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FIELD NOTES

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SOCIAL JUSTICE

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System for Adult Basic Education Support
Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education

Teaching the Word and the World

By AMY BATTISTI-ASHÉ

*I*t's tough to be a principled adult educator these days. While the federal and state departments of education continue to obsess over standardized testing, we're still striving to make the classroom a place to question the world we live in and envision a different one. How do you make room for social justice in your lesson plans in such a world? I'm not sure I know the answer, but I can say one thing: it has never been more important to try. What follows is an account of a time I tried, and mostly succeeded, in what Paolo Freire calls "teaching the word and the world."

It was October 2002, and the Janitors of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 615 had just gone out on strike. Because I was teaching ESOL to workers in a union hall, I decided it would be important to put some images of the strike up on the walls of the classroom to provoke discussion. As is so often the case, my class didn't need much prodding. As I put the pictures up, I heard one student telling another she was going to try to get a job at one of the companies where workers were picketing. "A friend of mine is going today," she said, "and I need to get a job now." Another student responded, "Yeah, only a few people went out [on strike] at my workplace. I'm not going."

My students are men and women from Latin America and Eastern Europe, some Teamsters, most not. Some are housekeepers at nonunion shops; some are unemployed and looking for work in whatever they can find to pay the bills. I didn't

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F O R E W O R D

We are devoting this issue of Field Notes to social justice topics as they relate to our students and programs in adult basic education. For many educators, embracing issues of social justice “encourages learners to examine their lives critically and take action to change social conditions” (Kerka, 1997). Analyzing root causes of social problems as a classroom activity allows for the integration of many literacy and numeracy skills: critical reading, understanding data, and reviewing logical and spurious reasoning, among others. Probing the causes of social inequities and envisioning possibilities for change prompts us to gather energy for action—action that may lead to change and to the improvement of people’s daily lives.

Some teachers may feel that it is too directive, or too “biased” to introduce politically charged topics into the classroom. I suggest that omitting topics dealing with social inequities, especially if these topics grow out of students’ concerns, is an overt political act in itself. Choosing “what counts,” just as choosing what doesn’t count, each reveals our biases.

Teachers who have contributed to this issue of Field Notes have focused on topics relevant to their students. Amy Battisti-Ash, Jenny Utecht, and Tess Ewing all examine aspects of worker education. Nancy Goodman explains how her course at Wellspring House, *Women in Leadership*, guides students toward more active civic participation as they understand how “the system” works. What makes the work of these teachers successful is that they start with listening to students, needs and concerns and build curriculum with them.

In addition to classroom experience, this issue also offers updates, resources, and student writing. Andy Nash provides us with information about a new resource for teaching immigrants based on an upcoming PBS series, “The New Americans,” and Silja Kallenbach invites us to join NELRC’s ambitious efforts as they launch the 2004 Voter Education Registration, and Action (VERA) campaign. Linda Werbner’s ESOL students contribute their opinions about raising the minimum wage; we have also included some data about the history of minimum wage. As always, we have included listings of web sites and other resources that can provide information and inspiration for teachers.

One final note: Some social justice topics are conspicuously absent from this issue of Field Notes—not deliberately, but because we did not receive submissions devoted to them. Racism, discrimination, English-only movements, homelessness, the Patriot Act, the war, and many other issues that touch students’ (and our) lives are missing from this collection of writings. So, we have more work to do.

Unless we can see the possibility of change, we can’t act.... And what better place to imagine brighter possibilities than in our classrooms?

Lenore Balliro, editor

Field Notes Mission Statement and Editorial Policy

Mission

Field Notes is an adult basic education (ABE) quarterly, theme-based newsletter. It is designed to share innovative and reliable practices, resources, and information relating to ABE. We attempt to publish a range of voices about important educational issues, and we are especially interested in publishing new writers, writers of color, and writers who represent the full range of diversity of learners and practitioners in the field.

Field Notes is also a place to provide support and encouragement to new and experienced practitioners (ABE, ESOL, GED, ADP, Family Literacy, Correction, Workplace Education, and others) in the process of writing about their ideas and practice. Editorial support is always provided to any writer who requests it. Teachers, administrators, counselors, volunteers, and support staff are welcome to write for Field Notes.

Our Funder

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Our Editorial Policy

Unsolicited manuscripts to Field Notes are welcome. If you have an idea for an article or wish to submit a letter to the editor, contact Lenore Balliro, editor, by phone at 617-482-9485, by email at <lbaliro2000@yahoo.com>, or by mail at 44 Farnsworth Street, Boston, MA 02210. Submission deadlines for upcoming issues are published in each issue of Field Notes.

Opinions expressed in Field Notes are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editor, SABES, or its funders. We do reserve the right to decline publication. We will not publish material that is sexist, homophobic, or otherwise discriminatory.

Our Reprint Policy

Articles published in Field Notes may be reprinted in any publication as long as they are credited to the author and Field Notes.

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Teaching Social Justice in ABE Classes: It's for the Students and the Teachers

BY NANCY GOODMAN

What can adult basic education teachers do when students bring stories to school about their struggles to provide for themselves and their children? How do teachers cope with their feelings of anger at how unfair “the system” is?

By teaching students how “the system” works, by exploring the power of electoral politics, and by examining how students’ struggles are connected to people like themselves throughout history and around the world, teachers can begin to address the complexities of students’ issues and concerns and help them plan for social change.

Many of us who work with people who are not yet economically stable come to care deeply about them. So it’s hard when they come to school and tell the class, “I went in for a review of food stamps, but when they found out that I pay \$400/month in a car payment, they reduced the amount for my teenage daughter and me to \$12/month! If I don’t have a car, there’s no way I’m going to be able to get my degree and really earn enough to support us.” Or we have heard, “The good news is, I just got a raise! The bad news is, my rent’s going up, and now I earn \$10/month too much to qualify for Mass Health.” These, and many other related situations, are all too familiar to our students and for our staff. We feel sad, scared, angry, and overwhelmed.

Women in Leadership

Wellspring House is a 22-year-old organization that began as a

shelter for homeless families and has expanded to offer access to permanent affordable housing, education and training, and support for families. In the education program called Foundations (17 weeks of college transition classes), we give direction to all those feelings in a course called Women in Leadership.

Half the sessions focus on women’s history, particularly the fight by women to earn the right to vote. In learning about Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, students come to appreciate that voting is an opportunity not to miss. In the other half of the class, imagining our future, students learn how to use the power we have to influence the government and other bureaucracies to respond to people’s real needs.

Starting Out

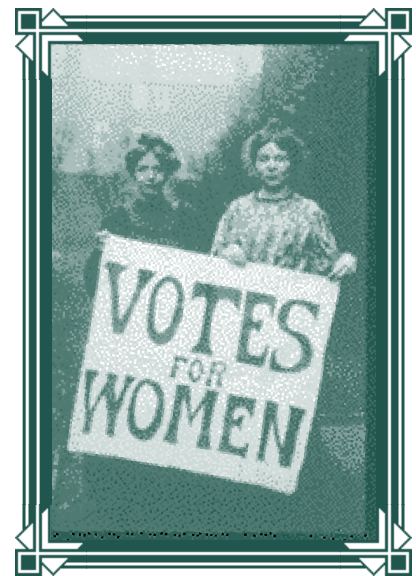
On the first day of class I show students a drawing of a woman standing in a kitchen holding an empty wallet. There is a toddler tugging at her shirt. Behind her are nearly empty cupboards and cracked plaster walls. I ask the women, “What do you see here? Why is the woman doing what she is doing? Does this happen in real life? Can you describe a real-life situation?” After linking it to their lives, I bring it out to a larger context. “What are causes of poverty? Why don’t people earn enough money?”

Once I have stimulated students’ thinking regarding the what and why of poverty, I ask them, “what do you know about poverty in

America? What do you want to know?” Because I use the model of popular education, I use the answers to these questions to shape the course to each class’s particular interests, providing information that the students tell me will be useful to them.

The course is approved for three credits at North Shore Community College, so we consistently cover some basic concepts: self-interest as a motivator to action; vision of the world as it could be including other groups whose visions have already led to action plans (such as the Massachusetts Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Project); the role of citizens in a democracy; the opportunity to register to vote including a discussion of the values of the four political parties listed on the voter registration form; the role and structure of American

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Teaching the Word...

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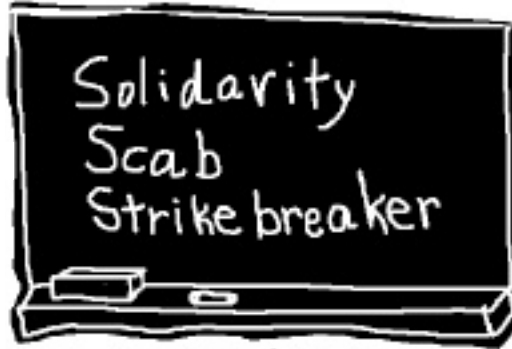
realize it until that moment, but one of my students was in SEIU Local 615—and not striking. I wanted to equip my class with the appropriate vocabulary to talk about unions, contracts, and the strike, but I also wanted to open up a discussion about what it means to be supportive of fellow workers in today's desperate job market. Above all, I wanted to be clear that the actions students were talking about are considered antiworker by the labor movement, and I wanted them to understand why.

Solidarity

I began the following class by writing the word "solidarity" on the board and asking students what they thought it meant. From their varied experiences, many already were familiar with the word. Some suggested definitions: "fight for freedom," "people helping each other."

Next I presented a handout I made that defined the words "scab" and "strikebreaker." We had just been studying the differences between the verbs "want" and "need," so I phrased the handout to reflect this. I peppered my grammar practice sheets with strike examples for the next few lessons. In the multilingual discussions that followed, it was exciting to see that I didn't have to be the only one arguing for supporting the strikers. Two of my students were vociferously pro-union; another eloquently explained that even when you are desperate for work, you could always try to look someplace other than where workers are striking, because "immigrants, we have to stick together."

We used this one day's lesson as a jumping off point to discuss what rights you have in a unionized workplace and what rights you have



in one that is not. I continued to bring information into the classroom about the strike's progress; more important, I noticed that students were sharing opinions about it.

I've been learning as I do this work that there are many different actions we could categorize as positive outcomes. So I wasn't devastated when my students didn't all suddenly decide to stand out on the picket line. Sure, I was disappointed that the SEIU member never did change her mind about the significance of working while her coworkers struck, but it would have taken a lot more than a few classes for that to have happened. I was excited to see how some union members felt more proud of their unions, and how others became enthusiastic about workplace justice. Some students even began to talk about organizing the places they work.

The janitors ended their strike in November of 2002, claiming substantial gains in their new contract. But there are plenty of other issues of social justice that remain unresolved, in their workplaces, in the other workplaces of our stu-

dents, in the labor movement, and beyond. From the war on Iraq to the war on terrorism; from the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) to the World Trade Organization (WTO); from violence against union organizers to the struggle for a living wage—there are hundreds of fights at local, national, and international levels that we can discuss with our students. I hope that out of these discussions students will gain not just a greater knowledge of English, but a greater desire to make social justice grow, too.

Amy Battisti-Ash has stubbornly remained in adult education for 13 years, with the goal of developing the leadership skills of up-and-coming activists within the labor movement and the immigrant communities of the Boston area. She is an ESL instructor/community organizer at Teamsters Local 25 in Charlestown and can be reached at <AmyB@teamsterslocal25.com>.



The Massachusetts Adult Literacy Hotline

The Hotline is a statewide information and referral service. It serves adults who seek a basic education program, volunteers who want to tutor, and agencies seeking referrals for their clients.

Participatory Classes About Work and the Union

By JENNY LEE UTECH

A few years ago, I was teaching workplace ESOL classes for workers at a large hospital. The classes were sponsored jointly by the hospital and the union, and classes were taught by teachers from the union's worker education program. This article describes some participatory lessons in my workplace ESOL class, where we explored work, the union, and taking action, together.

The Students

My hospital class had eight students—three women and five men, who worked in housekeeping, dietary, and transport departments. Two students were native speakers of English (from Trinidad and Barbados). All had worked at the hospital for several years except one, and all had high levels of spoken English. All were union members.

Goals: Workers, Union, Hospital, Teacher

These workers had low-level literacy skills and were all eager to improve their reading and writing. The union and hospital wanted people to improve communication and writing skills. As the teacher, I wanted to have an engaging, dynamic class that kept workers coming back. Most important, I wanted to create worker-centered, participatory lessons that would bring out students' work issues and concerns and help us examine them together. I wanted us to explore students' experiences and knowledge of their union, and develop

lessons on union issues. I hoped class work might lead to students taking some sort of action to address issues raised in class. And I wanted to give workers lots of reading and writing practice that would help them gain confidence and skills.

Getting Started

During the fall cycle, I would often write up students' main points on flip chart paper as our discussions moved along. This habit kept discussions focused and helped to get everyone talking, since all the students wanted to see their comments up on the flip chart. The process also helped to democratize discussions that might otherwise be dominated by the more talkative students.

I would then type up people's comments after class and we would read them during the next class. Workers appreciated seeing their words in print, and even the lowest-level readers could read and understand their own comments. Reading back discussion content also helped us recall, re-spark, or continue discussions from previous classes.

The Theme of Work

We spent the fall cycle reading and writing about work. I used short readings as catalyst activities to explore student's interests. Students read workers' stories, described their own jobs, interviewed each other about work, and compared their departments with others. The stories students liked



best came from *Working Writers*, collections of student writings we had compiled and published. We also read a piece from *Working Writers II*, "Speak Up For Your Rights" (1998) by Joan Canty. Reading this piece sparked animated discussion, and led to the participatory work described below.

Speak Up for Your Rights

In "Speak Up for Your Rights," the author describes her first job (in 1959), when she worked as a nurse's aide at a large hospital. She recalls the bad treatment she received that led her to quit six months after she started. At the end of the piece, she concludes, "I learned after my first job experience about communicating with my supervisors, asking questions about my evaluation, and many other things I needed to know about my job. I learned to be aggressive and speak up for my rights."

"Speak Up for Your Rights" sparked a lot of dialogue. Students' questions about the story led us to examine the question: "What are your rights at work?" The students seemed quite familiar with basic union procedures and members' rights. (This is not always the case, even for long-time workers.) They all had experience with supervisor problems and shared strategies for dealing with them.

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Participatory Classes...

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Worker Rights in Massachusetts

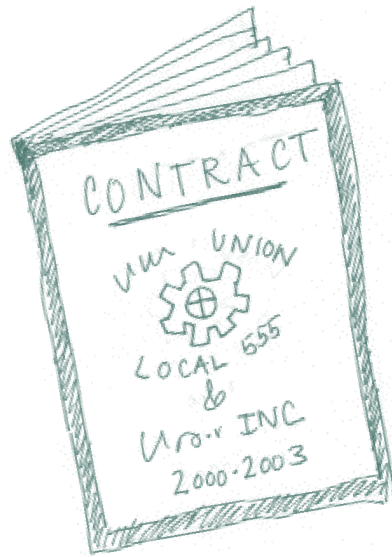
Hoping to expand our discussion of workers' rights and the union, I posted a big version of a "Workers' Rights in Massachusetts Quiz" I had created (on flip chart paper). We read it together. The quiz followed a yes/no format we had routinely used for reading comprehension practice in the fall cycle. First, I asked students to complete the quiz thinking about rights guaranteed all workers in Massachusetts, even those in non-union jobs. People circled yes or no for each item. When everyone was done, they called out answers. Once we decided the correct answer for each item, I put a "yes" or "no" Post-It next to the item on the flip chart-sized quiz.

These workers, many of whom had worked in union jobs for years, were surprised to learn that state laws guarantee workers relatively few rights. I asked students to do the quiz again, this time answering it about their own rights as unionized workers at the hospital. I used different-colored Post-Its for our union yes/no answers, and we compared rights guaranteed under the union contract and under state law—the contract guaranteed more! People laughed and debated as we went over the answers together.

We reviewed the quiz in the next class. Then I posed more discussion questions: Why do you have these rights? How did you get these rights? How do you find out about your rights? What is a union contract? How do you find out what is in the contract? and How do you read the contract?

Workers eagerly shared opinions, experiences, and advice.

Several students said that they attended union meetings regularly. Questions that surfaced during this discussion included, "Should the union tell the employee about their rights after the union meets with the supervisor?" and "Should the union representative tell you if you did something wrong?" I asked students to write about a time they had spoken up for their rights. I also asked workers if they wanted to talk



more about the contract and union representatives, which they did. So I asked them to bring their union contracts to the next class.

Practicing Specific Reading Skills Using the Union Contract

For the next class, I prepared a worksheet for exploring the contract. To complete the first part of the worksheet, students had to use the contract table of contents. For the second part, they had to look up contract articles and search for specific pieces of information; for example they had to research how many days notice supervisors must provide if they plan to change a

worker's schedule. I hoped this search would reinforce what people knew, provide some practice with written text, and perhaps bring out more questions.

Students enjoyed looking through the contract and locating specific information. I posted vocabulary words from the contract worksheet and we practiced them.

Union Steward Roles

For the remainder of the class, we discussed the roles and responsibilities of union stewards. (The steward is usually the union rep that workers talk to first about issues and problems.) I had prepared discussion questions and a brief reading about steward roles to try to address students' previous questions about union stewards informing members of their rights and telling workers if they've done something wrong. Before we read, I asked workers to name what they thought union stewards should do. I wrote people's ideas on flip chart paper. Workers felt strongly that stewards should explain things to members if there is a problem, and not just meet with management alone.

After this discussion, we read a Duty of Fair Representation (DFR) paragraph I had excerpted from the union steward's handbook. The excerpt contained words that many students understood but could not sight read ("regardless," "disability," "oppose," "discord"), and we did extensive vocabulary work that absorbed us until the end of class. The DFR information helped workers clarify what stewards are supposed to do. We agreed that a union representative should come to class and talk to people about union stewards.

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Participatory Classes...

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Integrating Grammar

We spent the next four classes reading, doing grammar work, and completing review activities. We practiced have to/has to statements based on the readings. These were calm, relaxed classes, a break from our intense discussions. Students were very absorbed in reading and writing work.

Visit From a Union Representative

We invited a union representative to visit our class. During the class before his visit, we made a list of questions to ask him. During the visit, students got answers to some of their questions. They also talked with the union rep about the evening housekeeping shift.

Students were concerned because this shift had no stewards, and workers didn't stand up for themselves.

Successes

With the exception of one worker, everyone in this class had worked at the hospital for years and had lots of experience, opinions, and advice for each other. For the most part, they understood how the union worked and were eager to talk about it. I see the following outcomes as successes in this class:

- ◆ Workers often clarified information and answered questions for each other.
- ◆ Everyone had a chance to voice concerns and be heard.
- ◆ Our discussions gave workers the opportunity to explain their experiences, share lessons they had learned, and suggest what other workers could do.

- ◆ Students loved reading the *Working Writers* pieces; they related them easily to their own experiences and opinions. Starting with these personal stories and discussing their own experiences helped people

dialogue, and to provide a structure for thinking critically and moving forward. I was not the expert, but I did my best to create a space for students' experience and expertise to come out. Then we worked on understanding the issues together.

It was my job to pose problems and questions for dialogue, and to provide a structure for thinking critically and moving forward.

connect more to our reading of "official" texts like the union contract and steward's handbook excerpts.

- ◆ Workers appreciated the chance to read official texts as well and felt proud that they could make sense of such complex reading. But starting with texts like these might have put people off or put them to sleep.
- ◆ We took action together by inviting a union rep in to class; during that visit we were able to address union and member responsibilities and clear up some concerns workers had.

Most of all, the class afforded an opportunity for workers to discuss matters of daily importance in their lives. We were able to address union and member responsibilities and clear up some concerns workers had. Even if we never get past discussion, writing, and language, I think that the dialogue itself is valuable. When we discussed issues together, I often felt that students had a better critical understanding of them than I did. It was my job to pose problems and questions for

Note: My approach to participatory education is informed by the books in the resource listing below. Both of them provide in-depth discussion and documentation of creating participatory curricula in ESOL classes and are valuable resources for teachers.

Resources

Auerbach, E. (1992). *Making Meaning, Making Change*. McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems Co.

Nash, A., Cason, A., Rhum, M., McGrail, L., Gomez-Sanford, R. (1992). *Talking Shop*. McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems Co.

Jenny Lee Utech taught ESOL for over 13 years. She also served as director for two programs, one workplace education and one community-based. Jenny is now working for the Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable to develop trainings for teachers in labor-management worker education programs. She can be reached at <jennyu@mindspring.com>.

Tools for the Classroom

From *The New Americans Teacher Guide* <www.pbs.org/newamericans/6.0/pdfs/warmup.pdf>
Excerpt from "You Have to Live in Somebody Else's Country to Understand,"
A Lesson on Outsiders, by Patty Litwin (reprinted with permission)

Introduction and Purpose:

The goal of this one-hour warm-up is to provide students with an opportunity to explore the feelings of people who are considered outsiders in society. By the end of the lesson, students should be able to experience the feelings of outsiders more sensitively, and use their experience to practice the skills of active listening, empathy, compassion, and problem solution. (Note: This lesson is generally intended for American-born students.)

Materials:

Handout: poem, Noy Chou, "You Have to Live in Somebody Else's Country to Understand." (See poem on the next page.) A Spanish translation of the poem is available on The New Americans Teacher Guide web site.

Process:

1. Arrange ahead of time for an adult who is literate in a second language to read the poem in the second language to the class. For the purpose of this lesson, be sure that the language spoken is one that most of the students **do not understand**. It's even better if just a few students understand. They will provide an interesting contrast to the experience of the majority. Tell the class that they will be having a guest speaker who will be sharing a poem with them. Have the guest introduce him or herself briefly in the second language, without speaking any English. Expect students to feel mildly uncomfortable not understanding the speaker.
2. Instruct the class that they will be listening quietly to the poem with their eyes closed. Have the guest read the poem to the class.
3. After the poem is read, have the guest give the following instructions **in the second language** to the class: "Please take out a piece of paper and complete this journal assignment in five minutes. Describe a time when you felt like an outsider, or when someone made a judgment about you based on things over which you had no control." Repeat the instructions in English. Start by saying something like, "For those of you who are non-native speakers, here are the instructions in your language."
4. Hand out copies of the poem in English and read the poem to the class. (You may want to ask the guest to read the poem in English to the students as they follow along.)
5. After the poem is read, have the students write a second journal entry. Students should review the text of the poem and select phrases, lines, or passages that have meaning for them and copy them. Have them give examples from their own life experiences to explain each of their choices. Allow five to ten minutes.
6. Have students share their journal entries with each other in pairs or groups of three.
7. Debriefing: You can use an overhead for the debriefing and cluster their ideas as they speak. Ask students to share how they felt while the poem was being read. Label the cluster, "Feelings of Outsiders." Continue the debriefing discussion with the these additional questions:
 - ◆ For the students who did understand the poem, how did you feel? About yourself? About the other students who couldn't understand the poem?
 - ◆ Who do you think are treated like "outsiders" in America today? Individuals? Groups?
 - ◆ What are the possible results or consequences when people feel like outsiders in their surroundings? For themselves? For others? In school, for example, how might these feelings interfere with a student's ability to learn or collaborate with other students in a group?
 - ◆ How might you act differently toward someone when you recognize that s/he might be feeling like an outsider?

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Tools for the Classroom

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Poem:

You Have to Live in Somebody Else's Country to Understand

By Noy Chou*

What is it like to be an outsider?

What is it like to sit in the class where everyone has blond hair and you have black hair?

What is it like when the teacher says, "Whoever wasn't born here raise your hand."

And you are the only one.

Then, when you raise your hand, everybody looks at you and makes fun of you.

You have to live in somebody else's country to understand.

What is it like when the teacher treats you like you've been here all your life?

What is it like when the teacher speaks too fast and you are the only one who can't understand what he or she is saying, and you try, to tell him or her to slow down.

Then when you do, everybody says, "If you don't understand, go to a lower class or get lost."

You have to live in somebody else's country to understand.

What is it like when you are an opposite?

When you wear the clothes of your country and they think you are crazy to wear these clothes and you think they are pretty.

You have to live in somebody else's country to understand.

What is it like when you are always a loser.

What is it like when somebody bothers you when you do nothing to them?

You tell them to stop but they tell you that they didn't do anything to you.

Then, when they keep doing it until you can't stand it any longer, you go up to the teacher and tell him or her to tell them to stop bothering you.

They say that they didn't do anything to bother you.

Then the teacher asks the person sitting next to you.

He says, "Yes, she didn't do anything to her" and you have no witness to turn to.

So the teacher thinks you are a liar.

You have to live in somebody else's country to understand.

What is it like when you try to talk and you don't pronounce the words right?

They don't understand you.

They laugh at you but you don't know that they are laughing at you, and you start to laugh with them.

They say, "Are you crazy, laughing at yourself?"

Go get lost, girl."

You have to live in somebody else's country without a language to understand.

What is it like when you walk in the street and everybody turns around to look at you and you don't know that they are looking at you.

Then, when you find out, you want to hide your face but you don't know where to hide because they are everywhere.

You have to live in somebody else's country to feel it.

**Published in 1986 by the Anti-Defamation League in the "A World of Difference" project.*

Labor Extension Program Offers New Workers' Rights Curriculum

By TESS EWING

The UMass Labor Extension Program has put together a curriculum on workers' rights for use with people who are fairly new to the workforce in the United States. The audience for the curriculum includes young people just starting to work, recent immigrants, and people moving from welfare to work. The curriculum offers nine modules on subjects such as basic legal rights on the job, discrimination, and the right to unionize, and more modules are planned. Each module ranges from 45 minutes to two hours. Information on workplace rights for facilitators and teachers is provided in a clear and easy-to-understand format.

You can download all of the material from the new curriculum from <http://cpcs.umb.edu/lep>.

In March 2003 many ABE and ESOL teachers attended a training for trainers on using the new curriculum. These teachers suggested that the materials would need to be modified for specific adult basic education populations, especially for beginning level ESOL groups. The Labor Extension Program is interested in hearing from teachers who have ideas for modifying the curriculum so they can share these insights with other facilitators. If you have comments or questions about the curriculum or the work of the Labor Extension Program, contact Tess Ewing.

Tess Ewing is the director of the UMass Labor Extension Program. She can be reached at tess.ewing@umb.edu

What is discrimination?

See page 14 for an excerpt from the UMass Labor Extension Program Workers' Rights Curriculum.

The **UMass Labor Extension Program** is a statewide effort, based in the UMass campuses at Amherst, Boston, Dartmouth, and Lowell, to provide training and education to workers, their unions, and other workers' organizations. The focus of the program is on strengthening these organizations, increasing activism, and building the skills necessary to effectively advocate for the needs and concerns of the workforce.

The Labor Extension Program helps unions and other worker organizations to fully and effectively represent an increasingly diverse membership, to train a new generation of union leaders to face the challenges of the future, and to prepare all workers, organized and unorganized, to exercise their full rights in the workplace and the community.



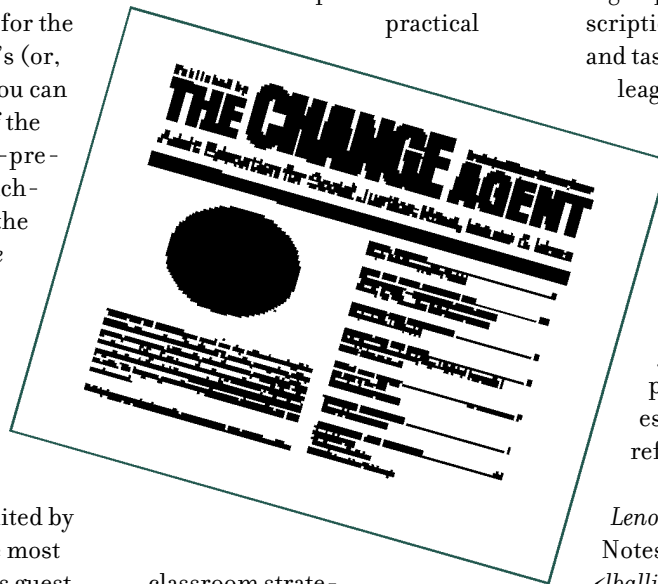
The Change Agent: One of the Best Tools at the Best Price

BY LENORE BALLIRO

How much do you spend a week for your take-out coffee? When you figure that a latte costs well over \$2.00, and even a Dunkin Donuts small costs \$1.25, it adds up, right? Now, I would never suggest that you give up your morning coffee; I'm just prone to weighing the cost of extra things I buy in terms of my own daily caffeine-centric expenditures. All this is to say that for the price of a few lattes at Pete's (or, dare I say it... Starbucks) you can get a subscription to one of the most invigorating and well-prepared resources for approaching social justice issues in the ABE classroom: *The Change Agent* newspaper.

The Change Agent is a publication of the New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC) based at World Education in Boston, and is most competently and inspiringly edited by Angela Orlando. (Note: the most recent issue on housing was guest edited by Deborah Schwartz.) *The Change Agent* focuses on issues relevant to our students' lives and to our own. According to Angela, the main goal of the paper is to "explore causes and solutions to challenging, provocative issues and begin building a more just world." Past issues have included such topics as economic justice, civic participation, food, language and power, teaching and learning across differences, and work.

The Change Agent works on many levels. Through well-researched and well-written articles contributed by teachers, students, and community activists, it informs us with background information, statistics, historical data, and facts. You will also find poetry, interviews, reviews, and cartoons. The paper helps us to translate complex material into practical



classroom strategies without watering down the content. Pre-reading and post-reading activities accompany many articles, and if you want to explore a particular topic in more depth, you will find web and print resource listings.

A yearly subscription, for only \$10.00, gives you two 24-page tabloid sized, user-friendly, content-rich issues. I love to open it up and see, balanced with all the print, a suitable amount of white space

and lots of appropriate graphics and illustrations. Though *The Change Agent* is primarily intended for intermediate level ESOL, ABE, and GED students, some of the material can be adapted for lower levels, especially the graphs and illustrations.

What better time than now to enliven our teaching with such a high-quality publication? Subscriptions also make a thoughtful and tasteful gift for your ABE colleagues committed to social justice, or curious about trying new teaching approaches.

I know this is an unabashedly positive review, transparently biased. But sometimes you just have to write from your passions and your heart, especially when it comes to reflecting on social justice.

Lenore Balliro is the editor of Field Notes. She can be reached at <lbaliro@worlded.org>.

To subscribe:
Call 617-482-9485 and ask for *The Change Agent* subscriptions, or print a subscription form from our web site at <www.nelrc.org/changeagent>.

Note: The author of this article works at World Education, where *The Change Agent* is published.

What Does It Mean to Be an American?

By ANDY NASH

This coming March 29, 30, and 31 (postponed from September), PBS will be airing a three-part documentary series called "The New Americans." The series captures the stories of a diverse group of contemporary immigrants and refugees from Nigeria, India, the Dominican Republic, the Israeli-occupied West Bank, and Mexico. These stories raise issues both about the immigrant experience and about what it means to be an "American."

Several educational resources will be available to support discussion of the film, including an NELRC-developed resource kit of

discussion activities for community forums and adult education settings, a video clip reel for use in



classrooms, a new National Issues Forum guide for discussing immigration, and a web site of supplementary activities and resources. Although the entire documentary is

seven hours, special attention has been given to creating resources that address the contextual reality of limited class time. The resource guide, for example, provides support for viewing and discussing short segments or single scenes.

For more information about "The New Americans" and its companion resources, visit www.itvs.org/outreach/newamericans/resources.html.

Andy Nash is the civic participation coordinator for the New England Literacy Resource Center. She can be reached at anash@worlded.org.

Annotated Bibliography of Diversity and Multicultural Materials for ABE

The "Annotated Bibliography of Diversity and Multicultural Materials for ABE" is now available. You can access it in PDF format at www.sabeswest.org/publications/divbiblio4.pdf. There is also a limited number of hard copies available. Please contact Michele Sedor at SABES West mseidor@hcc.mass.edu if you are

interested in obtaining a hard copy.

The guide was compiled and created by Dale Parker, educational consultant and a member of the SABES West Diversity Advisory Group. It contains both materials that may be useful for the classroom as well as materials that teachers may find useful for their own reading. As you read it, you may find gaps, resources that you

feel should be included. There is a feedback form on the last page of the publication; feel free to add whatever you would like to see in a future edition of the bibliography.

The hope is that this guide will help ABE practitioners in incorporating diversity and multicultural issues into their classrooms and programs.

Errrrrrr . . . Erratum (Or: Were Our Faces Red!)

For those of you who pointed out the extra "o" in the word "school" in a headline in the last issue of *Field Notes*, whoops! Three of us proofed the final copy and didn't pick up the error. Maybe the mistake illustrates how we really do read "chunks of meaning" in text, seeing what we expect to see rather than examining every letter as we read? Whatever the reason, it was a mistake . . . thanks for pointing it out.

Raising the Minimum Wage

BY THE ABE/ESOL WRITERS IN LINDA WERBNER'S CLASS

Not long ago, our ESOL class explored the topic of work and fair compensation. We visited the Department of Labor's web site, <www.dol.gov/>, and learned about the minimum wage in each state. Most of my students work jobs where they earn the minimum wage, so I asked them to write their thoughts on whether it should be raised. Here are their responses.

1. Yes, because if the minimum wage is not raised, the people will lose their hope and their lives will be difficult.—Justin
2. I believe we need to change the president first and after that we can ask for a higher wage. All of the problem is based on the government and how he rules our country. If the country is ruled very well no matter what you make you can live with it.—Florilia
3. Everybody needs a raise because Boston is too expensive and we use the money we make each month for the most important things in life like rent, health care, education and food.—Abdelfattah
4. Yes the minimum wage should be raised because everything is too expensive living in the United States. I think if they raise it that will be a better life for people who live in the US but it is still difficult.—Yeshi
5. Yes because many people work too hard for their dream. They want to buy a house. They want to travel. They want their kids to go to a nice school to get a good education. Every year food, transportation, rent, clothes go up.—Robert
6. I think it should be raised up because everything is expensive now like clothes, food, rent, bills, health care. You cannot save money in the bank. I work part-time and I am looking for a new job. It's hard to find a job right now.—Ahmad
7. Yes I think the minimum wage should be raised up because everything is going up—rent, car, food, buying a house.—Ramadan
8. I think the minimum wage should be raised because people work very hard for their money and people have to take care of their homes and take good care of their children. They have to think about their future like putting money in the bank and paying their rent. And if the wages are not raised people will not feel good. They always remember problems and that is not good. People should live a happy life everyday.—Fatu
9. Yes I think the minimum wage should be raised because everything is so expensive—every kind of transportation and food. And people are working so hard for their money and even if you want to go to school you cannot pay your rent and you cannot do anything for your family and you dream.—Haja
10. Yes because people work too hard. They want more money for rent, transportation, food, health care.—Tarikwa

Linda Werbner teaches ESL and literacy at the International Institute in Boston. She can be reached at <lwerbner@hotmail.com>.

Before 1938, workers were not guaranteed a minimum wage for their work, nor were employers required to pay workers time-and-a-half for overtime. The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 guaranteed time-and-a-half pay for work in excess of 40 hours per week and established a minimum wage of 25 cents per hour. The *federal minimum wage* has not increased since 1997.

Month/Year	Minimum Hourly Wage
October 1938	\$0.25
October 1939	\$0.30
October 1945	\$0.40
January 1950	\$0.75
March 1956	\$1.00
September 1961	\$1.15
September 1963	\$1.25
February 1967	\$1.40
February 1968	\$1.60
May 1974	\$2.00
January 1975	\$2.10
January 1976	\$2.30
January 1978	\$2.65
January 1979	\$2.90
January 1980	\$3.10
January 1981	\$3.35
April 1990	\$3.80
April 1991	\$4.25
October 1996	\$4.75
September 1997	\$5.15

Source: CNN News.

Note: The Massachusetts hourly minimum wage is \$6.75 per hour—much higher than the federal standard.

Is This Discrimination?

FROM THE UMASS LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM WORKERS' RIGHTS CURRICULUM

Is this discrimination?

Read the following descriptions of employment situations. Discuss what is happening in each case, and then answer the following questions:

1. Is this illegal discrimination?
2. If yes, what right or law is being violated?
3. What could the person do about it?

1. Henry, an African-American man, applies in person for a job that was advertised in the paper. When he gets there he is told that there are no jobs available. On the way out he notices a young, white woman sitting in the reception area, filling out a job application form.

2. Rhonda is pregnant and has been on the job as checkout person at the local supermarket for two weeks. Her back hurts and her ankles are swollen and both problems are worse after standing for 8 hours at a time, with only short breaks. She has asked her supervisor for a stool to sit on, but the supervisor told her no.

3. Sonia has been working in the clerical area of a large insurance company for over a month. She likes her work, but has been having problems with her supervisor. Every time he gives her work he puts his hand on her shoulder and leans in close. He makes comments on her clothing and her body, and sometimes blocks her way to her desk with his body. She doesn't want to lose her job, but his attention is putting a lot of stress on her and making it hard to concentrate on her work.

4. Linda has been working at the coffee shop for three months, doing an 8 a.m.–3 p.m. shift. It allows her to be home when her kids are home and has worked well for her. Now she is being told that if she can't work Saturdays she will be fired.

Is this discrimination?

Facilitator's Answers

1. This is a violation of the Massachusetts Fair Employment Practices Act (FEPA) and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, barring discrimination on the basis of race or sex. Henry should talk to the young woman and found out what she was told. He could then either confront the employer, talk with an employment counselor if he has one, or contact the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. If the advertised job is unionized, he could contact the union.

2. This is a violation of the federal ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and the Massachusetts FEPA. Both laws require an employer to make a reasonable accommodation to an employee's disability. It is reasonable for Rhonda to ask for a stool. Rhonda should talk to her supervisor, citing the law and what it requires. If the employer still won't get Rhonda a stool, Rhonda can contact the union, if she has one, or the MCAD.

3. This is sexual harassment and illegal under the Massachusetts Fair Employment Practices Law (FEPA) and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It is a form of harassment called hostile work environment, and is affecting Sonia's ability to do her job. She should tell the supervisor to stop what he is doing. She could also talk to her coworkers and enlist their help, go to the supervisor's supervisor if the harassment doesn't stop, file a grievance through her workplace sexual harassment grievance process, or go to her union, if she has one.

4. While this hardly seems fair to Linda, there is no violation of the law here. There is no law that protects Linda's job because her status as a parent makes it difficult for her to work on Saturday.

Note: "Is This Discrimination?" is from the University of Massachusetts Labor Extension Program Workers' Rights Curriculum, Module 5. Materials from the new curriculum are available online at <<http://cpcs.umb.edu/lep>>.

Upcoming Issues of *Field Notes*

Spring 2004

GED, EDP, ADP, and other postsecondary programs
Call to reserve space by January 5. Submit by January 10.

Summer 2004

The summer issue of *Field Notes* will be very short and will only be posted on the SABES Web site in pdf and html versions. It will include material we have already received for publication as well as short notices, calendar listings, and spotlights on resources. As a result, we will be able to jam-pack the fall writing issue.

Fall 2004

This issue of *Field Notes* will exceed its normal scope. It will highlight some of the best practices from the SABES statewide writing initiative and will include tools for teachers, resources, articles, and more.
Call to reserve space by: June 15. Submit by: June 30.

Driving vs. Guiding

BY BOB BICKERTON

I know that many of us agree that adult educators:

- ◆ Not only can, but must support disenfranchised adults in their and their family's efforts to take control of their own lives.
- ◆ Must respect the actual and perceived unequal power relationship between "teacher" and "student."
- ◆ Must continuously improve our craft so that the academic and language skills of our students catch up with our own.
- ◆ Must, from the very beginning, engage students as our equals in every nonacademic dimension of their experience and wisdom.

I reiterate these beliefs to make the following points related to this issue of *Field Notes*:

- ◆ Adult education at its best cannot be separated from issues of social and economic justice. Thank you for this issue of *Field Notes*.
- ◆ When joined, good adult education demands that we serve as GUIDES as we and our students search out paths to social and economic justice. In my opinion, all but one of the authors for this issue of *Field Notes* are wonderful models for this role. It is not appropriate for teachers to DRIVE their own positions related to social and economic justice through the adult education classroom. If you share the beliefs listed above and whether you agree with a position or not, proselytizing under any guise or name is disrespectful of our students.
- ◆ Although staying at the cutting edge of our profession is extraordinarily demanding, it is not and cannot be viewed as incompatible with our roles as guides for social and economic justice. Our struggles with our expertise (for example, in the area of standardized assessment) and with justice are all part of the whole cloth of adult education at its best.

Bob Bickerton is the director of Adult and Community Learning Services for Massachusetts and brings many years of experience in ABE to his work. He can be reached at <rbickerton@doe.mass.edu>.

Teaching Social Justice...

Continued from page 3

government. But we are also flexible. One class may ask for a session on taxes. Another group may want to know about the federal budget.

Meeting with Legislators

Often there are opportunities to meet with our legislators at the statehouse. For example, three students and I attended a Home and Harvest Rally in the fall of 2002.

pass, but you can be sure that the student whose story generated the bill learned a huge lesson about influencing the legislature.

Wellspring complements social justice teaching with a community-based public policy committee. This group "invites Cape Ann community members to examine economic and social policies that make it difficult for many residents to attain economic stability.... The committee also encourages people who are directly affected by these

going on." And one more: "So we can advocate (vocabulary word!) for what is important to us, which in turn empowers us. We should not leave our future in the hands of others."

In the title to this article, I claim that teaching about social justice is beneficial both to the students and to us, the teachers. The students' words above have given you their reasons why it's beneficial to them. For teachers it helps relieve the anger and helplessness we feel in the face of our students' obstacles. It helps to know that we are sending them out into the community with tools to organize and advocate for change that will lead to greater justice for all.

One student wrote, "to get involved ... to make a difference in our community and make informed decisions—to understand that each vote counts,"

The rally was an education and advocacy event put on by a number of the Boston coalitions who are working to increase access to housing and jobs. One of the Foundations students spontaneously agreed to take the podium and describe how she had become homeless and what it had been like to live in a motel for several months with her young son. She also told us that she is in school now and plans to earn a degree in criminal justice. Then the students and I visited our state senator. After hearing that another of the students had been forced by the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) to quit a full-time job before they would help her, our senator filed Senate 812, a bill to allow DTA to offer benefits on a sliding scale. In the fiscal climate of FY '03, the bill did not

policies to offer testimony at legislative hearings." The public policy committee is a safe place for students who have a high level of interest in social justice to learn to work with others to make it easier for families to thrive in Massachusetts.

On the final exam I asked: why do the Foundations program and Wellspring House want you to know about voting and how the government works? One student wrote, "to get involved ... to make a difference in our community and make informed decisions—to understand that each vote counts, we can be heard at all levels of our government and work together to improve our own life and the lives of many." Another woman wrote, "...We will know what is happening in our government and [decide] whether we agree or disagree with what is

Resources

<www.weiu.org>

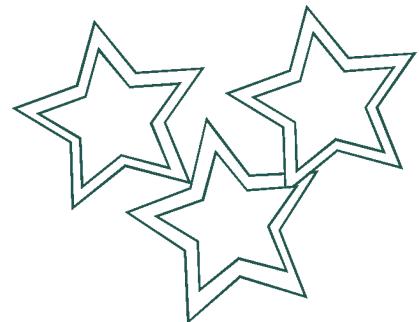
The Women's Educational and Industrial Union has information on the Massachusetts Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Project.

<www.civicyouth.org>

United for a Fair Economy has materials available online.

Hope, A., & Timmel, S. (2001). *Training for Transformation*. London: ITDG Publishing.

Nancy Goodman is the director of community education at Wellspring House in Gloucester, MA. She can be reached at <ngoodman@wellspring-house.org>.



Resources for Integrating Social Justice Issues in ABE Classrooms

Web Sites

Editor's note: Many of the descriptions below are taken from the home pages of the various web sites and are printed in quotations for this reason.

Rethinking Schools

<www.rethinkingschools.org>

"Rethinking Schools has been around for 18 years—is the country's leading grassroots journal for education reform. An independent, quarterly journal, it is written by teachers, parents, educational activists, and students and tries to balance classroom practice with educational theory. Each issue is filled with innovative teaching ideas, analyses of important policy issues, and listings of valuable resources. While writing for a broad audience, Rethinking Schools emphasizes problems facing urban schools, particularly issues of race. Throughout its history, Rethinking Schools has tried to balance classroom practice and educational theory."

This web site will connect you to a group of teachers who are resisting the war in Iraq. To connect with them, go to the Rethinking Schools web site and click on "Teachers Against the War."

Center for Popular Economics

<www.ic.org/resources/cdir1995/CenterPopular.html>

The Center for Popular Economics holds workshops and institutes on economics for activists and educators with critical perspective of US capitalism and international profiteering. Call or write for more information at P.O. Box 785, Amherst, MA 01004; 413-545-0743. Staff from this center will come into classrooms or programs and explain economic concepts in very real and understandable terms, using interactive activities. This is a great resource used by many ABE teachers.

Health Care for All

<www.hcfama.org>

Health Care for All believes that everyone—regardless of income, social, or economic status—has the right to health care. Their goals are to educate people in Massachusetts about the health care system and become involved in changing it. They work on policy

analysis, offer referrals, provide legal advocacy, and are committed to public education and community organizing.

MIRA: The Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition

<www.miracoalition.org>

"The Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition is committed to promoting the rights, opportunities, and well-being of immigrant and refugee communities. Our work focuses on policy advocacy, public education, capacity building and leadership development in newcomer communities." MIRA offers advocacy alerts, a monthly bulletin, materials for citizenship preparation, and more. They also organize rallies and events.

The Center for Popular Education and Participatory Research

<www.cpepr.net>

"(CPEPR, pronounced 'sea-pepper'), is a student-initiated center created in January 2000 in the University of California Berkeley Graduate School of Education. CPEPR's mission is to promote and support popular education and participatory research in order to strengthen the participation of everyday people—especially the poor, youth, immigrants, and people of color—in efforts for social justice." Teachers form study circles on high-stakes testing, racism in the classroom, violence and wellness in the classroom, and other topics. Teachers post to the site.

MassCOSH

<www.masscosh.org/index.htm>

"MassCOSH brings together workers, unions, community groups, and health, safety, and environmental activists to organize and advocate for safe, secure jobs and healthy communities throughout eastern and central Massachusetts. Through training, technical assistance and building community/labor alliances, Mass COSH mobilizes its members and develops leaders in the movement to end unsafe work conditions." One of their projects is the immigrants safe work initiative.

Continued on page 18

Resources for Integrating Social Justice...

Continued from page 17

Books

These titles include racism, multiculturalism, homophobia, critical pedagogy, and other issues relating to social justice.

Adams, M., Bell, L., & Griffin, P. (1997). *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge.

Auerbach, E. (1992). *Making Meaning, Making Change*. McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems Co.

Bennett, L. (1993). *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America*. New York: Penguin Books.

Bigelow, B., Christensen, L., Karp, S., Miner, B., & Peterson, B. (1994). *Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.

Clark, C., & O'Donnell, J. (1999). *Becoming and Unbecoming White: Owning and Disowning a Racial Identity*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Derman-Sparks, L., & Phillips, B. (1997). *Teaching/Learning Anti-Racism: A Developmental Approach*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Lee, E., Menkart, D., & Okazawa-Rey, M. (1998). *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development*. Washington, DC: Network of Educators on the Americas.

Lipkin, A. (1999). *Understanding Homosexuality, Changing Schools: A Text for Teachers, Counselors, and Administrators*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Mack, E. (1994). *Putting the World in Their Hands: A Guide to Culturally Inclusive and Relevant Teaching for Teachers of Adult Basic Education*. Milwaukee, WI: Wisconsin: Technical College System.

Martin, R. (1999). *Listening Up: Reinventing Ourselves as Teachers and Students*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Schniedewind, N., & Davidson, E. (1998). *Open Minds to Equality: A Sourcebook of Learning Activities to Affirm Diversity and Promote Equity*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Schreiber, T., & Martin, R. (1994). *Other Colors: Stories of Women Immigrants*. [2 audiocassettes + booklet]. Albuquerque, NM: Other Colors Project.

Schwartz, R. M. (1992). *Your Rights on the Job*. Boston: The Labor Guild of Boston.

Zinn, H. (1995). *A People's History of the United States: 1492–Present*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Videos

General Resource:

Women Make Movies

462 Broadway, Suite 500, New York, NY 10013

Tel: 212-925-0606, ext. 317

Note for teachers: The ALRI library (617-782-8956) has teaching materials for many feature films available on video. Teachers have suggested the following films for adaptation to the classroom and are easily available at video stores.

Feature Films for Classroom Use:

Bowling for Columbine (economic issues/environment/violence)

Bread and Roses (union issues/strike)

Dead Man Walking (capital punishment)

Do the Right Thing (racism, interethnic conflict)

Dirty Pretty Things (immigration)

El Norte (immigration issues)

Ironweed (homelessness)

John Q. (health care access)

Norma Rae (union organizing/women's issues)

Real Women Have Curves (immigration/women's issues/work)

The Wedding Banquet (gay issues, interethnic conflict)

To Kill a Mockingbird (racism)

Mark Your Calendar

January 29–31, 2004

Technology, Reading & Learning Disabilities (TRLD), 22nd Annual Conference
Location: San Francisco, CA
Contact: 888-594-1249; Web: <www.trld.com>

March 1–3, 2004

National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), Annual Conference
Strong Programs, Strong Families: Excellence Through Professional Development
Location: Orlando, FL
Contact: NCFL, 502-584-1133; Web: <www.famlit.org/Conference>

March 1–6, 2004

Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education (SITE), 15th International Conference
Location: Atlanta, GA
Contact: SITE/AACE, 757-623-7588 ; Web: <www.aace.org/site>

March 5–9, 2004

National Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs (NAASLN), Annual Conference
Embracing Dialog for Improved Services
Location: Tampa, FL
Contact: NAASLN, 800-496-9222; Web: <www.naasln.org/Conference/Conference.html>

March 10, 2004

Massachusetts Capacity Building Coalition
Sharing Skills—Building Connections
A statewide conference for community-based workforce development professionals.
Location: Worcester, MA
Contact: Martha Oesch, 781-438-5593; Email: <meoesch@cs.com>

March 29–April 3, 2004

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), 38th Annual Convention
Soaring Far, Catching Dreams
Location: Long Beach, CA
Contact: TESOL, 703-836-0774; Web: <www.tesol.org/conv/index-conv.html>

April 12–16, 2004

American Educational Research Association (AERA), Annual Meeting
Enhancing the Visibility and Credibility of Educational Research
Location: San Diego, CA
Contact: 2004annualmtg@aera.net; Web: <www.aera.net/meeting>

April 24–28, 2004

Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE), National Conference
Discover Columbus: Discover the Best of Adult Education
Location: Columbus, OH
Contact: 866-996-2223; Web: <www.coabe04.org>

Make the 2004 Elections a Priority in Your Classroom and Program

By SILJA KALLENBACH

Let's make history together and get the adult learner and educator vote out in record numbers in the 2004 elections! This fall the New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC) will be launching the 2004 Voter Education, Registration, and Action campaign (VERA '04). Its goal is to educate adult learners and educators about voting and the topical electoral issues, and to mobilize them to vote in the 2004 elections. NELRC will be recruiting teachers and programs from across New England to participate in the VERA campaign by educating students about representative democracy, voting, and topical election issues through instruction and workshops; encouraging and helping students and staff to register to vote; encouraging and helping students and staff get to the polls and vote; tracking the number of students and staff, how many voted and how many voted for the first time; and submitting a brief report to NELRC.

Participating programs will receive copies of the March 2004 issue of NELRC's *Change Agent* paper devoted to "Voting in the 2004 Elections." This issue will cover relevant content related to voting, democracy, and the most topical issues in the 2004 presidential elections. Some articles will serve as background reading for the teachers while others will be ready for use in the classroom accompanied by activities, graphics, or discussion questions. Campaign participants will also receive information about resource people and organizations in their state. As this issue of *Field Notes* goes to press, NELRC is in conversation with several potential partner organizations. If you're interested in joining the campaign, would like more information, or have some suggestions, please contact NELRC board member and Massachusetts VERA committee convener, Carol Bower at Northeast SABES office, <cbower@necc.mass.edu>. Carol serves on the New England VERA '04 steering committee.

Silja Kallenbach is the director of the NELRC and she can be reached at <skallenbach@worlded.org>.

Look for more information on the VERA campaign, and how to sign up in the next issue of *Field Notes*!



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