

Given recent and well publicized hate crimes against African Americans, Latinos, gays, Arab Americans, Asian Americans and the homeless (and certainly women), along with the growing movements for one language, one value system and re-institutionalized religion(s), assaults on immigrants and the poor, and the continuing sociopolitical illiteracy so many American students, voters and typical citizens demonstrate, there would seem no need to have to take up space here at the start attempting to justify the need for multicultural/anti-bias efforts in our schools. The question should not be whether it needs to be done nor when, but how. The American school system has dragged its feet badly on this, which is no surprise given its intended purpose historically. Where there have been initiatives toward diversity, of population, in the history curricula and texts, of cultural expression, etc., such initiatives have most often broken down due to hostility, misunderstanding, defensiveness and denial. An entire State curriculum in New York was essentially thrown out because of the interfering opposition of a church and a political party to two paragraphs on sexual orientation. Those who want to maintain the favored status they inherited – from the Eurocentric and male-dominated perspectives of our history teaching, from the “Savage Inequalities” of our school systems that favor the White and economically privileged, from the rampant homophobia and reoccurring Christianization (or at best Judeo-Christianization) in our educational institutions – talk about patience and piecemeal approaches. What is needed is not to “add” people on to or modify what we have been doing, but, rather, to begin again, with truth, balance and fairness.

While it can be argued that the field of early childhood education has been a bit less resistant and has somewhat less to “repent” for, that can easily lead, and has, to self-satisfaction, if not self-congratulations, which serves as an obstacle to real continued growth and fundamental change. We are a field which has always been one of revolutionary, not conservative measures. For centuries, we have been all about the underprivileged, about the “head start” and planting seeds for a better society and future. The advantage we have is that with each new child we can “get it right the first time.” We do not have to resort to remedial means like “Black History month” or “women’s month,” etc., to fix a mistaught history because our children are being exposed to history for the first time. When we get children, they are naturally curious about difference and, hopefully and in most cases, have not yet been poisoned as to their implications. Their “pre-prejudiced” perspectives are rather superficial, and the potential growth of these cancers can be turned around with the right foundations and responses. But all of this takes a great deal of knowledge and effort and introspection. It requires trying to create a world model for them which is as unbiased and diversity-friendly as humanly possible, one which will allow them to grow to be who they are and wish to be, but the best version thereof, and to accept and appreciate others for being likewise. The most important consideration in this, of course, is the people within that little world. One and all must make an affirmative effort to provide young children with concrete experiences of diversity through their interactions with teachers and peers who are as different from them as they are alike, in their appearances, celebrations, families, perspectives, etc. But of the utmost importance in this equation is ourselves: the kind of role model we are or are not, the kind of knowledge we have or do not, the kind of world we envision or can not. But underlying the

people is a universe of small symbols that also need to be seen and confronted, because although each in and of itself may not be earth-shattering, together they make up patterns that send clear messages to children about what people are important, attractive, right, normal, identifiable, etc... and which are not.

So, to start, "multiculturalism" in its broadest sense is both proactive and reactive. Proactively, it is a matter of diversity and inclusion. It is the appreciation of diversity in balance with the appreciation of our common bond. It is the inclusion not only of the experiences and contributions of all cultures, but also the perspectives and values that may diverge from those of the dominant culture, and through which we undermine such dominance. Reactively, it is anti-bias, in relation not only to race, ethnicity and nationality, but encompassing unfair ideas and actions against children/people based on class, gender, ability, religion, age, family background and even appearance. Multiculturalism is not a separate subject or curriculum area (though one may choose to additionally make it so; it interweaves and transcends the curriculum, manifesting itself in the environment we prepare, the foods we eat, the music we listen to, the books we read, the words we use, the behavior, attitudes and "truth" we express and the value system we build and uphold. It includes curricula of self-esteem -- whose absence is not only the product of prejudice but usually the cause as well, of conflict resolution/peace education, of independent thinking skills and social skills, of sensitivity training and community building. And it is centered on the simple idea of sameness and difference, in all forms. If we can talk about differences in the color of clothes or hair, but not of skin, if we do not know about or cannot talk about melanin, are we not further stigmatizing race? If we separate boys and girls arbitrarily, through separate line-ups, bathrooms or expectations, if we do not have anatomically correct dolls, and do not in some way challenge the impression that gender difference is based on clothes or gender gap? If we do not introduce the existence and facts of disabilities, and keep the focus on the abilities, are we not perpetuating fear and discrimination? And if we do not establish an atmosphere of knowledge, acceptance and socialization, are we not inviting homophobia, xenophobia, anorexia and a rash of other social ills?

In beginning to answer these questions, we embark on a trip through space and time. The trip through space revolves around our classroom. Beginning with the walls, are the posters, such as the old standby "Community Helpers," reflective of diverse ethnicities? Are the professional and leadership roles displayed inclusive of those to whom equal access has been traditionally denied: women, African Americans, Latinos, differently-abled people, etc.? Are stereotypes, in the form of happy little Caucasian-like Indian children or frilly pink and blonde little princesses, avoided? Where African or Native or Asian cultures are distinctly displayed, are they shown only in traditional costume, making them appear unidentifiably "different" to most young American children, or with traditional costume completely avoided, thereby whitewashing any hint of difference? If there is a map of the world, is it realistic, or is it deliberately distorted by size, shape and color, like most school maps, to propagandize Northern Hemisphere and United States superiority? Do the children depicted on the walls look like the children in our class? More importantly, do they look like the children in our world?

Moving to the library, we confront even more questions. Are the characters, especially the protagonists, in our fiction, reflective of diverse races, classes, nationalities and family backgrounds? Are girls portrayed as heroines, thinkers, achievers, brave and strong figures,

good in math? Are boys shown, matter-of-factly, as nurturing, communicative and unposturing? Are people with disabilities written about not only regarding their disabilities, but with their disabilities as simply incidental? Are there depictions of environments of poverty, of different family structures or of different community environments? Are there books with appropriate yet strong anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-classist, anti-handicappist, anti-ageist, anti-xenophobic and anti-judgmental messages? Conversely, have all books with stereotypes or hidden symbols of prejudice been caught and removed? Do we have on our shelves the original “Babar” books, wherein the native Africans are depicted as savage cannibals with the old, negatively caricatured features? Do we have The Egyptian Cinderella, wherein the beautiful maiden, as is so typical, has blonde hair and fair skin, despite the climate and population (which raises the question as to why we persist in our literature in portraying Jesus as if he looked like Greg Allman and Moses as if he resembled Jerry Garcia)? How about the cover illustration of The Three Chinese Brothers, which depicts three men with stereotyped features, bright yellow skin and all looking alike? And what about the hidden symbolism of Harry the Dirty Dog, wherein a white dog gets dirty, turns black, is rejected by his family, gets clean, turns white and gains reacceptance (which wouldn't be a problem were there an opposite story, but, typically, there is none)? What about the gender and color and body shape stereotypes (the “Barbie syndrome,” of sorts), not to mention the violence, in traditional European fairy tales? What are we, all so subtly, teaching our children, about beauty, goodness and rightness? Are there appropriate and diverse folktales and factual books? Are stories told in the oral tradition as well as the graphic? And as tricky a question as it is, could our book corner be seen to some as a purveyor of heterosexual propaganda if children who will find themselves to be biologically predisposed to being gay or have parents or relatives who are gay are shown only one way to grow up, a way which does not include their own instincts or loved ones, and might we then be responsible for some of the victimization, intolerance or self-loathing they will grow up with (assuming they do grow up and do not fall prey to teen suicide)?

As we pass the block area, do we see multiracial block people, looking across the room at similarly diverse lego people and dollhouse figurines? In the music area, are the records and tapes representative of not just a balance of international cultures, but intra-national -- classical, jazz, ethnic folk, rap, etc., -- as well? Are the instruments hanging above similarly internationally and inter-culturally reflective, including, perhaps, steel drums, maracas, of course, and REAL Indian and African drums? And are the words and sounds of other languages and dialects introduced through music, as well as literature and games. Even the art area holds symbolic power. Brown and black are all too often viewed as non-colors or, worse, ugly ones. Is brown resigned to soppy accidental mixtures of paint, as an accident, or do teachers put out brown playdough, paints and paper intentionally? Is black relegated to being primarily a background on which “pretty” colors stand out, and do teachers and students gleefully make pastel colors, experimenting with lightening, but neglecting experiments and appreciation of darkened colors? Are the new sets of skin tone crayons and blends of diverse skin shade paints made available to the children, or is the classroom still operating in the era of the “flesh” crayon and the “invisible” “flesh-tone” band-aid?

But perhaps the most culturally influential area of all is dramatic play, the area where living is represented, explored and acted out. Are the foods, the food packages, the cooking and eating utensils, the decorations and the clothes multiculturally diverse and inclusive. As the teacher changes environments periodically, to support curriculum, follow through on children’s

ideas and interests, and provide stimulating variety, are all such environments Western and traditional, or are different home lives and home structures tried? Are there clothes and accessories for boys, and girls, to explore adult maleness, and gender neutral implements for self-expression? And then there are the dolls.

By now, any classroom without multiracial dolls, regardless of the class composition, simply is not paying attention. Dolls stand for people, and the dolls in the classroom should reflect diversity of not only color – which implies more than a token Black doll – but should be bi-gender, multi-age, diversely dressed and inclusive of visible disabilities. Attitudes developed and conveyed through dolls is a subject with a long history. In each decade throughout this century, experiments have been conducted to gauge children's predispositions regarding race. Children viewing two dolls, one Black and one White, are asked questions judging their relative beauty, niceness and desirability. While some progress has been made, the White doll continues to be viewed in the more positive light by the majority of both White and Black children. (A similar study of Native American children was even more tragic, showing Native American children showing prejudice in favor of the White dolls at a rate even higher than that of the White children, and we will look at some of the reasons why shortly.) Understanding the seriousness of the implications, remedial materials have been developed as part of the continuing study. One was Black is Beautiful, a book to enhance the image of blackness in a society where the dictionaries list forty-four positive connotations of "white" and lightness (white hat, White Christmas, white magic, the Age of Enlightenment, etc.) and sixty negative association with blackness or darkness (Black Friday, Black Plague, Dark Ages, etc.). More recently, books with balanced characterization and messages of fairness have been introduced into the experiments, and these newer experiments show that prejudice can be effectively untaught, just as it is must be taught in the first place. Within the last decade, new lines of Black dolls have been developed, with the assistance of sociologists involved in the experiments, dolls which, unlike the early Black dolls that were essentially White dolls painted brown, now reflect the realities and variations of hair texture, skin shade and facial features. My son's mother, who happens to be African American, happened to cut out an ad for one of these lines of dolls, to help me in preparation for the workshop I was doing at the time. I could see in her face that she really wanted one of these dolls, so I bought it. From the way she cared for it, and called her mother to tell her about it, the importance and remedying potential was obvious, as was the tragedy. Like most African American children of her generation, she grew up with images that were not reflective of her. The characters in books, the visages on school posters, the families on television and the dolls she played with conveyed, rather, a message of her invisibility, "difference," inferiority and ugliness. That is a terrible thing to do to any child.

Having completed our trip through space, we engage now in some time travel, over the course of the school year. We begin in September, which is occupied with discussions and activities involving classroom routines, individuality and community building, and, probably, Autumn. And then October comes, and with it comes Columbus. Now why is this important? After all, Columbus merely accidentally bumped into a continent which he misidentified, didn't he, this being important solely because he was a European, and, after all, you can't trust no savage Injuns to discover themselves, now can you? It reminds me of my childhood visit to the Traveler's Insurance exhibit at the New York World's Fair. It advertised itself as "The History of the World," and one traveled in a little train past life-size dioramas, which quickly time warped from the first, cavemen times (and undoubtedly the discoverers of fire *were* portrayed

as men, to the second, the "Black" plague (which was described as having wiped out half of civilization, which meant Europe), to the third, the Renaissance (a rebirth-which the non-European world didn't require, as they hadn't just gone through a thousand years of brain death), to the fourth, Columbus, and then the final seventeen in America. At least that is how I remember it, which is probably all that matters, and the history books I was "taught" with only reinforced the memory. But now we know more. We know of Columbus' brutal colonization, the genocide, the exploitation, the enslavement and the plague. It is not only developmentally inappropriate to discuss the traditional "history" and have young children make little ships and such, it is morally unconscionable.

Following on the heels of Columbus, we come next to Thanksgiving, an almost universal school celebration, and a national day of mourning among most Native American nations. Even if the Thanksgiving story were accurate, which is at very least highly questionable, it is hardly representative of the relationship between the Natives and the Pilgrims. Yes, there *was* a Squanto (the English name of a Wampanoag who had been kidnapped into slavery by the English and who had then returned and helped the colonists. And there *was* a feast, although whether turkey was a part of it is in some dispute. But within a generation it was back to genocide as usual (including the King Philips War, the bloodiest war in American history), the Natives having been a temporary convenience, as so often "minorities" in this country have been. The "happily-ever-after" myth and the image of the friendly and child-like Indians, to be distinguished from the "bad" Indians, who lived long ago, is all part of an indoctrination which is reinforced continually by telling children to "sit Indian-style" (as if an entire race of people sits the same way), singing "Ten Little Indians" (can one imagine "Ten Little Caucasians?"), and doing inauthentic and stereotyped craft activities while accepting, if not endorsing, the accompanying "woo-woo's" and dramatic savagery. (In one nursery school I visited, the craft project for the time was to color in "Indians" on dittos [what color?]; in another, it was actually, get this, to **make** "Indians.") Our children, growing up believing that it was the Natives, rather than the colonizers under royal proclamation, who introduced scalping to the "New World," end up like those Atlanta Braves fans with their little stereotyped tomahawk chop with one hand and can of beer in the other, resisting any attempt to move away from using a race of people as mascots for sports teams. (What ethnic mannerism might accompany rooting for the Cleveland Caucasians, the Jersey Jews, the Ithaca Italians or the St. John's White Men?).

Even when one tries to use Thanksgiving as a vehicle to positively highlight Native culture, the opposite effect is inevitable. "Indians" as a unit, squeezed between leaves and pumpkins and turkeys and trees can do little but objectify "Indians," as the historical artifacts and non-people that most American children see them as being. In my son's school recently they did a "pow wow." Can the reader imagine instead celebrating a holiday which the majority of Jews find offensive by doing some stereotypical Jewish religious ceremony, complete with inaccurate costumes, mock Jewish "songs" and trivialized sacred artifacts, wherein we all "became" generic and misnamed Jews? Cultural exploration in the traditional disjointed manner of focusing on one culture in November, another in January and a third in May makes it impossible for young children to understand "peoplehood" as either a unifying concept or an individual attribute. Nor will it allow a balanced representation of the world's cultures, not many of which have such accessible and convenient holidays. There has been a movement in the Native communities to drop recognition of Thanksgiving in favor of an "Indigenous Peoples

Day,” to recognize the heroes, history and perspectives that America has never humanized much less appreciated. When I taught, I realized that, unlike Columbus Day, Thanksgiving was not easy to ignore, as it was part of children’s family experiences. So what we did was eliminate the culture and time aspects of the holiday, which would be addressed at more appropriate times, and (since most cultures, Native included, have some day of “thanksgiving,” which *is* a classroom-compatible value), instead simply gave thanks and shared it, along with harvest baskets, with local senior citizens.

Even before the facepaint and headdresses and turkeys are dry, the stores and streets and media and classrooms are caught up in the Christmas spirit. Once a religious holiday, Christmas has become so nationalized, so commercialized and so removed from the separation of church and state that little is thought about the other side of the joyous feelings: the feelings of inferiority and exclusion and disappointment and division. Growing up Jewish, I was conscious that I was "different." I was jealous of those who "had" Christmas, and, in fact, self-denyingly appropriated it to the degree I could. Sure, we celebrated Chanukkah, too, like so many teachers now do, not unlike a dry appetizer before the fun feast. And the celebrations of Three Kings Day, Kwanzaa and the holidays of others are rarely given even the perfunctory acknowledgement that Chanukkah is deigned. And what of children from Islamic, Buddhist, Jehovah's Witness or atheist backgrounds? What of the children who have to stay home, leave the room, endure invisibility or resent or betray their own traditions? As the political movement to Christianize America marches onward, as people in poverty, despair and loneliness are bombarded with messages of what they should be buying and receiving, how they should be feeling and praying, teachers continue celebrating their impending vacations and the suicide rate keeps growing.

Next we come to Black History Month. The reason for a "Black history" in America's schools is clear. The Eurocentricity of the history texts and traditional curricula remains a mockery, perpetuated by self-centered politicians, fearful teacher's unions (don't want to have to update those old, yellowing notes, now do we?), and misunderstanding teachers. And they have no monopoly on Eurocentricity. Even the textbooks that we teacher educators use to train the next generation of teachers are tainted, tracing educational theory and practice from Plato in Greece to Luther in Germany to Comenius in Czechoslovakia to Locke in England to Rousseau in France to Pestalozzi in Switzerland to Froebel in Germany to Montessori in Italy, across the water to Dewey in the United States. So what's wrong with this picture? What of the great African, Indian, Asian, Arabic, Judaic and Latino philosophers, scientists and teachers? Do we know them just as vague "cultural traditions," while knowing Europeans by name, face and story? In any case, for young children history is conceptually inappropriate anyway. More importantly, they have not yet been taught the "White history" that necessitates the remedy. So the symbolism of a Black History Month, well meaning as it is, cannot, for young children, be anything other than an indication that Blacks are somehow "special" and apart. It is an introduction to a division and objectification that might not yet have otherwise been suggested to them yet, often built on concepts (slavery, injustice, segregation, lynching) that not only are not developmentally appropriate but threaten young children’s needed “basic trust.” And children have been known to act out these new ideas. Given our unique opportunity to “get it right the first time,” the weaknesses and risks are all largely unnecessary (assuming, of course, that other teachers, in subsequent grades, will hold up their ends). It is, unfortunately, like most

holiday curricula, done because it is done, without much thought as to the ramifications, for Black children or White.

In contrast to the progressive intentions of Black History Month stands the next holiday of our series, President's Day. Now what is really meant by "President's Day" is Washington's Birthday; that, and not Lincoln's, is when the celebration occurs and that was the national holiday. And this is not surprising. Unlike Lincoln, who was the great, if grudging, "emancipator," George Washington was a slave owner. Many people owned slaves, comes the retort, self-satisfying to some, unacceptable to advocates of multiculturalism. You can't judge people by today's morality, they say, and that would be true if the person were not being posed as a hero for today. There were in fact a number of (White) American patriots who were not slave owners, Thomas Paine and Samuel Adams for example. We do not celebrate their birthdays. In fact, the only way we know Samuel Adams is that a beer is named after him, and Thomas Paine, the true American revolutionary, is practically untaught. Thomas Jefferson also owned slaves. We know him. But he was a rather benign slave owner it appears, who actually fell in love with one of his slaves, traveled through Europe with her as man and wife and freed her and their children in his will. This does not exactly demonstrate the moral courage usually ascribed to him, but it, apparently, exempts him from holiday status as well. The information on Washington's treatment of his slaves is somewhat mixed, and are we sure that he could not be considered "the father of our country," our whole country, only if we condone rape? What does even acknowledging the holiday, inviting it into our classroom via pictures or discussions, say about the esteem in which we hold African American children? If we include it, the children can only conclude that it must be important to us; they would have no other frame of reference for the factors that might lead a teacher to curriculum decisions. And if we are important to them, it will be important to them, part of their experience, value system and world. We will be modeling and facilitating prejudice, one Piagetian building block . . . one sinister seed. The four year old child will, of course, not make the cognitive connection, but the child will leave us, and someday, especially if s/he is Black, learn about the slave-holding, and, then, what will the child think and feel? Will the Black child feel betrayed or confused? Will the White child feel desensitized ("But he was a great man anyway") or ignorant? Will they feel as so many of us have felt about our "educations?" No, we should not tell them about the slavery at their tender young ages, but then telling them just half the whitewashed story is surely not the answer.

Finally, we need to touch on St. Patrick's Day. While a rather benign holiday, we are still faced with a big symbolic problem. Most classrooms use some form of symbols on their calendars, for patterning or at least decoration, and usually March is reserved for clovers and such. So how many ethnicities have the benefit of being represented in such a manner for an entire month? And what ethnicities never gain mention, never have their foods tasted, never hear their music played, never see their books and colors and symbols displayed, never have their holidays celebrated, at all?

In our classroom we create a community of values. We must. "Values free education" did not work, and could not possibly. We unavoidably teach values in our behavior, our attitudes, our words, our rules, our relationships and our curriculum. The issue is whether our values are constructive or destructive, pro-social or antisocial, reasonably objective, universal and bridging or harmfully subjective, sectarian and divisive. It most assuredly is our job to teach values that improve us, bring us together and help us survive as a human family, values

like respect and caring, fairness and equality, freedom and responsibility, individuality and diversity, sharing and cooperation, communication and community, thinking and truth, non-violent problem solving and anti-bias. These are values which we as educators can take the risk of determining that children should, irrespective of cultural diversity or individual expression, not grow up without. They are not to be confused with either our own personal, cultural, religious or political beliefs or subjective interpretations of values, nor with those traditionally or currently held by our society, where caring is more and more replaced with selfishness, cooperation with competition, diversity with chauvinism, sharing with greed, truth with deceit, wisdom with ignorance, fairness with injustice, community with division and non-violence with violence. The problem with holidays is that they are a society's ways of passing down its values and beliefs, its perspectives on what people and events and perspectives are important and which are not. The values and beliefs of the surrounding society are clearly at odds with those of our classroom society, the "microcosm of society" Dewey refers to.

Thus, it becomes our job to include in our classroom those societal symbols and messages, whether found in holidays, books, words, practices or belief systems, that reinforce our model value system, and to filter out those which undermine it. And since nasty little prejudice seeds have a way of getting through even the most vigilant filter, it is then our further responsibility to balance them with other perspectives, with an asserted consistency of values and truth. We need to find and ask for good and appropriate books on the Native perspectives on Columbus, Thanksgiving and themselves, at very least for balance. Some see this as indoctrination, but not doing so is to allow indoctrination and give passive acceptance to unfairness, bias and lies. The real indoctrination comes when we substitute beliefs for values. We propagandize the *belief* of patriotism through the Pledge of Allegiance and the flag. Young children stand with some hand over some part of their body and mouth words that sound a bit like "Richard Stanz" and "invisible," which, in its developmental inappropriateness, makes seem funny the very serious matter of being told what to say, believe and be loyal to when one has no ability to understand, make choices about or defend oneself against doing so. The value is not patriotism per se; whether we happen to personally agree with it or not is irrelevant. The value is loyalty, a loyalty to ultimately self-chosen ideals and people. The question we must always ask ourselves is whether it would be okay if the child grew up without it. Would it be okay for the child to grow up without, say, fairness or respectfulness or responsibility, no. But if the child ultimately decides to embrace a different nationality or political philosophy, that is his/her right. Our job is to plant good seeds and hope the child makes good decisions with them, but not to dictate those decisions. Similarly, we impose theism and the Judeo-Christian (or just Christian) ethic via our holidays, perspectives and sneaky attempts to reintroduce school prayer, where the real value is, rather, faith, a faith in self and extending outward to whom and what it will when the child is ready to autonomously express it. It is not our job to pigeonhole children or make them into little us's. Rather, we should encourage them to become who they are and decide to be, while providing, again, a good foundation of values, thinking skills, self-esteem and a pro-social environment, so their decisions will, hopefully, be good ones.

So, we are necessarily neither servants of society nor perpetrators of the faith. We can choose our holidays or select from among wonderful child-centered holidays (something our society is somewhat lacking in) from around the world, or make up our own, or reclassify them through symbols of unity and objectivity (like a "Winter holiday" of lights, love, peace, family and gift-giving) or celebrate none. These are important decisions, too often made by the local

teacher supply store which runs a sale on ready-made holiday bulletin board displays and curriculum "cookbooks," by the ghosts of our teachers and our teachers' teachers who "did" these holidays before and with us, and by those people who might challenge us or compared to whom we might feel "different." But it is to the children, not to the arbiters of society, or even the teachers down the hall, whom we are ultimately responsible. They look to us with trust, respect and curiosity. We must consider seriously what we are teaching and why. The argument is often offered that we must prepare our children to live in society, this society. This is true, but perhaps the most effective way of doing so is through three things: truth, choice and ideals. By giving children unbiased and appropriate information, from which to develop ideals, by giving them varied and balanced perspectives so that one is not left alone and unchallenged as absolute truth, by giving children a responsible and universally-applicable value system upon which to make choices, we provide the best preparation. This way, the child will not see other people, new ideas and diverse cultural elements as "foreign;" what will be foreign will be the prejudice, ignorance and divisiveness that assault them.

We must, as responsible early childhood educators confront, gently yet firmly, instances of prejudice, unfairness and self-hatred when they occur. It may be necessary or strategically more effective to do so directly, by offering the truth, a different perspective, food for thought or an opportunity for rethinking. It may be less threatening for the children or for us to respond with some subsequent, more generalized discussion, activity, puppetry, story, rule, chart or experience. But the very worst thing we can do is nothing, or too little, to be paralyzed by fear or doubt. For this reason, the so-called "tourist approach," wherein students "visit" different cultures or societies and sample their foods, musics, literature, games, crafts, language, symbols and pictures, does not bother me. Some are afraid that this might lead to stereotyping or trivializing the cultures. But that is likely to happen in our children's experiences anyway, and less likely with our gentle and knowledgeable provisions, guidance and modeling. Multiculturalism must be integrated into everything we do, but we can also stop and focus more directly on it, as a theme, a natural extension of the social studies process that begins with me, moves out to family and school, then to community, and then to the world and "people" as a concept. It is not expected that young children will be able to identify places that they "visit" on a globe or conceptualize, as such, the meaning of the journey. But the affective and experiential value of the pleasurable, stimulating, diverse and concrete experiences provide an appropriate foundation for deeper understandings in the future. Developmental appropriateness must always be the criterion, but in matters of safety and rights, such as touching a hot stove, running into traffic or raising a block to another child, we cannot always wait for full understanding before interceding. Multiculturalism qualifies as a matter of safety and rights. With serious and caring research as to authentic, culturally sensitive representations, with clear attention to similarities between groups and differences within them, with a framework that begins and ends with "People" as a whole concept so as to provide binding and context, and with honesty, fun and good intentions, the benefits clearly outweigh the risks.

In our classroom, we did sand paintings and rock paintings, made Kachina dolls, made-fry bread and maize pudding, learned (all of us) authentic Native children's songs and fingerplays, used authentic Indian drums and listened to diverse accompanying music, and read "Small Wolf," "Arrow to the Sun" and "Knots on a Counting Rope." In subsequent weeks, we made Ashanti Akuaba dolls, Mexican pinatas, Chinese lanterns, Israeli dreidls, Persian rugs and English may baskets, cooked Ghana sugar bread, Egyptian apricot pudding and ate a Korean

banquet with chopsticks, listened to folklore and fiction and non-fiction and poetry, and participated in dozens of other activities, which were balanced (there's nothing worse than having delicious candy for one culture and something that tastes like playdough as representing another, or having one celebration that is gobs of fun and another that seems somber and distant), researched, accessible, enjoyable and purposeful. The risk factor was dispelled most by the parents, who came to me with stories not only of their children's positive school experiences, but of instances when their child had stopped their television channel-surfing long enough to watch a documentary, on African culture in one case and Native American in another. Now did they fully understand what they were watching, of course not. But because this was now part of their experience (and children do learn through experience, and everything we do in the classroom becomes such), introduced (instead of Columbus or Washington) by someone they presumably trusted and cared about, they now cared, too, and it was part of their world, or, should we say, "our" world. Later artwork and play scenarios confirmed a change in attitude of children who only weeks before had expressed disrespect and fear of "bad" Indians, for example, or a general discomfort with difference. I do not worry about these children quite as much as I worry about so many others. And if I were assured that other teachers would pick up this mission, perhaps I would feel more comfortable in playing it safer and more strictly appropriately. But those of us who care about these issues have only each other, and we may be all the children, the future, have in this regard.

The ending of this article is the starting point of any discussion of multiculturalism: self-examination. It is incumbent upon us to take an introspective look at any prejudices, lack of knowledge or inhibitions we have, and of course we have them. We should take apart our belief and value systems and try to rediscover their origins, intentions, ramifications and universal applicability. Our expectations of children, based on race, culture, gender, class, ability, appearance or behavior, will almost inevitably affect their performance and potential. This phenomenon is called "The Pygmalion Effect." It is based on a study wherein a group of teachers were given, at the beginning of a school year, a list of names of children allegedly identified as those who research showed were on the verge of a great breakthrough or dramatic rise in achievement. In reality, the names were picked randomly out of a hat. But guess what? Those were the children that showed the greatest breakthroughs and rises in achievement, because they were expected by their teachers to do so. The teachers talked to them differently, touched them differently, challenged them differently, believed in them differently. So we must be careful. We simply cannot allow ourselves to do anything avoidable that will limit, define or hurt children, based on our own prejudices, or to pass down those prejudices, as was done most often to us. The most dangerous teachers (next to those who are bigoted and damn proud of it) are those who consider themselves unquestionably free of prejudice, because those are the teachers who will never seriously take responsibility for working on and compensating for such prejudices.

"The Eye of the Beholder" is a video portraying the "Blue Eye/Brown Eye" experiments of Jane Elliot, who began by wanting her first grade class in the South in the seventies to be able to concretely understand what prejudice means and feels like. On the first day of this experiment, it was the brown-eyed children who were viewed, in a "game," as the "insiders," the ones that come from the "good" backgrounds and families and places, the ones we believe in and want to play with, with the blue-eyed children being those "other" ones. On the second, day, the roles were reversed, to give children both sides. Perhaps the most haunting realization

regarding the power of prejudice is when, on the second day, the "blue-eyes," now freed from the negative expectations and bolstered by esteem and, consequently, self-esteem, breezed through their group spelling exercise at **three times** the speed of the previous day. And this being only a two day game, one can only imagine the impact of a lifetime of subtle and not so subtle messages: of teachers not teaching to or about me, of educators not believing in or understanding me, of teachers and the classroom not looking like me, of my life, my values, my perspectives, my needs, my styles, my feelings and my people not being seen. We see the consequences of this all around us. There are other studies on gender, videotapes of teachers, thinking themselves "enlightened" and egalitarian, who talk in softer voices to the girls to make them come more dependently close, who expect less of boys in regard to social negotiation and sensitivity, and who otherwise reinforce, in their behavior, words and expectations, role stereotypes and resultant barriers. And there are many testimonials about the personal experiences of being labeled, channeled, tracked, isolated, rejected or misunderstood, and the power of one person to either do the damage or undo it. Multiculturalism means non-judgmental acceptance as a precondition to working with a child. Then it means getting to know the child as a whole, unique person, and to do so requires a complex understanding of not only the family, life and culture of the child, but of the society and its relationship to that family, life and culture. The issue of culturally and gender-related learning styles, for example, is still a bit scary, even taboo, to some, but unless we are able to separate the science and sensitivity from the stereotypes and self-interests, we will never approach fairness. And, finally, it means teaching others, in ways that will help them accept and understand and include and learn from that child, and vice versa. It starts and ends with the people in the classroom, with who is and is not represented and how, the kinds of relationships they establish and do not, and what is expected of them, in all senses. And in between there are those little symbols to start to look at. Multiculturalism is a way of teaching, a way of thinking and a way of being. It, like the ideas contained in this article, seeks further debate.