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SENIOR SCHOLAR, FIRST  
AMENDMENT CENTER

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*civil rights: to learn, play and grow up in a safe environment."*

Joan Duffel  
EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR,  
COMMITTEE  
FOR CHILDREN



# TEACHING TOLERANCE

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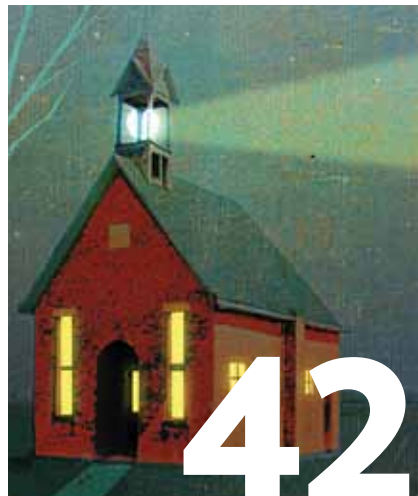
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Valuable new  
lessons from  
Teaching Tolerance



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Southern Poverty Law Center*

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**DESIGN DIRECTOR** Russell Estes

**MANAGING EDITOR** Sean Price

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR** Lisa Ann Williamson

**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT** Victoria Williams

**CURRICULUM DESIGN MANAGER** Thom Ronk

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER** Michelle Marsh Garcia

**DESIGN**

**DESIGNERS** Valerie Downes, Michelle Leland, Scott Phillips

**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT** Sunny Paulk

**PRODUCTION**

**WEB SERVICES DIRECTOR** Ryan King

**WEB CONTENT PRODUCERS** Annah Kelley, Chris Pow

**PRESS PRODUCTION MANAGER** Regina Collins

**WEB TECHNICAL LEAD** Brian Youngblood

**CONTRIBUTORS**

Tracy Beck, Doug Chayka, Jamey Christoph, Barbara Coloroso, Angela Dion, Amy Eckert, Anthony Freda, Christy Goldfinch, Lorna Greene, Vanessa Hua, Camille Jackson, Monica James, Jenson Larson Photography, Betsy Jerome, Darlene Koenig, Susan Estelle Kwas, Anita Kunz, Laura Linn, PJ Loughran, Sean McCollum, Ben Newman, Theresa Paradowski, Milt Priggee, Nirvi Shah, Grace L. Sussman, Ellen Weinstein, Deb Westgate-Silva, Nate Williams, David McKay Wilson, James Yang

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David Wang

**EDITORIAL OFFICE**

400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104

**EDITORIAL FAX** 334/956-8484

**ORDER DEPARTMENT FAX** 334/956-8486

**SUBSCRIPTIONS** 334/956-8200

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*“As we tell stories about the lives of others, we learn how to imagine what another creature might feel in response to various events. At the same time, we identify with the other creature and learn something about ourselves.”*

— MARTHA NUSSBAUM, philosopher

# Imagining the Lives of Others

BY MAUREEN COSTELLO

Like many students, I often found myself sitting amidst strangers in September. Remember how that felt? You worried about so much—whether you would fit in, what group you’d join, how you’d identify yourself and whether you’d find new friends.

In high school, my ninth-grade English teacher began our first class with an icebreaker designed to jump-start the process of turning strangers into friends. First, he asked us to take out a sheet of paper and jot down a list of words to describe ourselves. When we were done, he had us turn to our neighbors and talk about ourselves without using any of the words we had conveniently listed on the looseleaf paper.

At the time, I thought it was a particularly devious way to test our creative literary powers and a troubling omen for the next few years. I’ve since learned to appreciate the exercise. It helped us get beyond labels, those reductionist terms that can establish a quick identity but mask the real person.

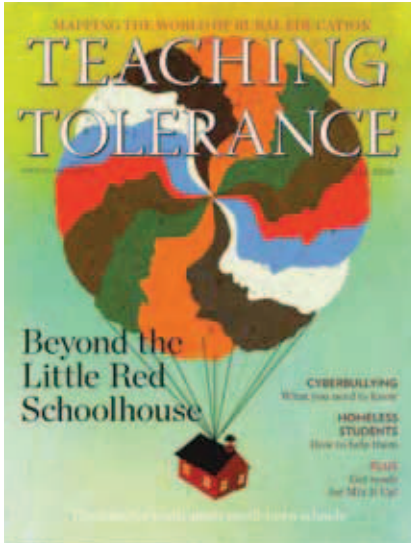
This issue of *Teaching Tolerance* tackles a wide range of apparently unrelated topics, from social media to immigration to bullying. But two common threads weave through the words and unite them all: the idea of empathy and the goal of getting past labels. In the words of Atticus Finch, the stories here urge us and our students to “consider things from [another person’s] point of view ... climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

Through language, technology, institutions and media, our culture reduces people all too easily into conveniently labeled objects—“illegals,” “Muslim terrorists,” “bullies,” “slaves,” “child laborers,” “Facebook friends,” “Special ed.” We hope to provide you with ways to help your students “tell stories about the lives of others,” imagine what it’s like to be another person and recognize the humanity in us all.

And, as always, we’d love to hear what you think. Write to us at [editor@tolerance.org](mailto:editor@tolerance.org).



**MAUREEN COSTELLO** is the director of Teaching Tolerance and a former teacher. She has spent the last 13 years in publishing. Starting at a local newspaper and then at both *Newsweek* and Scholastic in New York, she worked to engage students in current issues.



**Thanks for Your Issue on Rural Schools**  
I have been overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of *Teaching Tolerance* magazine and the Southern Poverty Law Center in providing excellent materials for our kids. However, the fall 2010 issue focusing on rural schools was especially moving for me personally.

In her editor's letter, Maureen Costello distinguishes between two types of rural school settings: first, the one that is a short bus ride from a city; second, the school that is miles and miles away from anywhere. My school typified the second example.

I graduated fifth out of a class of thirteen. The school had been condemned, patched and condemned again. Funds were insufficient to make needed building repairs, so one summer a bunch of parents climbed up on the three-story building and tarred the roof so that we wouldn't have to be bused to a town. But that only got us so far. Once, while I was sitting in study hall during a particularly bad rainstorm, a skylight crashed in. The

school was eventually closed and the children bused to bigger schools.

When I finally made it to college, our undergraduate race and ethnic relations professor prescribed wonderful books like *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood In America* and *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*. But none of the material covered in class mentioned much about the people in rural schools. As Costello's article put it, rural schools "existed in a kind of Edenic landscape." Our professor explained that rural white schools would never experience the level of poverty that urban schools faced. I took her to task, but thank you for finally acknowledging that rural school students face some pretty tough issues and lack of funding as well.

Rev. Lori Peach-Filban  
Vincennes, Ind.

#### 'Bullied' Is A Wake-Up Call

Thank you so much for the film *Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case That Made History*. It speaks so powerfully to the trauma that ongoing harassment causes—and how desperately students need adults to stand up and stop tolerating any form of abuse. My hope is that this film and other efforts to raise awareness will help wake up those who have the "boys will be boys" attitude toward bullying and sexual harassment.  
Alyson Dearborn  
Via the Teaching Tolerance Facebook page

#### Don't Teach Children About Homosexuality

As a Christian mother (married to a Jewish husband), I find it disturbing that every article I have read in *Teaching Tolerance* concerning homosexuality in schools does not allow for



**TEACHING TOLERANCE** challenges teachers to combat the many stereotypes tied to undocumented immigrants. Read "The Human Face of Immigration," starting on p. 20.



## Join our online professional learning community

Our **blog** is a place where teachers interested in anti-bias education come to share experience, join the conversation and support each other.

Our **lessons** help you to promote respect for differences in your classroom.

Our professional development **activities** encourage personal reflection and staff learning.

A place to get the Teaching Tolerance perspective on a wide variety of social justice topics that matter to you and your students

A host of new teachers' voices from inside the classroom

And, every week, a newsletter that brings the best of Teaching Tolerance and anti-bias education to your inbox.

## GO ONLINE TO SIGN UP TODAY

[www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)

families who believe homosexuality is a sin to have a valid viewpoint.

Neither I nor any other Christian believes that bullying is appropriate to anyone for any reason, including bullying homosexuals. However, I agree with the Focus on the Family position that I do not want my 7-year-old to be taught in school specifically about homosexuals. It is simply appropriate to teach children to treat others respectfully.

I'm not sure I agree that there is an underlying "homosexual agenda" in anti-bullying policies that specifically talk about homosexuality. But I do think that, as a parent, I have the right to teach my child that our faith does not find homosexuality appropriate behavior.

Linda Rosenblum

Via the Teaching Tolerance blog

### Why 'Tolerance'? Why Not 'Acceptance'?

I have always wondered why we all call it teaching "tolerance" instead of teaching "acceptance" of others. To me, *tolerance* means putting up with something I do not like or something I disapprove of. Hopefully, we are not sending the message that it's okay to disapprove of others because of their race instead of accepting them for who they are. Tolerance is just not good enough. We should go further and teach acceptance and respect of others.

Nancy Burkley

Via the Teaching Tolerance blog

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *We use "tolerance" in a broad sense, and as a way to counter intolerance. We're often asked this question and always refer to the definition adopted by UNESCO in 1995: "Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being*

*human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace."* We invite readers to find out more about how we understand the word—and what we stand for—at [www.tolerance.org/about](http://www.tolerance.org/about).

### College Students Need To Mix It Up

I was moved to tears (of joy) when I read how some schools used Teaching Tolerance's Mix It Up at Lunch Day. Having recently visited my children's college campus, where I observed students eating lunch in separated racial groups, I thought it would be great if there was a modified version of this program that could be used with college students.

Thanks for the hard work that has been done on this.

Marvin Morgan

Via the Teaching Tolerance blog

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Actually, some colleges already use Mix It Up at Lunch for both students and staff. Be sure to check [www.mixitup.org](http://www.mixitup.org) throughout the year for news, tips and important developments about Mix It Up.*

### Tell Us What You Think!

Got an opinion about something you see in *Teaching Tolerance* magazine or on our website? Email us at [editor@tolerance.org](mailto:editor@tolerance.org). Please put "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Or mail a letter to 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104.

WHY I TEACH

A woman wearing a pink hood, glasses, a dark purple coat, and a striped scarf is sitting on a wooden fence. She is looking off to the side with a slight smile. The background is a vast field of dry grass under a cloudy sky.

# Giving Students Room to Run

IN THE THIRD GRADE, NEAR THE END OF WORLD WAR II, I learned why I wanted to be a teacher.

Mrs. Wright, a woman in her late 50s (or so it seemed to an 8-year-old) taught me what every child needs to know. And I don't mean grammar or multiplication tables or how to sit quietly in our chairs, which were bolted to the floor.

Mrs. Wright was austere in appearance, wearing beige two-piece suits, sensible shoes and a white blouse with a jabot fluff held securely by an oval cameo pin. She was a gentle, supportive and knowledgeable person who was obviously born to be a teacher. Her voice never rose in anger or frustration. Her pleasant, plain face, framed by bobbed silver hair, never displayed anger or disappointment.

And in the back of the room, in seat seven of row six, sat Joel, an active 7-year-old with dark unruly hair, lopsided glasses and fidgeting hands. He spoke with a decided lisp, although he did not speak to the rest of us often. Joel was in our classroom, but he was not in our "class." A mathematical genius, he was a long-time member of a national quiz show featuring children with exceptional intellectual ability. Joel's aptitude for mathematics was amazing, even to those of us who didn't know what calculus or trigonometry meant. He was taking math classes through the local high school and some college-level classes as well. But he was taking those classes while sitting in our third-grade classroom.

Today, Joel would be identified as ADHD, or perhaps even as autistic. Back then he followed a peculiar ritual. He would look at his "homework," whisper something to himself, get up, run around the perimeter of the classroom at full speed two or three times and then slide into his seat and write down the answer. With 10 to 15 problems on the page, Joel spent most of his time running around the classroom. Meanwhile, we sat quietly, participating in reading groups or individual work.

Finally, after three or four weeks, one of the children apparently had had enough, either of sitting quietly or of watching Joel whiz around the room.

"Mrs. Wright," she asked, "why is it that we have to stay in our seats to do our work, and we have to mostly not talk to our friends, but Joel gets to run around and around and around and talk to himself even when he is supposed to be doing his seat work? Why? How come he gets to do that?"

Without even a pause Mrs. Wright replied, "Well, remember how we talked about how some of us learn to read very quickly, and some of us take a little longer, and some of us have very small voices and some of us have very big voices—because we are different, but we are all special. You know that Joel is very special in doing things with numbers. He is doing many things we don't even understand, things like

calculus and trigonometry. Joel can do those things because his mind works very, very fast. In fact, his mind works so fast that sometimes he has to hurry so that his body can keep up with his mind. That's why he runs around the classroom when he is thinking. So he can help his body to keep up with his very fast mind."

"Oh," the little girl said. "I get it—sort of like singing really fast when you are jumping rope really fast."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Wright, "something like that." And everyone went back to work while Joel ran frantically around the room. Today, a student like Joel would have an IEP, but it's unlikely he'd

have a more accommodating classroom. Six decades ago, special education was in its infancy. Special needs students were often shuffled off to private schools, kept at home or shunted into separate rooms. A few unusual savants, like Joel, awkwardly made their way in general ed classrooms.

Joel was different in how he worked, but we respected his differences because Mrs. Wright respected them.

I knew then that if I could make one child feel as comfortable with "specialness" as Joel was made to feel with his, and if I could help one child accept another who was "different" in any way, I would do something really wonderful.

And so that is why I teach. ♦

LORNA GREENE is the professional development coordinator for the Early Childhood Council of Larimer County, Colo. She is also a part-time instructor at Front Range Community College.

**"I knew then that if I could make one child feel as comfortable with 'specialness' as Joel was made to feel with his, and if I could help one child accept another who was 'different' in any way, I would do something really wonderful."**



## Share Your Story

What motivates you to get up each morning and serve the children in our nation's schools? We want to hear from you. Send your submission for the "Why I Teach" column to [editor@teachingtolerance.org](mailto:editor@teachingtolerance.org).

# The Only Boy in Ballet Class

TO TEACH ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF KINDNESS, I FIRST choose a story in which children are putting down others—for example, *The Only Boy in Ballet Class*, by Denise Gruska, or *Oliver Button is a Sissy*, by Tomie dePaola. Before reading the story, the students talk about some of their differences. They might discuss some activities they enjoy and others that they don't. I then give a student a large drawing that symbolizes the boy in the story (this is hand-drawn by me). While we read the story, the student rips a tear into the paper child every time the class hears something



in the story that would be upsetting or hurtful. I usually need to help them think through how they would feel (focusing on the various situations in the book).

After reading the story, I ask the students how they think the child in the story feels with all of his tears and rips. The students usually say “bad” or “yucky.” I ask the students how they would help the little boy who has been ripped. They usually say they would hug him, talk to him, try to provide support, tell a teacher, etc. Then I hand out some little bandages for the students to put on the ripped child and they begin to bandage him. Now I ask them to observe how the little boy looks. They acknowledge

that he looks a little better, but still not great. They say things like “he has lots of boo-boos.”

I explain that no matter how much “fixing up” you do, you never can completely heal the hurt and damage that has been done to someone’s self-esteem. I usually give them an example from my childhood in which somebody teased me or left me out of a game. I explain how I can still remember the hurt others caused me.

I wrap up by reminding students that we need to stop and think before we say something because our comments could hurt another person for life. This is so moving to the students! I leave the little poster of the bandaged child in the room so that the kids can be reminded all year.

**Betsy Jerome**  
Dallas Elementary School  
Dalton, Penn.



## Write for Us

Have you created a classroom activity tied to a social justice topic? Think it would be perfect for Teaching Tolerance? We'll pay \$250 for Activity Exchange items we publish. To see submission guidelines, go to [www.tolerance.org/blog/do-you-teach-about-social-justice-share-us](http://www.tolerance.org/blog/do-you-teach-about-social-justice-share-us).

Send submissions to [editor@tolerance.org](mailto:editor@tolerance.org) with the subject line “Activity Exchange submission.” Or mail your activity to: Teaching Tolerance Activity Exchange 400 Washington Ave. Montgomery, AL 36104

*We only reply to submissions selected for publication.*



# Quilting Our Diverse Classroom

THIRTY-SIX CHILDREN FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS SAT before me in my sixth-grade inner-city class. Daily conflicts arose among them. How was I going to build an environment conducive to learning with this going on? I decided to use a quilt activity. Students would create quilt pieces that told the world something important about themselves. I brought in pieces of felt in various colors, different glues, sequins, glitter and scissors.

This activity had six components. For social studies, the students learned quilting's historical significance for enslaved African-Americans. For science, we explored the adhesive qualities of different glues. For math, we found the perimeter and area of different shapes. For literacy, the students had to write a paragraph explaining what their quilt piece would be about and why it was significant for them. I modeled first, wrote my paragraph, drew my idea, chose felt pieces, then cut them out and glued down my pictorial representation. I displayed my piece and told the class what it meant to me.

I wondered how invested, how self-revealing my students would be. The students worked hard on their squares. One by one, they stood before the group to share their work. Dyesha created a unique square from a pair of jeans that showed her flare for fashion. Robert designed a car. Dante had a complex set of robots. Others showed equal commitment and satisfaction in their finished products. I even found students from other classes sitting quietly in the back of my class creating squares of their own! Somehow the word got around about our class project. I had to call their teachers and ask if they could stay.

After the pieces were done, we calculated the size to find the best place to display our quilt. We hung it with pride.

Did the conflict among my students subside? At first just a little, but the revelations brought new camaraderie among the students. That camaraderie grew over the months. No longer were we distant individuals forced into the same space every day. Each of us was a person with a context



THE MORE THAN WARMTH project is a network made up of children from all over the world. It encourages compassion, understanding and hope by creating quilts for people in need. Lesson plans are available online at [www.morethanwarmth.org/quilting.html](http://www.morethanwarmth.org/quilting.html).

that others could understand. Each child's uniqueness and beauty shone through.

There was an additional benefit. The students' quilt squares guided me in finding curriculum topics that would interest them. That helped me make my lessons more culturally relevant.

**Grace L. Sussman, Ed.D.**

Formerly at Mifflin Elementary School  
Philadelphia

# How Do We All Live Under the Same Sky?

CYNTHIA DEFILICE'S *UNDER THE SAME SKY* FOCUSES ON issues of immigration and migrant workers. The story is told through the eyes of a teenager who struggles to make sense of his world. Content related to history, geography, economics, civics, citizenship and government are all braided into the story.

I begin by reviewing some of the story's essential vocabulary, like *immigrant, migrant worker, agriculture, economics, oppression* and *human rights*. Students write definitions for each of the words and share them. Some students associate migrant worker with birds that migrate. This fits in with our science content. It also leads to the question, What do migrant workers do and why?

After reading the book, I highlight some quotes, like "Just because the law says children can do farm work when they are 14 doesn't mean they should. ...". Then students learn that child labor laws in the United States allow 14-year-olds to work on farms while other jobs have an age limit of 16. Finally, the students explore the question, "Why are there different child labor laws?"

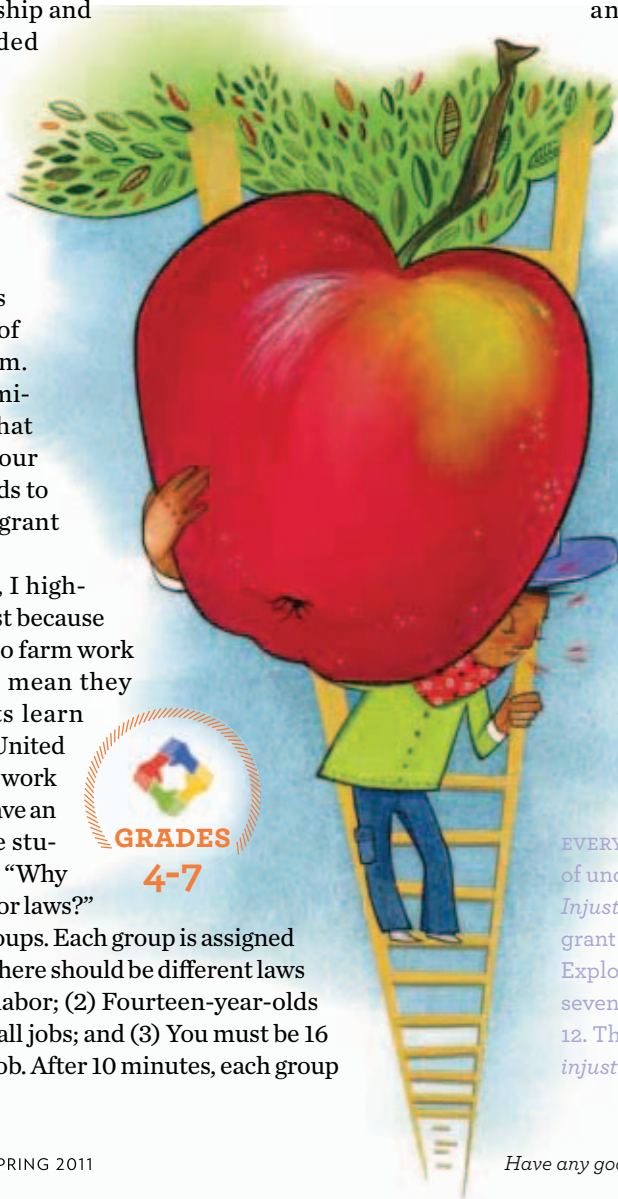
The students work in groups. Each group is assigned one of three positions: (1) There should be different laws for different types of teen labor; (2) Fourteen-year-olds should be able to apply for all jobs; and (3) You must be 16 to have any type of paying job. After 10 minutes, each group

selects one student to summarize its discussion. Students usually develop a deeper understanding of the interdependence between farmer and migrant worker.

As the story continues, students are faced with another important issue. The book discusses how "some of the neighbors showed up at the town meeting to say that they did not want more housing for the Mexicans." The neighbors feel that the presence of Mexicans will lower property values. This leads to a discussion about stereotypes and prejudice. I wrap up the lesson by exploring the pros and cons of migrant workers using a T-chart graphic organizer to help dispel stereotypes. Half of the class responds from the perspective of the farmer while the other half of the class responds from the perspective of the migrant worker.

**Theresa Paradowski**  
Ellicott Elementary School  
Orchard Park, N.Y.

EVERY DAY, Americans rely on the labor of undocumented laborers. SPLC's report, *Injustice on Our Plates*, shows how immigrant women live and work (see p. 54). Explore these issues in greater depth, using seven theme-based lessons for grades 7 to 12. They are available at [www.tolerance.org/injustice-on-our-plates](http://www.tolerance.org/injustice-on-our-plates).





# Treasure Chest for Change

IT IS A CHALLENGE TO HELP STUDENTS TO LEARN NOT ONLY *about* HISTORY but also *from* it. I use Treasure Chest for Change as the culminating activity of an interdisciplinary Holocaust unit, but it could be used with any unit on intolerance. I designed Treasure Chest for Change to help students remember and apply lessons of tolerance, diversity and civic responsibility.

Introduce the project to students by giving each of them a photocopy of a treasure chest. Tell students that although they'll fill the chests with pictures of everyday objects, the chests are valuable because they hold the potential to change the world. Even though this activity could be done by acquiring items and filling shoeboxes, tell students they'll be using pictures instead so that they can carry their treasure chests wherever they go.

Explain that the everyday objects used to fill the chests must somehow serve as reminders to promote peace and tolerance. They must also be reminders to practice the courage needed to stand up for their beliefs. (It may also be helpful to review the concept of metaphor.) Offer a few ideas to get your students started. For example, Swedish fish

might help students remember the courage of the fishermen who sneaked Jews out of Nazi-occupied Denmark to Sweden. A shoe might remind students that it's important to be considerate of others by "walking in their shoes." Let them brainstorm in small groups first, and then have a class discussion. List all ideas on poster paper. From the class-generated list, students should choose at least five objects of their own for their treasure chests. They can draw the objects or find computer clip art.

After the treasure chests are creatively decorated, students should write a reflective essay explaining the significance of each object. In their explanations, students must connect the objects to incidents in history that the class has studied. For example, a student may have included a picture of a lighthouse to remind her that people can be beacons of light to others. An example of this might be people who rescued Jews during the Holocaust. Allow students to share their essays and remind them of the assignment's purpose: to carry the lessons of tolerance, diversity and civic responsibility with them wherever they go.



CHECK OUT some student art samples of Treasure Chests. You'll see a short description of the objects and their connected meanings online at [www.tolerance.org/treasure-chest-samples](http://www.tolerance.org/treasure-chest-samples).

**Deb Westgate-Silva**  
Slater Junior High School  
Pawtucket, R.I.

# Taking Action on the R-Word

DEROGATORY LANGUAGE IS COMMON AT THE HIGH SCHOOL where I teach. I call students out whenever I hear them calling names or using profanity, and I often get into deep discussions about why it's a problem. Recently, I decided that I needed to do more. So I developed an interactive lesson plan to use whenever the situation dictates. Each semester, no matter which courses I'm teaching, I abandon my lesson plans at some point to "take action on the r-word."

As students enter the room, they're challenged to identify one word that best describes them. Some students choose adjectives like *spectacular*, *fabulous* and *chill*. Others identify with their social group, writing words like *jock*, *emo* and *skater*. They record their word on a name tag and stick it to their shirt so they can wear it loud and proud.

After a brief classroom discussion about labeling, I select five students by drawing names from a hat and bring them to the front of the class. In order not to marginalize anyone, the five selected students randomly choose new name tags I've prepared with derogatory words on them (retard, moron, dumb, imbecile, stupid). They're challenged to imagine how different their lives might be if these were the labels they were forced to wear.

With these thoughts swirling around, we then work through a presentation about the issues of derogatory language. This briefly addresses the history of words, synonymous meanings, oppression and the emotional hurt caused by these words. If time permits, we also explore the similarities between the civil rights movement and the disability rights movement. Examples from students' personal experiences enhance this portion of the lesson.

With a better understanding of the issue, we brainstorm ideas of what we can do to combat derogatory language. One obvious idea that comes out of this discussion is that students

can speak up when they hear the word.

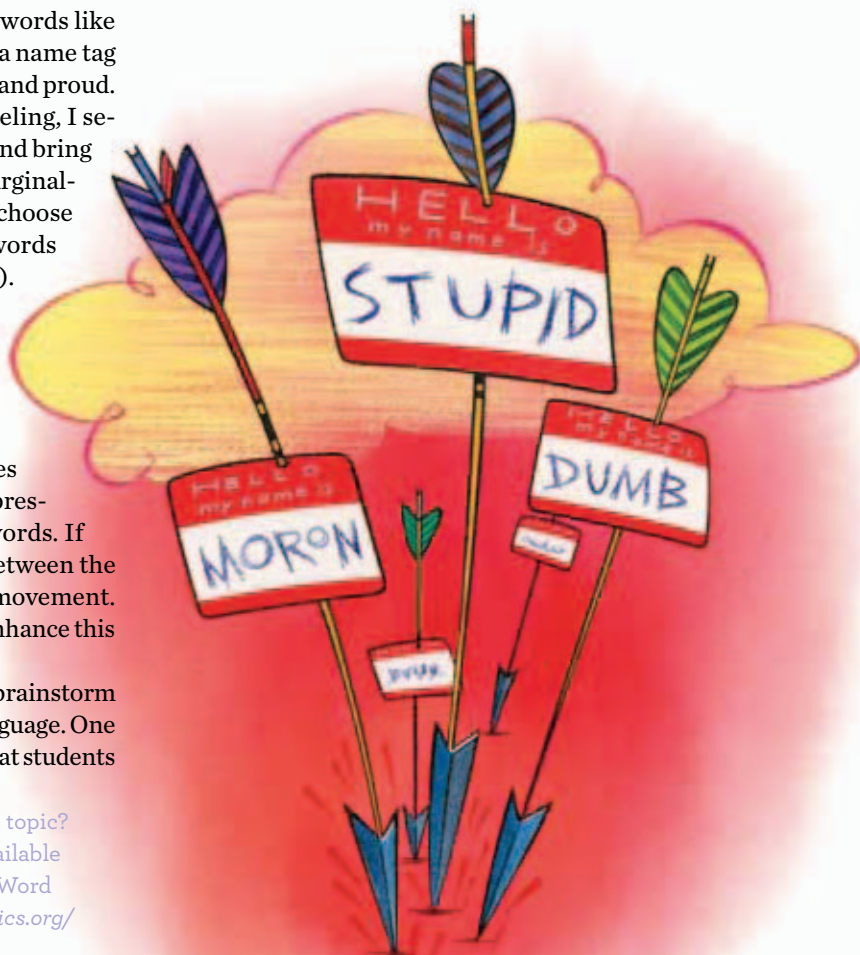
Students work in groups to create skits based on scenarios prepared in advance. In each, they hear derogatory language and have to find an appropriate way to respond.

Following the performances, students complete a brief written reflection based on their learning experiences of the day.



**Tracy Beck**

White Oaks Secondary School  
Oakville, Ontario, Canada



INTERESTED in making media connections with this topic? Check out Soren Palumbo's amazing speech. It's available online as part of the Special Olympics' "Spread the Word to End the Word" campaign. See [www.specialolympics.org/spread-the-word-to-end-the-word.aspx](http://www.specialolympics.org/spread-the-word-to-end-the-word.aspx).





# Act it Out

I TEACH WRITING AND DRAMA FOR SEVENTH- THROUGH 12th-grade students who are home-schooled, financially secure and white. Racial and religious stereotyping issues frequently come up in the classroom. The students seem to forget that I'm a minority (African American) when they say things like, "Why don't Mexicans ever take showers?" or "A lot of Muslims *are* terrorists."

I used to challenge the stereotypes and chastise the student. A year ago I decided to use my character development and dialogue teaching sessions as an opportunity to explore and discuss these beliefs.

I give each student a different index card with a simple character description: friendly convict, angry mom, playful toddler. Then I tell them to develop this character in a race, culture or ethnicity that's different from their own.

I give examples: a friendly convict who is Jewish; an angry mother who is Italian; an impoverished playful toddler. Next I hand out a character development sheet for them to complete on their character. The students answer questions like:

- What motivates this character?
- How does the character deal with emotions?
- What are social and intimate relationships like?
- What spiritual elements does the character exhibit?
- What does the character do for fun?
- What faults does the character have?

FOR SOME STRAIGHTFORWARD and effective pointers on how to approach students' biases and stereotypes, read *Impressionable Children* online at [www.tolerance.org/handbook/speak/impressionable-children](http://www.tolerance.org/handbook/speak/impressionable-children).

- What biases or prejudices motivate his or her behavior?
- What bugs you about the character?
- What makes the character endearing?

Then they write a physical description of their character.

The students invariably respond with basic stereotypical behavior. The Jewish convict is motivated by money. The Italian mother is demonstrative with her hands. The impoverished toddler is dirty and disrespectful. We discuss these briefly, but then I take the exercise a step further.

I place the character in an environment. For example, the students write about the toddler facing a fear. Or they act out the convict getting a speeding ticket (another student plays the police officer). I ask the students questions about why they portrayed their character as they did.

They start to realize that the media, their parents, their peers and their limited experiences shape the way they view other races, ethnicities and religions. I suggest that their views are incomplete. Maybe family motivates the Jewish convict, or the Italian mother cries and withdraws when she's angry. During the discussion students begin to consider the danger of stereotyping based on limited information. More than that, they see the importance of meeting a variety of people who are different from them so they can experience more of the world.

## Angela Dion

College of Southern Maryland  
La Plata, Md.



# Planting Seeds, Growing Diversity

Science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) classes have long been dominated by white males. Here are ways to make these fields more attractive to girls and students of color.

BY VANESSA HUA

**B**enjamin Franklin. Thomas Edison. Albert Einstein. Bill Nye the Science Guy. Last year, when students at Ridgecrest Intermediate School in Palos Verdes, Calif., were asked to name scientists, their answers—the men listed above—reflected a common perception. Most of the leading scientists they came up with were white, male or dead.

Although women and people of color have made major breakthroughs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), their contributions have often been missing from classroom curricula. This lack of role models—and the belief that these disciplines are unwelcoming to women and minorities—has contributed to a stubborn level of underrepresentation.

Closing this gap is not merely a matter of fairness, according to the National Academies, a Washington-based group that represents scientists, engineers, researchers and medical professionals. Failing to access the finest minds, regardless of gender or ethnicity, also limits U.S. scientific and economic competitiveness. Improving instruction and access could not only increase STEM proficiency, it might boost critical thinking skills as well. Young Americans who

can think through political positions, analyze production schedules or calculate interest are ultimately better citizens.

## Lack of Diversity, By the Numbers

When it comes to diversity in science and engineering, numbers suggest untapped human resources. In 2006, the National Academies reported that African Americans, Latinos and American Indians made up about 28 percent of the U.S. population. But these groups accounted for just 9 percent of college-educated Americans in science and engineering jobs. Meanwhile, data from the National Science Foundation showed that men outnumbered women in those fields almost two to one.

Further research suggests that women and people of color must overcome barriers when it comes to STEM jobs. According to a recent survey by the Bayer Corp., more than three-quarters of women and underrepresented minorities said that girls and children of color are not identified or encouraged to pursue STEM studies. Two-thirds said that resistance to the idea of female or minority scientists remains an important cause of underrepresentation.

Advocates for diversity see these social and attitudinal barriers as missed opportunities for all involved. “[Female

ILLUSTRATION BY ELLEN WEINSTEIN

**“Sometimes you run into a class of students who are not interested in the contributions the Mayans have brought into the study of mathematics, or the [contributions of the] Chinese. But a math project that incorporates their community gets [students] excited, so we start there.”**

and minority] students aren’t seeing that science is *now*, that it’s something they can do,” says Alison Seymour, the seventh-grade science teacher at Ridgecrest Intermediate who asked her students to name famous scientists. “A diverse background brings diverse ideas. Thinking out of the box is a big part of science, which you won’t get if everyone is from the same background and education.”

#### **Integrating Identity**

In addition to teaching, Seymour is a trained marine biologist who volunteers for Earthwatch, an environmental watchdog group. She makes a concerted effort to weave diverse peoples into her curriculum. For example, when she discusses James Watson and Francis Crick, the biologists who proposed the double helix structure of DNA, Seymour highlights the work of Rosalind Franklin. Franklin’s research was instrumental to the DNA breakthrough, but she received no credit when Watson and Crick collected their Nobel Prizes.

Seymour also offers a variety of extra-credit projects aimed at introducing students to scientists of various backgrounds. Students choose from a list of scientists, study the person’s biography and research, then write up or record a mock interview. By highlighting contributions by women and people of color, this approach seeks to explode stereotypes. The roster of accomplished, if relatively unknown, scientists includes astronaut Mae Jemison, AIDS researcher David Ho, ichthyologist Eugenie Clark and Nobel Prize-winning chemist Mario Molino. Variations on the assignment include creating a Wanted Poster or a brochure about the scientist. At the elementary school level, Seymour suggests students explore some of the same material by making puppets.

To create the list of scientists, Seymour accessed the websites of NASA and the Nobel Prize committee. She also recommends the book *100 Most Popular Scientists for Young Adults* by Kendall Haven and Donna Clark. “No one book had it all,” Seymour says. “But you can’t say that the information isn’t out there.” She encourages teachers to examine the demographics of their classrooms to help guide their efforts. At her school, Asian-American and white students predominate.

Sara Crossman, 13, staged a mock interview with a classmate about Jane Goodall in Seymour’s class. She says what she learned while researching the primatologist inspired her. “We picked her because she was female, and most of the main scientists we learned about in the past were males,” says Sara, who has three dogs and two cats and dreams of someday studying animals herself. “I loved how she had a major love for animals, because I adore animals, too.”

#### **Passion Appeal**

When it comes to science and engineering, teachers and curricula also have the power to reach underrepresented groups by appealing to student interests and passions. Initially, this often involves dispelling fixed ideas about these fields.

“Girls have the concept that engineers are gearheads, that it’s about engineering a car or a plane, and don’t realize you need engineers to make [any product],” says Mary Phelps. Phelps became a middle school technology education teacher three years ago, after a career in mechanical engineering and management at General Electric. Engineering is “about how to solve problems,” she says. “You find what interests girls, and often, it’s about helping people.”

Phelps’s classes at Noble Middle School in Wilmington, N.C., are a third or more female, in contrast to the 10 percent she’s typically seen in the past. She credits this shift to concerted recruiting efforts that let girls know the assignments aren’t all about “rocket ships and dragsters.” Projects include designing prosthetics and toys from recyclable materials such as water bottles and tennis balls and making model homes out of cardboard boxes. As a speaker at career fairs and at her school, Phelps calls attention to careers—such as bio-engineering and the engineering of technology—that help the environment and improve health care.

Phelps recommends partnering with local companies and organizations, especially those that promote diversity, such as the Society of Women Engineers (SWE). Bringing in presenters who undercut stereotypes offers living, breathing examples to underrepresented groups. “[Students] see that it’s not all white males—that there are people talking to them who look like them,” Phelps says. Phelps helps oversee the SWE’s Aspire program, a K–12 educational outreach to girls.

## **“A diverse background brings diverse ideas. Thinking out of the box is a big part of science, which you won’t get if everyone is from the same background and education.”**

How teachers manage the classroom can also make a difference in the willingness of female and minority students to engage the subject. Fred Dillon, a math teacher at Strongsville High School in a Cleveland suburb, says he makes sure no one shouts the answer in class. Risk takers may shut down more deliberative thinkers, he says, and he cites research that teachers are much faster at stopping girls if they respond incorrectly. In contrast, teachers are more likely to encourage boys, even if they are giving the wrong answer.

Dillon lets students of all backgrounds and both genders know it’s okay to be wrong. “That’s how math is done,” he says. “It’s okay to question things. That’s a regular step in problem solving.”

Using different teaching techniques can also foster student involvement, says Jenny Salls, a math teacher at Sparks High School in Sparks, Nev., where the student body is more than half Latino. “The traditional way [of teaching] is to teach by lecture,” Salls says. “But many females and non-white students prefer less competitive games and more opportunities to work with each other—though that’s a stereotype, too. You can never assume.”

Salls also strives to present math as a dynamic human endeavor rather than a static field of study. She describes the history of mathematics as a way to help students see the needs that fed its development. She uses diverse examples of mathematicians, such as Emily Noether and Benjamin Banneker, an African American, as well as al-Khwarizmi, the Persian scholar who codified algebra in the ninth century.

This inclusion can be expanded from the individual to the cultural. Diana Ceja is a math teacher who recently became an assistant principal at Garey High School in Pomona, Calif.—a school where more than 90 percent of students are Latino. She has exposed her classes to ways diverse cultures have contributed to mathematics. She has used patterns in fabrics from around the world to explore geometry, and introduced mancala, a type of counting game popular in much of Africa.

“Sometimes you run into a class of students who are not interested in the contributions the Mayans have brought into the study of mathematics, or the [contributions of the] Chinese,” Ceja says. “But a math project that incorporates their community gets [students] excited, so we start there.”

Ceja is also active in Todos: Mathematics for All, a group that advocates for equitable math education. She recommends that teachers emphasize how math can be applied in the real world. For example, a project analyzing fish populations can be paired with a lesson on the research undertaken by marine biologists. A unit featuring engineering projects in the community can include a class speaker, complete with hardhat and tools.

The more familiar and humanized STEM subjects become to students, the more likely they are to picture themselves in these fields—and the more likely diversity will increase.

### **Changing Attitudes**

Growing up in Galveston, Texas, Vanessa Westbrook was fascinated by the Gulf of Mexico’s marine life. “I wanted to know everything that dealt with water—how to work with dolphins and examine erosion,” she says. “I discovered the science to shrimping, knowing when to go out, when to make the catch.” A former elementary science teacher, Westbrook now works as a science content specialist at the University of Texas at Austin.

As a teacher, she tried to involve parents in her efforts to inspire students about the natural world. She created a carnival-style family night of science for the whole family, and partnered with local museums so that lessons taught in school would connect to exhibits students could visit with their families. “When people think of science, they say ‘It was hard. It wasn’t my favorite subject,’” says Westbrook, an African-American woman and committee director of multicultural and equity issues at the National Science Teachers Association. “I wanted to get students and parents to realize we can do science in our backyard.”

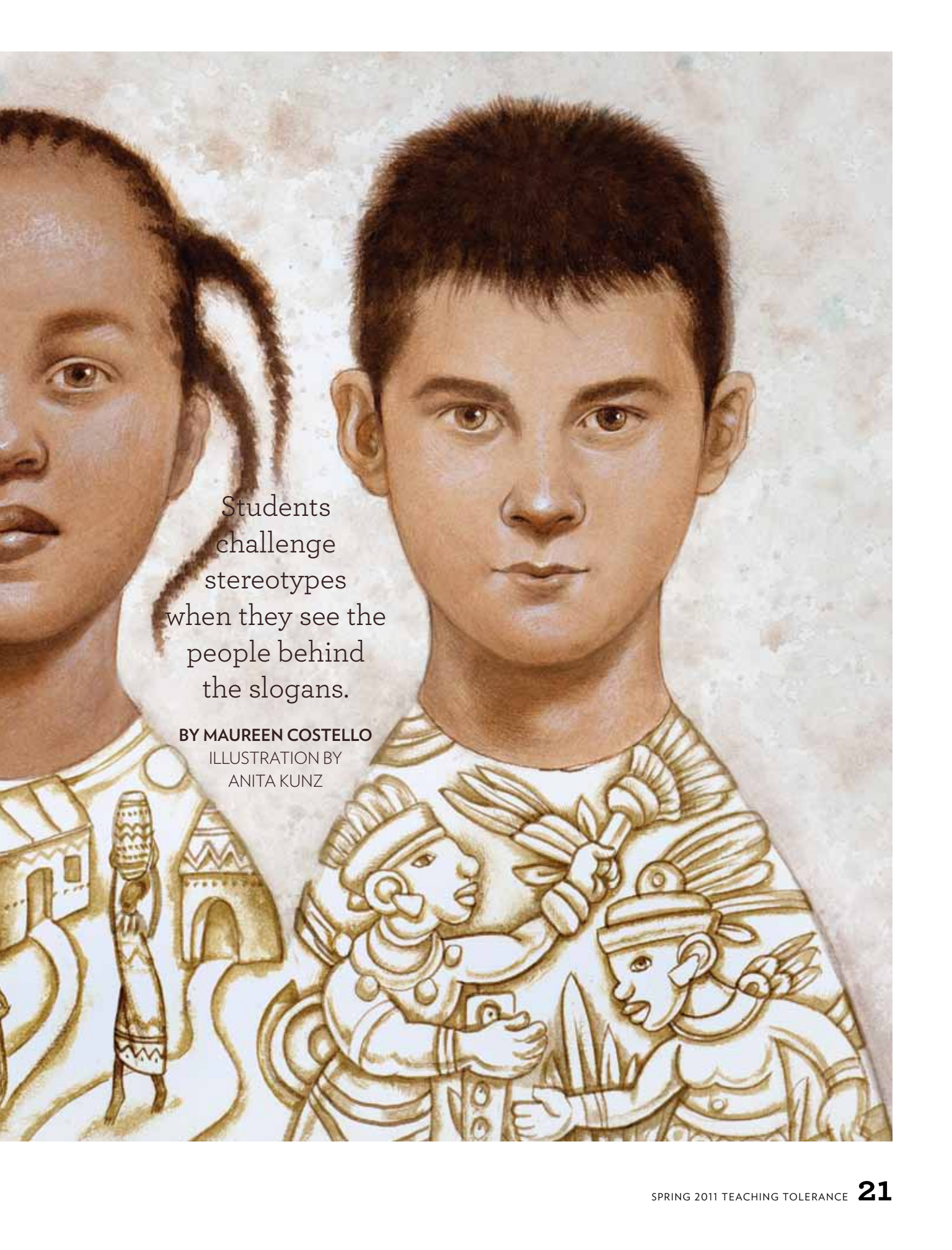
Parents can discover the scientist in themselves, Westbrook says. She shares an example of a mother or father who gardens, then realizes: “I’m not a rocket scientist, but I’m a master gardener who can expose my children to an aspect of science: botany. I never knew I was doing botany.”

“The learning is continuous,” Westbrook says. “Kids realize, ‘I don’t just learn in school. I learn outside of school, too.’” And among mathematicians, scientists and engineers, that may be the most important lesson of all. ♦



**THE HUMAN FACE OF IMMIGRATION**



An illustration of two young people, a girl on the left and a boy on the right, from the chest up. They are wearing white t-shirts with intricate, golden-brown line drawings of traditional scenes. The girl's shirt shows a woman carrying a basket on her head and a building. The boy's shirt shows two figures in traditional attire, one holding a bundle of feathers. The background is a textured, light-colored wall.

Students  
challenge  
stereotypes  
when they see the  
people behind  
the slogans.

**BY MAUREEN COSTELLO**

ILLUSTRATION BY  
ANITA KUNZ

“So,” Mindi Rappaport asks the eighth-graders in her English class, “What’s going on these days with immigration? How do you feel about it?” ¶ The students, in the leafy and historic town of Ridgefield, Conn., jump in eagerly to talk about what they know and what they’ve heard. It’s not long before their consensus is clear: Legal immigrants are good, model residents; “illegals” are very bad. ¶ You can’t blame them for reaching that conclusion. After all, immigration has returned to the front burner of American politics. Last year, Arizona passed a series of laws hostile to immigrants. Thousands of Facebook users became fans of pages asserting, “This is America, I

don’t want to press one for English,” and the term “anchor baby” entered our vocabulary (*see No. 9 in “10 Myths About Immigration,” p. 29*).

In the past, nativists opposed immigration, period. The sharp distinction between “legal” and “illegal” immigrants emerged fairly recently, according to immigration historian David Reimers, a professor of history at New York University. “Basically, by the mid-90s ‘legal’ immigration was no longer an issue,” he says. “The hot-button issue became the undocumented immigrants.”

That makes immigration a powder keg for teachers. It’s a deeply important part of American history, a part of nearly everyone’s family legacy and present in almost every community. Many educators agree that concentrating on the power of personal stories helps students see how today’s immigrants are not that different from those in the past.

#### **A Nation of Immigrants**

Most people living in the United States are here because someone in the last 400 years came here from somewhere else. Immigrant experiences are naturally strong for first-

and second-generation immigrant families. But Reimer says that memories and language skills typically tend to fade by the third generation. It’s hard to understand the immigrant experience if your family has forgotten it. And forgetting, as Reimer suggests, has long been a part of assimilation.

Mindi Rappaport’s classroom—which we’ll return to later—is filled with students whose families have lost track of their roots. But across the country, in another eighth-grade English classroom, sit students whose immigration experience is firsthand.

Welcome to Dale Rosine’s class at Grace Yokley Middle School in Ontario, Calif. From time to time, Rosine sees new immigrants arrive in her class. When they first get there, she says, they are uncomfortable and afraid.

Sixty percent of Ontario’s population is Latino, with many people tracing their U.S. roots back to the 19th century. Like the rest of Southern California, Ontario is a divided camp when it comes to immigration. While unauthorized immigration is a hot political issue, the immigrants are a part of the fabric of life, with a cultural heritage shared by most residents. “Many people understand the reasons people come,





[while] others are frustrated with the process,” Rosine says, adding that right now, “It has lots to do with economics.”

Rosine worries about her students. “Some of the students from Mexico talk about the way they feel disrespected and second-rate in society,” she says. “They see what their parents go through, what lies ahead, and what’s going to be available to them.”

“Some of them are really in pain,” she says.

#### **The Family Heritage Project**

Rosine was determined to use the students’ own experiences as a guide.

Her “Family Heritage” project aims to connect students—all of them—to their family backgrounds while promoting diversity and understanding in the classroom. “I look at students who see themselves as not smart, not worthwhile,” she says. “I try to build on what they can do and raise the expectations they have for themselves.”

She begins with the play *The Diary of Anne Frank*. She and her students discuss prejudice, oppression and Anne’s statement that “In spite of everything, I still believe that

**Under Rosine’s guidance, students ask family members about their cultural heritage and the challenges they had to overcome. The students ask questions like, “Who came here [to the United States or to California] first?” and “What difficulties did they face?”**

## Two Poetic Views of Immigration

people are really good at heart.”

Halfway through the play, Rosine outlines the project. It calls for students to conduct family research, but not the “family tree” assignment, which experts warn can be painful for children who are adopted or fostered or whose families are separated. For children in those situations, Rosine suggests that they “choose the family who you see as family.”

Under Rosine’s guidance, students ask family members about their cultural heritage and the challenges they had to overcome. The students ask questions like, “Who came here [to the United States or to California] first?” and “What difficulties did they face?” Her students build a cultural identity for themselves as well as a family history of resilience.

Sometimes, Rosine admits, there’s reluctance from children whose families say, “Oh, we don’t know anything” about their origins. But a story usually emerges.

Rosine is after a real story, not just a cultural bazaar. She encourages her students to find out about the oppression and prejudice buried in the family history, and to ask elders to talk about the family’s hardships and worries. Some of her immigrant students talk about what it’s like to come over the border, she says, and they give voice to “the feeling of desperation and the fear of being deported.” Others, from all over the world, relate how their families were separated for years while one member in the United States worked to arrange for the others to come.

She’s had Japanese-American students who have told the story of their families being sent to internment camps, and African-American students who learned about their ancestors leaving the South.

For some of her students, the experience really lowers walls. “When they hear so many kids with different backgrounds, and the difficulties they’ve had, it opens their eyes and makes their own situation seem less personal. They often remark that they thought they were the only

### The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.  
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she  
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

– *Emma Lazarus, 1883*

“I try to confront students’ limited perspectives. The big challenge is that they don’t realize they have a limited perspective.”

## Unguarded Gates

... Wide open and unguarded stand our gates,  
And through them presses a wild motley throng  
Men from the Volga and the Tartar steppes,  
Featureless figures of the Hoang-Ho,  
Malayan, Scythian, Teuton, Kelt, and Slav,  
Flying the Old World's poverty and scorn;  
These bringing with them unknown gods and rites,  
Those, tiger passions, here to stretch their claws.  
In street and alley what strange tongues are loud,  
Accents of menace alien to our air,  
Voices that once the Tower of Babel knew!  
O Liberty, white Goddess! is it well  
To leave the gates unguarded? On thy breast  
Fold Sorrow's children, soothe the hurts of fate,  
Lift the down-trodden, but with hand of steel  
Stay those who to thy sacred portals come  
To waste the gifts of freedom. Have a care  
Lest from thy brow the clustered stars be torn  
And trampled in the dust. For so of old  
The thronging Goth and Vandal trampled Rome,  
And where the temples of the Caesars stood  
The lean wolf unmolested made her lair.

— Thomas Bailey Aldrich, 1895

ones who had experienced something until they heard their classmates' stories.”

The project isn't just about oppression, though. When they present their work, students bring in heirlooms or other items that are special to their families. “We've had wonderful artifacts,” Rosine says, “including Hawaiian sculpture, Filipino lanterns and ethnic clothing. We've also had military discharge papers and dog tags, as well as keepsakes that have been handed down for generations.”

As part of their presentations, students have shown pictures of dances and celebrations in which they've participated while visiting their family's country of origin. They have also shared stories they've learned. Often, parents and grandparents come to class for the presentations, which are taped and photographed.

For Rosine, the payoff on the project comes when her students hear the presentations and are amazed to discover that the world is much bigger than they originally believed.

### Immigration in a “White-Washed World”

Mindi Rappoport's eighth graders at Ridgefield's East Ridge Middle School don't seem to have much in common with Dale Rosine's students—except for a teacher who wants them to appreciate diversity.

Ridgefield sits just inland from Connecticut's wealthy “gold coast.” Rappoport describes it as an affluent community “with a blue-collar feel.” The students in her English class are mainly white, with “a smattering of ethnic minorities and immigrants.”

“It's a pretty white-washed world,” Rappoport says of the small city of Ridgefield. “I try to confront students' limited perspectives.” The big challenge, she adds, “is that they don't realize they have a limited perspective.”

In Connecticut, essential questions drive the curriculum. Eighth-graders are supposed to focus on the individual and society. Students in this district are challenged to ask, “What are our values and beliefs?” and “How does diversity influence us?” Rappoport's students also grapple with stereotypes and examine “how they affect our ability to learn the truth.”

“If you ask if they have stereotypes, they're not aware of them,” Rappoport explains. Her job, she feels, is to develop habits of self-examination.

### A Tale of Two Poems

Like many middle schools, East Ridge embraces a team approach. In the fall, Rappoport and a social studies

**Immigration policy is not simple. The tangle of issues includes enforcement costs, disunited families, a preference system that favors some immigrants over others and a nearly 10-year-long backlog of applications that fuels unauthorized entry. It also includes the demand for low-cost workers in construction, agriculture and personal services.**

colleague collaborate on immigration. The social studies unit focuses on historical immigration and culminates with a heritage project and a trip to Ellis Island.

So while her students are learning about the golden door, letters home and steerage in social studies, Rappoport starts them off reading the Emma Lazarus poem “The New Colossus.”

“They think it’s wonderful,” she says.

The next day she passes out another poem, “Unguarded Gates,” written in the 1890s by Thomas Bailey Aldrich, who told a friend that he worried about “America becoming a cesspool of Europe.”

Rappoport carefully watches as her students pore over the verse. “They start out thinking, ‘Okay, here’s another nice poem.’ And then there’s this dawning realization that something ... is very wrong.”

It’s the beginning of a mind-opening unit for students. They are asked to closely examine how people think about immigrants today and to question their received notions about how the other half lives.

For Rappoport, the mission is personal. Jewish, she grew up in predominantly Christian Fairfield, Conn., and remembers anti-Semitic taunts and exclusion. Her husband, who

was born in Guatemala and was brought to the United States as a child, has helped her understand what today’s immigrants endure.

After students finish reading the two poems, one celebrating those “yearning to breathe free,” and the other warning of “accents of menace alien to our air,” Rappoport begins a conversation about contemporary immigration. She starts by asking students what’s going on now and how they feel about it.

What emerges, she says, are “lots of things you would expect.” Some of the students will mention that their housekeeper, landscaper or gas station attendant is from another place. Others will talk about the day laborers, mainly Mexican and Central American, who congregate on certain corners in the early morning hoping to snag some manual labor.

“Then the received notions start coming out,” Rappoport says, as students begin to repeat what they’ve heard.

“They’re taking jobs.”

“They’re terrorists.”

“They bring crime and a lot of them belong to gangs.”

Agreement is general and swift that there are hard-working, good immigrants—and then there are the “illegals.”

Rappoport says it’s important not to correct students or shout them down when they make these kinds of statements. Instead Rappoport challenges students calmly. “How do you know that?” she asks.

Before class ends, Rappoport gives students a journal assignment to write at least three pages about their feelings, thoughts and ideas on immigration.

#### **Walking in Someone Else’s Shoes**

The next day, students share some of their entries. Few have changed their minds. That’s when Rappoport shows them an episode from the Morgan Spurlock reality show *30 Days*.

Rappoport discovered the show on cable’s FX channel a few years ago (it ran from 2006 to 2008). In the series, Spurlock, best known for his documentary *Super Size Me*, showed what happens when one person becomes immersed in another person’s life.

The episode that got Rappoport’s attention focuses on immigration. It features Frank, a Cuban-born immigrant who is also a “Minuteman”—someone who patrols the border to guard against illegal Mexican immigration. Frank agrees to live in Los Angeles with a family of undocumented immigrants for 30 days.

“As soon as I saw it, I thought, this would be so great to use in a classroom,” Rappoport says. “I bought the DVD and started planning.”

In the episode, Frank is strongly opposed to illegal immigration. And even though he comes to like the immigrant family with whom he's staying, he remains adamant about his political views. The turning point comes when he visits the father's brother in Mexico and sees firsthand the squalid conditions under which the family lived.

It's a revealing scene for students, too, that "brings understanding and empathy," according to Rappoport. She tells them to write another journal entry that night and revisit their feelings and thoughts. The next day, she says, it's clear that "the factual experience has enlightened them."

#### Setting the Stage

The immigrant study takes place in October, and sets the stage for the rest of the year. In May, Rappoport says, a Holocaust survivor visits the school. Before they leave for the summer—and for high school—her students often commit to remain alert to human rights issues in the world.

Neither Rosine nor Rappoport devotes much time to exploring the policy issues surrounding immigration. Their mission is to build empathy, break through common mindsets and encourage students to examine their received notions.

Immigration policy is not simple, Professor Reimers warns. The tangle of issues includes enforcement costs, disunited families, a preference system that favors some immigrants over others and a nearly 10-year-long backlog of applications that fuels unauthorized entry. It also includes the demand for low-cost workers in construction, agriculture and personal services. "It's a complicated issue," Reimers says, "a hard problem to solve."

In high school, perhaps, Rappoport's and Rosine's students will tackle those complex policy issues in government class. When they do, they will be better prepared to understand the human dimensions. ♦

# 10 Myths About Immigration

Debunk the misinformation students bring to school—and help them think for themselves

**M**YTHS about immigration and immigrants are common. Here are a few of the most frequently heard misconceptions along with information to help you and your students separate fact from fear.

When students make statements that are mistaken or inaccurate, one response is to simply ask, "How do you know that's true?" Whatever the answer—even if it's "That's what my parents say"—probe a little more to get at the source. Ask, "Where do you think they got that information?" or "That sounds like it might be an opinion and not a fact." Guide students to find a reliable source and help them figure out how to check the facts.

## 1 MOST IMMIGRANTS ARE HERE ILLEGALLY.

With so much controversy around the issue of undocumented immigrants, it's easy to overlook the fact that most of the foreign-born living in the United States have followed the rules and have permission to be here. Of the more than 31 million foreign-born people living in the United States in 2009, about 20 million were either citizens or legal residents. Of those who did not have authorization to be here, about 45 percent entered the country legally and then let their papers expire.

## 2 IT'S JUST AS EASY TO ENTER THE COUNTRY LEGALLY TODAY AS IT WAS WHEN MY ANCESTORS ARRIVED.

Ask students when their ancestors immigrated and if they know what the entry requirements were at the time. For about the first 100 years, the United States had an "open immigration system that allowed any able-bodied immigrant in," explains immigration historian David

Reimers. The biggest obstacle would-be immigrants faced was getting here. Today there are many rules about who may enter the country and stay legally. Under current policy, many students' immigrant ancestors who arrived between 1790 and 1924 would not be allowed in today.

### 3 THERE'S A WAY TO ENTER THE COUNTRY LEGALLY FOR ANYONE WHO WANTS TO GET IN LINE.

Ask students if they know the rules to enter the country legally and stay here to work. The simple answer is that there is no "line" for most very poor people with few skills to stand in and gain permanent U.S. residency. Generally, gaining permission to live and work in the United States is limited to people who are (1) highly trained in a skill that is in short supply here, (2) escaping political persecution, or (3) joining close family already here.

### 4 MY ANCESTORS LEARNED ENGLISH, BUT TODAY'S IMMIGRANTS REFUSE.

Ask students to find out how long it took for their ancestors to stop using their first language. "Earlier immigrant groups held onto their cultures fiercely," notes Reimers. "When the United States entered the First World War [in 1917], there were over 700 German-language newspapers. Yet, German immigration had peaked in the 1870s."

While today's immigrants may speak their first language at home, two-thirds of those older than 5 speak English "well" or "very well" according to research by the independent, nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute. And the demand for adult ESL instruction in the United States far outstrips available classes.

### 5 TODAY'S IMMIGRANTS DON'T WANT TO BLEND IN AND BECOME "AMERICANIZED."

Ask students what it means to blend in to American society. In 2010, about 500,000 immigrants became naturalized citizens. They had to overcome obstacles like getting



#### WEB EXCLUSIVE

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**"The first generation [of immigrants] struggled with English and didn't learn it. The second was bilingual. And the third can't talk to their grandparents."**

here, finding a job, overcoming language barriers, paying naturalization fees, dealing with a famously lethargic immigration bureaucracy and taking a written citizenship test. This is not the behavior of people who take becoming American lightly.

The reality is that the typical pattern of assimilation in the United States has remained steady, says Reimers. "The first generation struggled with English and didn't learn it. The second was bilingual. And the third can't talk to their grandparents." If anything, the speed of assimilation is faster today than at any time in our past, mainly because of public education and mass media.

### 6 IMMIGRANTS TAKE GOOD JOBS FROM AMERICANS.

Ask students what kinds of jobs they think immigrants are taking. According to the Immigration Policy Center, a nonpartisan group, research indicates there is little connection between immigrant labor and unemployment rates of native-born workers. Here in the United States, two trends—better education and an aging population—have resulted in a decrease in the number of Americans willing or available to take low-paying jobs. Between 2000 and 2005, the supply of low-skilled American-born workers slipped by 1.8 million.

To fill the void, employers often hire immigrant workers. One of the consequences, unfortunately, is that it is easier for unscrupulous employers to exploit this labor source and pay immigrants less, not provide benefits and ignore worker-safety laws. On an economic level, Americans benefit from relatively low prices on food and other goods produced by undocumented immigrant labor.

### 7 UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS BRING CRIME.

Ask students where they heard this. Nationally, since 1994, the violent crime rate has declined 34 percent



and the property crime rate has fallen 26 percent, even as the number of undocumented immigrants has doubled. According to the conservative Americas Majority Foundation, crime rates during the period 1999–2006 were lowest in states with the highest immigration growth rates. During that period the total crime rate fell 14 percent in the 19 top immigration states, compared to only 7 percent in the other 31. Truth is, foreign-born people in America—whether they are naturalized citizens, permanent residents or undocumented—are incarcerated at a much lower rate than native-born Americans, according to the National Institute of Corrections.

## 8 UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS DON'T PAY TAXES BUT STILL GET BENEFITS.

Ask students what are some ways Americans pay taxes, as in income tax and sales tax. Undocumented immigrants pay taxes every time they buy gas, clothes or new appliances. They also contribute to property taxes—a main source of school funding—when they buy or rent a house, or rent an apartment. The Social Security Administration estimates that half to three-quarters of undocumented immigrants pay federal, state and local taxes, including \$6 billion to \$7 billion in Social Security taxes for benefits they will never get. They can receive schooling and emergency medical care, but not welfare or food stamps.

## 9 THE UNITED STATES IS BEING OVERRUN BY IMMIGRANTS LIKE NEVER BEFORE.

Ask students why they think this. As a percentage of the U.S. population, the historic high actually came in 1900,

when the foreign-born constituted nearly 20 percent of the population. Today, about 12 percent of the population is foreign-born. Since the start of the recession in 2008, the number of undocumented immigrants coming into the country has actually dropped.

Many people also accuse immigrants of having “anchor babies”—children who allow the whole family to stay. According to the U.S. Constitution, a child born on U.S. soil is automatically an American citizen. That is true. But immigration judges will not keep immigrant parents in the United States just because their children are U.S. citizens. Between 1998 and 2007, the federal government deported about 108,000 foreign-born parents whose children had been born here.

These children must wait until they are 21 before they can petition to allow their parents to join them in the United States. That process is long and difficult. In reality, there is no such thing as an “anchor baby.”

## 10 ANYONE WHO ENTERS THE COUNTRY ILLEGALLY IS A CRIMINAL.

Ask students whether someone who jaywalks or who doesn't feed a parking meter is a criminal. Explain that only very serious misbehavior is generally considered “criminal” in our legal system. Violations of less serious laws are usually “civil” matters and are tried in civil courts. People accused of crimes are tried in criminal courts and can be imprisoned. Federal immigration law says that unlawful presence in the country is a civil offense and is, therefore, not a crime. The punishment is deportation. However, some states—like Arizona—are trying to criminalize an immigrant's mere presence. ♦





# Human Trafficking

Slavery never went away, and students need to know how it affects today's world.

BY DAVID MCKAY WILSON ILLUSTRATION BY DOUG CHAYKA



**I**n early December 2009, Reggie Wills rose before an assembly at the Edmund Burke School, in Washington, D.C. His T-shirt was emblazoned with the question, “Can you hear it?” On the back, the shirt elaborated: “The silent cry of 27 million enslaved.”

For Burke students and Wills, the school’s director of equity and inclusion, the assembly commemorated the 1949 United Nations convention on human trafficking. The event kicked off efforts to shine new light on why slavery persists in the 21st century. The program seeks to alert students and their communities about slavery’s slippery guises in the modern day, including bonded labor, involuntary servitude and forced prostitution.

This is not the human bondage characterized in high school history books, notes Wills. “Many of our students had images from the 17th and 18th century, with slaves shipped to the United States in chains and working on cotton plantations,” he says. “Today, [slavery] takes on different forms. It’s a problem all over the world, and in the United States as well.”

The shadowy, criminal nature of human trafficking makes evaluating its nature and scope difficult. The U.S. State Department and anti-trafficking groups estimate that worldwide some 27 million people are caught in a form of forced servitude today. Most labor in the developing world, especially in India and African nations. No nation, however, is immune from these inhumane practices. Law enforcement and intelligence agencies have found that human trafficking rings are strengthening inroads into every country, including the United States.

### The Nature of Slavery Today

Public awareness of modern-day slavery is gaining momentum thanks to new abolitionist efforts. Among today’s leaders is Ken Morris, president of the Frederick Douglass Family Foundation.

“Awareness is the key to one day resolving the issues,” says Morris, who is a direct descendant of both Frederick Douglass, the former slave and abolitionist, and Booker T. Washington, the leading African-American spokesman of the early 20th century. “We need to help people better understand the inhumanity of slavery in every form, with the idea that once people pay attention to the issue, they will be motivated to address it.”

Today’s slavery has metastasized from its pre-industrial roots. Today’s versions go by new names, including forced labor, involuntary domestic servitude, sex trafficking, bonded labor, forced child labor and the impressment of child soldiers into army units. But each form involves the exploitation of vulnerable populations—predominately women and children—for financial gain. The average price for a human slave today is just \$90, according to the anti-slavery organization Free the Slaves. But in aggregate, slavery is a huge international shadow industry worth more than \$32 billion annually.

Sources of slaves today are depressingly familiar. In many developing countries, destitute families are forced to sell their children to sweatshops and brothels. In Thailand, for example, young girls are lured from the countryside with the promise of good jobs in the city. But they soon find themselves initiated into the grotesqueries of prostitution.

Destitute laborers may bond themselves to a master in hopes of crawling out from under crushing, often bottomless debt. In south India, bonded gem cutters work for years to pay off debts that may amount to less than \$50. High fees for room and board, compounded by absurdly high rates of interest, mean the debt is always beyond fulfillment, and may even be passed on to children and grandchildren.

In the United States, foreign workers can also find themselves swept into the black market of bonded labor.

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

### Teaching Tips

The issue of slavery can offer a powerful connection between historical and contemporary issues. Adding service-learning components, such as letter-writing campaigns, also helps students recognize they can take an active role in fighting modern-day bondage.

Here are several tips for getting started:

*Cultivate local contacts.* Find lawyers and activists in your community or area who are fighting human trafficking. A surprising number of communities have experienced cases of human trafficking and forced labor.

*Don’t be afraid to discuss the topic.* Human trafficking is an emotional, complicated topic that can elicit strong feelings. Teachers are in a unique position to help students process information and sort through their responses to the issue.

*Access online resources.* Good sites include the Frederick Douglass Family Foundation at [www.fdff.org](http://www.fdff.org); Free the Slaves at [www.freetheslaves.net](http://www.freetheslaves.net); and the U.S. State Department at [www.state.gov/g/tip](http://www.state.gov/g/tip).

*Include action projects.* Issues such as modern-day slavery can overwhelm students with a sense of despair. But getting them involved in projects to address the issue teaches them they need not be powerless in the face of evil.

*Promote open, respectful discussion.* The subject of human trafficking may raise disturbing issues. Structure and guide class discussions so they are open, honest and respectful.

Undocumented immigrants and workers who arrive with sham agreements are particularly vulnerable, caught between ruthless employers and fears of deportation. They may be subjected to bonded labor to work off debt to the smugglers who arranged for their passage into the country. They may end up as servants in private homes where they suffer abuse and sexual exploitation.

### Enlisting Students to Confront Modern Slavery

Organizations like the Frederick Douglass Family Foundation are committing much of their efforts to getting the message out to young people about slavery today. They are teaming with educators to teach students about its current forms, and get students motivated to share their newfound awareness.

Elizabeth Devine is a social studies teacher at William H. Hall High School in West Hartford, Connecticut. She includes a three-week unit covering human trafficking and modern-day slavery in her one-semester course on human rights.

Devine's unit features films, books and guest speakers to help students relate to and engage the material. She introduces the topic with scenes from the film *Human Trafficking*, a fictionalized look at the sex trade in Eastern Europe. She invites experts, such as a federal prosecutor who presided over a local human trafficking case, into the classroom. "The kids couldn't believe [human trafficking] was happening here," Devine says.

Her curriculum also includes excerpts from *Sold*, Patricia McCormick's account of a young Nepalese girl who was purchased by an Indian brothel. The class views segments of the PBS series *The New Heroes*, which features vignettes of individuals around the world fighting modern-day slavery. Students' perspectives expand from the individual to the systemic when they read Kevin Bales' book *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*.

"No doubt it's provocative," says Devine, named the 2009–2010 Secondary Teacher of the Year by the National Council of Social Studies. "The high school students can handle it. And I don't give them titillating things about sex to read. We focus on the difficulties faced by the women."

The more students investigate, the more they recognize the economic underpinnings of human trafficking. They learn that wherever there is greed and vulnerable people, conditions exist for turning humans into slaves.

Devine guides students in tracking their own attitudes and perspectives as they explore the mini-unit. She has them keep a "dialectical journal," synthesizing ideas from in-class discussions with their own ideas and personal responses to texts and videos.

To create the journal, students separate a page into two columns. On the left, they record the facts and concepts included in the text or video, including quotations and descriptions of material that affected them. In the right-hand



**“We need to help people better understand the inhumanity of slavery in every form, with the idea that once people pay attention to the issue, they will be motivated to address it.”**

column, they jot down their own thoughts, questions and insights. "They do it after everything we see or read, so they are constantly reflecting on what they learn," Devine says.

The unit culminates in an "action project." These projects ask students to research an issue, then perform a related project in the community. Last year, two girls teamed up to collect backpacks and toiletries for women who had been rescued from traffickers and were living in a safe house.

Service-learning projects also play a central role in the Frederick Douglass Family Foundation's programs. The foundation encourages educators to design units that compare and contrast today's anti-slavery struggle with the abolition movements of the past. In one project, called "Off the Chain: Preventative Abolition," students study how masters used violence and coercion to control slaves. In today's sex industry, pimps use similar tactics to keep control over prostitutes. Students are asked to come up with ways to educate their peers and other young people about the unglamorous, cruel reality of the sex trade.



In Chicago, students taking part in the Frederick Douglass Family Foundation program explore the subject of slavery through the lens of history. They study the story of Haiti, a republic founded by former slaves who had rebelled against their French owners. They then learn about Haiti's "restavek" system, an entrenched practice in which poor families send their kids to work in the homes of the wealthy—a system the United Nations classifies as slavery. Students are encouraged to create a bridge to Haiti through sister-city programs and letter-writing campaigns urging action to end this form of child exploitation.

"We use history as the entry point," says Robert Benz, executive director of the Frederick Douglass Family Foundation. "And then we look at child trafficking in Haiti."

At last year's International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, students at Edmund Burke presented a range of co-curricular projects. In one math class, high school students conducted a statistical analysis of slavery today. One student recited her poem on the theme of human bondage. Another produced a DVD of digital images featuring women and children enslaved around the world. Others created pamphlets and handed them out on the streets of Washington, D.C., to educate passersby to the suffering of 21st century slaves.

Local media helped amplify their message. A Washington newspaper covered the day's events, and National Public Radio broadcast a segment featuring students speaking about their desire to eradicate slavery.

"There was unity in our cause, and it brought our community together," Wills says about the day's events. "The students learned that it's important not to turn a blind eye to [modern slavery] and that they can make a difference in saving the lives of the innocent." ♦

## Slavery Happens Here

The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, adopted in December 1865, prohibits slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime. But nearly 150 years later, cases involving bonded labor, human trafficking, sexual slavery and other forms of forced labor are popping up in increasing numbers. David Batstone, president of the Not for Sale Campaign, estimates that the number of slaves in the United States may be as high as 200,000, encompassing both forced labor and forced commercial sex.

Most of the victims are from outside the country, and their foreign status leaves them vulnerable to coercion. Smugglers, pimps and racketeers terrify victims with threats of arrest and deportation.

Here are some recent cases of human trafficking in the United States:

➤ In 1985, two married doctors in Milwaukee brought a 19-year-old domestic servant from the Philippines. For 19 years, the woman worked 16-hour days, seven days a week, earning \$4 a day. Police acted on a tip and freed her in 2004. The doctors were convicted. Both are serving six years in prison.

➤ In 2008, hundreds of guestworkers from India, lured by false promises of permanent U.S. residency, paid tens of thousands of dollars each to obtain temporary jobs at Gulf Coast shipyards only to find themselves forced into involuntary servitude and living in overcrowded, guarded labor camps. The Southern Poverty Law Center filed a class action lawsuit on the guestworkers' behalf. The case remains active.

➤ In June 2010, the Philadelphia office of the FBI cracked a human-trafficking operation run by a band of four Ukrainian brothers. The brothers lured workers to the United States with the promise of cleaning jobs, but they forced their recruits to work for little or no pay. To maintain obedience, they threatened violence against the workers' families back in Ukraine and against the workers themselves.

In the last decade, state and federal law enforcement agencies have dedicated more energy to investigating and shutting down human-trafficking rings in the United States. Unfortunately, their caseloads continue to grow.

# Combating Anti-Muslim Bias

Followers of Islam face widespread prejudice in the United States. How can teachers help students overcome these attitudes?

BY NIRVI SHAH PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMY ECKERT

**W**hen Basir Jamil was 8 years old in 2001, he hated the terrorists who destroyed the World Trade Center, smashed into the Pentagon and downed an airplane full of people in rural Pennsylvania.

So when he was called the same thing—a terrorist—a few years later in middle school, he was shocked.

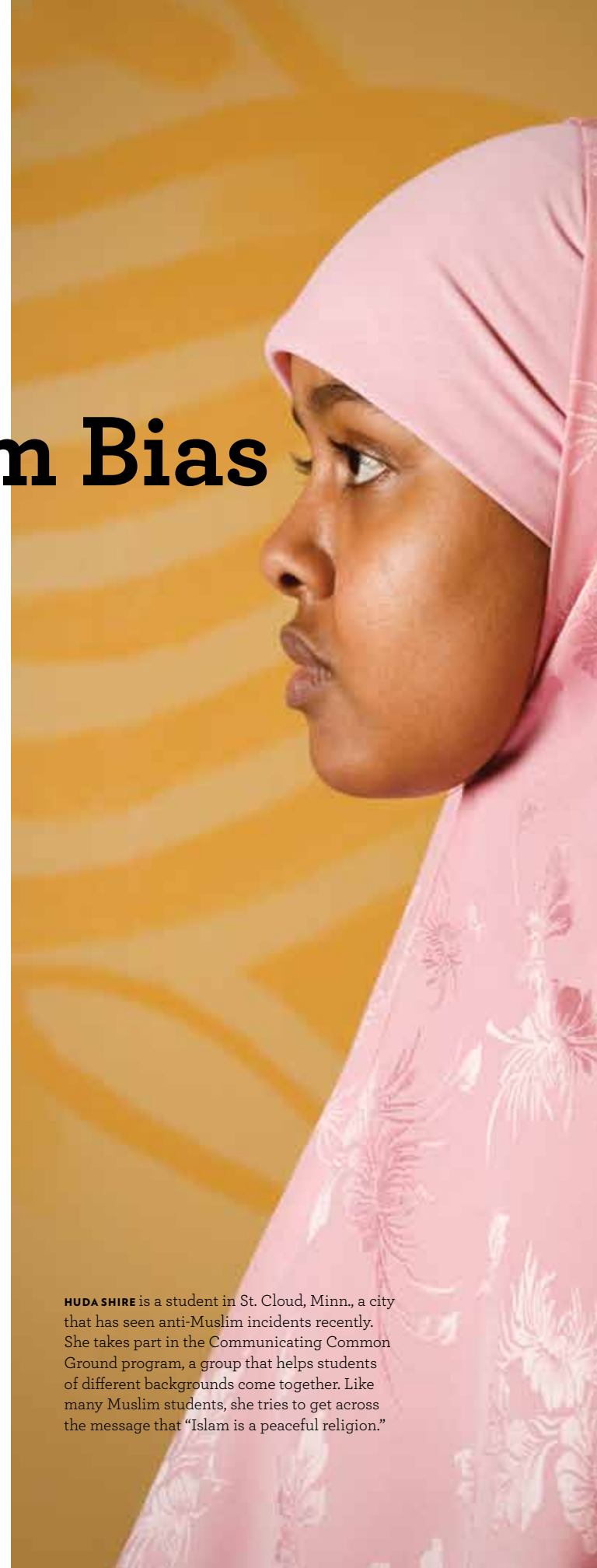
Basir, now a senior at C. Milton Wright High School in Bel Air, Md., says he hears fewer insults directed at him or other Muslim students today.

But he knows that's not the case for thousands of other Muslim kids across the country.

“People should have the right to speak out, but they should be more educated before they say something,” says Basir, 17, whose parents are from Pakistan. The Islam he has been raised with is a peaceful religion, he says.

America's 2.5 million Muslims make up less than 1 percent of the U.S. population, according to the Pew Research Center. Anecdotally, we know that many Muslim students face discrimination. Unfortunately, no group or government agency keeps statistics on the subject. But some cases have warranted investigation by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights.

Muslim groups have reported widespread bias as well.



**HUDA SHIRE** is a student in St. Cloud, Minn., a city that has seen anti-Muslim incidents recently. She takes part in the Communicating Common Ground program, a group that helps students of different backgrounds come together. Like many Muslim students, she tries to get across the message that “Islam is a peaceful religion.”



**RYAN WHOLERS**  
**AND ANTWON EVANS**  
are both non-Muslims in the Communicating Common Ground program. “Before I went,” says Antwon, “I wasn’t sure that Muslim students would really hang out or talk to people who didn’t have the same culture.”

The Islamic Networks Group is a San Jose, Calif., nonprofit that promotes education about Islam. In recent years, the group has spoken with Muslim students about what they were experiencing. Content Director Ameena Jandali says her organization wanted to know if the students’ beliefs had made them targets for taunts and bias. “We were shocked to see it was happening on a regular basis,” she says.

#### **Inflamed by the News**

Jandali says news stories frequently trigger anti-Muslim incidents. In recent months, those stories included the controversy over a Florida preacher threatening to burn Qur’ans and the uproar that followed plans to build an Islamic center near the World Trade Center site in New York. Jandali says just about any anniversary of September 11 also heightens the tension for Muslims.

“Now it’s to the point where it’s like, ‘What’s it going to be today?’” she says. “It’s been such a long cycle.”

This constant cycle has had a profound impact on Muslim students nationwide. Here are just a few of the incidents that have been reported:

➤ In St. Cloud, Minn., a high school student created a short-lived Facebook group called “I hate the Somalians at Tech High.” The area is home to one of the largest groups of Somali refugees in the country, many of whom are Muslim.

➤ In Oklahoma, a student was suspended after wearing a hijab, or headscarf, at school on September 11, although she had worn it for weeks before.

➤ In Massachusetts, when a Cambridge store burned down, Muslim high school students were asked by classmates if they bombed the store.

➤ In New York, four high school students were charged with a hate crime after spending more than a year bullying a Muslim classmate, occasionally beating him and calling him a terrorist.

For many Muslim students—particularly those who don't speak English—teachers are their best defense, says Jandali. Educators need to set clear and consistent guidelines.

“Schools can change the situation by saying there's a no-tolerance policy in our schools, that there are going to be consequences,” she says. “Our approach is that education is the best way to prevent bias and discrimination—try to prevent that bad thing from happening.”

On the first day of Kathy Wildman's world religions class at Chantilly High School in Fairfax County, Va., she sets ground rules for the year.

“How do we talk about religion in a way that is neutral—a way that is fair?” she says. “It's important to create safe space. No student will ever be asked his or her religion.”

When she addresses Islam, one of the things she discusses is the concept of “jihad.” While jihad can mean fighting against others, it more frequently means a struggle that is fought within one's own heart. It is a struggle for self-improvement. “That really surprises them,” Wildman says. “We try to break a lot of stereotypes in the Islam unit.”

In Connecticut's West Hartford Public Schools, students begin learning about religious holidays starting in kindergarten and study religion in greater detail in middle and high school. “We really focus on understanding where everybody's coming from—religion is a piece of that,” says Superintendent Karen List.

But developing that mindset wasn't easy. “It has created a lot of angst,” she says. “How do you talk about this?”

### A New Set of Expectations

Melanie Killen, a professor of human development at the University of Maryland's College of Education, says part of the reason discrimination against Muslim students and others persists is that the problem isn't systematically addressed. “What we do with expectations for math we should do with expectations for social development,” she says.

Killen envisions classroom visits from school counselors who can talk about Muslim and Arab traditions and dis-



ASMA DIRIR (LEFT) AND ANISA HAJI-ALI are both Muslim students in the St. Cloud area. “We are not all the same,” says Asma. “We are all different.”



cuss the differences within those groups, “just like in Judaism, from Hasidic to reform to secular. That helps you to reduce stereotypes.” If head coverings worn by some Muslim women seem strange, students can be shown images of Catholic nuns and Orthodox Jewish women covered virtually from head to toe.

For teachers who are reluctant to delve into these sensitive issues, there are compelling reasons to do so, Killen says. There is a strong correlation between a child's sense of inclusion and academic success.

“Children who experience bias are not going to do well academically,” Killen says. “If you're excluded from your peers you don't really want to go to school. There's a direct relationship there.”

### Guidance for Teachers

Since the September 11 terrorist attacks, there has been a spike in teachers' interest about Islam. But one of the obstacles to dealing with religious bias for many teachers—including experienced ones—is that their knowledge about Islam is often limited, says Diane Moore, a divinity and education professor at Harvard University.

She says taking a cultural studies course to learn about a religion, any religion, can help educators become aware and responsive to issues of discrimination. “One good course can radically alter teachers' perceptions,” she says.

Conard High School social studies teacher Keara O'Leary is studying Islam and Muslim civilizations through the Harvard Extension School. The course at the West Hartford, Conn., high school uses a cultural studies approach to teaching about religion.

“We have been exposed to a variety of sources that will be useful in the classroom, including Islamic literature, po-



### WEB EXCLUSIVE

Like these pages? Get a web-exclusive lesson on fighting stereotypes about Muslims and Islam at [www.tolerance.org/activity/debunking-muslim-myths](http://www.tolerance.org/activity/debunking-muslim-myths).

etry, ‘passion plays,’ calligraphic art and the meaning of the Qur’an in support of certain Islamic beliefs,” she says.

### **Making Contacts**

Southeastern Michigan is a richly diverse area that includes one of the largest Arab-American communities in the United States. But it’s a divided region where kids from different backgrounds rarely meet, says Christine Geoghegan, director of Generation of Promise.

For the last 20 years, her group has been trying to make those contacts. Each year, 60 high school juniors are chosen for a 10-month program that gives them the opportunity to showcase their culture and learn about others.

“We attempt to take students who are leaders in those communities, who can influence their peer groups, and expose them to that diversity in a real, intimate way,” she says. That can happen through trips to a mosque in Dearborn, which has a large Muslim population, or by attending a Shabbat dinner at the home of a Jewish student.

Last year, Maya Edery, an Israeli-American wary of Arabs, was paired with Mohamad Idriss, a native of Lebanon who is Muslim, at the group’s first gathering.

They have become close friends.

“You can coordinate the most sophisticated program,” Geoghegan says, “But what changes people is people—access to relationships they’re otherwise not having.”

“I never had any friends who are Muslim or Arab,” says Maya, 17, now a senior at Berkley High in Berkley, Mich. After visiting a mosque and learning about Islam, “I basically learned it’s very, very similar to Judaism.”

As for Mohamad, who goes to Dearborn’s Fordson High, which is mostly Muslim, Maya opened up a new world.

“We live at most, maybe, an hour away, but you don’t get around,” he says. “All my life, I’ve heard one side of the story. I was waiting for this.”

Maya and Mohamad’s experience was a happy one. But the fact is that navigating the world of religious differences remains difficult.

In St. Cloud, Minn., some Muslims live in a hostile atmosphere. For instance, last year a local church tried to run an ad questioning whether Muslims were a threat to the United States. That hostility has trickled down to high school students, who’ve reported several instances of harassment.

Eddah Mutua-Kombo is a communications professor at St. Cloud State University. She has been working with high school students through the Communicating Common Ground program, getting them to open up about their feelings and interact with each other.

“We have problems in our community, but we are trying,” she says. “We are still working toward making St. Cloud a good community, a community where we respect one another, where we respect diversity. We share this community. It doesn’t belong to one group.” ♦

## **Debunking Misconceptions about Muslims and Islam**

Stereotypes about Muslims range from insults about terrorism to misunderstandings about the meaning of the word *Allah*. Teachers should probably start with a discussion about stereotyping and why it is wrong to paint any group of people with a broad brush. Then the class can move on to the specific stereotypes about Muslims.

### **Islam is a religion that promotes violence and terrorism.**

“Islam totally prohibits terrorism—there is no text that endorses that,” says Ameena Jandali of the Islamic Networks Group. “Killing an innocent person is considered to be the greatest crime after worshiping another god.” Teachers could ask students to brainstorm about other groups that have also engaged in terrorism or violence in the name of a religion and how that behavior ran counter to their faiths’ core beliefs.

### **Islam guides followers to oppress women.**

Historically, Islam promoted women’s rights. For instance, the Qur’an grants women freedoms that they did not have before, such as the right to inherit property, conduct business and have access to knowledge. “Men and women have the same responsibility before God, the same accountability before God,” says Jandali. “Arranged marriages are more of a cultural practice—and women do have the right to divorce.” In many cases, the oppression many women face in Muslim countries is caused by cultural tradition, not Islamic law.

### **Women are forced to wear a headscarf, or hijab, by men as a sign of submission.**

Rules about modesty are open to a wide range of interpretations. That is why women in Saudi Arabia must cover everything but their eyes, hands and feet while many women in Turkey observe no special rules about dress. “It’s really because of a desire to please God,” Jandali says of using head or body coverings. The practice comes from a traditional interpretation that says the hijab protects women’s dignity. But wearing any special clothing is a personal choice. Teachers can ask students to find the similarities between the hijab and how some women of other faiths dress, including Catholic nuns, Amish women and Orthodox Jewish women.

### **Muslims worship a god named Allah.**

The Arabic word *Allah* simply means *God*, and Islam springs from the same monotheistic tradition as Judaism and Christianity. To Muslims, Allah is the God of Abraham, Moses and Jesus.



# your students love social media

Want to engage students?  
Meet them on society's  
newest public square.

BY CAMILLE JACKSON  
ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES YANG



# ... and so can you

Last spring, a New Jersey middle school principal saw a rise in bullying at his school. Students were spreading rumors and gossip online, hiding behind anonymous screen names and profiles. What was worse, the principal said, his school's guidance counselor was spending the majority of her day dealing with the emotional fallout.

The principal had had enough. He emailed a letter to parents, asking them to forbid their children from participating on any social networking sites. Experts say the principal's frustration was understandable—but his solution was simply not practical.

A recent Pew Research Center report shows that 73 percent of teens between the ages of 12 and 17 use social networking, up from 55 percent just four years ago. Numbers are greatest among high school girls, who tend to use social media as a way to socialize and strengthen relationships.

Facebook and, to a lesser degree, MySpace are the major social networking sites of choice. But teens also use social media when they text on cell phones, play online games and interact with others through online forums and membership sites. In the last five years, social networking has become ubiquitous.

Some of the concern about social media is warranted. Parents should be more knowledgeable about their children's online activity, and cyberbullying can be painfully vicious.

But others say social media is here to stay, and rather than shielding children from it and admonishing them for using it, educators should support these social networks.

Pam Rutledge, a psychologist and director of the Media Psychology Resource Center, says adult fear of new technology is not new. There were similar concerns when television was introduced.

"From my perspective, this new technology is all a very positive thing. Social media has totally changed the communication model," Rutledge says. "This is so empowering."



That's especially true for teens in their search for affirmation. Teens still engage in traditional behaviors, like talking on the phone for hours and trolling the mall with their friends. But Rutledge says social media provides a new way for them to construct their identities.

"It's fundamental for teens to want to feel empowered, to have a sense of individual agency, a willingness to learn, to produce," she says. "To spend all their time making their

Facebook page cute allows them to exercise control over their domain and their identity."

### Social Boundaries Translate Online

Social media researcher Danah Boyd is a fellow at Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society and author of "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life." She says social networking has become part of social learning. In these contexts, teens learn how status in a social group works and how information flows through a community—skills they will need in adult life.

However, while teens can hone their social skills online, technical skills vary according to household income. There is "an unfortunate assumption that since they're young and they grew up with it, they know how to use it," says Eszter Hargittai, an associate communications and sociology professor at Northwestern University. "We do them a disservice by going into the classroom and assuming they are already digitally savvy."

In studying the next generation of Internet users, Hargittai found that "students who come from families with lower economic status and less education know the Internet less than those with a privileged background, therefore they are less likely to reap the benefits."

Differences in how students use social media are manifest in other ways, but all agree that existing social boundaries translate online. Most teens are networking with peers they already know—kids a lot like themselves.

Rutledge understands parent fears about privacy, cyberbullying and online safety, but she also understands teenage behavior and the significance of social networks.

"People connect—that's what we do," says Rutledge. "That's a biological function, not an aberration. The desire to grow up and do these adult things overrides caution. It's not pathological. It's normal teen behavior."

### A Healthy Dose of Social Media

Sometimes it's hard for parents and educators to understand what healthy online behavior is. Social media can provide an opportunity for teens and adults to gain media literacy.

"I think it is incumbent upon schools to teach smart digital citizenship," says Christopher Lehmann, principal of Science Leadership Academy (SLA), a 6-year-old Philadelphia charter school. "One way to model digital citizenship is to be there [online] and let yourself be seen as part of that world. It also helps them navigate that space."

Lehmann's embrace of technology led to him being

### TIPS

## Social Media in the Classroom

At the beginning of each school year, Science Learning Academy students in Philadelphia are given social media guidelines by health and physical education advisor Pia Martin.

"I tell them to look at how you're representing yourself," Martin says. "Does that reflect you? If you wouldn't say it to someone's face, don't write it. Online, others don't necessarily get [tone of voice], don't get an explanation for what you meant to say. There is not a conversation."

By heading off the common misconceptions her students face online, Martin is able to create a healthy social media environment. Here are some other tips:

- Set up your own Facebook or Twitter account and model healthy online behavior.
- Teens may find it easier to express themselves to others, especially adults, online. Be open to communicating with students through social media.
- Creating a public persona through a profile or online bio gives them choices about which part of themselves they want to display and to whom. If you are concerned about a student's privacy, ask the student to be critical about making choices. Evaluate the profiles of other teens to promote discussion.
- Use social media as a way to teach students critical thinking about information found online. Wikipedia, for example, allows students to see how content is created, stored, edited and organized.

“SOCIAL MEDIA IS PART OF KIDS’ LIVES. EITHER WE ACKNOWLEDGE IT EXISTS AND ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE PART OF THE CONVERSATION, OR IT’S ONE MORE WAY SCHOOL BECOMES IRRELEVANT TO KIDS. ANY TOOL IS A WEAPON IF YOU HOLD IT RIGHT.”



named one of the “30 most influential people in EdTech” by *Technology and Learning* magazine. Lehmann is a frequent blogger and maintains a Facebook and Twitter presence. (He only “friends” students who “friend” him first.)

Part of SLA’s social media strategy is parent education. Lehmann says the response he receives from parents runs the gamut. “Some are unbelievably fearful, others are fully invested in it.

“Social media is part of kids’ lives,” he adds. “Either we acknowledge it exists and allow ourselves to be part of the conversation, or it’s one more way school becomes irrelevant to kids. Any tool is a weapon if you hold it right.”

Lehmann believes “being online in 2011 is part of living a healthy life. Let kids see us use it in a healthy way.”

#### Tweet Away Anxiety

Some researchers are finding that social media in the classroom can have positive psychological effects.

Erica Robles, an assistant professor of media and communication at New York University discovered that when students were asked to answer questions using Twitter, they felt less pressure, even if the answer was incorrect.

“Social media allows teachers to manage social anxiety and create a safe learning environment where everybody learns,” says Robles. “We have only just begun to scratch the surface on the architectural design of the classroom, or the physical layout of information. We’re learning that you can go beyond the curriculum to communicate the same content across laptops. It might not be the best place to show collaboration, but it gives students control. Small choices can

have implications psychologically.”

David Bill, a former middle school teacher, used social media as a teaching tool in his classroom to help students “learn from experts around the globe as well as teachers down the hall.

“I wanted them to see how it could extend and simplify their learning,” says Bill, who is now the online community manager for New Tech Network, an organization that helps create project-based learning schools. “I think it is important for educators to understand our students and try to meet them halfway. To ignore how our students learn and operate would only push them away from enjoying the process of learning.”

#### ‘Friend’ Me

Rutledge encourages adults to ask teens about their online interests. If a student is absorbed by online gaming, play with her. If another is glued to Facebook, ask him about the attraction without being judgmental.

“I have a nephew who, in high school, was painfully shy,” says Rutledge. “He told me the reason he liked Facebook was because he liked to think before responding immediately. He found he could cultivate friendships that were much deeper.”

She says casting judgment makes kids become instantly defensive.

“They are still forming their sense of self, so they are not very secure. They are still experimenting with who they are. They get defensive because they are just trying to build their identity and may not yet be where you want them to be,” explains Rutledge. “What you don’t want is for them to firm up that boundary while they are still fluid. If you attack them you slow that process down and get them to defend something when they are still in transition.”

Lehmann discovered that when students are trusted, they monitored themselves and learned from each other naturally. Not long ago, someone at Science Learning Academy started a slam page deriding the school on Facebook.

“The kids took it upon themselves to make sure it went away,” Lehmann says.

Then, he says, they started another one asking visitors to finish the sentence, “You know you go to SLA when ...”

“The students were posting all these silly, ridiculous, weird things that celebrate our community,” says Lehmann. “It was really cool. The incident showed that when kids didn’t like the way something happened they felt empowered to reverse it.” ♦

# social media in the schoolhouse

Twitter, Google Docs and their cousins shrink the spaces between cultures even as they expand the reach of a typical classroom. How can you use them to promote social justice?

BY DARLENE KOENIG ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY FREDA

In Sarah Brown Wessling's English class, students are about to give Little Red Riding Hood a makeover.

For weeks, her students at Johnston High School in Johnston, Iowa, have been breaking down several classic fairy tales, discussing ways in which they both construct and confirm our ideas about gender roles. Using examples from the stories, they then dig deeper—exploring concepts such as oppression and objectification in society. Finally, in a culminating activity called the Genders Game, Wessling challenges groups of students to rewrite the familiar tales.

Immediately, students turn to Google Docs—a free, Web-based service that allows users to create and edit documents while collaborating with each other in real time. At first, says Wessling, students switched the roles of the little girl and the valiant hunter who rescues her from the Big Bad Wolf. Little Red Riding Hood, they decided, would instead be the hero who saves the hunter.

“But the further their [online] discussions took them, the more they realized they were just taking what essentially were male stereotypes and assigning them to a female character,” says Wessling. They worked together to recast their story, making the hero a character shrouded in a cloak whose gender is never identified.

The exercise can be a tough one, says Wessling, “because it means perhaps denying what you’ve been taught and suggesting that something about your culture or what you’ve

learned needs another look or needs to be changed.”

Wessling, the 2010 National Teacher of the Year, could just as well be talking about today's teachers and their use of Web-based technologies and social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter. In her classes, she has seen their value in fostering collaboration and in extending the learning experience beyond the 50-minute block.

“They were all writing at the same time,” she says of her fairy-tale authors and their use of Google Docs. “They could create a draft together, leave class, add to it outside of class and see how the work evolved. When I think about social networking, I think of moments like that. That [type of collaboration] really capitalizes on the promise of technology.”

Educators concerned with social justice and tolerance also hope that promise will pay off in the larger world. With their tendency to shrink the spaces among nations, cultures and people, can these social-networking tools foster not only collaboration in the classroom, but students who will become tolerant advocates of each other as adults?

The answer may be more complex than it seems.

## How the Experts See It

Two years ago, the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project surveyed Internet leaders, activists and analysts on the future of the Web and its impact on everyday life. Their answers were shared in a report titled, *Future of the Internet III: How the Experts See It*.

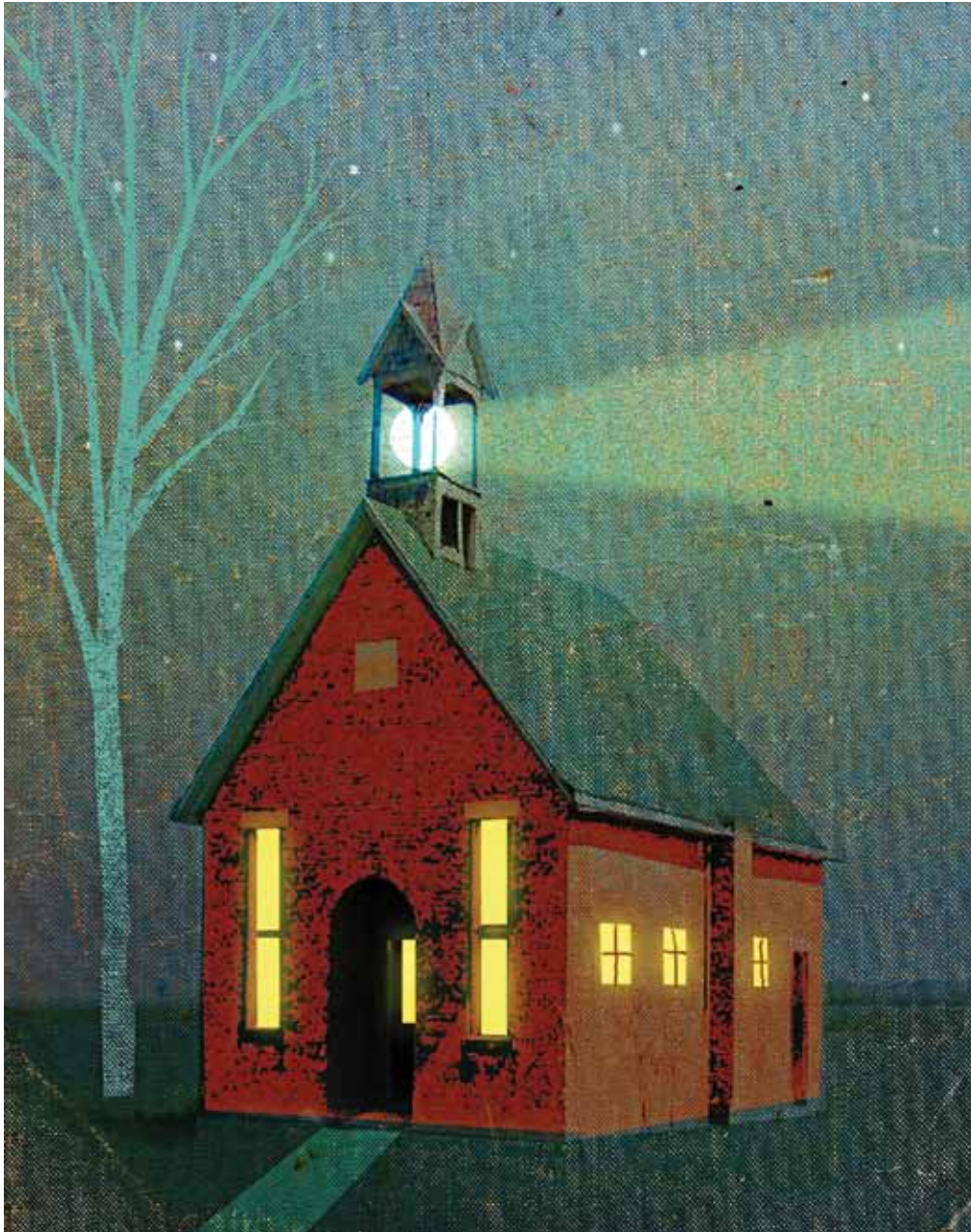
According to the authors, “a strong undercurrent of anxiety runs through these experts’ answers.” For instance, while Web-based technologies will give people “the power to be stronger actors in the political and economic world,

that won’t necessarily make it a kinder, gentler world,” the report said.

Matt Gallivan, a senior research analyst for National Public Radio, was more blunt. “Sharing, interacting and being exposed to ideas is great and all,” Gallivan said in the report, “but saying the Internet will eventually make human beings more tolerant is like saying that the Prius will reverse global warming. [It’s] a little too much of an idealistic leap in logic. People are people are people. And people are terrible.”

Don Heath is former head of the Internet Society, a nonprofit that provides leadership on Internet standards, education and policy. He predicted that “polarization will continue and the people on the extremes will be less tolerant of those opposite them. At the same time, within homogenous groups (religious, political, social, financial), greater tolerance will likely occur.” In other words, says Florida technology educator Emily Vickery, “like minds can find and feed each other.” And that applies to hate groups as well as to those people concerned with tolerance and social justice.

Educators and parents have seen that dynamic play out among students in the form of bullying. So



"I BELIEVE IN GOOD TEACHING, SENSIBLE FILTERING, GOOD SUPERVISION AND TRUSTING KIDS TO DO THE RIGHT THING. I DON'T THINK ANYTHING SHOULD EVER BE BLOCKED." BOTH WEB-BASED APPLICATIONS AND SOCIAL-NETWORKING TOOLS "GIVE [STUDENTS] THE CONNECTIONS THEY'RE QUITE USED TO AND THE OPPORTUNITY FOR COLLABORATION."

how can teachers help reverse that dynamic in a rush-to-technology world?

"Instructional design is what underlies the use of technology," Wessling says. "[The idea for] 21st-century learning is not just about the technology, but about creating learners who are problem-solvers and critical thinkers."

The most successful educators are adept at both.

#### 21st-Century Ideas

Vickery is a 21st-Century learning specialist at Pensacola Catholic High School (PCHS) in Florida and supports teachers as they integrate technology into curriculum, instruction and assessment. A former Teaching Tolerance research fellow, she also emphasizes tolerance-based issues and the idea of digital citizenship.

One initiative at PCHS is iPod Pals, an outreach program that partners teens with elementary students at nearby St. John the Evangelist School to learn about the faith's Corporal Works of Mercy. The actions and practices relate to the material needs of others, such as feeding the hungry, visiting the sick and sheltering the homeless. Students in the high school's technology and production classes first produce podcasts that introduce younger students to women

in Africa and South America who are struggling to ensure their economic futures. According to senior A.J. Ricketts, students are assigned different tasks in podcast production, including research, voice work and editing.

The teens then visit St. John's, with each one partnering with three or four elementary students. The younger children are all given iPods and headphones to listen to the three- to six-minute podcast. These students also take a short quiz on the iPod and discuss the topic of the week. In a culminating activity, the younger students travel to PCHS and take part in producing a final podcast that summarizes what they have learned—from math facts to the concept of charity.

"We also wanted to broaden the students' perspective of the world," says Ricketts. "I think they realized that there is more going on in the world than just their local city happenings, and that they have a duty to help others in any way they can—whether that is donating to the local food kitchen or fundraising for the poor on the other side of the globe." And the iPod technology is an exciting hook. It gets the younger students' attention immediately, says Ricketts. They seem to grasp the learning concepts more quickly and look forward to the next week's lesson. (Podcasts can be viewed at [http://web.mac.com/chsadmin/Site/iPod\\_Pals/iPod\\_Pals.html](http://web.mac.com/chsadmin/Site/iPod_Pals/iPod_Pals.html).)

Wessling has also seen the value of combining technology with community resources and social justice. In an advanced course primarily for seniors, she used the novel *The Great Gatsby* and the play *A Raisin in the Sun* to teach a unit on the American dream. Both classics explore the topic in their own ways. As an extension project, she then challenged students to create a nonprofit organization that addressed the problems of a particular demographic group in their community—problems that might keep members of that group from achieving their own dreams. She told them that their organizations would compete for a hypothetical \$300,000 in grant money.

In groups, students used Google Docs to compile research, take notes, put together budgets and design presentations that would support their grant requests. Although Facebook is blocked in the district, some students also used the social networking site outside class to communicate and organize work.

Wessling invited a panel of community members to read the presentations and then visit the school to hear each group's final pitch and ask additional questions. With that combination of resources, she says, "there's no way to avoid full-group engagement."

#### Looking Ahead

District blocking of Web-based applications—particularly social-networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter—

is a hot topic among educators. Many are frustrated with the lack of access to tools so popular with students. Janet Barnstable is an expert on both sides of the argument. An elementary art and technology educator “since the days of the 800 number and 300-baud modem,” she recently retired from Oak Park District 97 in Oak Park, Ill. She’s now program manager for the Global Virtual Classroom, a collection of free, online activities and resources that integrate technology into classroom curricula.

Barnstable notes that previous generations of kids folded secret missives into triangles and palmed them to their friends across the classroom, “but we didn’t take away pencils and paper.”

“I believe in good teaching, sensible filtering, good supervision and trusting kids to do the right thing,” she says. “I don’t think anything should ever be blocked.” Both Web-based applications and social-networking tools “give [students] the connections they’re quite used to and the opportunity for collaboration” they need. But she also says good teachers find ways around the obstacles.

One of those teachers is Michele Gelrud, who last year was a first-year high school Spanish teacher in Virginia’s Chesterfield County schools. She quickly found that her diverse group of students wasn’t interested in traditional lectures and dialogue drills and worked to find the best way they could learn and work together. She gave her students goals for learning the language. Then she put them in charge of their own learning, challenging them to find the most helpful sites on the Web. Outside of class, students then began emailing or using Facebook to send the most useful sites to each other. At one point, they asked to “friend” Gelrud on Facebook.

Understandably reluctant to share photos of her recent beach vacation, Gelrud took down her personal Facebook page and replaced it with one dedicated to “Señora Gelrud.” She “friended” her students and challenged them to share their favorite Spanish-language links on her wall. Others commented on the links and what they’d learned from them.

“They learned a lot [and] the kids still respected me,” she says. “But there was also socializing and interaction to make it more fun”—skills essential to learning a language.

Wessling would like to try Twitter as a note-taking tool in her classroom. She envisions students tweeting observations about the text they’re reading, with those tweets being shared among students taking the same class in different periods.

When such tools are banned, says Florida’s Emily Vickery, teachers lose those valuable opportunities to guide

students in using digital tools effectively and safely. Vickery has a particular interest in mobile technology, which she says will be important as the number of smart-phone applications increase.

“The first thing students do when school has ended is to pull out their mobile phones, which are integral parts of their lives,” she says. Mobile technology tools have the potential to “provide the opportunity for learners of all ages to tap into and share information on demand from almost any place,” she adds, “and few schools are embracing this change ... while others resist out of fear. We’re part of a hyper-connected existence—an upheaval of sorts from the way things have always been done. Outdated educational bureaucracies either do not understand it or are not prepared for it.”

### Change the Thinking

Wessling says other teachers often ask her how to reverse district blocks of Web-based tools. Her advice: Shoulder the responsibility for turning that thinking around. She says teachers should engage themselves in explaining to administrators just how those tools would function to accomplish curriculum goals. Sites such as Twitter and Google Docs, she explains, represent the start—not the end—of learning.

But she also encourages teachers to consider equity—not just in terms of what students at all income levels can access, but what students who represent all learning styles can get from using social media. While we might assume students share an enthusiasm for them, that’s not always the case.

“Surprisingly, not all students fall into this way of communicating,” says Wessling. “Students who are naturally social anyway seem to have gravitated to it. You find that kids who are on their phones in between classes and seem incredibly well-connected are also well-connected in person. [Others] who are less social have also found it’s a way to find a community that’s important to them. But some aren’t into it at all.”

Instead, Wessling says, learning should be guided by essential questions, with social media used as just one tool toward answering those questions. For the students in her English classes, for example, those questions revolve around what it means to be human. It’s an enduring question she thinks applies to all disciplines.

“I think it’s incredibly important to have included in the fabric of our school lives this understanding of humanity,” says Wessling. She believes it can foster tolerance among students who are the pioneers of social media.

“I suppose,” she says, “that’s social justice at its most essential.” ♦

# getting past the 'digital divide'

Educators who can work around obstacles and recognize the promise of new technologies are making a difference.

BY SEAN MCCOLLUM ILLUSTRATION BY BEN NEWMAN

Two years ago, Aaron Fowles found the digital divide waiting in his Memphis, Tenn., ESL classroom: four old desktop computers, two of which worked. The accepted course of action would have been to load the corpses onto a cart and roll them to wherever dead computers go. And he would have let his at-risk students make whatever use they could of the fossilized software on the survivors, for however long they lasted.

Fowles has no training as a computer tech. But he has enough of the digital native in him, as well as a dose of Dr. Frankenstein, that he refused to call the hearse. Instead, he researched and did what he calls a lot of “judicious Googling” and got out his screwdrivers. From the two defunct hunks of hardware he cobbled together a working unit. He then trashed the ancient Windows software on the three machines and replaced it with the Linux operating system, available free online. His tinkering resulted in a significant upgrade over the tech he had inherited.

Then a fellow teacher revealed the school’s computer graveyard to Fowles. Working on his own time, he had eight working computers in his classroom by year’s end. He rebuilt and upgraded an additional 16 that found new life in other classrooms.

As most educators know by now, there is a lot more to addressing the so-called “digital divide” than having enough working machines in classrooms. Effective information technology

(IT) in schools requires useful software, reliable and speedy Internet access, effective teacher training and well-considered goals with transformative outcomes. But perhaps empowering tech-savvy, can-do administrators and teachers, like Fowles, needs to be added to that list. These are the tinkerers—pedagogical as well as technical—who won’t wait to upgrade their own performance in order to help their underserved students get the most from IT.

## Redefining the Digital Divide

In the last decade, “digital divide” has become a catchphrase for the stubborn disparity in IT resources between communities, especially in regard to education. Low-income, rural and minority populations have received special scrutiny as the technological “have-nots.”





“In too many communities, you don’t have access to technology,” U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said in an interview on *Frontline*. “You don’t have access to the teachers who understand the technology. You don’t have access to the out-of-school learning opportunities.” That, Duncan went on to say, leads to student achievement gaps, which can ultimately leave those without basic computer and IT skills at a distinct disadvantage—not only in the workplace, but as contributors to society.

Government at every level has invested billions of dollars to address this gap in IT. And as far as overall numbers are concerned, they have reached something like respectability. For 2009, The National Center for Education Statistics reported: 97 percent of public school teachers had one or more computers in their classroom every day; 93 percent of classroom computers had Internet access; and the ratio of students to computers in the classroom every day was roughly 5 to 1. The Obama administration has continued this national commitment to tech access by setting aside \$7.2 billion in stimulus monies to expand the reach of broadband Internet into rural and low-income areas.

These statistics, of course, do not take into account the high percentage of low-income homes without computers or Internet service, or the resulting educational impact on kids who must sign up for limited chunks of computer time in their school’s computer lab or local public library. These constraints can stunt a user’s self-directed learning and play, key elements in exploring anything as multifaceted and fascinating as the online universe.

Here’s where the narrative gets messier, though. Low-income students and children of color, those often cited as the underserved side of the digital divide, are wiring other pathways into the digital world. “Ten years ago it was thought [disadvantaged kids] were digitally unengaged,”

says S. Craig Watkins, associate professor at the University of Texas at Austin and author of *The Young and the Digital*. “Now we know the opposite is true: They’re even more engaged than their advantaged peers.”

Watkins points to studies that indicate African-American youth are accessing the Internet for gaming, watching videos and social networking at more than twice the rate of young whites. Many do this by means of mobile technologies like cell phones and smart phones. They are also using these devices to conduct online research and complete school assignments. Meanwhile, young black and Latino Internet users are more than twice as likely to use Twitter as white Internet users, according to a new report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

But that does not mean these young users are getting anywhere near the best the digital world has to offer, Watkins cautions. “What are the skills and forms of knowledge that allow young people to be full-fledged digital citizens?” he asks. “Some kids are getting access to those skills and some kids are not.”

Nevertheless, growing numbers of Latino, African-American and low-income youth are joining in the great collaborative experiment that is the Internet. Advocates for IT in underserved communities believe that is a scaffold to build on as educators address what Watkins and others now refer to as the “participation gap.”

#### Mobile Devices in the Classroom

In most U.S. schools, cell phones and other mobile digital devices in the quick fingers of students are often a source of conflict. A handful of school districts, though, are adapting their use to serve the curriculum. The exponential growth in computing power and the availability of mobile applications has turned these communication gadgets into





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mini-computers that fit in a pocket or palm. And the price—less than \$300 plus telecom fees and software licenses—has made them attractive alternatives to laptops.

In 2009, Cimarron Elementary in Katy, Texas, piloted a “mobile learning device” initiative. Smart phones, with telephone and texting functions disabled, were distributed to all 136 fifth-graders at the school. With a small, retractable keyboard and a stylus-sensitive touch-screen, these devices have been incorporated into math, science and language arts classes. Students can upload class work, complete homework and send assignments electronically to their teachers for comments and grading.

Fifth-grade teacher Matt Cook spearheaded the use of smart phones at his school in Keller, Texas, after attending a technology conference. He sought out donations of the phones and Internet connectivity. He also received donations of GoKnow.com software, specifically designed for handheld devices. Cook's students have used their smart phones to write,

crunch data, record science experiments and create podcasts to share with classmates. In a lesson about astronomy, students were able to create a diagram of the solar system, then animate the planets into orbit.

“I integrated the phones into everything we did,” Cook told *District Administration Magazine*. “For lessons traditionally done with a paper and pencil, we now were able to do them in color, with animation, and with more depth and complexity. It was one of the most exciting things I've ever done.”

Not everyone is as enthusiastic about this introduction of mobile media devices in the classroom. Some critics see it as a brazen sales pitch by cell phone companies to create a new educational techno-fad. Others believe mobile devices may be fine for drill and remediation exercises, but

question whether they promote digital literacy in any substantive way.

An electronic gadget may excite students, but does that translate to usable knowledge and skills? Does it primarily entertain, or does it have the potential to transform student understanding? These are questions such pilot programs have an opportunity to address.

### Harnessing IT

To experience digital technology harnessed to create a transformative experience, visit the classroom of Brian Crosby. A 29-year teaching veteran, Crosby teaches class through grades 4–6 at Agnes Risley Elementary in Sparks, Nev. At least 90 percent of his students are English language learners or somehow “at risk.”

Each member of his class has an Internet-accessing Mac laptop. They each write their own blog. Together as a class, they collaborate on projects, incorporating language arts and digital design elements into almost everything they do. Collaboration and social learning are ends as well as means in Crosby’s tech-enhanced pedagogy.

Last May, Crosby’s fourth-grade class had a science unit on air pressure and atmosphere. Students conducted classroom experiments, using digital devices to record and describe their experiences. They conducted online research on the topic, including the history of hot air balloons.

They then teamed with engineering professors from the University of Nevada, Reno, to launch a high-altitude weather balloon carrying the payload the fourth-graders had prepared. It included a camera, a remote weather monitor, a global-positioning system, and “High Hopes”—a collection of good wishes they had written for themselves, their community and the world. They also sent up hopes that kids from around the world had submitted online. They counted down, the balloon was released, then they went back to their computers to track its progress up to 100,000 feet and across the landscape.

After the balloon burst and its payload had been retrieved, the class members worked together to describe the experiment on their blogs and Wiki web page. They wrote creative stories. They incorporated video, essays, photos, maps and charts. In short, they used IT and digital media to demonstrate understanding and share what they had done and learned—not just with themselves, but with the wider world via the Web.

“This is active learning,” Crosby said last summer during a presentation in Denver, describing his tech-intensive approach in the classroom. “[W]e’re empowering kids to

learn on their own, to use a lot of these 21st-century tools to do that.”

Aaron Fowles, the computer-repairing ESL teacher in Memphis, is on board with Crosby’s approach. And he believes educators who are reluctant to upgrade their own IT knowledge and skills do a disservice to their students. “A lot of teachers do professional development only as a requirement, not to become a better teacher,” he says. “That is not going to jibe with successful tech integration in the classroom.

“For kids to be given a fair shake in a modern economy, they are going to have to be computer literate,” Fowles adds. “Kids who aren’t will be at a terrible disadvantage, especially America’s poor children. And for many of them, school is the only place they’ll have the chance to learn it.” ♦

### WEB RESOURCES

## Upgrading the Tech Classroom

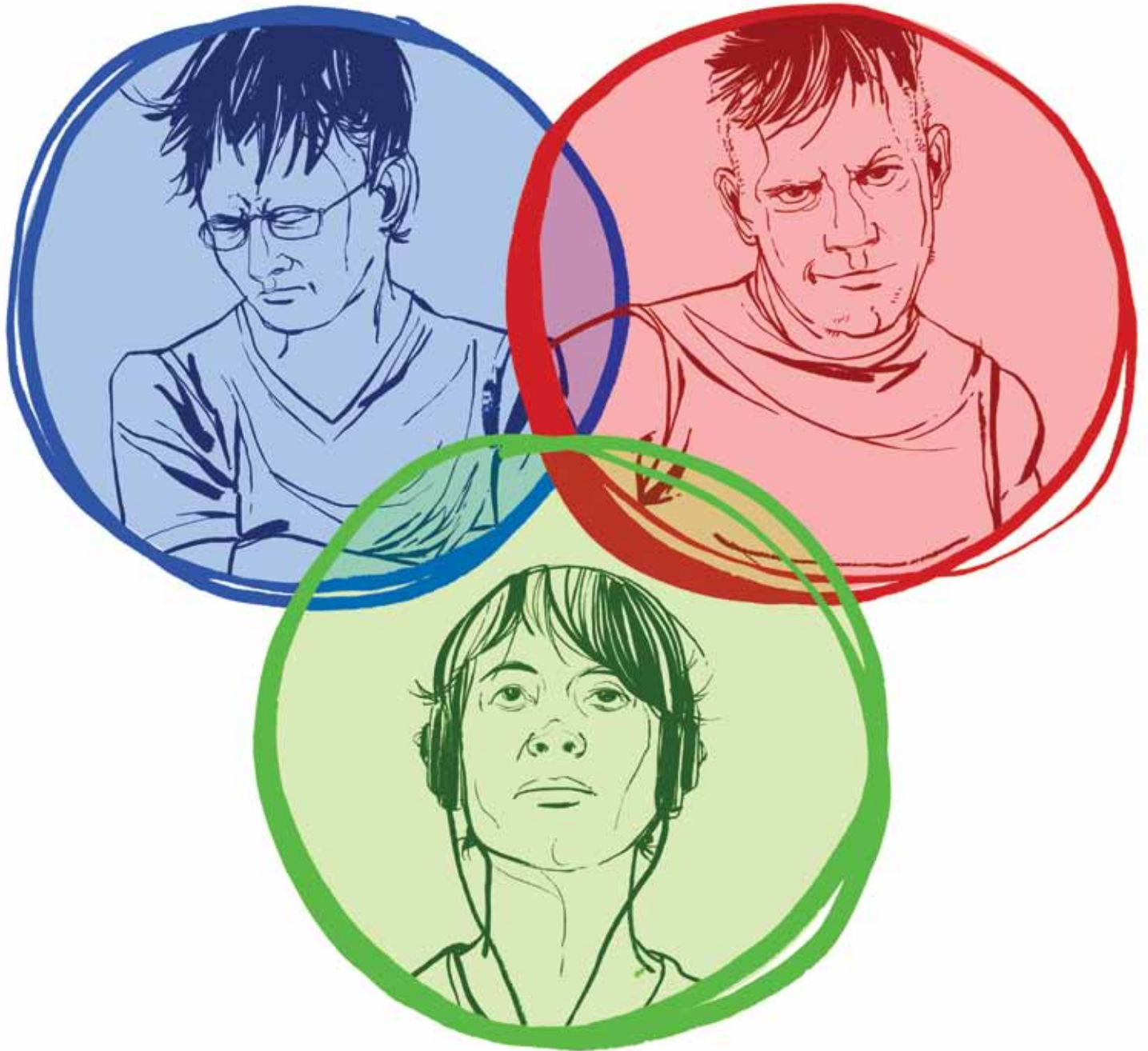
Want to create your own Smart Board for a fraction of the \$3,000 price tag? Check out Johnny Lee’s do-it-yourself demos.  
<http://johnnylee.net/projects/wii>

Follow the adventures of tech-savvy “edupunk” Aaron Fowles.  
<http://afowles.blogspot.com>

Catch Brian Crosby’s Education Blog—Learning Is Messy—at  
<http://learningismessy.com/blog>  
... and a video from his presentation at TEDx in Denver  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=olUn4Si22Sg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olUn4Si22Sg)

Cool Cat Teacher is the blog of Vicki Davis, an educational innovator with dozens of ideas for incorporating technology-enhanced lessons.  
<http://coolcatteacher.blogspot.com>

The Innovative Educator Blog includes resources for using cell phones as educational tools.  
<http://theinnovativeeducator.blogspot.com>



# Bully, Bullied, Bystander ... and Beyond

Help your students choose a new role.

BY BARBARA COLOROSO

“After all there are no innocent bystanders. What are they doing here in the first place?”

— William S. Burroughs

A 14-YEAR-OLD HANGS HERSELF. A 19-YEAR-OLD JUMPS OFF a bridge. A 13-year-old shoots himself. Another loads his backpack with stones and leaps into a river. Still another swallows her father’s prescription meds to get rid of the pain and humiliation. A 17-year-old is found hanging outside her bedroom window. Two more 11-year-old boys kill themselves within 10 days of each other.

These young people all had two things in common: They were all bullied relentlessly, and they all reached a point of utter hopelessness. Bullying is seldom the only factor in a teenager’s suicide. Often, mental illness and family stresses are involved. But bullying does plainly play a role in many cases. These students feel that they have no way out of the pain heaped on them by their tormentors—no one to turn to, no way to tell others. So they turn the violence inward with a tragic and final exit.

Most of the bullying that helped cause these tragedies went on without substantial objections, indignation, inter-

vention or outrage. The bullies were far too often excused, even celebrated. The bullied were usually mourned after their deaths. But at times they were also vilified in order to justify the bullies’ actions. We are devastated by the final act of violence but rarely outraged by the events that lead up to it.

## An Act With Three Characters

There are not just two, but three characters in this tragedy: the bully, the bullied and the bystander. There can be no bullying without bullies. But they cannot pull off their cruel deeds without the complicity of bystanders. These not-so-innocent bystanders are the supporting cast who aid and abet the bully through acts of omission and commission. They might stand idly by or look away. They might actively encourage the bully or join in and become one of a bunch of bullies. They might also be afraid to step in for fear of making things worse for the target—or of being the next target themselves.

Whatever the choice, there is a price to pay.

Actively engaging with bullies or cheering them on causes even more distress to the peer being bullied. It also encourages the antisocial behavior of the bully. Over time, it puts the bystanders at risk of becoming desensitized to cruelty or becoming full-fledged bullies themselves. If bystanders see the bully as a popular, strong, daring role model, they are more likely to imitate the bully. And, of course, many pre-teens and teens use verbal, physical or relational denigration

ILLUSTRATION BY PJ LOUGHRAN

of a targeted kid to elevate their own status.

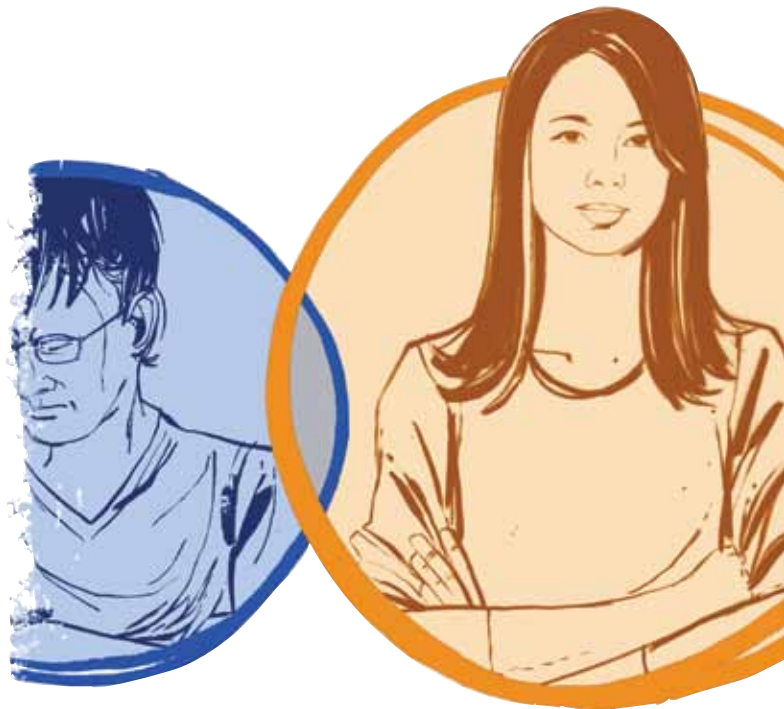
Students can have legitimate reasons for not taking a stand against a bully. Many are justifiably afraid of retribution. Others sincerely don't know what to do to be helpful. But most excuses for inaction are transparently weak. "The bully is my friend." "It's not my problem!" "She's not my friend." "He's a loser." "He deserved to be bullied—asked for it." "It will toughen him up." "I don't want to be a snitch." Many bystanders find it's simply better to be a member of the in-group than to be the outcast. They're not interested in weighing the pros and cons of remaining faithful to the group versus standing up for the targeted kid.

But injustice overlooked or ignored becomes a contagion. These bystanders' self-confidence and self-respect are eroded as they wrestle with their fears about getting involved. They realize that to do nothing is to abdicate moral responsibility to the peer who is the target. All too often these fears and lack of action turn into apathy—a potent friend of contempt (*see sidebar below*).

#### The Rewards of Bullying

Bullying often appears to come with no negative consequences for the culprits. Indeed, it can provide a bounty of prizes, such as elevated status, applause, laughter and approval. The rewards contribute to the breakdown of the bystanders' inner objections to such antisocial activities. As a result, you soon see a *group* of peers caught up in the drama. Once that happens, individual responsibility decreases. The bully no longer acts alone. The bully and the bystanders become a deadly combination committed to denigrating the target further.

This "trap of comradeship" reduces the guilt felt by the individual bystanders and magnifies the supposed negative attributes of the target. "He's such a crybaby. He whines when we just look at him." "She's such a dork. She wears such stupid clothes and walks around with her head hung down." The situation becomes worse when the victim's supposed friends stand idly by—or, worse, join in with



the bullies. The hopelessness and desperation of the target is compounded by the realization that these "friends" abandoned him.

All this leads to more serious problems. The lack of sanctions, the breakdown of inner objections, the lack of guilt and the magnification of a target's weakness all contribute to the cultivation of a distorted worldview. This worldview reinforces stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination. That, in turn, hinders kids from developing empathy and compassion—two essentials for successful peer relationships.

#### The Fourth Character

Another potential actor can bring the curtain down on this tragedy. This fourth character—the antithesis of the bully—gives us hope that we can break out of the trap of comradeship. This character can appear in three different and vital roles—those of *resister*, *defender* and *witness*. He or she actively resists the tactics of the bullies, stands up to them and speaks out against their tyranny. The fourth character might also defend and speak up for those who are targeted. Bullying can be interrupted when even one person has such moral strength and courage. This fourth character is a reminder that choices are possible, even in the midst of the culture of meanness created by bullying. Here are some examples:

➔ When the high-status bully in eighth grade told all the other girls not to eat with a new girl, Jennifer not only sat with the new girl, but took in stride the taunts and threats of the bully and her henchmen: "Miss Goody-Two-Shoes, you're next!"

➔ When a group of teens mocked a student because of his perceived sexual orientation, Andrew refused to

## Bullying: It's Not About Anger ...

Contrary to popular opinion, and contrary to the thesis of some anti-bullying programs, bullying is not about anger or conflict. It's about *contempt*—a powerful feeling of dislike toward someone considered to be worthless, inferior or undeserving of respect. Bullying is arrogance in action. Once kids believe that someone is "less than them" they can harm that child without feeling any empathy, compassion or shame.



## Anti-Bullying Resources

Any teacher looking to combat bullying should start with the Teaching Tolerance documentary *Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case That Made History*. This free movie includes a viewers guide with great anti-bullying resources. For more information, go to the movie's website. [www.tolerance.org/bullied](http://www.tolerance.org/bullied).

Other Teaching Tolerance resources include the classroom activity "Bullying: Tips for Students." It gives students advice on how to handle bullying situations. [www.tolerance.org/activity/bullying-tips-students](http://www.tolerance.org/activity/bullying-tips-students)

Another useful activity is "Stand Up." It reminds students that no one deserves to be bullied and that everyone has a responsibility to stop it. [www.tolerance.org/activity/stand](http://www.tolerance.org/activity/stand)

For a comprehensive list of anti-bullying resources, including anti-bullying organizations, visit the Teaching Tolerance website at [www.tolerance.org/supplement/resources-and-project-partners](http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/resources-and-project-partners).

join in and shrugged off the allegations: "What, are you chicken?" and "You're just like him."

➔ When a group of 7-year-olds circled Derek, taunting him with racial slurs, another 7-year-old, Scott, told them "That's mean." He turned to Derek and said, "You don't need this—come play with me." The bullies then targeted Scott. Derek told him he didn't need to play with him if the others were going to target him, too. Scott's response: "That's their problem, not mine."

➔ When 15-year-old Patricia was tormented by her peers at a small-town high school, one senior named Brittne stood up for her. But Brittne's courage cost her dearly. She was cyberbullied, verbally attacked at school and nearly run over on Main Street. For the girls' own safety, they were moved to another school in an adjacent town. Brittne had been in line to be valedictorian. Moving meant she had to give that up, costing her several scholarships. Yet Brittne says, "I would defend her again."

### Fifty Pink Shirts

Bullying can be challenged even more dramatically when the majority stands up against the cruel acts of the minority. For instance, seniors David and Travis watched as a fellow student was taunted for wearing a pink polo shirt. The two boys bought 50 pink shirts and invited classmates to wear them the next day in solidarity with the boy who was targeted.

Most bullying flies under the radar of adults. That means kids can be a potent force for showing up bullies. But speaking out can be complicated, risky and painful. Even telling an adult can be a courageous act. As parents and educators we must make it safe for kids to become active witnesses who recognize bullying, respond effectively and report what takes place. (See above)

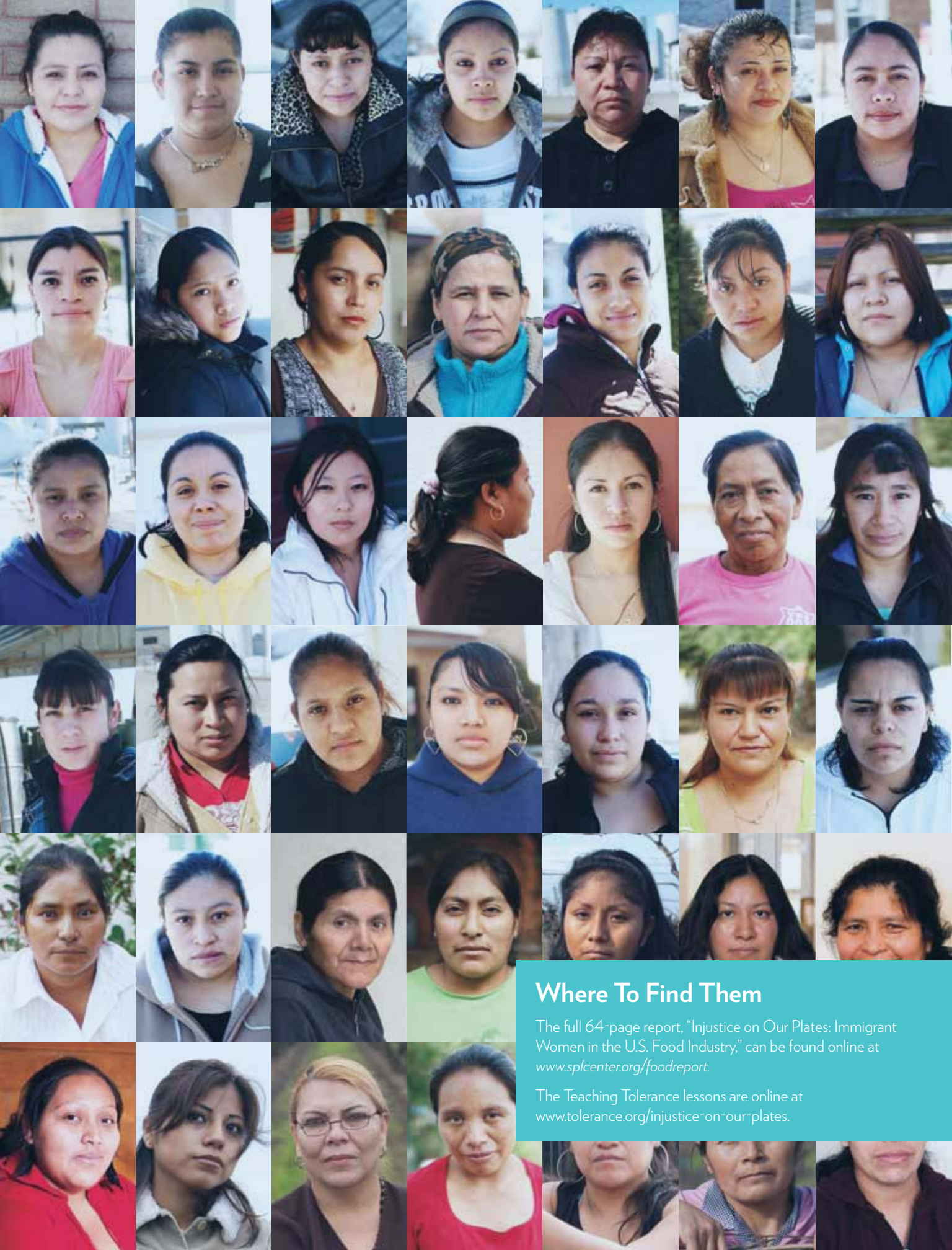
Establishing new norms, enforcing playground rules and increasing supervision are policy decisions that can help reduce the incidents of bullying. So can having a strong anti-bullying policy. It must include procedures for dealing effectively with the bully, for supporting and emboldening the bullied and for holding bystanders to account for the roles they played.

Merely attaching an anti-bullying policy to the crowded corners of our curriculum is not enough. With care and commitment, together with our youth, we must rewrite this script—create new roles, change the plot, reset the stage and scrap the tragic endings. We can't merely banish the bully and mourn the bullied child. It is the roles that must be abandoned, not our children.

We can hold bullies accountable and re-channel their behaviors into positive leadership activities. We can acknowledge the nonaggressive behaviors of the kid who is bullied as strengths to be developed and honored. And we can transform the role of bystander into that of witness—someone willing to stand up, speak out and act against injustice.

Bullying takes place because some people feel a sense of entitlement, a liberty to exclude and intolerance for differences. We can use the stuff of everyday life to create a different climate in our schools. This new climate must include a deep caring and sharing that is devoted to breaking the current cycle of violence and exclusion. It's a daunting task but a necessary one. ♦

**Coloroso** is an educator and the author of several books, including *The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander—From Preschool to High School, How Parents and Teachers Can Help Break the Cycle of Violence*.



## Where To Find Them

The full 64-page report, "Injustice on Our Plates: Immigrant Women in the U.S. Food Industry," can be found online at [www.splcenter.org/foodreport](http://www.splcenter.org/foodreport).

The Teaching Tolerance lessons are online at [www.tolerance.org/injustice-on-our-plates](http://www.tolerance.org/injustice-on-our-plates).



# Injustice on Our Plates

Our food supply depends on immigrant labor. Seven new Teaching Tolerance lessons bring this important message into the classroom.

When Sara entered the United States in her early 20s, her main goal was to find work and help provide for her family back in Mexico. But she also had a youthful urge to travel. “I was really excited about seeing the United States because I heard a lot about how pretty it was,” she says.

A decade later, at 33, Sara wishes she had resisted the allure of her country’s richer neighbor. “Now that I’m here, I see things so differently.” Life in Mexico was hard, she says, but “even though I was poor, I was free.”

The crossing was difficult. She paid \$1,800 for the privilege of nearly losing her life in the Sonoran Desert. The journey began with 18 other immigrants. By the end, after five days in the desert, only a handful remained. “Many people got lost.”

Sara is one of 150 undocumented workers interviewed for the Southern Poverty Law Center report *Injustice on Our Plates: Immigrant Women in the U.S. Food Industry*. These women from Mexico, Guatemala and other Latin American countries provide cheap labor for the billion-dollar food industry. They work in the fields harvesting tomatoes, oranges, mangoes and other fruits and vegetables. They also work in dangerous food-processing plants.

Many U.S. teenagers know nothing about women like Sara. Students don’t know why these women come here or why they work in hard, high-risk jobs. Teaching Tolerance has excerpted parts of the report in a set of seven high-interest classroom lessons.

“With these lessons, students have a chance to see beyond the bumper-sticker slogans of the immigration debate to the human beings involved,” says Teaching Tolerance Director Maureen Costello. “With facts at their side, they can question the myths about immigrants and come to an understanding of how interdependent we are with the people who work on farms and in food factories. High school social studies teachers will find lessons on economics, law and public policy in this one simple unit that also helps students understand how we build our lives on the labor of others.”

Sara’s contribution to America’s appetite is instructive.

Within a week of arriving in North Carolina, she got a job in a chicken-processing plant. Though prepared to work hard, she was shocked by what she found. Working on the “disassembly line,” Sara placed skinned, whole chickens onto cones that sped by her. The food plant was bitterly cold to preserve the food. She regularly stood for eight hours at a time, sometimes 10.

“You’re at the pace of a machine,” she says. “I felt like I was going to faint. The line was too fast. ... I couldn’t close my hands at night because they were so swollen. One day I went to the office and told them I couldn’t take it, that it felt like my bones were going to pop out.”

SPLC Legal Director Mary Bauer says that these women are the backbone of the U.S. food industry. “But they are exploited and abused in ways that most of us can’t imagine and that none of us should tolerate,” says Bauer, a co-author of the report. “Fear keeps these women silent, so their suffering is invisible to all of us who benefit from their labor every time we sit down at the dinner table.”

These Teaching Tolerance lessons can help educators make undocumented immigrants like Sara visible to their students at last. They include:

- ➔ *Recognizing the Undocumented:* This introduction emphasizes the ways in which undocumented workers create goods and services that we enjoy.
- ➔ *The Economics of Risk:* For undocumented laborers—women in particular—everyday life plays out in a series of calculated risks.
- ➔ *The Motivation for Movement:* Why do undocumented workers come to the United States, and how do their motivations mirror our own?
- ➔ *Family Ties:* Most undocumented women are determined to improve life for their children.
- ➔ *The Bill for Health:* Why do so many undocumented women take jobs that are hard and dangerous?
- ➔ *Acting Locally:* How students can make a difference in the community. ♦

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*Critical Multiculturalism: Theory and Praxis* (\$45.95), edited by Stephen May and Christine E. Sleeter, offers a thorough, compelling discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of liberal multiculturalism. The book explores its successes and limitations, before discussing the theory and application of critical multiculturalism. Rather than focus on curriculum and building cultural competency, the book asks educators to perform a “structural analysis of unequal power relationships, analyzing the role of institutional inequities.” Later chapters allow educators to explain what critical multiculturalism should look like in their classrooms, by subject area and grade level.

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*Do Something! A Handbook for Young Activists* (\$13.95), by Nancy Lublin, is an indispensable educational guide to help students go from wanting to do something that makes a difference to actually doing something. It's written in easy-to-understand language and covers a wide range of issues, like homelessness and bullying in schools. *Do Something!* will inspire students to get involved.

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*Great Group Games for Kids: 150 Meaningful Activities for Any Setting* (\$16.95), by Susan Ragsdale and Ann Saylor, supplies numerous practical and valuable activities that foster relationship-building through “play with purpose.” The games help students understand their peers from different neighborhoods, cultures and age groups. The debriefing questions in the “Going Deeper” sections encourage reflection on what worked and how the activities connect to students' lives.

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*Fire in the Heart: How White Activists Embrace Racial Justice* (\$24.95), by Mark R. Warren, provides a comprehensive study about what inspires white activists to take a stand for racial equality. Although not presented as a “how to,” there's plenty to learn from the 50 white activists interviewed for the study. Warren explores the essential question: “How do people who are not themselves victims of discrimination come to develop a commitment to act for racial justice?”

ISBN 978-0-1997-5125-9

Oxford University Press

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*Acting Out! Combating Homophobia Through Teacher Activism* (\$26.95), edited by Mollie V. Blackburn, et al, shares the reflections and experiences of teachers from



urban, suburban, and rural schools. The teachers also provide helpful discussions about how to start a teacher inquiry group. This book includes a useful annotated bibliography that addresses homophobia.

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Teachers College Press

(800) 575-6566

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A collection of 18 essays, *Are We Born Racist? New Insights From Neuroscience and Positive Psychology* (\$18), edited by Jason Marsh, Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton and Jeremy Adam Smith,

explores issues such as racial prejudice, cultural bias and gender discrimination from a multidisciplinary perspective. Although some prejudices are hardwired, we learn that the “human brain [is] expertly equipped to overcome automatic prejudices and build positive social relationships.” Recommended resources are included at the back of the book.

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Beacon Press

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In *Finding Mrs. Warnecke: The Difference Teachers Make* (\$19.95), veteran teacher Cindi Rigsbee recalls her search to reconnect with Mrs. Warnecke. She was the first-grade teacher who inspired

Rigsbee's love of learning and her choice to become a teacher. The book reads like an extended version of *Teaching Tolerance's* own “Why I Teach” column. It is sure to reinvigorate the passion that led teachers to the classroom.

ISBN 978-0-4704-8678-8

**Jossey-Bass Publications**  
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*Storytelling for Social Justice: Connecting Narrative and the Arts in Antiracist Teaching* (\$28.95) is part of the *Teaching/Learning Social Justice* series. It was written by Lee Anne Bell,

director of education at Barnard College and Columbia University. This book offers practical tools for engaging students through a process of storytelling that critically examines their experiences with racism and other forms of social injustice. Teachers are asked to view diversity through the structural dynamics of power and privilege. This process allows students to examine the power *in* stories and the power dynamics *around* stories.

ISBN 978-0-4158-0328-1

**Routledge**

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*They Called Themselves the KKK: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group* (\$19), written by Susan Campbell Bartoletti, is a lively portrait of America's best-known white supremacists. Bartoletti's book does have some problems. For example, her approach to the material implies that the post-Civil War KKK was a monolithic organization; in fact the South's "night rider" groups were diverse and went under many different names. Even so, this book is a well-illustrated, interesting way to introduce young adults to the Klan and the Reconstruction Era. Teachers and librarians should use it to teach about the struggle for civil rights.

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Rafael's lunch has been stolen. What should he do? He listens to his instincts and follows his mother's valuable advice that "fighting is for cowards" and "use your mouth before your fists." *The Lunch Thief* (\$16.95), by Anne C. Bromley and illustrated by Robert Casilla, is the moving and thoughtful real-life story of how Rafael chose not to respond impulsively. Instead, he thought through his actions to resolve the problem in a nonjudgmental way. This is a heartwarming book that helps children see the other side of every story.

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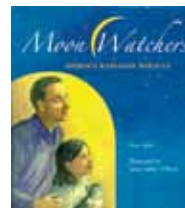
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In *Moon Watchers: Shirin's Ramadan Miracle* (\$16.95), Reza Jalali tells the story of Ramadan, while showing the every-day intimate details

of a family. With the holy month of fasting just beginning, Shirin, a 9-year-old, wants to fast just like her older brother, Ali. Her dad reminds her she's still too young to fast, though she can still do some good deeds to help others. Anne Sibley O'Brien's detailed illustrations complement this story.

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*Abuelo Vivía Solo/Grandpa Used to Live Alone* (\$16.95), by Amy Costales and illustrated by Esperanza

Gama, is an intergenerational story about the relationship between a grandpa and his granddaughter. The girl and her mother, a single mom, move in with the grandfather. He helps out as much as he can by providing care for his granddaughter while his daughter works. As time passes, their relationship grows. In the end, the granddaughter continues their family traditions and oversees the well-being of her grandpa.

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*Sensing Peace* (\$13.99), by Suzana E. Yoder, explores the question “What is peace?” through the senses. Rachel Hoffman-Bayles

tells an inviting visual tale with the help of a diverse, multicultural community. This thought-provoking story takes the meaning of “peace” from our everyday experiences—what peace looks, sounds, feels, tastes and smells like in both big and little moments in life.

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Eva takes Chien, her best friend, on a tour of her barrio when he visits. While showing him what makes her neighborhood so special, she also

immerses him in a welcoming cultural exchange. *Welcome to My Neighborhood! A Barrio A B C* (\$11.89), by Quiara Alegría Hudes and illustrated by Shino Arihara, portrays how our different communities and cultures can bring us closer together. This edition is available either in English or Spanish.

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As a new student, Roberta James quickly learns that although she may seem to fit in at first, something as small as the designs on her lunch box may

cause other students to exclude her. Before the end of the day, she discovers that differences are often the best part of life. *One of Us* (\$16.95), by Peggy Moss and illustrated by Penny Weber, explores the issue of cliques and being accepted, especially if you are not “exactly” like everyone else.

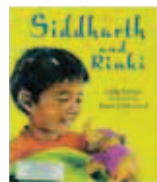
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Grades 3 to 6



*Siddharth and Rinki* (\$9.99), by Addy Farmer and illustrated by Karin Littlewood, tells the story of Siddharth, a young boy who has moved to a new

country. He is lonely in an unfamiliar place. Siddharth yearns for his friends in his home country, India, and clings to his stuffed elephant, Rinki, for comfort and friendship. Before long, Siddharth begins to make new friends and a smile returns to his face.

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Tamarind Books

www.tamarindbooks.co.uk

Grades Pre-K to 2



Patricia Polacco's *Thank You, Mr. Falker* (\$16.99), is a story about overcoming academic obstacles. It's also about the difference a caring teacher can make. The book's narra-

tor, modeled on Polacco herself, talks about struggling tremendously in school. She gets teased and ostracized because of her difficulties. She is on the verge of deciding she is stupid and hopeless. But then Mr. Falker takes the time to get to know her and help her understand what is getting in her way. Polacco weaves her lesson into a beautifully illustrated, provocative narrative that can provide tremendous comfort to struggling students.

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Grades K to 3



*Ben and the Emancipation Proclamation* (\$16.99), by Pat Sherman and illustrated by Floyd Cooper, is a true story about Ben, a young slave in Charleston, S.C. White southerners

forbade enslaved people to read or write. But Ben takes great risks to teach himself to read. While in a holding cell waiting to be sold, he uses his skills to read aloud the Emancipation Proclamation from a newspaper to the others in his cell. This is a story about freedom and literacy's power.

ISBN 978-0-8028-5319-6

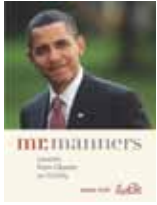
Eerdmans Publishing Co.

(800) 253-7521

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Grades 3 to 6

*Mr. Manners: Lessons From Obama on Civility* (\$10.99), by Anna Post, uses photos and minimal text to show that our first black president is also a very well-mannered gentleman who is considerate of others. Whether writing a thank-you



note or wiping crumbs from a counter, the president is a great role model for good behavior. The book would be a wonderful addition to any class library, showing children the simple ways that civility makes a difference, even in the lives of the powerful.

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**Grades 3 to 5**

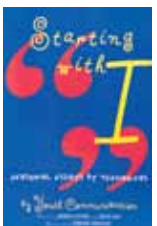
## MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL



*Fish Out of Water: God Did Make Adam and Steve* (\$24.95), written and directed by Ky Dickens, shares the artist's personal journey about

being a lesbian. The animated documentary shows the negative reactions, often reinforced by biblical quotations, that she faced after "coming out." In an accessible and nonthreatening way, the film explores and demystifies the seven Bible passages often used to condemn homosexuality.

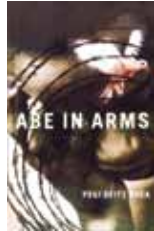
**Yellow Wing Productions**  
**www.fishoutofwaterfilm.com**



*Starting with I: Personal Essays by Teenagers* (\$13.95), edited by Andrea Estepa and Philip Kay, is filled with intimate, heartfelt stories from writing students that tackle issues like gender, racism

and homosexuality. This collection will inspire students to write and think. Free Teacher's Guide available online at Youth Communication ([www.youthcomm.org](http://www.youthcomm.org)).

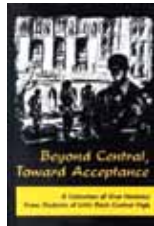
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*Abe in Arms* (\$15) is a powerful story of suffering and survival. As a child in Liberia, Abe is forced to join rebels and fight a war he wants to avoid. Adopted by an American doctor, Abe comes to the

United States. By the time he's 17, he suffers from flashbacks about his wartime experiences. Author Pegi Deitz Shea tells Abe's story with compassion, educating readers both about the Liberian conflict and about posttraumatic stress disorder and its treatments. The novel, though written for a middle school level, has disturbing content more suitable for older students.

**ISBN 978-1-6048-6198-3**  
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*Beyond Central, Toward Acceptance: A Collection of Oral Histories From Students of Little Rock Central High* (\$19.95), edited by Mackie O'Hara and Alex Richardson, presents student essays

based on oral history interviews by ninth graders at historic Little Rock Central High School. The book starts with black-white relations at Central. Then it expands to include reports on desegregation at other schools. It also includes stories of discrimination in other countries and against other groups as well as stories of positive change. In addition to informing readers about desegregation, the book inspires students to create oral history projects in their own communities.

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*Is It Night or Day?* (\$17.99), by Fern Schumer Chapman, tells the story of Edith Westerfeld, a 12-year-old Jewish girl whose parents send her, alone, to the United States in 1938 to



escape the Nazis. Told in Edith's voice, the novel captures both the specific fears of a child fleeing the Holocaust and the more general experiences of immigrants adjusting to life in a new country. It's easy

to identify with Edith's loneliness and loss. Her story puts a human face on one way that Jewish children survived the Nazis.

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*The Phoenix Gone, The Terrace Empty* (\$16) is the reissue of a 1994 book of poetry by Marilyn Chin. Chin writes about immigration, adaptation and assimilation, and what was lost and found in her

move from China to the United States. The book includes a new afterword in which Chin places her work in the context of 1980s identity politics, declares that she is still an "activist poet," and argues that the need for activism persists despite the election of an African-American president.

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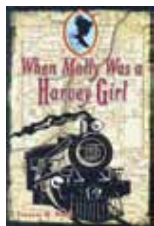


*Suitcase Full of Dreams* (\$14), a memoir by Hoy Kersh, recounts what it was like growing up black in the segregated South. Kersh spent her childhood in Mississippi and Alabama in the years

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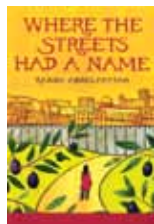
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*When Molly Was a Harvey Girl* (\$15.99) traces the adventures of a 13-year-old who, passing for 18, joins the staff at one of the famous Harvey Houses—the restaurants at stops on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway in the late 1800s. Molly, the hero of this historical novel by Frances M. Wood, is full of pluck and ingenuity, and middle school readers will enjoy reading about her. The novel explains the opportunities and limitations that young women could expect back in the late 1800s. And it shows the prejudices that Mexicans and Native Americans faced during U.S. expansion.

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*Where the Streets Had a Name* (\$12.59), by Randa Abdel-Fattah, is a poignant, witty story of a Palestinian girl's attempt to travel the short distance from her home in

the West Bank to Jerusalem. Her goal is to get a handful of soil from her grandmother's childhood home. The story makes vividly clear the devastating impact of Israeli-imposed segregation on both Palestinians and Jews.

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*The Year of Goodbyes* (\$16.99), by Debbie Levy, takes the form of a *poesiealbum*—a kind of autograph book that German girls signed for each other. Levy based her book on an album that her mother, Jutta Salzberg, kept in 1938. Levy takes on the voice of 12-year-old Jutta, expressing the young Jewish girl's feelings as her family tries to get visas to come to the United States.

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*Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty* (\$12.88) tells the story of Robert Sandifer, known as Yummy in his Chicago neighborhood. In this graphic novel, written by G. Neri and illustrated by Randy DuBurke,



Roger, one of Yummy's 11-year-old classmates, tries to understand why Yummy joined a gang, shot a girl and then got shot himself. The novel is based on events that took

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*Monica & David*, directed by Alexandra Codina, is an insightful documentary about the endearing marriage of two adults with Down syndrome. The film showcases the

complexity of the issues—employment, sexuality, dating, the role of parents—they face every day as a married couple. The film beautifully captures how family members, especially their mothers, devote their lives to this couple. Monica and David want independent lives, at least as much as possible, with support of their loving families. Discussion guides are available online. DVD available Spring 2011.

**HBO Documentary**  
(646) 450-7619  
[www.monicaanddavid.com](http://www.monicaanddavid.com) ♦

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**Teaching Economics as if People Mattered** at [www.teachingeconomics.org](http://www.teachingeconomics.org) provides free high school economics lesson plans. The lessons cover topics of financial literacy and help students understand economic justice issues like the growing divide between rich and poor. The lessons are aligned with the National Council on Economic Education standards.

**Teachable Moment** at [www.teachablemoment.org](http://www.teachablemoment.org)

provides timely lessons that encourage critical thinking on current events and promote positive intergroup relations. Activities are available for all grade levels. Teachable Moment is a project of Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility.

**Saudi Aramco World** is a free print magazine designed to broaden knowledge about the cultures, history and geography of the Arab and Muslim

worlds. Each issue includes beautiful photographs and well-written articles. Classroom guides are available at [www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/201006](http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/201006).

**Curriki.org** is an open-source website that offers accessible world-class K-12 materials to educators and aims to eliminate the education divide. Curriki provides standards-aligned STEM resources that emphasize

interactive and experiential content designed to engage students.

**iCivics.org** is a free, web-based curriculum developed by education, law, entertainment and technology experts across the country. A vision of retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, iCivics.org engages middle school students in social studies and inspires them to be active participants in democracy.

# RESPECT







# A Girl and a Word

BY LAURA LINN

Nine-year old Rosa Marcellino did not know much about the history of the word “retarded.” She just knew that she didn’t like it.

But Rosa has Down syndrome, so her school in Edgewater, Md., labeled her as “mentally retarded.”

That did not sit well with Rosa’s family.

“We’re not allowed to use the words [mentally retarded] at my house,” says her brother, Nick, 14. “It would be just like saying a curse word. We’re also not allowed to use other words that are hurtful.”

Rosa’s family worked to pass a law to stop schools from using “mentally retarded” on official records. Rosa’s mom, Nina, met with one of Maryland’s U.S. senators. Rosa’s sisters Gigi, 12, and Maddie, 10, got petitions signed. Nick spoke in front of Maryland’s General Assembly.

Last October, the Marcellino family’s hard work paid off. President Barack Obama signed “Rosa’s Law.” It keeps the phrase “mentally retarded” off official documents. During the law-signing ceremony President Obama quoted Nick. “What you call people is how you treat them,” he said. “If we change the words, maybe it will be the start of a new attitude toward people with disabilities.”

Schools have been using the phrase “mentally retarded” for a long time. The term first came into use in the late 1800s. “Mentally retarded” was a medical description for people with intellectual disabilities. That means they could not learn as easily as others. At first, the phrase was not considered hurtful. However, over time the word “retarded” became an insult.

Of course, Rosa’s Law cannot keep people from using “retarded” in insulting ways. That will take time and effort. But the law lets people know how hurtful that word can be to those with intellectual disabilities. In 2008, the Special Olympics began working to stop the use of the “r-word” by launching the website [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org). At this site, people can pledge to stop using the r-word.

“Respect, value and dignity—everyone deserves to be treated this way, including people with intellectual disabilities,” says Dr. Timothy P. Shriver, chairman and CEO of Special Olympics. “Once you open your heart to people with intellectual disabilities you are going to want to do more.” ♦

# Still I Rise

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may tread me in the very dirt

But still, like dust, I'll rise.  
... Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.  
- Maya Angelou





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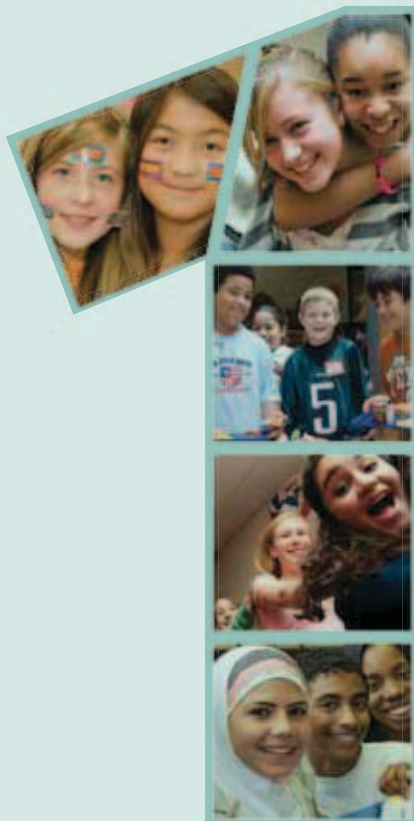
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