on American Comedy: A Celebration of 100 Years of *Huckleberry Finn*, held at Pennsylvania State University, April 26-28. A report on the conference, organized by John Bryant and Augustus Kolich, appeared in the last *Bulletin*.

in his class, was asked by his teacher to read the part of Jim aloud. When a curious white youngster immediately asked why he was selected, the teacher replied, "He has the perfect voice for it." At that, the class laughed. My son was humiliated, though he, too, tried to hide his feelings, just as I had so many years before. After class a number of his friends came up to him and made comments like, "Gee, I'm sorry, the teacher's a real jerk." Others were not so supportive. One child said, "That must tell you what the teacher thinks of you," and there were those who took the opportunity to snicker "nigger" under their breath to him.

Greatly distressed by my son's experience, I called the Vice-Principal who, in turn, had the teacher call me later that same morning. In our discussion, I asked why she chose my son to read Jim's part and told her emphatically that I did not want him to read that part. The teacher reported that in years past, whenever she had Black students in her class, she'd asked them to read Jim's part and without exception, they had been "proud" to do so. (She also said that she felt that since slavery was a part of the Black heritage, my son should be proud to authenticate that history by reading Jim's part aloud ... and after all, since he is Black, he could read the part better than the white students.)

Use of *Huck Finn* Questioned

Incensed by this teacher's lack of sensitivity and understanding, I wrote to the State College Area Intermediate High School asking that *Huck Finn* be immediately discontinued as required reading. I felt that any book that leads a teacher to openly discriminate and to offend a student should be seriously questioned for its appropriateness as a tool of instruction. I also questioned the real educational value of *Huck Finn* as it was currently taught.

The Principal responded immediately to my letter by pulling my son out of English class and sending him to the library where he was instructed to work on something else. When the Principal called to tell me of his actions, I did not immediately object to his taking my son out of class because I was more concerned as to what the school's response was going to be to my request to have the book discontinued as required reading. Our phone conversation was very brief, however, and the Principal said very little beyond informing me that the forms needed to challenge class materials were being mailed to me.

In retrospect, the school's first action was awkward at best, perhaps symptomatic of the staff's inexperience in dealing with matters relating to race. Had officials been more willing to discuss the "incident," it certainly would have gone a long way towards reducing the racial tension and suspicion on both sides which, in turn, may have had an ameliorative effect on the final resolution of this matter. Since this was not the case, I had no alternative but to proceed to formally challenge the book's use. In effect, the battlelines were drawn before there was ample opportunity to discuss the nature of the conflict or even establish a climate for discussion.

Fortunately, Christmas vacation intervened, providing time to step back from the situation, to reflect and to do some research in this area. I had, however, no further contact with the Principal, the teacher or any of the school district officials until March of 1982, when the paperwork detailing objections to the book was formally submitted to the district. (The "Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of a Book" was a one-page questionnaire asking for specific examples from the book for each stated objection. I gave seven objections and the completed form was some five pages long. I am grateful that I had the expert assistance of Dr. Jane Madsen, a professor of

More on the Study...

By Beryle Banfield

As noted in the accompanying article, the Study Group appointed by the State College Area School District attempted to determine how reading *Huck Finn* affected ninth-grade students' attitudes toward African Americans.

The article points out that serious questions have been raised about the fact that the Study seemed to suggest—in the face of evidence to the contrary—that reading the novel leads to positive attitudes by whites toward Blacks. In an earlier article (Vol. 15, No. 4), it was noted that Professor Jane Madsen of Penn State had criticized the test methodology as seriously flawed and attacked it, in part, for basing its findings only on white students. Other even more serious questions, however, must be raised about the study.

The Study Group employed a four-part test in a series of pre- and post-reading situations. The test consisted of four parts—three were so-called "objective" tests (*i.e.*, multiple-choice questions); the fourth part asked for brief essay responses to three specific questions. Two of the instruments (both multiple choice) were variations of standardized tests used to determine racial attitudes. (They asked, for instance, that students indicate how they "think and feel" about various situations in which race was a factor, *e.g.*, "A Black family moves next door. . . .") Dr. Madsen pointed out recently that one of these instruments—a Simplified Attitude Scale—had apparently never been validated for ninth grade students; this calls into question all conclusions based on this portion of the Study.

While such general attitudinal tests have their own problems, in this case it is the other two instruments—both designed by the Study Group—that give rise to the most troubling concerns. Some of these have to do with the basic assumptions of those who developed the instruments and analyzed the results. Others have to do with the perceptions of white America and the kinds of attitudes and behaviors on the part of Black people with which they are most comfortable.

The multiple-choice questionnaire was designed to determine student attitudes about "the many crucial issues raised . . . around the matter of race." The test developers identify these issues as "friendship, loyalty, integrity, compassion, and transcendence." Obviously, they were operating on the assumption that *race* rather than *racism* is the issue. This assumption ignores the fact that "intercultural understanding" cannot exist without an understanding of racism and how it functions in a society.

This section has 18 questions. Three possible responses—rated positive, negative or neutral by the Study Group—are given for each question. A critical question deals with Mark Twain's frequent reference to Blacks as "niggers." The "positive" response is that "at the time the novel took place the term was commonly used to refer to all Blacks." There is no response that indicates the truth—that the term "nigger" was

meant as a term of opprobrium in those times and that it was an example of the racist tenor of the period.

A second question deals with the famous "Anyone killed?"/"No'm. Killed a nigger" exchange. This passage has been cited by *Huck Finn* enthusiasts as a satiric gem, illustrating how completely people of the time viewed Black people as non-persons. Yet the desired response to this question is that Huck is pretending to be prejudiced so that he will not be suspected of trying to rescue Jim!

The essay questions present still greater problems. The three questions asked were: (1) Discuss Jim's three most important character traits. (2) How has the reading of *Huckleberry Finn* affected your attitude toward Blacks? Explain. (3) Is the use of the term "nigger" offensive in this novel? Why? Why not?

Essays receiving high marks were those which "reflected a positive racial attitude." A positive racial attitude was identified by the use of such words and phrases as "loyal, trustworthy, fatherly, decent, 'noble savage' [!], intelligent, patient, friendly, a good friend, caring." A look at a highly rated response to the first question is instructive:

> Jim's three most important character traits are his kind heart, his nobility, and his ability to father. He is kind because he's been treated poorly so he should treat people nice and lovingly because he has the ability to turn the other cheek. He is noble because at the end of the book he gives up his freedom to save Tom Sawyer's life. He is like a father figure to Huck because on the raft and all the times they've shared he helped Huck through it.

What this student is describing is the classic stereotype of the faithful slave (identified by Sterling A. Brown and others)—always loyal, always dependable, always willing to make the ultimate sacrifice! Jim is part of a literary tradition in which "noble" Black adults are willing to die for a young white "master." In another highly rated essay, Jim is described as a kind and patient person who would protect Huck if he needed it.

The test did indicate that reading *Huck Finn* doesn't automatically lead to even these "positive" attitudes. One student wrote:

> Jim's three most important character traits are: a dumb nigger run away from his rightful owner, a typical slave bent on only freeing himself, and unknowing and uncaring to other peoples [sic] feelings, including fellow niggers.

At least this response was rated "Low."

We must ask what exactly were the racial attitudes that were affected by the reading of *Huckleberry Finn*. Is the "positive" reaction to Jim because he was after all a servile Black functioning for the comfort and protection and amusement of whites? Is this really the type of attitude that will lead to greater intercultural harmony? Is it possible that the white students who viewed Jim positively did so because his is the posture that most whites would have Blacks assume? (How would these same students react to Henry Highland Garnet, Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner and Denmark Vesey—all strong Black men who were unswerving in their fight for liberation?)

It is unfortunate that this extremely flawed study has been used to justify the continued use of *Huck Finn* with ninth graders.

education at Penn State, whose specialty is identifying racism and sexism in children's literature.)

In April, my husband and I participated in two rather heated meetings involving the Supervisor of Secondary Education and the District English Coordinator. During these discussions, while apologies were offered for the teacher's blunder (the words "stupidity" and "insensitivity" were used) and for the embarrassment and pain it caused our son, neither the Supervisor nor the English Coordinator could understand that the teacher's remarks were, in and of themselves, racist and discriminatory in nature.

In fact, the English Coordinator, who spent a good deal of time explaining the desired educational objectives involved in teaching the book, preferred that we avoid any discussion regarding the teacher's competence. We were asked to focus our concerns *solely* on the book. That focus led to an agreement between the School District and ourselves to put our "Request for Reconsideration" on hold while a Study Group was formed to identify the positive and negative effects of reading *Huck Finn* at the ninth-grade level. I consented to be part of the Study Group because the Supervisor of Secondary Education seemed to be very empathetic about our concerns, and both my husband and I had every hope that the issue would be resolved to our satisfaction. (The English Coordinator, however, continued to defend the book's literary and educational value.)

In the initial meetings of this Study Group, I was adamant in expressing my feeling that any book that permits an otherwise competent teacher to openly discriminate in class should not be required reading. My inclination was still to find fault with the book rather than the teacher; this may have been a strategic and critical error on my part.

During the next 18 months, the Study Group met some 16 times. Eventually—after much struggle—two recommendations were made. They were, very briefly:

(1) To use a book other than *Huck Finn* as required reading for ninth-grade classes but make it available for use in courses for grades eleven and twelve; and

(2) To undertake a comprehensive study of the schools' sensitivity to and treatment of minority groups in the curricula for grades K-12. (A Task Force on Understanding Others was set up to meet this recommendation.)

Racism Not Addressed

Reasonable as these recommendations sound, they unfortunately failed to address the real underlying issue of institutional racism. This often happens when educators over-intellectualize problems rooted in racial prejudice. Whites, in particular, find it very hard to identify, accept and understand their own racism and the way in which institutions, including the educational system, contribute to and perpetuate this racism.

At any rate, pressure from the School District to bring closure to this whole matter resulted in conclusions being drawn from the study that were not totally sound and which warranted further statistical analysis. Even worse, the study seemed to suggest (in the face of evidence to the contrary) that reading *Huck Finn* did not encourage stereotypic thinking in ninth graders. This study, which, to my dismay, bears my name as a group member, has been distributed in a number of arenas, the most significant being the 1983 National Council of Teachers of English Convention.

Significantly, the printed study's recommendation that the book be held for the last two grades of high school was ignored. The School Board stated that it was not the Board's prerogative to decide the grade placement of the book, and that decision was referred to an English

Advisory Committee made up of the English Coordinator and classroom teachers. At a School Board meeting in October, 1983, the final decision was to retain *Huck Finn* in the ninth grade.

The District did give the assurance that, prior to teaching the novel this year, in order to allow parents and youngsters to decide whether they wanted to read the book or not, letters would be sent to all parents informing them that the book had recently come under scrutiny because of the controversy surrounding its negative racial stereotyping of Blacks and its abundant use of racial slurs. The School District never sent such a letter; it later decided to offer *Huck Finn* as one of three titles ninth graders could select for English class. (The other two books were also about adolescence: *Great Expectations* and *A Separate Peace*).

Complaints Filed

After the School Board condoned the continued use of *Huck Finn*, and with the support and urging of Ida Belle Minnie, Education Chairperson of the State NAACP standing committee, I filed formal complaints with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission and the Pennsylvania NAACP. It was clear that my original concerns about the impact of this book on youngsters (both Black and white) had been lost between the cracks of committee bureaucracy and School Board politics. I asked that an investigation be held to ascertain what corrective action had taken place to ensure the appropriateness of teaching methodologies used with this book, and the competence and sensitivity of teachers to carry out those methodologies without racial overtones.

I filed my complaint with both organizations in November, 1983. Although my son's experience had occurred more than two years earlier, I felt a compelling need to continue the challenge. Accordingly, I sent copies of my complaint to several legislators and state agencies. I got a supportive response from K. Leroy Irvis, Pennsylvania House Minority Leader, and from the Office of the Secretary of Education. In addition, the NAACP delegated Virginius Thornton, a Black historian, to speak against the continued use of *Huck Finn* at a School Board meeting, but I heard from no one locally—not the School Board President, not a single School Board member, and certainly not the State College Area Superintendent of Schools.

In January 1984, I received a notice from the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, indicating that my complaint had been assigned a docket number. This was encouraging, but everything seemed to be moving at a snail's pace. I felt very much alone and the occasional support from a parent here and a couple of parents there, an English professor here and a psychology professor there, were not enough to brighten what seemed to be a bleak horizon.

Two Supportive Events

Two separate but related events occurred in March of this year to change this entire picture for me. The first of these was reading the article, "*Huckleberry Finn* and the Traditions of Blackface Minstrelsy" in the CIBC *Bulletin* (Vol.15, Nos.1&2). This comprehensive piece, which brought some new historical and scholarly insights to understanding the negative characterization of Jim, underpinned academically many of the concerns that had been expressed nationwide about the book at a more emotional level.

The second thing that happened was that I was asked to participate in a panel on the teaching of *Huck Finn* in the public schools, at the Conference on American Comedy: A Celebration of 100 Years of *Huckleberry Finn*, hosted by Penn State in April (see Vol.15, No.4). The panel presentation resulted in a very extensive and positive dialogue. And, while there was by no means a consensus, there was substantive agreement that indeed there are problems in teaching the novel; that it should be held for use in college or, at the earliest, in the upper grades of high school; and that new teaching strategies *must* be developed to properly teach the novel.

I came out of this conference buoyed and more committed than ever to the belief that no youngsters should be required to read literature which demeans, dehumanizes and caricatures their racial or ethnic heritage. Several years ago, *The Merchant of Venice* was dropped from a State College required reading list for this very reason. Why is *Huck Finn* immune from similar scrutiny?

Currently, the Pennsylvania NAACP Education Committee is fully supportive of my complaint, but the bureaucratic wheels of the Human Relations Commission are moving at a much slower pace. With or without their support, I intend to continue to fight this issue. The State College Area School District hired a new superintendent in July, and I have already written him about my concerns. Dr. Fredrick Woodard, co-author of the *Bulletin*'s article on *Huck Finn*, is conducting new research on the negative racial elements of the book and I do not see how it can be ignored. In addition, Roy L. Austin, a professor of sociology at Penn State, James Stewart, a professor of economics as well as President of the Penn State Forum on Black Affairs (an organization of Black faculty, staff and graduate students), and the aforementioned Jane Madsen recently reviewed the study on "The Effects of Reading *Huckleberry Finn* on the Racial Attitudes of Ninth Grade Students." Their conclusions were such that the Forum's membership voted to issue a public statement affirming that the Study's findings had been published prematurely and were misleading and biased. The statement appeared in the local newspapers and has led to some constructive dialogue between the Black community and the School District. In addition, I understand that the School District's Task Force on Understanding Others, which until this summer had been very inactive, is now meeting again.

Network Needed

There is a need for those who feel as I do to come together and form a strong network to further our cause. I ask those interested in being a part of this network to write me at 101 N. Clover Rd., State College, Pa. 16801. Surely, we can draw upon each others' strengths and share experiences.

Bringing new insights, visions and perspectives to the teaching of *Huck Finn* is no easy matter. The book is cherished; its worth is passed down from professor to graduate student, from teacher to teacher, from teacher to student. But whatever the book's merits, there is a cost to pay in reading it, and unfortunately that cost is borne in large part by young Black students who may experience a complex range and mix of feelings from indifference to anger, from insult to humiliation. (There is also a cost to white students, whose out-dated notions of white superiority are reinforced.) No one has yet proven that the price we pay is reflected in positive educational gains for any student. □

About the Author

MARGOT ALLEN is an activist parent in State College, Pa., and the Academic Coordinator for Penn State's Office of Academic Assistance Program.

CIBC conference grapples with the unmet needs of children of interracial families and counters common myths

Conference Addresses Needs of Interracial Children

A recent CIBC conference on children of interracial families, the first of its kind, pointed up the tremendous unmet need for resources and programs that address the needs of interracial families. In addition, the conference served to counter many negative myths about interracial families: new research indicates that these families—though faced by severe pressures in a racist society—have many strengths.

The two-day conference, attended by both parents and scholars, was widely covered in the media, and media coverage reflected participants' enthusiasm at having an opportunity to share their needs and concerns. (Many participants called it the "most exciting" conference they had ever attended.) The extensive media coverage has led to numerous additional requests from parents and educators seeking information about resources, support groups and future conferences and workshops.

The purpose of the conference was twofold: (1) to examine the development of positive self-identities for interracial children and (2) to develop guidelines and criteria for resources which reflect the reality of interracial families. Envisioned initially as a regional gathering, the conference quickly became a national one, with representatives of seven interracial parents' groups attending from diverse points in the U.S.—Tennessee, Texas, Illinois, California, Pennsylvania and upstate New York. There were also many participants who were not affiliated with organizations who came long distances to attend the conference at their own expense. (Of the 175 parents attending, 58 were from out of state, with an additional 15 from upstate New York.)

Participants heard a summary of the history of interracial unions in this country, presented by Dr. Larry Glasco of the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Glasco described the enactment of anti-miscegenation laws, which were still on the books in 11 states when they were declared unconstitutional in 1967. Dr. Ernest Porterfield, author of *Black and White Mixed Marriages* (Nelson Hall, 1978), gave current statistics on interracial marriages, which increased by a dramatic 155 per cent between 1970 and 1980 (approximately one-third are Black/white marriages).

Dr. Alvin Poussaint of Harvard University and Dr. Joyce Ladner of Howard University addressed identity development in interracial children in a panel titled "The Role of Culture, Ethics and Morals in the Development of Self-Perception." Dr. Poussaint presented findings of a study he conducted of 39 interracial adults; the overwhelming majority of those studied identified as Black but were positive about their interracial background. Dr. Ladner urged parents to address the issue of race identity and racism since interracial children, like other children of color, must cope with racism.

Discussions on Identity

There was lively discussion at several panels regarding the identity of Black/white interracial children; were they Black, Black and white, or interracial/biracial? Although there was a consensus that these children will face racism and that they will be viewed generally by the wider society as Black, there were diverse views on whether the children should be given a Black identity.

Four adults from interracial backgrounds (three from Black/white and one from Black Hispanic/white) spoke about their personal experiences and what advice they would give parents raising interracial children. While panelists came from very different family situations, they had very similar suggestions. They urged parents to expose their children positively to all of the cultures in their background and recommended that the issues of race identity and racism be addressed openly and unambiguously with children.

Participants heard adults from Asian, Hispanic and Native American interracial backgrounds describe their personal experiences, which included both similarities and differences from those of Black/white panelists. Intermarriage has been estimated as high as one-third for these three groups, and there appears to be a greater degree of assimilation into the dominant white culture by interracial children from these backgrounds. However, all speakers felt it very important for parents to teach their children about the culture of the parent of color. They also noted that parents must understand that their children, like children of Black/white backgrounds, will usually be viewed by the wider society as persons of color. Following the panel presentations, participants broke into various discussion groups.

Panels on the second day examined the image of interracial unions in film and literature, including children's literature. This was approached from a cross-cultural perspective, with Brazilian and Cuban literature and films highlighted because these two cultures approach interracial unions positively.

Close to one-third of the participants

Above, Kate Shackford and Emily Leinster, co-directors of the CIBC conference on children of interracial families.

were single parents, and the issues facing single parents of interracial children were addressed in a panel titled "Doing It Alone: Single Parents with Children of Interracial Unions." Panelists spelled out problems confronting any single parent, regardless of the interracial questions, and then went on to delineate ways in which single parents of interracial children could keep their children in contact with both cultures and help them feel good about their identity.

Workshop Conclusions

In the afternoon, participants attended one of five small group workshops: "Play Activities to Promote a Positive Self-Image in Pre-School and Elementary School Children," "Identity and the Adolescent of Interracial Families," "Developing Our Own Resources," "Working with Writers and Publishers," and "Developing Support Networks for Single Parents." Summaries of each workshop were given in the final plenary session and these reports prompted several conclusions:

1. There is a great need for further conferences and workshops, both on the regional and national levels;

2. Publishers and teachers should be made aware of the need for resources and curricula which reflect the existence of interracial families;

3. Parents need to begin to develop their own resources and consider writing their own books;

4. Parents and children need networks for mutual support and information sharing.

The CIBC will be developing a follow-up program with parents, publishers and teachers. The first step in that program is the publication of a special issue of the *Bulletin* on "Children of Interracial Families." This issue, to be published this fall, will give summaries of the major addresses of the conference, provide information on groups of interracial parents, review the few books featuring interracial families, and give suggestions for further follow-up work.

The conference, held June 15-16, 1984, at The Riverside Church in New York City, was organized by the CIBC's Project on Children of Interracial Families and co-sponsored by The Riverside Church, which provided the facilities. The conference was made possible in part by funding from the New York Council for the Humanities.

Inquiries regarding the Project on Children of Interracial Families can be directed to the CIBC, 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10023. □

Software Guidelines

Continued from page 15

Overall content: Software has been developed for a wide variety of content areas from learning the alphabet and telling time to learning physics and preparing for the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Nonetheless, there is a tendency for schools and parents to emphasize math uses and math-oriented software. This can cause the more math anxious (who are disproportionately minorities and women) to avoid computers. Software should be purchased for a variety of topic areas.

Graphics: Colorful graphics are used to make software more interesting. Because of the limitations of many microcomputers, drawings tend toward the representational rather than the realistic. This can easily lead to stereotypes. Check the graphics. Are Asians or Asian Americans, for example, represented by slanted lines for eyes; are there unequal amounts of detail (for instance, are whites drawn with complete features while Blacks have few or no features)?

Language: Language in software and supporting materials—like language in textbooks and literature—can affect perceptions. Is the so-called generic masculine pronoun used when referring to women *and* men? Are racist or other offensive terms used?

Packaging: While what is on the disk is far more important than what is on the packaging, these materials give an important first impression about the software. Check the package to see who and what is portrayed. Publishers are becoming more sensitive about showing girls as well as boys working with computers, but few show children—or adults—of color.

People: The stereotypes and omissions that are offensive in a book are offensive in software as well. If people appear in the software, check to see if characters are of both sexes and racially diverse. See if one sex is passive and the other active, if people of color are included only as "natives" or if they play a variety of non-stereotypic roles. Are older characters included? How are they portrayed? All that we have learned from evaluating books can be applied to software. □

About the Author

PATRICIA CAMPBELL is the Director of Campbell-Kibler Associates, an educational research and evaluation firm located in New York City and Groton, MA. Dr. Campbell's major interests involve computers and equity, and she is delighted when they meet.

With the expansion of computer use in schools, it is important to select materials that encourage equity

Preliminary Guidelines for Selecting Computer Software

By Patricia B. Campbell

As young people spend more time, at school and at home, working with educational (and not so educational) computer software, it becomes increasingly important to assess if—and how well—software promotes equity. Reader response to the *Bulletin*'s article "The Computer Revolution: Guess Who's Left Out?" (Vol. 15, No. 3) reinforced our belief in the pressing need for equity-oriented guidelines.

What follows is an effort to meet that need, but it is *not* a finished set of guidelines. Rather, these concepts are presented for your comments, additions, deletions (and maybe even praise). Please help us revise and refine them. So that we may publish an expanded set of guidelines early in 1985, we would appreciate your response by November 30.

These preliminary guidelines are based on several assumptions. The first is that there is currently no firm distinction between "educational software" and "video games." Many educational software programs ("Aliencounter," "Gulp" and "Face Flash," for example) draw heavily on the design principles of video games, and many of the newer adventure games such as "Zork II" and "Suspended" teach logic and problem-solving skills. Since the lines between "education" and "entertainment" are blurred, these guidelines are designed to cover both.

The second assumption is that, for software, it is more appropriate to look at such areas as violence/nonviolence and passivity/empowerment rather than specific "isms," because there are few people/characters in most educational software. This is not, however, to suggest that criteria for evaluating racism, sexism, ageism and other forms of bias—both in terms of individual characters as well as the program as a whole—are irrelevant. (For example, when one looks at the role violence plays in a piece of software, one should also check to see at whom violence is directed: Women? People of color?)

Areas to Examine

Violence/Nonviolence: Much computer software is based on violence: ships, people, aliens, frogs are destroyed in the name of fun or learning. In addition to endorsing the acceptability of violence, such software reinforces militaristic thinking. Check software for the presence and degree of violence. Non-violent software conveys an important message—and it also attracts a broader range of users.

Reward Context/Structure: Most software provides "rewards" for doing something right, finding the correct answer or following directions. Check the rewards. Are they all related to sports (*e.g.*, getting a home run) and/or to violence (*e.g.*, shooting an enemy), or are there a variety of rewards including attractive graphics, music and "helping." (In one program, the right answer "helps" a monkey climb a tree.) If a touchdown or a basket or a home run are the only rewards offered, there is little incentive for someone not interested in these sports to use the software. And in our society, such traditionally masculine sports rewards make a strong statement about who should, and shouldn't, use computers.

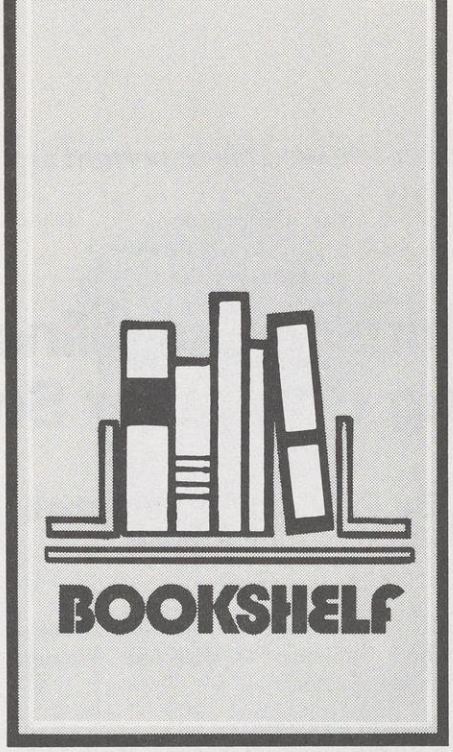
Could this ad be showing Prince Charming at the computer?

Passivity/Empowerment: One of the most important messages young people can learn is that they can, and should, have some control over areas that affect them—that they have the power to change things. Computer software can either reinforce or deny that view. Good software gives users some control; they are able to set some limits and make some decisions about the directions they want to go. Software that "tells" users what to do at every step may teach facts but it also teaches that the computer is in control. Software that encourages decision-making can teach facts *and* foster the tremendously important concept that people control computers, not vice versa.

Competition/Cooperation: In much computer software, competition makes the world—and the software—go 'round. Users compete against each other, against the computer, against imaginary characters. Competition shouldn't be the only model offered for young people. Look for software that encourages cooperation, where users have to work together to solve a problem or to receive a reward.

Failure/Success: In most video games—and the "educational" software based on those games—users can stave off defeat for longer and longer periods but sooner or later the alien will shoot them, the ghost will eat them or they will crash. Success is impossible. One can only hold off failure for as long as possible. The message that you can't succeed is one that young people, particularly young women and minorities, get far too often. Look instead for software that gives the user a chance to be a success.

Continued on page 14



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

A Season of Secrets

by Alison Cragin Herzig and
Jane Lawrence Mali.
Little, Brown, 1983,
$9.95, 193 pages, grades 5-7

Epilepsy and seizure disorders are unlike other physical disabilities, since the disability is invisible until or unless a seizure actually occurs. Nevertheless, the social handicaps are quite real, all of the time.

A Season of Secrets focuses on the sister of Benjy, a six-year-old boy with epilepsy. The writing is excellent and the treatment of epilepsy is, in general, realistic. Even the unfortunate fact that Benjy's over-protective parents do not reveal his epilepsy to anyone, even their own children, is realistic. (When they do discuss Benjy's epilepsy, the explanation is informative and very well written.)

One caution: The book's realism about epileptic seizures may be difficult for children who have never seen and/or experienced them. [Nina E. Yahr]

The Double Life of Pocahontas

by Jean Fritz,
illustrated by Ed Young.
Putnam, 1983,
$9.95, 96 pages, grades 4-7

Pocahontas is one of the handful of Indian names immediately recognizable to most white Americans. The little that is actually known about this young woman can be covered in a few short paragraphs, yet she has been the subject of countless articles, stories and works of non-fiction. (At least a half-dozen children's titles based, in one way or another, on her life, are currently available.) More than any other individual, with the possible exception of Sacagawea, Pocahontas is the embodiment of whites' romantic mythology of the American Indian.

Although most historians now acknowledge that John Smith lied when he told of having been saved by Pocahontas, the popular conception remains unaffected. Jean Fritz's new "biography" will do nothing to change this. She reproduces the standard version, intact, with enough chunks of history of the Jamestown colony thrown in to make it book-length. There is plenty of speculative padding: "She would have" and "She must have" are common phrases. John Smith is portrayed as a hero, and there is more about him in this book than there is about Pocahontas. The Library of Congress CIP data notes: "A biography of the famous American Indian princess, emphasizing her life-long adulation of John Smith and the roles she played in two very different cultures," and that about says it.

The reviews of this book have been uniformly positive. Kirkus called the book "buoyant and affecting." *Hornbook* found it to be "carefully researched," commended Fritz's "Forthright ... disapproval of the exploitation of the native population" (it's hard to say where they found that), and spoke of the "transformation of an Indian princess into an Englishwoman." In fact, there is considerable emphasis on the trickery, savagery and childish naivete of the Native people: "Yet other Indians were not one bit friendly. Once they killed an English boy and shot an arrow right through President Wingfield's beard. Often they lay in the tall grass ... waiting for someone to come through the gate.... Not even a dog could run out safely. Once one did and had forty arrows shot into his body."

And here's another quote: "Perhaps the strangers would leave soon, Powhatan thought.... In the meantime, he might get guns from the strangers. How he marveled at the power of guns!" The suggestion here is of a simple-minded person naively awed by the "power of guns" rather than of someone encountering a new technological achievement. And this is the same man who led a confederacy of 30 tribes, comprised of more than 9, 000 people, in 200 villages. (And it must be noted that the man referred to as "Powhatan" by the English colonists—and everybody else since—was actually named Wahunsonacock. He was the founder of an Algonquian confederacy that also came to be called Powhatan by whites. Powhatan was the name of the town where Wahunsonacock lived.)

And surely it should not *still* be necessary to point out that there has never been such a thing as an Indian king, queen or princess?

It would serve no useful purpose to go through this book page by page, separating fact from fantasy. Suffice it to say that Fritz has added nothing to the little already "known" about Pocahontas, and that this little is treated with neither sensitivity nor insight. [Doris Seale]

Northern Fried Chicken

by Roni Schotter.
Philomel Books (Putnam), 1983,
$10.95, 144 pages, grades 6-10

Betsy Bergman, a Jewish sixteen-year-old who lives in Rhode Island, overcomes her excessive timidity to become active in the 1960's Civil Rights struggle, culminating in the historic March on Washington. Much of the flavor of those naively hopeful times is captured, as are the lifestyle and concerns of a variety of Jewish families. Young readers will learn something about the still-unsettled issues of race discrimination, as well as some of the white, middle-class reasons for the women's liberation movement. (Betsy's mother reads *The Feminine Mystique* and begins to understand and overcome her own fears.)

For some readers, these important pluses will atone for the occasionally awkward and unlikely dialogue, as well

as for the improbable portrait of Charlayne, a Black teenage activist who befriends Betsy. No Black adults appear, and the only active, adult leader of the teenagers is Frieda ("call me Fred"), a lawyer who is the mother of the most politically astute girl.

I wish that the author had offered some insights into the reasons Dr. King's "dream" still has not come true; as presented here, some young readers may question the usefulness of joining the struggle for justice. Although readers are likely to applaud Betsy's conversion to forthright speech and action for her beliefs, they will have to look elsewhere for a meaningful understanding of racism. [Lyla Hoffman]

Strike!

by Barbara Corcoran.
Atheneum, 1983,
$10.95, 157 pages, grades 7-up

Fifteen-year-old Barry Helving has a battering, alcoholic father who abuses him both physically and emotionally. Their conflicts come to a head when father and son take opposite sides on a teacher strike at Barry's school.

Barry supports his teachers, who oppose library censorship, while his father, a School Board member, supports the Committee for a Balanced Curriculum, a group of right-wingers who resort to violence to prove their point.

The book does encourage teenagers to fight for their beliefs. Positive characters include Barry, who resists his dominant father, and strongly feminist Emma, who leads student support for the strike. (On the other hand, Barry's mother is a rather passive victim, nurturing to her son, yet only subtly resistant to her husband.)

The book is seriously flawed because it offers a simplistic solution to the problem of a parent's alcoholism. Mr. Helving beats up his son and then later visits him in the hospital after Barry is further injured during a strike action. Dad is jokingly gentle for a moment, implying that some new understanding has been reached, but he then leaves to get his midday martini.

Barry, moved by this nurturing moment, thinks, "The old man really wasn't all that bad, just pig-headed." The book ends with this optimistic reflection, yet there is little indication that Mr. Helving has begun to deal with his alcoholism, or that his family will seek some much-needed help to deal with him. The book raises an important issue, and then gives false hope that everyone will live happily ever after. [Jan M. Goodman]

The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl

by Virginia Hamilton.
Harper & Row, 1983,
$11.50, 309 pages, grades 6-up

The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl, like much of Hamilton's writing, has the quality of a grand myth. It draws on fragments of stories heard in family and community, memories of African American childhood games and the much suppressed African roots of our culture. It also draws on stories of the slave and Reconstruction eras with Black protagonists. These tales are still highly threatening to white society, so how they are retold is important. They require sensitive, artistic and respectful handling, and Hamilton does a fine job of meeting these criteria in a book that should serve as an inspiration for other African American writers.

Pretty Pearl is a descendant of the

women who are central in certain of the creation myths and grand legends of many African societies. Traveling from the mountains of East-Central Africa to the forests of the United States, her mission is clear and forms the basis of the story. She comes to see about her "darker people" and to try out her powers as a god who can be human one minute and invisible the next. Four ancient spirits travel with her. Symbolically, this is a creative retelling of the sojourn of African peoples in this country, what happened to them, and the spirits and traditions they brought with them that led to the creation of African American spirits and traditions.

There are a couple of areas of ambiguity. One is the repeated use of "them" or "they" or "who" that keeps the "darker people," as Hamilton calls them, enslaved. While it is important not to belabor this point to the detriment of the story, explicitness about the role of white slavers and slavemasters would have made that aspect of the history sharper. The misperceptions young people have about the history of slavery is breathtaking. In addition, Hamilton seems to be writing about an "outlyer community," one of the secret communities established by runaway slaves, but I wonder if the setting is clear enough for children.

And will children understand the "charred black shape hung from a limb of a poplar tree beside a smoldering cabin"? Pretty Pearl says that "Be my poor heart hangin there—yes, it is!" And it is *her* heart, it is my heart, it was my mother's heart as she struggled to tell me what lynching was. But she told me. Hamilton implies, but does not say explicitly, that what hung on the tree was a person. Children should be given the gift of fact. A tough assignment.

Nonetheless, Hamilton gives us many moments of prophetic clarity and she has given us a respectful approximation of the language forms that Black Americans used in the 19th Century. She's included *authentic* phrases and idioms and has done well with the structure and phrasing.

Don't miss *Pretty Pearl*! The book will provide you with magical spiritual moments, some belly laughs. But best, it will introduce you to some very serious African American ancestors and cultural archetypes who inhabit a great history we should all know much better. And the

cover—*Morning Skies* by Romare Bearden—is an *excellent* choice! [Geraldine L. Wilson]

Under the Shadow

by Anne Knowles.
Harper & Row, 1983,
$9.95, 121 pages, grades 5-up

Under the Shadow is an English tale that depicts Mark, a boy with muscular dystrophy, Cathy, the girl who moves into the old house near him, their friendship and a rather cliched "fulfill-the-dream-of-a-crip" plot. It might have been easier to accept the horseback riding theme in this book if it had not been billed as "Mark's dream," a supposedly impossible dream. In fact, horseback riding is a viable athletic activity for people who use wheelchairs, and it should not be treated as a "once-in-a-lifetime" wish.

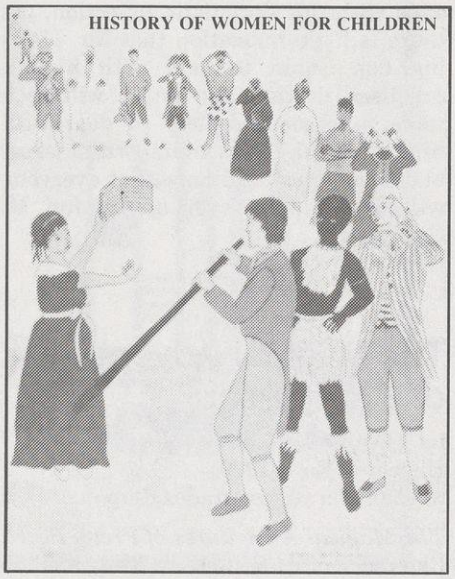
The one positive note in this book is Cathy's first experiencing a friend who happens to be disabled. Most of her encounters with Mark are honest and without evidence of handicapistic attitudes. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same for the rest of the book. It is filled with antiquated attitudes of pity and two stereotypical embittered disabled people.

Although the author's writing style is quite good, I cannot recommend this book. [Caryl Dresher]

History of Women for Children

written and illustrated by
Vivian Sheldon Epstein.
VSE Publishers (212 S. Dexter St., # 6, Denver, CO 80222) 1984,
$3.35 (paper), plus 60¢ postage,
31 pages, grades p.s.-5

This extraordinary book for very young children outlines the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy and the subsequent loss of power and oppression of women through the ages. The concepts are clearly presented and should be extremely helpful to any educator or parent wishing to give children an overview of women's history, particularly in Western societies. A list of women of achievement in various fields—the arts, women's/civil rights, government, etc.—



provides areas for further study.

In addition to its Euro-U.S. emphasis, the book is marred by its illustrations, which do not achieve the sophistication of the text. In addition, attempts to depict various races and societies through the representation of one person emphasize the stereotypic nature of some of the figures. [Ruth Charnes]

Danny

by Margaret Sturgis.
Alyson Publications (P.O. Box 2783, Boston, MA 02208), 1984,
$6.95, 252 pages, grades 7-12

Tom York enjoys teaching English at his suburban high school, but he doesn't enjoy his personal life (he is separated from, but friendly with, his wife and daughter). He is also gay, but tries to avoid dealing with that by immersing himself in teaching. Danny, one of his best students, soon becomes a friend and then a lover of the reluctant Tom.

These events are set against a deteriorating situation in town, where Moral Majoritarians have taken control of the school board and are campaigning to bring back "traditional" education. Tom and Danny are eventually found out. Tom is fired; Danny suspended. The story ends with Tom leaving town to find another job.

This tale of an aggressive teen seducing an older man is unsuccessfully presented. Tom is a cipher compared to Danny, and this—not the difference in ages—is the major problem with the book. Moreover, a subplot regarding other gay teens at the school is never developed. The Moral Majoritarians are faceless, lending a sinister air to their actions, but the political situation as described is just contrived. There are too many missed opportunities in this novel to recommend it. [W. Keith McCoy]

Spirit to Ride the Whirlwind

by Athena V. Lord.
Macmillan, 1981,
$10.95, 205 pages, grades 7-up

This 1981 title—a feminist, pro-labor account of one of the famous Lowell mill strikes—should not have been overlooked in these pages.

Binnie Howe's mother runs a boarding house in Lowell, Mass., in the mid 1830s. These boarding houses made it possible for young women to leave their New England homes for what was imagined to be an exciting, independent life full of opportunity—particularly the chance to make money. The corporations that owned the mills provided the boarding houses, with curfews and strict rules for female workers' behavior, as part of an intense effort to present the experience as morally uplifting and character-building.

Eleven-year-old Binnie fills most of her waking hours with unending chores squeezed in around school, which she finds uninspiring and hateful. She tries to snatch occasional minutes to read—she loves books—but her life provides little time for such luxury. Binnie yearns to work in the mills; only money can help her escape the grim hopelessness in her life.

Finally Binnie does get a chance to work, and the boredom and dreariness of the work depress and frustrate her. She questions the employer's exploitation of women workers and shares her thoughts with her new friend, Packy, an Irish boy a few years older than she. Though anti-Irish prejudice divides her community from his, the two come to understand and like each other. When Packy talks about workers and their rights, he means men, but Binnie argues that women have to work, too. Her feminism arises out of her

own life experience and that of the women around her, drawn in rich historical detail. Eventually, what amounts to a wage reduction precipitates a mill walk-out, that of 1836. Valuable author's notes at the end provide useful additional background.

The characters are distinctive and memorable. Binnie's hardworking, serious mother has a strong sense of justice, which Binnie feels she inherited, and she ends by agreeing that Binnie's money should go towards her own—and not her older brother's—education.

The book brings the milltown setting to life in all its ugliness but manages to convey a sense of hope: while realistically portraying the problems of striking workers who have no income, the author makes clear that with organization comes the power to make change. [Susan L. Wizowaty]

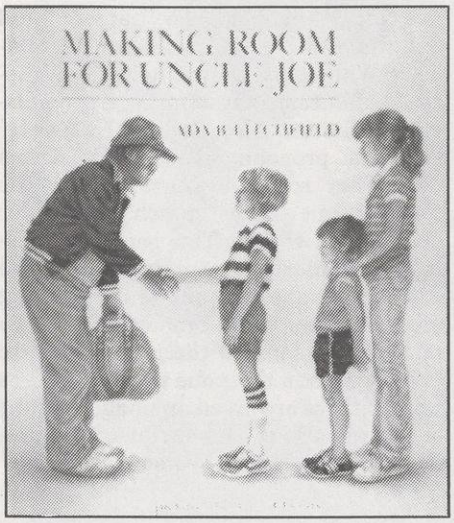
Making Room for Uncle Joe

by Ada B. Litchfield,
illustrated by Gail Owens.
Whitman, 1984,
$8.25, 26 pages, grades 1-3

This well written and sensitively illustrated book describes a family's adjustment when a moderately mentally retarded relative comes to live with them.

When Uncle Joe's State Hospital School closes he comes to live with Dan and his family until a social worker can find him another place to live. Dan's older sister Beth is afraid that her friends will make fun of her and Joe; even well-meaning Dan has his doubts. It's only after five-year-old Amy offers to be friends with Joe that barriers begin to crumble. Dan and his family go on to discover that Joe is not the burden they had feared but a welcome addition. He becomes a listener, teacher and helper—and an accepted member of the family. When Joe's social worker finds him a new apartment and job in a nearby sheltered workshop, no one is happy until the family decides that Joe will stay with them and commute to his job.

The storyline is clear and handles difficult topics (*i.e.*, Down's Syndrome, sheltered workshops, institutionalization) easily and forthrightly. The illustrations also avoid the pitfalls so often seen in de-



picting individuals with Down's Syndrome. This book gives a positive, nonstereotypic portrayal of a situation that will confront an increasing number of families, given the increasing trend to de-institutionalization. *Making Room for Uncle Joe* is a highly recommended book that will go a long way toward easing potentially difficult situations. [Emily Strauss Watson]

Anna Joins In

by Katrin Arnold,
illustrated by Renate Seelig.
Abingdon, 1982,
$9.95, 26 pages, grades pre k-2

Anna is a little girl who has cystic fibrosis, a condition affecting respiration. We see Anna participating in family life, school activities and recreation. She is depicted very naturally, in word and picture, at the dinner table, in school with non-disabled children, with friends and playing by herself. Her therapy and medical treatment are treated as a part of her everyday schedule with no value judgement attached to it.

Unfortunately, Anna participates in an all-white world. The book was originally published in Germany, and it seems likely that the illustrations were taken from the original edition. Moreover, the author presents an almost paternal relationship between Anna and her older brother, who is depicted as policing her, reporting on her activities, etc. The author uses less than positive language, describing Anna as "sick." In addition, this book rambles. In attempting to show Anna "joining in," the author tries to cover too many story lines, especially in a book geared for this age group. [Caryl-Robin Dresher]

Daddy's Girl

by J.D. Landis.
Morrow, 1984,
$9.50, 191 pages, grades 8-up

This tale of a young teenage girl coping with the discovery that her father is having an extramarital affair mocks feminist education in the most misogynist manner, while offering an emotionally dangerous solution to a serious problem.

With each step of the plot, we are subjected to events that are, at best, completely implausible. At the book's start, our protagonist, Jennie, accidentally sees her father in the street, kissing his woman lover. He does not see his daughter, however. The very next day, after having learned the woman's first name from her father's secretary by sheer chance, Jennie leaves school and trails him to the woman's apartment. Once there, she looks up the woman's last name on her mailbox and phones her repeatedly, asking for her father without identifying herself.

We can believe this kind of impulsive teenage behavior (if we try), and there are some fairly well written moments as we learn of Jennie's initial rage and feelings of betrayal. What is far less plausible is her father's response when she confronts him with her knowledge that evening: after an initial denial, he invites his deeply distressed daughter to lunch with him and his lover on the following afternoon, exacting her promise to keep this a secret from her mother.

The father seems oblivious to the distress he has caused his daughter (he also lacks any concern for her missing school). There is never any indication that this turn of events is at all unusual, and we are not made to feel particularly horrified by the father's unfeeling behavior. The lunch itself is exceedingly unrealistic, as Jennie and her father's lover squeeze each other's hands and smile comfortably. The lunch does end disastrously (to the author's credit) and on the following day, Jennie decides to

tell all to her psychologist/author mother, who reveals that she has been aware of the affair, but prefers to tolerate rather than confront it. She communicates the less-than-healthy message to Jennie that she can keep her husband only if she *continues* to trust him! She too seems to be asking Jennie to join her in a conspiracy of silence, which Jennie seems to take in stride.

As if this were not discouraging enough, the father's lover miraculously dumps him, revealing to Jennie in a letter that she has made this decision specifically because of Jennie's needs. Such a resolution to a family crisis can only be seen as the fantasy a child or teenager might have as her family is seeming to come apart. To ask the reader to accept this as reality is unfair.

In the midst of this three-day whirl of events, we are treated to an irrelevant subplot involving Jennie's "feminist" school, in which a ludicrous "feminist" principal constantly makes derogatory and hostile comments about men. The school is, in fact, the complete antithesis of a truly feminist institution.

As a therapist who works with adolescent girls from troubled families, I find this book unhealthy reading. As a former teacher who worked in a feminist school, I am offended by the repeated implications that such schools "emasculate" boys and teach girls to feel superior. Most feminist teachers, male and female, are struggling (against many obstacles) to teach both boys and girls that they are *equal,* not that either sex should reign over the other. [Leonore Gordon]

Someone Special, Just Like You

by Tricia Brown,
photographs by Fran Ortiz.
Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1984,
$11.95, 64 pages, grades ps-1

Directed at preschool children, *Someone Special, Just Like You* describes the activities and interests that disabled children—just like their non-disabled peers—participate in. All of the children photographed are disabled; they represent a broad spectrum of disabilities and racial backgrounds.

The children are shown as active participants, enjoying the happier and sometimes less joyful moments of childhood. What is not shown, however, is disabled children interacting with non-disabled children. Also, the text frequently switches pronoun gender, sometimes using "he," sometimes "she" so that the text does not always "match" the gender of the child shown. This can be confusing, particularly for young children who frequently have difficulty understanding pronoun use. The bibliography is a mixed bag—some of the good books are given less than their due while other less worthy titles are given an undue amount of coverage. This book is flawed but useable. [Emily Strauss Watson]

The Tempering

by Gloria Skurzynski.
Clarion Books, 1983,
$10.95, 178 pages, grades 6-up

Set in the 1912 mill town of Canaan, Pa., this book tells of sixteen-year-old Karl's struggle to define himself as he approaches adulthood. Karl is torn between his lifelong ambition to work in the steel mills and the encouragement of his much-respected teacher Yulyona, who urges him to stay in high school and develop his literary and musical talents.

The Tempering accurately describes a young man's adventures and dilemmas as he searches for self-identity, surrounded by a working-class tradition yet challenged by new ideas. At one point, Karl is tempted to stay in school to win the love of his teacher, but he ultimately chooses to work in the mills, as most of his peers will do. Karl learns the importance of discovering what will make him happy and secure, even if it means he must reckon with the disappointment of someone he loves.

The book is a "period piece" and moves slowly; it is not gripping or particularly exciting. Both male and female characters are strong-willed and assertive, but not engaging to the reader. Even Karl's love for his teacher, though clearly powerful, seems passionless.

The author has drawn upon her father's boyhood adventures for this novel. These adventures may not appeal to today's modern readers, though the book's lessons are timeless. [Jan M. Goodman]

Voyage

by Adele Geras.
Atheneum, 1983,
$10.95, 193 pages, grades 6-up

Voyage portrays the journey of a family of Jewish immigrants who travel by ship from Eastern Europe to New York in 1904. It is good historical fiction, well-written and moving. The reader experiences the hardships, fears and hopes of the immigrants as they approach America, and it is refreshing to read a good book with a strongly Jewish focus.

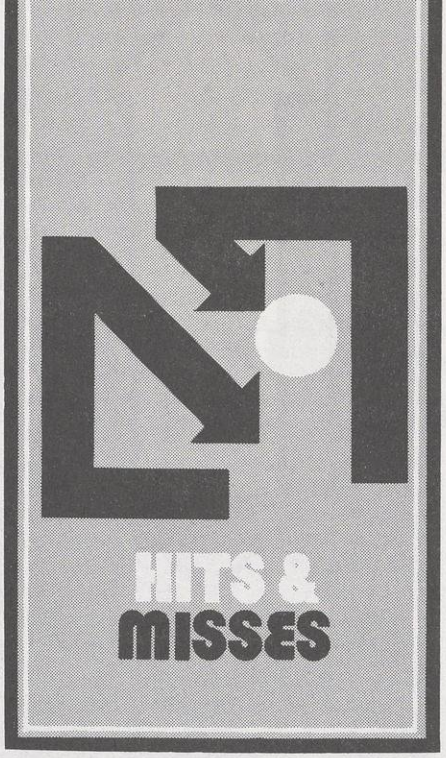
Characters resolve problems amidst their close confinement: Minna gains the courage to confront a nasty boy who has stolen her shy brother's precious hand-carved toy; the elderly Mr. Kaminsky is reluctantly uprooted from his homeland, only to die on board before the ship docks; and Golda is unable to nurse her newborn baby and must ask a non-Jewish woman to provide milk to keep the child alive.

The book does not spare its readers from the pain of the journey and of Jewish European history. Memories of pogroms, and rapes and murders of the Jewish people, are shared as the story unfolds. *Voyage* is recommended for mature readers who can deal with injustice and accept the fact that a book about a long, tedious voyage will not be packed with action. [Jan M. Goodman]

A-B-C-ing: An Action Alphabet

text and photos by Janet Beller.
Crown, 1984,
$8.95, 32 pages, grades ps-k

This ABC is Aggravating (because a woman did it), Backsliding (for a publisher like Crown) and Categorizing (children into the same old sex-roles). The cover shows five active boys, then starts the alphabet-ing text with "acting" and a photo in which a made-up and earringed little girl stands pouring tea for a boy sitting in a chair. The "b" and "c" verbs show active boys "blowing bubbles" and "climbing." "Dancing" shows three little girls as would-be-ballerinas. And so it goes. The sexes are segregated except in the photo that accompanies "quarreling." Oh, yes, it is multicultural. [Lyla Hoffman]



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.

Watermelons Not War!: A Support Book for Parenting in the Nuclear Age

by Kate Cloud, Ellie Deegan and other members of the Nuclear Education Project.
New Society Publishers (4722 Baltimore Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143), 1984, $24.95 hardcover, $9.95 paper, 162 pages

Five mothers answer questions posed by children about nuclear energy and nuclear war. Basic information on nuclear weapons and related issues is presented in readily understandable form. Suggestions for lifestyles dependent on a non-nuclear future are described, and actions and resources for peace are offered. So are parent and child bibliographies. Though not enthusiastic about every one of the children's books listed, we can enthusiastically recommend this book. It is useful for *all* adults who spend time with children, not just parents. [Lyla Hoffman]

No Turning Back: Lesbian and Gay Liberation for the '80's

by Gerre Goodman, George Lakey, Judy Lashof and Erika Thorne.
New Society Publishers (4722 Baltimore Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143), 1983, $16.95 hardcover, $7.95 paper, 152 pages

No Turning Back is an excellent, although somewhat rhetorical and didactic book providing an analysis of gay and lesbian oppression plus strategies for change.

The book began as a paper commissioned by the Movement for a New Society, a network of collectives working towards radical social change. Its authors are four white lesbians and gay men of both working- and middle-class backgrounds, ages twenty-five to forty-three. Since the authors openly acknowledge the limitations of being an all-white collective, it is unfortunate that they did not obtain Third World contributors. The collective's limitations are noticeable in the section on women of color in the chapter on lesbian culture and in the treatment of racism in the chapter on gay male culture.

On the whole, however, the writers are sensitive to the interrelatedness of racism, sexism, classism and the struggles of lesbians and gay men for equality. There is a sophisticated analysis of the ways in which militarism, sexism and heterosexism benefit from the exploitation of people of color, women and gay people. The authors also note the equation this society makes between violence and "manly" behavior and pacifism and homosexuality.

What is also welcome in this book is the inclusion of lesbian and gay oppression into an essentially Marxist perspective; this is a rare occurrence in the U.S. left. The writers even criticize the sexist and heterosexist biases inherent in traditional Marxism, criticism that in some circles is tantamount to heresy.

The chapter on oppression is one of the best in the book, due to the thoroughness with which it presents the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by gays and lesbians. Examples range from institutional oppression in employment, education, religion, medicine and housing to the personal—the impact of loss of child custody, social isolation within family and job environments, internalized homophobia resulting in powerlessness and loss of self esteem.

Heterosexism is targeted as the primary cause of lesbian and gay oppression, and the authors explore its far-reaching effects, including the message that any deviance from established sex-role norms will be either condemned and/or labeled homosexual.

No Turning Back discusses both lesbian and gay male culture and addresses the needs of such diverse groups as lesbian and gay parents, bisexuals, married gays and lesbians, separatists and older gay people. To the authors' credit, there is a high value placed on providing a non-judgmental respect for all these groups in the interests of working together towards a common goal.

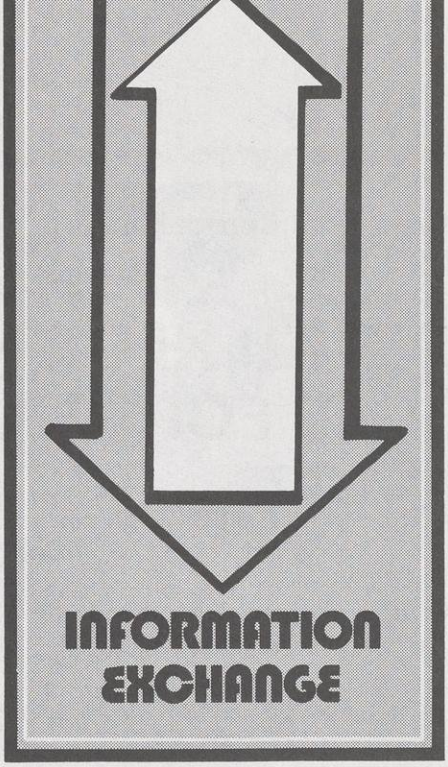
Strategies to combat oppression are multifold, some to be accomplished on a grassroots level, others on an institutional scale. While there is nothing to object to in the book's visions of an egalitarian society, those willing to plough through its rhetoric are probably already in sympathy with its perspective. Had the book been written in a more compelling style, it would have been accessible to a wider audience. [Leonore Gordon]

Now Read On: Recommended Fiction for Young People

by Bob Dixon.
Pluto Press (Unit 10, Spencer Court, 7 Chalcot Road, London NW1 8LH, UK), 1982, £3.95 paper, 148 pages

This selection of 200 fiction titles—presented by age groups—has been chosen with an eye toward those that show a "positive, overall attitude with regard to sex roles, race and social class." Though most titles are British, some works that originated in the U.S. are also included.

The author's Introduction is of particular value. Dixon makes clear his concern about content as well as form and firmly states, "I don't believe it's possible to have a system of aesthetics which excludes ethics." His discussion of values in children's books—and some of the problems involved in reviewing them—will be of special interest to *Bulletin* readers. Dixon's early work—*Catching Them Young* (Vol. 1, *Sex, Race and Class in Children's Fiction* and Vol. 2: *Political Ideas in Children's Fiction*) will also be of interest. Although we don't always agree with Dixon's evaluations, we wholeheartedly share his concerns and admire the clear and forceful way in which he writes about them.



Honey, I Love, a book of poems about a **young Black girl**, praised in Vol. 9, No. 2 of the *Bulletin,* is now available in record format; the poems are narrated by the author, Eloise Greenfield, and by children; there is a jazz accompaniment. The album is available for $6.98 plus $1.50 postage from Honey Productions, Inc., P.O. Box 29077, Washington, D.C. 20017.

In the Sky Over Nagasaki was recommended as a resource for grades 5-8 in the special *Bulletin* on **militarism** (Vol. 13, Nos. 6 & 7). Out-of-print for some time, it is once again available. The 104-page paperback is $3.50 (plus 60¢ postage) from Wilmington College Peace Resource Center, Pyle Center, Box 1183, Wilmington, OH 45177.

Helaine Victoria Press publishes a variety of post cards, posters, bookplates and other items that draw upon **women's history**. (There are, for example, post cards on women and ecology, suffrage and women's rights, Afro American women, various artists, nuclear protest and world peace, etc.) For an illustrated catalog/newsletter, write Helaine Victoria Press, 4080 Dynasty Lane, Martinsville, IN 46151.

"**Kids and Libraries**" is a collection of more than 60 articles published in *Emergency Librarian* during the last decade. Included are feature articles on storytelling, YA materials and services, microcomputers, professionalism, etc. (Many articles deal with Canadian themes.) The 229-page oversize paperback is $25 billed, $20 prepaid. In the U.S., order from Dyad Services, Department 284, P.O. Box C34069, Seattle, WA 98124-1069. In Canada, order from Dyad Services, P.O. Box 46258, Station G, Vancouver, BC V6R.

"What about the Children?" seeks to stimulate global understanding about the threat **nuclear war** poses to children. While not advocating any particular arms control proposal, it suggests a number of specific steps that people can take to prevent a nuclear disaster. The 14-page pamphlet is available for a donation of $1 to cover printing and mailing from Parents and Teachers for Social Responsibility (PTSR), Box 517, Moretown, VT 05660.

The Disability Rag, a new journal on **disability**, publishes letters, articles and stories on handicapism. A year's subscription to the monthly is $5 from *The Disability Rag*, Box 145, Louisville, KY 40201.

The Whole Again Resource Guide is an annotated listing of over 1,600 periodicals and resources for "people-saving, **planet-saving** alternatives." The 315-page paperback is $12.95 plus $1.50 for postage and handling (there is a 15 per cent library discount) from SourceNet, P.O. Box 6767, Santa Barbara, CA 93111.

"Going for the Gold: The Story of Black Women in Sports" consists of a 48-page book and 23-minute film. Featured are brief biographical sketches of outstanding **Black women athletes**. The book also contains sections on training and nutrition. The film is available on a loan basis from Modern Talking Pictures, 5000 Park St. N., St. Petersburg, FL 33709; the book can be obtained from Ken Bentley, Carnation Co., 5045 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036.

The New Song Library is a collection of feminist and other **progressive political songs** and tapes, records, lyric sheets and song books. In addition to making the collection available to visitors, the staff will attempt to meet the needs of those who write or call. For more information on services and fees, contact executive director Johanna Halbeisen, P.O. Box 295, Northampton, MA 01061; (413) 586-9485.

"Facing the Facts" is a set of flip charts on the arms race; they cover nuclear weapons, the costs of the **arms race** and the freeze. The set includes 35 charts plus material to assist in making presentations. The complete set is $55 (postage included) from Traprock Peace Center, Keets Rd., Deerfield, MA 01342.

The Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (CCHW) serves groups, individuals and small municipalities working to solve **hazardous waste** problems. It maintains an outreach program, crisis center, speakers' bureau, library and resource lists; it also publishes various materials including *Love Canal: My Story* by CCHW president Lois Marie Gibbs ($12.95 plus $1 postage). To order or obtain more information, write CCHW, P.O. Box 7097, Arlington, VA 22207.

"Resources and References for **Sex-Fair** Vocational Education" lists over 600 items for educators dealing with gender equity in vocational education. Sections include administrative resources, instructional resources, materials for parent/community involvement and more. The 126-page paperback is $7.50 (prepaid) from the Order Department, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1855 Folsom St., San Francisco, CA 94103.

"The Guide to Films on **Reproductive Rights**" describes 60 films, video tapes and slideshows on abortion, birth control, lesbian and gay issues, teen pregnancy and parenthood, etc. The guide is $2/copy plus postage. Write the Media Network, 208 W. 13 St., New York, NY 10011.

"Resources for **Affirmative Action**" is an annotated directory of books, periodicals, films, training aids and consultants on equal opportunity. The 190-page paperback by Joan Bartczak Cannon and Ed Smith is $11.95 ($10.95 prepaid). Write Garrett Park Press, Garrett Park, MD 20896.

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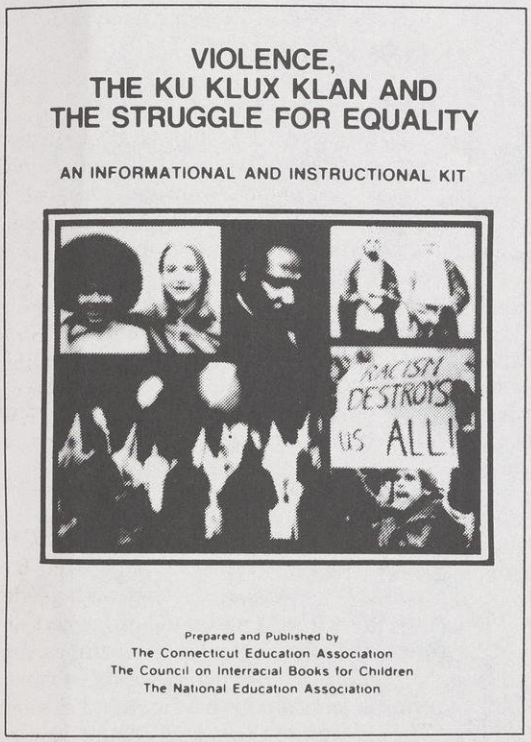

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For a free catalog listing anti-racist, anti-sexist materials, write the CIBC at the address given above.

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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 designed 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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